INTRODUCTION

Community resilience is not a new concept for the Jewish people. Indeed, some might say that Jewish history can be seen as the very expression of community resilience. Biblical stories as early as Noah and his ark, and events such as slavery in Egypt, the destruction of two Temples, the expulsion from Spain, and all the way through to today’s anti-Semitism, have demonstrated how the Jewish nation has coped and adapted in light of the frequent crises it has faced.

Spread throughout Israel and the Jewish Diaspora, we have lived organized as a people with communities all over the world, preserving our existence despite endless threatening challenges and tragedy.

In the stories of our ancient and modern history, we learn about the importance of leadership, organizational capacities, mutual responsibility and the strength of our sense of community and values. Above all, we learn of our belief in the significance of the Jewish people and we express our belief and hope in its future.

THESE ARE ALL CORE CAPACITIES FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE.

Since its very foundation, JDC has supported community development, cared for the vulnerable and responded to crises. Even without an articulated conceptual framework, resilience has always been an intrinsic part of the organization’s DNA.

However, in response to the changing reality of Europe, a team of JDC lay and professional leadership, guided by a consultant, has been studying resilience in order to develop a model which is appropriate for Jewish communities today. The work presented here is the culmination of that process, and includes:

• A working definition of “Jewish community resilience”

• The core capacities needed to promote resilience, together with the associated building blocks that strengthen each of those capacities

• Principles of developing a community resilience programme

Developing a community’s resilience can be a challenge and a long-term commitment. However, every step along that journey can make a difference towards a more vibrant, secure, and prepared future.
DEFINING RESILIENCE

In Europe today, JDC focuses on assisting Jewish communities to achieve self-sustainability. This often means that the community can meet the communal needs of its members, has adequate human capital, physical infrastructure, and financial strength to maintain community functions, and that its operations are guided by such values as inclusivism, transparency and accountability.

One of the crucial attributes of a self-sustainable community is its **resilience**: the community’s ability - in time of crisis or emergency and in its aftermath - to utilize its resources, adapt to environmental changes and continue to function and provide key communal activities in order to preserve and promote its members’ physical and psychological wellbeing.

**RESILIENCE IS AN ONGOING PROCESS THAT IS BUILT INTO THE ROUTINE, AND TESTED IN TIMES OF CRISIS/EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.**

Emergency situations cover a wide range of scenarios and time frames. They can include those that target the Jewish community such as acts of terror in a community institution, anti-Semitism or even a fatal accident involving children of the community, to those that affect the entire local population including Jews, such as economic depression, natural disaster, and social unrest.

One of the critical functions of a community is to prepare for such scenarios and to strengthen those capacities that are critical for functioning and responding during such times.

No one single capacity enables a community to cope with a crisis situation. Instead, community resilience is an inter-connected network of core capacities. All capacities are relevant and can be advanced with the right intervention. Community resilience cannot be achieved by focusing on the development of just one capacity. The core capacities for Jewish community resilience are as follows:

- **Leadership**
- **Economic Sufficiency**
- **Narrative and communications**
- **Shared Values**
- **Organizational Competence**
- **Preparedness and security**
- **Sense of Community**
- **Social Capital**

All communities have some degree of resilience capacities. To prepare for future emergencies, communities must first perform a risk analysis to define its range of potential crises, and then map their strengths, vulnerabilities and resources accordingly. The community resilience profile which results from this analysis can then be used to determine priority areas for strengthening resilience.
In times of crisis, uncertainty and trauma, communities look to their leadership for guidance.

Note: Our definition of community leadership is broad and inclusive. It comprises professional and lay leaders, elected officials and informal leaders, central institutions and grassroots organizations.

Leadership responsibilities at these times include: assessing the situation, making order within chaos, providing for members’ physical, emotional and spiritual needs, and being a source of hope and empowerment. Leadership must be able to determine priorities, make ongoing critical decisions, and find ways to connect, represent and engage all parts of the community. Leadership is the face of the community in interactions with local government and agencies, other communities and the Jewish world.

To fulfill these tasks, leadership must have earned the community’s trust. Not only must they have the vision, decision-making capabilities, and strength of character necessary to lead in challenging times, but also community members who believe in their abilities.

