

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 provides 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. 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 vocational retraining and job upgrading courses.

Each course costs the program between \$1,000 and \$2,500, depending on the specific need. Courses are evaluated based upon appropriateness for the student, viability of the job market in the requested field, and potential income upon completion of the course. When possible, students are encouraged to work while attending the course. One month before the completion of the course, employment counselors begin assisting the students in their search for a job in their new field.

Eran was raised on a farm in Gush Katif and always pictured himself entering the family business. When the Expulsion happened, Eran was just finishing his army service. He married his childhood sweetheart and they moved to a mobile home in Ein Zurim. Unable to join the family business that was destroyed along with his family home, Eran still dreamed of being able to work with the land. He turned to the Gush Katif Employment Project for a course in landscape design. Upon completion of the course, Eran interned with a landscape designer in Ashkelon. He is now employed with this landscaping firm, and when he and his wife relocate to their permanent community home, he will have a viable profession.

Chava, a mother of six, had been working as a bookkeeper in Gush Katif before the Expulsion. Afterwards, she was unemployed for over two years while her family moved from place to place, finally "settling" in the mobile home site of Nitzan. When she began looking for job opportunities, she realized that living closer to the center of Israel is more expensive and that her family would need a more substantial income. After meeting with the Gush Katif Employment Project counselors, Chava decided that she would like to remain in her field but upgrade her skills. The program funded her course to become a payroll specialist, a very employable and profitable field in Israel.

CFOIC Heartland has been asked to help provide evacuees, similar to the ones mentioned, with retraining programs. The Gush Katif Employment Project is requesting \$50,000. Thanks to a matching program of the Israeli government, we will be able to effectively double your contribution and provide significant support to the Gush Katif refugees.

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 harms them emotionally and spiritually, damages family stability, and impacts severely on the healthy development of their children. This project can get them out of this humiliating cycle of need.





- Five years have passed, and still, so many Gush Katif refugees are homeless and unemployed, forced to struggle to survive, forced to find a new direction of support.
- The Gush Katif Employment Project takes these refugees in hand, with love and sensitivity, and offers vocational retraining, capital for fledgling businesses and workshops to make them more marketable.

You, our dear Christian friends stood with us in Gush Katif during our most difficult times. We must not remain indifferent to the plight of these and so many other families. Unemployment turns people who were self-sufficient and hard-working into needy welfare cases. Our job is not over for these Gush Katif refugees. They don't want to need us. But they still do. A job can give them the sense of worth and dignity—and a livelihood they desperately need.

Project Budget

TOTAL FUNDS REQUIRED: \$50,000

To participate in this project: Click Here: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=P5DCJYARGLEF4

Or mail a check with the project name in the memo to:
CFOIC, PO Box 50833, Colorado Springs, CO 80949 (US & Canada)
CFOIC, PO Box 752, Ginot Shomron, Israel (All other countries)