



**S.O.S. Emergency Fund
of the
Fund for the Victims of Terror
Standing With Residents of Sderot and
Gaza Perimeter**

Report II

Presented to
**IEC Workgroup of the United Jewish
Communities**

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S.O.S. Emergency Fund

Standing With Residents of Sderot and Gaza Perimeter



Geut and Shlomi Argon with Ron Hirsch, SOS Emergency Fund donor

The month of February was a particularly difficult one for the residents of Sderot and Gaza Perimeter. As the barrage of Kassam rockets continue, the force, frequency, and intensity of attacks increased. Innocent children have been hurt, families have been terrorized—their only offense, not reaching the bomb shelter in time. Hundreds of citizens have been sent into shock. Public and private buildings have suffered extensive damage. And as the Kassams continue to fall, life in the region is a harrowing combination of survival, maintaining a sense of normalcy, and ensuring emotional wellbeing.

On Friday February 9, 2008, 8 year old Osher Twito, a Jewish Agency Youth Futures participant, was seriously wounded when a Kassam fell only a few meters from where he and his older brother, Rami, were walking. Osher's left was amputated below the knee; today, he and his brother continue on their road to recovery. The various programs of the Jewish Agency, including the S.O.S. Emergency Fund and Osher's Youth Futures Trustee, mobilized immediately to help Osher and his family during this crisis.

And as their lives are upturned by the realities of life on the frontlines, the Jewish Agency for Israel stands by the residents of Sderot and Gaza Perimeter providing immediate and long-term assistance for these vulnerable citizens. The Fund for the Victims of Terror, underwritten by the United Jewish Communities (UJC) and Keren Hayesod, has established the S.O.S. Emergency Fund—to meet the acute and urgent needs of the residents of this defenseless region.

In mid-February, we presented a description of how the funds had been allocated to date. Today, we submit this second report to the Israel Emergency Campaign Workgroup—an updated account of our distribution. Personal stories are included as well, giving you a real sense of the impact your support is making. **On behalf of the citizens of Sderot and the beneficiaries of this immediate assistance, we thank you for your commitment and look forward to your continued support.**

Program Rationale

In January 2008, the advisory committee of the Fund for Victims of Terror earmarked \$300,000 for emergency assistance to Sderot residents, with the goal of providing initial relief to victims of Kassam attacks, finances that would alleviate their immediate plight before assistance from the government. The lengthy process of gaining government recognition as a victim of terror, and the bureaucratic measures involved, make it extremely difficult for these vulnerable citizens to get back on their feet after an attack. As such, the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror is providing immediate assistance and giving the residents the resources and support they need to rehabilitate and rebuild their lives.

The people who are eligible for immediate assistance are those who are physically injured by a Kassam or whose house suffered a direct hit.

Program Details

Initially in May 2007, when this SOS fund was opened, the approved budget was \$25,000—allowing for an allocation of 1,000 NIS per request. In January 2008, the advisory committee approved the expansion of the budget to \$300,000 thus enabling the SOS allocations to be as much as \$1,000 per request. **In the month of February 2008 alone, 65 families received assistance for a total of 164,500 NIS.**

Expenditures to Date

The chart below indicates the regional distribution of funds as of February 29, 2008. The 3 beneficiaries from Dimona were injured in the most recent terrorist attack in the city on February 4, 2008. Since the advisory committee approved the assistance allocation in December, nearly one-quarter of the budget has been allocated.

Location	SOS FUND	
	Number of Beneficiaries	Total Cost
Dimona	4	\$2,720
Kfar Silver	1	\$1,087
Sderot	201	\$111,131
Misc.		\$4,243
Total	206	\$119,181

Our publicity efforts of the SOS assistance fund continue; we are working to ensure that all residents in need get the support necessary to persevere through these trying times. Jewish Agency field representatives, themselves residents of Sderot and the surrounding communities, work around-the-clock to reach the victims of terror and help them through the days of life post-attack.

The beneficiaries of this support continue to express how much these funds have eased their plight. Given the opportunity to relax and recharge

their batteries during respite weekends, with supplemental finances to buy food and other necessities, knowing that they are not alone—these residents are able to heal and regain their strength.

Personal Stories

The home of **Geut and Shlomi Agron** (pictured on the first page of this report), and their two children, was struck by a Kassam on January 15, 2008; the rocket landed only a few meters away from the children's bedroom—totally destroying the room and its contents. Geut was playing with her children on the computer at the time of the attack. Despite the shrapnel that had lodged in her head and knee, Geut managed to crawl her way out of the rubble and rescue herself and her children. Geut underwent surgery that removed three pieces of shrapnel; one was deemed too dangerous to remove. Shlomi is the owner of a local coffee shop and Geut is a nurse in the local Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon. The Agron family received 4,000 NIS from the SOS Fund—finances that were used to repair the Agron home and augment the family's resources as Geut is in therapy.

On February 26, 2008, the **Pinkasov family** home was hit by a Kassam rocket—for the second time! Natalia and her daughter were alone in the house. Natalia is a single mother of two children who made aliyah from Russia only a few years ago. She and her children live with Natalia's mother in Sderot. After the attack, Natalia went into shock and stopped functioning for several hours; she did not speak to her children and was unresponsive to any stimuli. Her five year old daughter was resentful of her mother's reaction and expressed extreme anger. She has since been suffering from vomiting and other physical reactions to trauma. The SOS Fund sent the entire Pinkasov family on a long respite weekend in Tel Aviv just a few days ago. Now, the social service and Jewish Agency professionals are exploring other ways of assisting the Pinkasov family.