



Middle East Spotlight

A History of Helping

As we look out on the barren trees and feel the frigid temperatures this winter, many of us may daydream about being in a tropical country like Israel, sitting on the warm beaches of Tel Aviv or hiking through the forests of the north. Yet Israel's geography didn't always make it the kind of place worth daydreaming about on cold winter days.

Even before the establishment of the state of Israel the nascent Jewish community there began making the desert arable and turning swampland into fertile orchards. They built infrastructure to distribute water through drip irrigation and began to set in place strategies and systems that would help the tiny country develop into one of the world's most lucrative producers of technology, science, business, culture and community.

After the state of Israel was founded it became a dependable consultant to communities and countries around the world facing similar challenges to the ones recently overcome by the Jewish state: land that was not conducive to agricultural development, neighbors who worked towards the destruction of the newly established state, and building a defense system from the ground-up. To that end, Israel founded MASHAV—Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation—in 1957 to act as an ambassador of best practices to other countries and empower them to meet their challenges with the same determination as Israel has met hers.

By prioritizing poverty alleviation, provision of food security, empowerment of women and upgrading health and educational services, MASHAV has made Israel a reliable resource to developing countries. Since its founding, MASHAV has trained close to 270,000 individuals from over 130 countries.

MASHAV also assists with disaster relief around the world, such as the recent typhoon in the Philippines that devastated much of the country. In response to the storm, Israel sent a delegation of experts to assess the situation and ultimately build a medical facility in Bogo, located in the northern province of Cebu, where most basic necessities were lacking following the storm. Two Israeli planes brought personnel and over 100 tons of humanitarian and medical supplies to set up a field hospital operated by IDF doctors, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists, mental health professionals, x-ray technicians and lab workers.

The operation helped to treat nearly 400 patients, including 150 children. Israeli doctors even helped a woman to deliver a baby in the field hospital—the mother named her child "Israel."

Through this mission and others, MASHAV helps Israel to continue to build new relationships with countries and communities all over the world. As we bundle up to face the sting of the cold this winter, we can take comfort in knowing that rain or shine, winter or summer, Israel is seeking opportunities to help others wherever it can.