



Jewish Reconstructionist Federation – <http://www.jrf.org>

2008 Omer Study - Week Six – Living Our Values in Partnership

This week's packet features some of the many organizations with which JRF has formal affiliations and partnerships.

→ <http://www.jrf.org/external-affiliations>

Contents

- 2 Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)
- 5 Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations
- 6 The Informed Meetings Exchange (INMEX) - Rights of hotel workers
- 8 International Association for Religious Freedom
- 9 International Jewish Social Justice Network
- 11 The Jewish Coalition Responding to HIV/AIDS in Africa
- 13 The Jewish Council on Public Affairs (JCPA)
- 15 The Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief
- 16 Mazon – A Jewish Response to Hunger
- 19 The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
- 20 Secure Communities Network
- 21 The World Union for Progressive Judaism

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL)

<http://www.coejl.org>

About COEJL

COEJL is the leading Jewish environmental organization in the United States. Since its founding in 1993, COEJL has helped tens of thousands of Jews make a connection between Judaism and the environment. COEJL has put environmental protection on the agenda of the organized Jewish community and made the case to elected officials and decision-makers that protecting the environment is a moral and religious obligation. Today, COEJL represents 29 national Jewish organizations spanning the full spectrum of Jewish religious and communal life and serves as the voice of the organized Jewish community on environmental issues in Washington, D.C. and around the country. COEJL has its headquarters in New York and a national board of 23 trustees. COEJL is a program of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA).

COEJL seeks to expand the contemporary understanding of such Jewish values as tikkun olam (repairing the world) and tzedek (justice) to include the protection of both people and other species from environmental degradation. COEJL seeks to extend such traditions as social action and g'milut hasadim (performing deeds of loving kindness) to environmental action and advocacy. And shalom (peace or wholeness), which is at the very core of Jewish aspirations, is in its full sense harmony in all creation

A Sample of COEJL's activities

Climate Change Campaign:

"How Many Jews Does it Take to Change a Light Bulb?"

Here's how you can take immediate action:



Contact climatechange@coejl.org to join in COEJL's climate change campaign.



Buy CFL bulbs as an individual or as a group through your synagogue or Jewish institution. Sell them in your gift shop, at Mitzvah Day or other community events. Call bulbs.com, our bulb provider, at 888-455-2800. To receive the campaign discount tell them that you're part of the COEJL campaign. They can also answer your lighting questions. For other information and help, contact us at climatechange@coejl.org or 212-532-7436.





Information on recycling CFLs –n

<http://www.coejl.org/climatechange/recycle.php>



I changed a light bulb...what are you doing to help stop global warming? postcards. Our elected officials in Washington, D.C. are debating global climate change legislation. We need to let them know that we demand strong action. COEJL has created postcards to be sent to elected officials, individually signed by you, their constituent. To see an image of the postcard click <http://tools.isovera.com/organizations/org/Postcard.doc> . If you would like to order them for your congregation or institution, contact climatechange@coejl.org.



Conservation Conversations: Invite Your Elected Official to Synagogue

Have an elected official dialogue with the congregation about their goals for a sustainable U.S. energy policy. They can join you at services, during adult education or community programs, or you can create a forum specifically for this issue.

Click <http://www.coejl.org/climatechange/consconv.php> for a "Conservation Conversations" advocacy starter packet. If you plan for a speaker to join you on Shabbat or for a Sunday program, make it a "**Lo-Watt Shabbat**" encouraging energy conservation. Click <http://www.coejl.org/climatechange/lowattshabbat.php> for some ideas.

If you'd like a more informal setting for dialogue, consider creating: "**CAFE Talks**." CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) refers to federal regulations intended to improve the average fuel economy of cars and light trucks (trucks, vans, and SUVs). Use this as an opportunity to talk about transportation issues (local and national), transportation policy, carpooling, idling (particularly when picking children up from Hebrew School), and health issues related to pollution (i.e., asthma and respiratory illnesses). This could also include letter writing sessions to elected officials. Be sure to serve Fair Trade organic coffee during your CAFE Talks! Use "Conservation Conversations" as an opportunity to get the dialogue going about "greening" and energy conservation in the synagogue and in congregants' homes.



