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THE JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

Jewish group delivers emergency aid to Nepal

AJN STAFF

THE US Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is on the ground in Nepal, providing relief to communities affected by catastrophic flash flooding that has killed more than 1300 people and displaced over 21,000.

JDC Global Response Innovative Development (GRID) director Avital Sandler-Loeff and head of disaster response Mickey Noam-Alon are in Nepal overseeing the response.

The floods, triggered by a glacier collapse and intensified by climate-related changes, have devastated northern Nepal. Nearly 5000 people remain missing and more than 650,000 have been affected. Roads, bridges, water systems, health facilities and communications networks have been destroyed, leaving many commu-

nities reachable only by helicopter. Damaged water and sanitation systems have raised the risk of disease as families attempt to recover.

JDC GRID was able to respond quickly because of groundwork laid after Nepal's 2015 earthquake, when JDC worked with local partner Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) for five years to support recovery and strengthen local disaster preparedness.

RRN is now among the local organisations helping lead humanitarian relief efforts, working with government authorities, disaster management committees and the Nepal Red Cross. The relationships built through that partnership allowed JDC GRID and RRN to assess needs and begin delivering assistance within days of the disaster.

Over two days, emergency supplies were distributed to 150



JDC team with RRN, a longtime local partner in Nepal, reaching the most vulnerable families in the hardest hit areas.

flood-affected households at a temporary holding centre in Nuwakot, which is housing displaced residents from the neighbouring Rasuwa district. The distribution included bedding, water storage buckets and hygiene supplies such as soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste,

sanitary pads and towels.

JDC will also support psychosocial first aid and counselling training for 100 community members to help families cope with trauma and loss.

Among those receiving aid was 20-year-old Mista Tamang,

a flood survivor from Rasuwa, who escaped with her husband and 18-month-old daughter after floodwaters swept away their home. As the water surged through their community, the family fled up a mountain and into the jungle, travelling for two days through rugged terrain with little food and relying on help from strangers.

The flood destroyed the family's home. Tamang's husband's sister and her two daughters remain missing, as does Tamang's own sister, who had warned her of the approaching danger.

"I carried my baby and ran up the mountain into the jungle. I could not think of anything else except saving her," Tamang said.

She is now living in temporary shelter and received a hygiene kit distributed through JDC GRID's response.

JNF AUSTRALIA

Rebuilding Sha'ar HaNegev after October 7

AJN STAFF

JNF Australia's 2026 national annual campaign, For a Stronger Israel, has announced a commitment to establish the Sha'ar HaNegev Community Village, a 15-acre precinct intended to support healing, recovery and renewal for communities affected by the events of October 7, 2023.

The announcement was made in front of 3000 supporters across Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. The campaign was headlined by international law and human rights expert Natasha Hausdorff, who spoke at all three events. She was joined in Sydney and Melbourne by Alon Ohel, who survived 738 days as a hostage in Gaza and shared his story with audiences, including a live musical performance.

Also in attendance was Sha'ar HaNegev mayor Ori Epstein, who lost five family members, includ-



Released hostage Alon Ohel.

Photo: Chris Kapa

ing his mother and eldest son, on October 7. Epstein took over the role from his late brother-in-law, Ofir Libstein z"l, who was murdered on October 7 while serving as mayor.

"I have learned that leadership in moments like these is about choosing. To believe in the future even when it's difficult to see

one," Epstein said. "We would come home, we would rebuild, but rebuilding Sha'ar HaNegev you cannot simply do by putting back what was destroyed. Our communities need to believe that they have a future.

"The Australian Jewish community have become such an important part of our story. We do

not see the community's donations as charity. We see it as partnership," he said. "I can choose what to do with the life that remains ... we will remember those we lost; we will carry them with us, we will build, grow and bring life back."

In Sha'ar HaNegev, 86 residents were murdered and 23 were kidnapped on October 7.

Eleven of the region's 12 communities were evacuated, displacing more than 9000 people for almost two years. Families are now returning, and JNF Australia said the Community Village would provide emotional, therapeutic, social and community services.

The 15-acre site will include a resilience and treatment centre, a social services division, a space for bereaved families, animal-assisted therapy facilities, an arts and culture centre, therapeutic gardens and communal recreational areas.

JNF Australia CEO Doron

Lazarus said the campaign reflected the organisation's commitment "to stand alongside the people of Israel today while helping build a stronger, more resilient future for tomorrow".

Construction is due to begin at the end of 2026, with completion expected by the end of 2027.

JNF Australia said the centre would be the first of its kind regionally and would serve approximately 20,000 people annually.

JNF Australia national president Pam Krail said the Sha'ar HaNegev Community Village "represents the next chapter of our collective commitment – creating a place that will help people not simply return to where they were, but move forward, heal and build a stronger future for generations to come".

To donate to the appeal, please visit:
jnf.org.au/ac2026

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