

Nearly a month since the outbreak of the war, the Rashi Foundation is expanding its emergency activities. We are focusing on providing therapeutic-educational solutions to the thousands of displaced families who are staying in hotels throughout the country, while continuing to support dozens of affected municipalities and their residents.

We are carrying this out in close collaboration with our network of eight affiliate associations as well as government ministries, municipalities, partners from the philanthropic and business sectors, and third-party social services organizations.

Following are stories from the field that will enable you to experience not only the pain and worry of the victims, but also moments of beauty and hope.

Our emergency effort

2,500
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

50
COMMUNITIES

20,000
CHILDREN AND YOUTH



PLEASE HELP US SCALE-UP THE
IMPACT OF OUR **EMERGENCY EFFORTS**

Connecting with children and giving them a safety net

Haviv | Graduate of year of service at Rashi's affiliate Ma'ase Center

Haviv served as a coordinator of volunteers at a Dead Sea Hotel where the Rashi Foundation delivers activities for evacuated families and for other war victims who come for a few days' respite.

Each morning, 10-15 volunteers arrive and connect with 60-80 children and teens. For the children, they provide experiential activities in music, science, and more. For the youth, they mainly lend a listening ear, and they try to help the adults as well. They must 'reinvent' themselves as needed. It gives the children a safety net, a routine amidst the general chaos. They get up in the morning and have something to do. It also gives the parents some quiet and relief.

In the hotel you can forget about the war when you are busy running activities and making the kids happy. But the reality is still here. When one of the volunteers led an activity about a safe and asked the children what they wanted to put in it, one of them said that his family had been kidnapped and he wanted them back. Once we had to calm down children who were terrified by the noise of a jet plane.

We try to direct those who need emotional therapy to the professionals. And we also need to be attentive to our volunteers - they are mature but still only 18 years old. Some of them are residents of the south, so the war affects them personally.

When terrorists entered our neighborhood, we witnessed everything that happened, it was right below our house. We were locked in the house for three days. We were afraid that they would enter our house, and there were alarm sirens blaring." Sofia was evacuated to a hotel at the Dead Sea with her entire family, except for one of brother who serves in the army.

As part of the Science Leadership program I volunteer with children in the hotels closest to us. We ran a 'grass head' activity, and explained photosynthesis to them. Activities like these enrich their knowledge, and it's also fun. We talk to them eye to eye, not as superiors.

It makes me happy to volunteer, to give to others. And being with my friends from the program instead of watching the news helps me to get over what I went through.

Living in the center of the country, I didn't really experience the war until I got to know these children. When they were given a doll to hug and asked how the doll felt, they said that it misses home. They are small children who were shut in their war safe rooms, they saw their parents holding rifles. Their trust was hurt.

My relationship with them is deep. One father said that his son does not hug anyone except for him and the mother. He was very moved to see the hug that his son gave me. The children rest their heads on me, needing attention. I feel privileged to be part of the kibbutz extended family, and I don't take for granted the love I get from them.

There is high demand for assistance from residents and soldiers, together with a great desire among the citizenry to give of their time or money. The main work is synchronization between who can give and who most urgently needs to receive. This requires a lot of holistic thinking and prioritization of tasks. I feel that working at the Cyber Education Center prepared me for these moments. And the support I received from my managers there was vital to my ability to do what I'm doing.

The evacuation of the city's residents was even more challenging. This included arranging accommodation and transportation, and taking care of populations such as the elderly, the disabled, those with special needs, etc. We needed to take care of the real-time needs of the residents, from 'when do the buses leave' to calming them when explosions were heard because of an exercise of the emergency response team.

"Although the level of war fatigue is high, we can clearly see that this is the time in which Israel is showing its best side. National resilience is measured in times of emergency - and according to this parameter we have already won this war in a big way.

The retreat space is designed for children of all ages. It provides a meeting place and a platform on which to address the emotional and academic situation of children and youth who were forced to leave their homes.

R., a 16 year old from Ofakim: "In the hotel everything feels busy, it's not like at home. There is no school, and I have to look after my younger brothers. But now there is a place where I can meet people my age, and now we are properly cared for."

Y., 13 years old: "Thank you very much for the activity room you opened, it's like a dream, it made my day, it made me happy. For someone who is far from home, this is very encouraging."

D., a mother of three from Sderot: "We've barely moved in two weeks, we're not doing anything, we're bored. And in one second - instead of sitting in the room, all the children are downstairs, playing, laughing, smiling. Wow, you don't realize what you've done. Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

Giving to others helps me to get over what I went through

Sofia | 18 years old from Sderot, participated in the Science Leadership program at Rashi's affiliate Beit Yatziv

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