Faith based screenings of An Inconvenient Truth are continuing to take place nationwide. <http://www.coejl.org/climatechange/itscreenings.php>



Take a Scientist to Synagogue to educate and motivate your community to action.
http://www.coejl.org/climatechange/cc_scientist.php



If you are a rabbi, continue to speak about the campaign and to inspire your congregation about the importance of taking action to help stop global warming.
http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/climatechange/Sermonic_Resources.pdf



If you are a teacher, lay leader, or activist, **educate yourself** on the Jewish response to global warming. http://www.coejl.org/~coejlor/climatechange/cc_resources.php

Conference of Presidents of American Jewish Organizations

<http://www.conferenceofpresidents.org/>

For half a century, the Conference of Presidents has played a key role in American and world Jewish history. From mass public events to private diplomacy, the Conference has been in the forefront of mobilizing support for Israel and educating the public in times of war and conflict, and in the pursuit of peace.

Today, the Conference of Presidents remains American Jewry's recognized address for consensus policy, collective action, and maximizing the resources of the American Jewish community. When events in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere affect the American Jewish community, the Conference of Presidents take the lead to explain and analyze issues, provide a link between American Jewry and the U.S. government, and marshal a coordinated community response.

Who We Are:

- the central coordinating body for American Jewry, representing 50 national Jewish agencies from across the political and religious spectrums.
- the voice of organized American Jewry, speaking and acting on the basis of consensus on issues of vital international and national concern.
- the proven and effective advocate of affiliated American Jews,
- forging diverse groups into a unified force for Israel's well-being.
- the central forum for key American, Israeli and other world leaders to address critical issues of concern to the American Jewish community.

What We Do:

- strengthen and foster the special U.S.-Israel relationship.
- ensure that Israel's interests are heard and understood by policy makers, opinion molders and the American public.
- address critical foreign policy issues that impact the American Jewish community.
- represent the interests of organized American Jewry.
- protect and enhance the security and dignity of Jews around the world.

Current Issues:

- US-Israel Relations
- The United Nations
- Counter Terrorism
- Global Anti-Semitism

Current Initiatives:

- America's Voices in Israel
- Israel Action Grants
- Justice for Jews from Arab Countries
- Secure Community Network
- Sharing For Life
- Year of Jerusalem

The Informed Meetings Exchange (INMEX) – Rights of hotel workers

<http://www.inmex.org/>

Check Out Working Conditions Before Checking In for Business

<http://www.forward.com/articles/check-out-working-conditions-before-checking-in-fo/>

by [Jerome Epstein](#), [Carl Sheingold](#) and [David Saperstein](#)

Fri. Jul 07, 2006

Last week the Conservative, Reconstructionist and Reform movements — encompassing the vast majority of American Jews — became founding members of the Informed Meetings Exchange, or Inmex. We feel strongly that Inmex, an independent organization that provides objective information on working conditions within the hospitality industry, will help translate the values we espouse into the actions we pursue.

Each year at our regional and national conventions, youth conclaves and professional assemblies, we immerse ourselves in a mix of spirituality, learning, inspiration and fun as we honor our past, reflect on our present and look with optimism toward our future. We spend hundreds of hours, and countless dollars, on these events. We plan everything from the roster of speakers to the number of donuts served at morning plenaries. We account for every detail.

In recent years, we have all begun to look beyond pure logistics as we take the moral and ethical implications of our events and meetings into consideration. Have we made it financially feasible for all within our community to participate? Do we provide healthy food options? Should a share of the costs, or saved costs, be donated to charity?

We grapple with these issues as we plan everything from local youth group events to national biennial conventions. Perhaps it is not feasible to address each one of these concerns adequately, but we must not be naive. Our choices and actions send messages as clearly as the words we speak from the pulpit, and it is the responsibility of our communities to engage with these issues seriously.

