



הפרויקט הלאומי לקהילה האתיופית בישראל בע"מ (חל"צ)
The National Project for the Ethiopian Community in Israel Ltd (PBC)
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Ethiopian National Project (ENP) and the Jewish Federations of North America's Stop the Sirens Campaign

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In the summer of 2014, Operation Protective Edge fundamentally altered life for millions of Israelis as the home front took hits from thousands of deadly rockets over the course of 50 days. Often unable or too afraid to leave home, citizens of Israel relied on professionals for much needed physical and psychological support. This report shows how the Ethiopian National Project was able - thanks to the generous support of Federations - to provide respite and back-to-school assistance to Ethiopian-Israelis around the country in a time of great need.

Respite to Northern Israel: First Weeks of the Conflict

As the summer conflict raged into its third week, 292 Ethiopian-Israeli children participated in a much needed respite to northern Israel. Children from 8 cities - Sderot, Beersheva, Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat, Kiryat Malachi, Gedera, Lod and Ramla- enjoyed a two-night retreat to the north of Israel from July 21st-23rd. The violence was so intense at that point in time that some kids had to be individually



evacuated from their homes to reach safer areas where busses could safely travel and people could congregate for more than a few seconds.

Once safely reaching Northern Israel, ENP youth participating in a wide variety of activities including: A boat-ride on the Kineret, Ice Skating, summer skiing, visiting the Beit Shean National Park, a movie night, a night of music and dancing, nature walks, a trip to a Tiberius water-park, and a visit to a high-tech farm.

But from ice skating to the boat ride, there was much more underlying the need, and reflected in the outcomes of this trip: Between the action packed days were meetings and deep discussions between students and ENP professionals about the new reality of violence thrust upon a population already struggling with many problems. Youngsters shared their worries and stories of



how it was they who had to lead their parents to the shelters back home and interpret the news for those who didn't speak Hebrew very well or much at all. Kids from different cities shared stories of what it was like in *their* bomb-shelter and supported and empathized with each other.

A couple of days of respite from a dangerous and traumatizing situation, the ability to simply sleep through the night and bond with peers and staff was a gift of healing and one that reminded ENP kids and staff that the situation, one day, would return to something more recognizable and livable.

Respite to Eilat: The Conflict Continues into August

Two weeks later, from August 6th-9th, the hostilities showed no real signs of letting up. Cease-fires were broken as they began and the rockets and mortars were falling more than ever. A decision was made that 824 Ethiopian-Israeli kids in ENP programs from 10 cities - Sderot, Beersheva, Kiryat Gat, Beit Shemesh, Gedera, Ashkelon, Lod, Ramla, Petach Tikva, and Ashdod - would be given respite from the violence.



Quiet afternoons at the swimming pool, aquarium, boating and the beach - now with family in addition to friends - was welcomed so very genuinely by kids and those parents and younger siblings able to join. One evening elders sat in one of the three hotel lobbies where participants were staying and they started talking in Amharic with staff:

"This is a gift from people so far away who clearly care about us so much - that's what this extended family really is. When we get back to our communities, we need to work together to help to remedy problems of poverty and underdevelopment within our community. If ENP and the Federations can bring so much joy and comfort to hundreds of people in such a short period of time, we, too, can achieve great things for our community."





Special Back-to-School Program - Trying to Return to "Normal"

Nationally, the start of the school year itself was in jeopardy due to the severity of the conflict. When a cease-fire finally held after more than a dozen failed efforts, school was suddenly just a few days away and a new critical phase began with two goals: Providing students with activities designed to transition into school again after a very difficult summer and to provide the opportunity for youngsters to leave homes and have some semblance of normalcy through workshops and enjoyable activities.

570 Students from six cities, Ashkelon, Be'er Sheva, Kiryat Gat, Ramle, Lod, and Petach Tikva, participated in workshops and seminars from August 26th-28th on topics including: Dealing with crisis, drug-use prevention, self-respect and respect for others, empowerment, conflict resolution, and positive study habits. During the three day back-to-school camp students also went to a now re-opened amusement park, a bowling alley, science museum, sports activities, and to see a movie with friends. These are kids who did nothing to deserve a summer plagued with violence and could finally do what kids do best: learn, enjoy friends and activities with good mentorship, and not live at the whim of sirens.



ENP and The Stop the Sirens Campaign:

On behalf of the Ethiopian-Israeli kids and families in ENP Programs that were able to cope with the summer of violence better and start the school year as ready as they can be – because of the Stop the Sirens Campaign: Thank you!