

## IsraAID Germany e. V. INFORMS



### HIGHLIGHTS AND NEWS FROM THE LAST FEW MONTHS

Dear friends of IsraAID Germany e. V., dear readers, the New Year has begun. We at IsraAID Germany e. V. would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support, interest and friendship. In our current newsletter we would like to share some personal insights with you from two of our international projects: Our project on **La Palma** as well as our project in **Greece**.

#### Psychosocial support after the volcanic eruption on La Palma



We will successfully wrap up **our project for those affected by the volcanic eruption on La Palma** in the course of this year. In this newsletter, we would like to take the opportunity to describe this special project to you in more detail.

In the background, behind the white walls of the school in Los Llanos, the silhouettes of the volcano can be seen, which buried entire villages under lava flows as a result of massive eruptions which began on 19.09.2021. The people fled, but many left everything they owned behind. Tourism and agriculture were one of the most important sources of income here. Due to the eruption, many of them lost their banana plantations, cafés or restaurants.

The psychological stress caused by the outbreak and the resettlements was very difficult for many families. Children, in particular, had traumatic experiences and had to get used to a new environment. Parents and teachers could only help them to a limited extent, as they themselves were affected by the disaster.

This is where the support of IsraAID Germany and the ZWST came into play. By providing psychosocial support to the children and by training teachers to deal with the high stress levels of their protégés, IsraAID Germany was able to successfully support people in coping mentally with the aftermath of the outbreak and in dealing with the possibility of further outbreaks.

Using his theatre-based educational approach, Rafael provides guidance to children and young people in dealing with their feelings and experiences in a way that they can easily relate to. In the children's living environment, the volcanic eruption and the resulting emotional stresses are addressed only reluctantly. With Rafael's help, they could open the door to their personal experiences and learn how to deal with their extremely distressing emotions. By introducing role playing activities, he gradually enables them to process their feelings and shows them ways to better deal with their situation in the future.



The workshops for teachers were also very greatly appreciated and the results are already visible. Participants often mirrored to the team that the workshops provided them with a valuable opportunity to self-reflect on the outbreak and its consequences in their professional lives and to deepen their understanding and their relationships with their students. "Many of the teachers who participated in our workshops have already been able to apply the techniques we taught them, and are more confident in dealing with the high stress levels of the children and young people," says Nina, who coordinates the project on site.

The project team consists primarily of local staff, which is well-networked in the local community. "The project led by IsraAID Germany and especially the integration into the multicultural and multiprofessional team has helped us a lot to expand our work and, above all, to organize it on a longer-term basis. In this way, we were able to successfully sensitise the population to the relevance of dealing with the psychosocial consequences of the volcanic eruption and offer targeted aid measures," added Nina.



In addition to the theatre-based educational components, IsraAID Germany also successfully uses art therapy methods on La Palma to help the people. The workshops for teachers also featured art therapy techniques for integration into the school curriculum.

Our special approach interests you and you want to support us in our work?

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#### Protection and mental health care for vulnerable refugees in Greece



IsraAID Germany has been active in Greece for many years in providing psychosocial support to vulnerable refugees. Together with local partner organisations, we have been able to help refugees in Greek shelters to deal with their sometimes very stressful experiences and to actively shape their own lives. In 2022 alone, we reached almost 1000 refugees through our work.

At this point, we would like to take the opportunity to relate one personal story (all personal details have been kept anonymous).

Esma, a middle-aged Syrian refugee, fell seriously ill after her escape and had to undergo a serious operation. The long period of therapy that followed was very exhausting for her. She then decided to ask our psychosocial expert for help in coping better with the challenges of the escape and her illness and to regain her strength. As the result of our support, Esma was able to rediscover her inner strength and draw on new energy. As a result, in June 2022, she started volunteering in a humanitarian organisation for women in Greece.

"Last year I found out that I was suffering from a serious illness. As a result, everything in my life changed and I lost a lot of what I had built up. I went to IsraAID Germany for legal advice because I had also received a rejection letter. That was terrible. The advisor from IsraAID Germany is a very nice woman and when I saw her I cried and couldn't stop crying. She advised me to talk to someone. I really wanted to talk to a psychologist. I had many problems in my childhood and after the illness it was even more difficult, I had no feelings anymore. I met with the psychosocial expert and came every week. I didn't want to miss a single session. We did exercises together, I learned to breathe, we talked about my life, and there are also some exercises when I have pain. I can handle myself better and I also signed up for a free online yoga course. I want to become more active and draw strength from my illness."

Esma is an example of how IsraAID Germany's psychosocial work can have a positive effect. It is all about mental stabilization, and being able to become active again in order to shape one's own life. This is often very difficult, especially for refugees. The traumatic experiences they had in their home country during their escape and the often unclear perspectives in the host countries cause a high level of stress and often a feeling that they can only influence the direction of their own lives to a very limited extent.

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[www.israaid-germany.de](http://www.israaid-germany.de)

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#### The work of IsraAID Germany e.V. is supported by



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