An inescapable ethical issue we must face is whether hotels and convention centers in which we hold our events are fair and just to their workers. This information is not listed on venues' Web sites alongside their room rates, and can be quite difficult to uncover — but it must be considered in our decision-making process.

Many in the hotel industry work physically demanding jobs under difficult conditions. A study conducted by the University of California at San Francisco found that hotel housekeepers are injured on the job 25% more often than other workers in the country, that three out of four hotel housekeepers experience "very severe" pain and that 84% regularly take pain medication for injuries incurred at work.

As one housekeeper said in another study, "Some days my leg would swell up and I would literally limp from room to room. When the pain was at its worst, I would sit on the beds and cry because it hurt so much. In the rooms, at least no one would see me."

How can we address this issue? Enter Inmex. Launched last month, Inmex serves to research, analyze and disseminate information about the hospitality industry. Inmex does not recommend using, or not using, specific hotels. Rather, it empowers its member organizations — which include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Sierra Club, Unite Here and more than 100 others — to make informed decisions about how and where their event dollars are spent.

It is easy to think of times when Inmex would have been a valuable resource for our organizations during the last year. The Jewish Reconstructionist Federation's executive leadership meetings generated more than \$50,000 for the hospitality industry. United Synagogue's many programs used more than 9,000 room-nights.

The Union for Reform Judaism's most recent national biennial convention represented a windfall of 10,000 room-nights and more than \$1.6 million for Houston hotels.

These three examples represent only a fraction of our communities' annual spending for conferences and hotels, and they represent only one constituency within Inmex — a group that counts an impressive number of academic, social and other religious institutions among its members. We are proud to join this community, and hope that through Inmex we can better understand where to spend our dollars to mirror the values of our tradition.

For us, this is not an issue of support for labor or management. Rather, we are committed to fair, constructive and sensitive treatment by each side toward one another. We believe that Inmex's goal of transparency helps move us in that direction.

We are confident that our movements' attention to this issue will translate to synagogues and congregants similarly considering how hotel choices align with our Jewish values. Through these thoughtful choices, we most certainly can strengthen our community — both locally and globally.

<http://www.iarf.net/>



The International Association for Religious Freedom is a registered charity based in the United Kingdom which has the aim of working for freedom of religion and belief at a global level.

Encouraging interfaith dialogue and tolerance is part of this agenda, and we are proud of a 100-year-plus history in this work. We have over 90 affiliated member groups in approximately 25 countries, from a wide range of faith traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism and Sikhism, among others.

With member organisations, regional co-ordinators, and national chapters around the world, the International Association for Religious Freedom is well placed to obtain local perspectives on religious freedom concerns and issues.

Latest Events and Reports (available on the website):

- IARF International Council Report 2008 with photos of the Council members at work
- European & Middle East Region conference 2008: "Religion in the public space"
- 25th - 27th July 2008, Belfast, Northern Ireland, U.K.
- Religious Freedom Young Adults Network (RFYN) Newsletter March 2008
- US Chapter Newsletter Winter 2008
- General Meeting 2007, Florida
- British Chapter newsletter 2008
- IALRW newsletter October 2006
- IARF newsletter July 2006
- Dignity in Diversity: Report on 32nd World Congress
- Human Rights Education
- In 2005 IARF received a grant from the Dutch government for producing materials on the right to freedom of religion & belief and using them in trainings through our networks. This training is now complete.

International Jewish Social Justice Network

<http://www.koldor.org/>



Koldor is global network of emerging Jewish leaders who are committed to shift the existing paradigms in the Jewish world, strengthen Jewish Peoplehood, and lead a change in Jewish communities worldwide.

Koldor brings together emerging Jewish leaders and activists from around the world who are galvanized by a commitment to shaping a positive future for the Jewish People. It enables new forms of collaboration on common opportunities and challenges, and encourages self-initiated actions – individual and collective, local and global.

Working across geographic, religious, political and organizational affiliations to develop mutual understanding, to build global Jewish Peoplehood, Koldor strives to bring together people and ideas in a neutral setting with the aim of innovating for the Jewish people. Focusing on three interrelated dimensions –Network, Ideas and Action– Koldor is a platform that exploits technology and is global. It acts as a catalyst and facilitator of substantive dialogue, connecting people and advocating on a global level about the Jewish People. Koldor focuses on increasing the capacity of individuals in various networks to take action themselves – in their own spheres of activity in the Jewish world.