Building Blocks

- Building a vision
- Assessing the situation and trends
- Providing guidance
- Making decisions and determining priorities
- Being representative
- Forming collaborations
- Leading by example
- Taking ownership
To foster a strong sense of community, a community must cultivate a narrative that emphasizes the importance of belonging, shared responsibility, solidarity and support. It is built upon a common history and developed by leadership together with community members. A strong collective narrative is often the banner under which the community connects, especially when it offers meaning and hope in times of need.

A community must also have mechanisms and channels by which to disseminate the message to all members of the community. These mechanisms must be trusted, familiar and shared in a culturally sensitive manner. At times of crisis, effective communications and information enable three essential functions:

a. Explaining how to act and behavioral guidelines
b. Providing valid information about events
c. Offering support to members

Building Blocks

- Shared narrative
- Trusted information sources
- Responsible community media
- Multiple & effective channels of communication
- Sensitivity to culture and relevance
Crises are characterized by chaos, uncertainty, ambiguity and often trauma.

A community’s ability to function – in routine and in crisis – relies upon certain organizational competencies. These include:

- **Policymaking** – Having the organizational culture and capacity to see the often complex “big picture” and long-term trends, determine strategic goals, and transform them into concrete plans for the here and now.

- **Decision making mechanisms** – Enabling the community to reach decisions based on valid data gathering and analysis, solving problems effectively and encouraging flexibility, creativity and thinking outside the box when necessary.

- **Operational know-how** – “Getting things done” and implementing policies and decisions made by the community. The ability to succeed in implementing community decisions is often dependent on the ability to communicate and coordinate between the hierarchical levels of the community as well as horizontally, across the different community organizations and entities.

- **Connections** – Developing working relations between the community and outside people of influence, including governmental bodies and agencies, and other Jewish communities and organizations. The dialogue with these entities needs to cover topics such as division of responsibilities, resources, modes of communication, coordination and expectations.

### Building Blocks

- Operations: ‘getting things done’
- Strategic planning
- Data gathering and analysis
- Problem solving
- Coordination & communications
- Relations with other communities
- Relations with government and other agencies
- Creativity & flexibility
A community needs financial resources to support communal functions. This is true in everyday reality and even more so in times of crisis, when additional financial resources are often needed to provide for increased community needs.

A community that relies on just one or a limited number of sources for income will be vulnerable during changes in its financial environment. Communities must have mechanisms to recruit financial resources in times of emergency, both internally (contingency funds, fund raising) and externally (relations with local government and agencies, connections to global Jewish communities and agencies).

Economic sufficiency also implies the ability to identify community members’ financial needs, determine criteria and priorities for allocation of funds, and distribute resources in a needs-based manner to ensure that resources reach those with greatest needs.

**Building Blocks**

- Diversity of income
- Contingency funds
- Resource distribution based on members’ needs
The community must prepare for emergency and crisis situations, and be geared to meet the community’s needs during the event (response stage) and its aftermath (recovery stage). Emergency preparedness and management includes:

- Physical components such as security infrastructures and mechanisms, medical care, and the ability to provide for the physical needs of the community
- Organizational components including the formation of emergency management teams and procedures of operation for different scenarios
- Psychological components and appropriate social interactions to provide for the psycho-social needs and trauma of the community (during and post event)
- Risk communications
- Training, drills and exercises to provide the knowledge, skills and expertise needed by the leadership, professionals, institutional staff and community members to act effectively in crisis situations
- A community culture of preparedness for crisis situations

Building Blocks

- Personal and institutional security
- Emergency management
- Contingency plans and procedures for different scenarios
- Mapping of community strengths and vulnerabilities
- Trauma and psycho-social services provision
- Ability to meet members’ basic physical needs
- Training and exercises
Social capital is the added value gained when community members work together, rather than as individuals. It is a community’s ability to maximize its resources e.g. economic, human capital, expertise, logistics, social support systems, etc.

To maximize a community’s social capital there is a need to develop formal and informal social networks that fortify the social glue.

A community needs to encourage its organizations and members to join community networks and to foster existing networks. Social networks are often grassroots entities that develop from the bottom up. Formal community entities must be open to including these networks in community activities. They must identify and engage the hubs (organizations or community members at the center of such networks), and assign them significant and appropriate roles.

By utilizing its full social capital, the community can map out and recruit all existing resources to provide for community members in times of crisis.

