

# Rebuilding Lives: One Business at a Time



In the summer of 2005 the Gush Katif refugee families were literally dropped on their country's doorstep. They were not simply "standard" cases of families in distress. Forcefully expelling people from their homes is a complex unique scenario that comes with complex and unique social, emotional and psychological problems that require attention. Thousands of families lost their primary means of support, when their jobs or businesses were destroyed in Gush Katif. Municipal workers, farmers and those who owned their own businesses were left with nothing. And most of those affected are no longer young, but over 50, a terrible time in life to have to start over.

In 2005, the unemployment rate was close to 80%. Thank G-d, as a result of the intensive efforts of the Gush Katif leadership, funded totally by private sources, including CFOIC, the unemployment rate has gone down significantly since then. However, many are still jobless and it hurts to remember that these people once supported themselves honorably and comfortably. The Gush Katif Employment Project assigns certified employment counselors to unemployed individuals. The counselors help their

clients overcome their barriers to success by clarifying a relevant employment direction for the future and offering job retraining and employment placement. They also provide support to small business owners on the opening of a business. This support includes grants to develop fledgling businesses and ongoing business mentoring and guidance after the businesses have opened. To date they have assisted in the establishment of 130 businesses including restaurants, clothing and house-goods stores, agricultural endeavors, vacation rentals and transportation services.

When they lived in Gush Katif, R and E owned two restaurants which served the community. A year and a half ago, they opened a small pizzeria adjacent to their mobile home in Nitzan. After struggling unsuccessfully for a year to make their business profitable, R and E sought out the aid and advice of the Employment Project's business advisors. Today, they have moved their establishment to the Nitzan community center, a more central location which attracts more traffic. Yet, as a family, they were still not balancing their budget and needed a way to increase their income. Working in conjunction with their business advisors, R and E devised a plan to expand into catering. They received financial assistance to purchase catering equipment including a cooling unit, barbeque, portable gas burner and pots enabling them to grow and move towards financial stability.

Before the disengagement, Y worked in education in Gush Katif; his wife D stayed home with their children. A practical young couple, they lived in a rented mobile home

while they put money away to buy a house. After the disengagement, they found themselves jobless, and as renters, without compensation money. Determined to build a new life, they joined a group of families committed to staying together in Bet Hagai. After researching the needs of the region and building a business plan with an Employment Project consultant, Y and D decided to start a clothing store on wheels. Instead of renting space, they bring their product to local communities. A small grant allowed them to purchase the winter line of clothing, enabling them to ease their cash flow and concentrate on building their business.

S was a farmer in Gush Katif, and lived in Atzmona with his wife and 11 children. After the disengagement, they lived for a year in tents, and then in a tiny mobile home. Because B had only lived in Gush Katif for three years, he was ineligible to receive land to farm and had to seek alternative employment. The family started to run up debts, despite the fact that they lived, and continue to live, very frugally. B purchased a fourteen seat vehicle, began a transportation service and is now working full time. His family is starting to balance their budget and pay off their debts. B's transport service currently employs him, with his wife doing the book-keeping. There is room for expansion with future funding.

CFOIC Heartland has been asked to provide retraining programs to the evacuees and to provide small businesses, similar to the ones mentioned, with grants.

I know you will find it hard to remain indifferent to the plight of these and so many other families. You, our dear Christian friends stood with us in Gush Katif during our most difficult times. We are turning to you, Christian supporters of Israel, from all over the world, to help these people. No other group of people in Israel was forced into poverty by a political action. This added sense of betrayal has compounded the suffering. Each day that passes with inactivity fosters unhealthy apathy and despair. Unemployment turns people who were self-sufficient and hard-working into needy welfare cases. It harms them emotionally and spiritually, damages family stability, and impacts severely on the healthy development of their children. Our job is not over for these Gush Katif refugees. They don't want to need us. But they still do. This project can get them out of this humiliating cycle of need. A new career can give them the sense of worth and dignity – and a livelihood they so desperately need.

<b>Grant level per business</b> .....	<b>\$1,000 - \$5,000</b>
<b>Job retraining programs</b> .....	<b>1,000-3,000</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED:</b> .....	<b>\$50,000</b>

***To participate in this project:***

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 ~ Or mail a check with the project name in the memo:

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