It is also important for communities to develop social networks with other communities in the region and with other global Jewish communities. These relations can be built on identifying and strengthening joint benefits, values and areas of common interest. In times of need they can be a vital additional financial and social resource. It is the foundation for joint social responsibility.

### Building Blocks

- Social networks: formal and informal
- Active participation & volunteerism
- Linkage and cooperation between organizations
- Utilization of existing community resources
- Relations with other local communities
- Relations with global Jewish communities
Resilience has much to do with community members’ perceptions and attitudes about their community. There are two fundamental elements to this capacity, both of which are pre-requisites for community resilience:

1. **A Sense of Belonging**: The extent to which members **identify** with their community, their desire to be part of it, and the degree with which they feel that belonging to it is an important part of their identity. That is, to what degree does the community have meaning for me? Do I have something important in common with other members of the community? Do I care about other members in our community?

2. **Perception of the Community’s Responsibility and Capacity to Meet Members’ Needs**: The extent to which members **feel** that their communal and personal needs will be better met through a commitment to being together. That is, do I see the community as a source of support in time of need? Will the community provide me with hope? Do I believe in the community’s ability to control its future and to succeed in coping with the challenges it faces? Do I believe in the leadership and capabilities of the community’s mechanisms?

### Building Blocks

- Belonging
- Meaning
- Solidarity
- Safety
- Success
- Trust
- Hope
Jewish tradition has long demonstrated values as the backbone of a resilient community. Such values, which include mutual responsibility, tzedaka, justice, contribution to society and solidarity, are all basic components of a Jewish resilience blueprint.

Shared values have a major impact on the socialization processes of its members, community culture and operational methods.

While all resilience capacities interconnect, shared values have a particularly major influence on all other capacities because they create the basis for a community’s very identity, especially when it is a community that is not based solely on proximity or geography.

### Building Blocks

- Giving
- Social responsibility
- Care for the vulnerable & others
- Justice
- Peoplehood
- Inclusivism & pluralism
PRINCIPLES OF DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROGRAMME

1. Part and Parcel of Community Development:
Community resilience should be understood as an inseparable component of community development, in general, and community self-sustainability in particular.

2. Multi-Faceted Concept:
Community resilience is an inter-connected network of core capacities. All capacities are relevant and can be advanced with the right intervention. Community resilience cannot be achieved by focusing on the development of just one capacity.

3. Long Term Strategy:
Building resilience is a long-term strategic goal. It demands key resources and touches on all spheres of community. Leadership must be committed, take ownership of the process, and set the goals and priorities for resilience development. External organizations can promote and support communal resilience plans but cannot lead them!

4. An Ongoing Process:
Core capacities of resilience cannot be developed and constructed overnight. Furthermore, there is no such thing as 0% or 100% capacity. Rather, building resilience is a journey where the community continually strengthens its ability to deal with change and adapts as needed.

5. No One Size Fits All Approach:
No one resilience development programme works for all communities. An effective resilience development programme is tailor-made for a community’s unique strengths, weaknesses, and threats. Community resilience plans should be based on an initial risk analysis and mapping of the community’s core capacities – a “community resilience profile”.

6. Community-Wide Approach Preferred:
Building community resilience is ideally carried out from a comprehensive, community-wide perspective, with a point person or agency facilitating the overall process. When this is not feasible, welcomed or initiated, it is possible to build “islands of resilience” whereby community components and /or organizations develop their resilience capacities. These “islands” can be catalysts for a community-wide programme. In such cases, the long-term challenge is connecting the various “islands” into a community-wide capacity.

7. Resilience Benefits Are Year Round And Not Just During Crisis:
Improved resilience capacities empower communities to be more effective and meaningful in the day-to-day and not just in times of flux.

8. External Connections Build Resilience:
Every community should see itself as part of a wider network of connected communities – local and other Jewish communities – who can support and assist each other. To maximize these connections, communities should identify common grounds, develop a shared language, create procedures for cooperation which strengthen shared commitments, and enable peer networks.
JDC Europe Task Force on Resilience

BOARD MEMBERS

- Amy Bressman
- Jay Ruderman
- Jerome Spitzer
- Kathy Manning
- Martin Storrow

JDC PROFESSIONALS

- Diego Ornique
- Russell Wolkind
- Mario Izcovich
- Stefan Oscar

RESILIENCE CONSULTANT

- David Gidron