With hundreds of network participants hailing from over 20 countries and who are themselves part of more than 150 diverse networks, Koldor has gained insight into how to create and manage a platform for connecting, engaging, and inspiring leaders around the world. Strengthened by its experience Koldor continues to broaden the reach and impact of the network in ways that add unique value to Jewish life, to ensure a strong and connected Jewish People in 21st century.

Koldor's diverse individual participation, combined with a collective passion for the Jewish future continues to yield powerful results. From encouraging the acceptance of the notion of "Peoplehood" in the forefront of Jewish conversations, declaring Cheshvan as "Jewish Social Action Month" – a corner stone in the implementation of the old Jewish commitment of Tikun Olam, inspiring the creation of innovative leadership programs and unique advocacy groups, to actively participating in the transformative processes in several leading Jewish organizations, as well as contributing to the creation and dissemination of knowledge about Jewish Peoplehood, Koldor and Koldorian ideas have already had tremendous impact, and it gains an independent momentum throughout the Jewish world.

Koldor is a uniquely flexible, independent and neutral entity that operates with little hierarchy or bureaucracy, which collaborates with grass-roots and established networks and organizations around the world.

Background

KoIDor was launched in 2003, following an incubation period of more than a year where Israeli, American, Canadian, British and French young professionals were engaged in a consultative process, answering a need to find new ways and meanings to connect as the next generation of global Jewish leadership. It brought together a diverse group of the emerging generation of Jewish leaders from around the world. It enabled them to connect across communities, get to know each other's needs and create a network for developing ideas and taking action.

Each one of the first KoIDorians felt the need to strengthen the Jewish dimension in their surrounding environment, rather than the religious or national, and KoIDor was the answer for this need. Together this group forged a vision for creating a new global Jewish agenda, building global connections and inspiring action on behalf of the Jewish People. The idea of Jewish peoplehood, still a concept not familiar at that time to most of Jewish organizations and the established Jewish world, became the anchor and the axis for KoIDor activities.

Following its first annual conference in 2004 in the Negev, the KoIDor Declaration was presented, offering new paradigms to the global Jewish discourse. Throughout 2005 and 2006, and after having its second annual conference in north of Israel, KoIDor has advocated and promoted global initiatives such as declaring the month of Heshvan as "Jewish Social Action Month" leveraging its networks and its conceptual richness to promote a new vibrant notion of Jewish Peoplehood. In addition, since inception KoIDor has impacted the work of participants' the Jewish world. Also, in many cases KoIDor participants have collaborated on new initiatives and have learned from each other.

During 2006 and 2007 KoIDor, gaining support from leading Jewish organizations, and answering the need to provide a neutral venue, conceptual and concrete, for exchange of ideas and actions, has become a hub, for various global Jewish networks.

The Jewish Coalition Responding to HIV/AIDS in Africa

<http://jrf.org/to/resolution-hivaids-africa.html>

Resolution Date:

Jan 2003

Sponsoring Organization:

JRF

The JRF Board resolves to join the JEWISH COALITION RESPONDING TO HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA. As a member of the Coalition, JRF commits to mobilizing the Reconstructionist community to encourage education, advocacy, and tzedakah for this important issue.

Commitments:

1. The Tikkun Olam Initiative will distribute to every JRF congregation the "AIDS in Africa" brochure with a cover letter inviting them to participate in the work of the Coalition.
2. The Tikkun Olam Initiative will disseminate to JRF congregations materials from the Coalition to encourage education, advocacy, and tzedakah. Education projects include sermons, workshops, lectures, or attending other groups' programs. Advocacy campaigns will address issues such as access to treatment or debt relief for countries ravaged by the epidemic. Funds raised will be disbursed by American Jewish World Service to grassroots organizations in Africa that are fighting HIV/AIDS through education, prevention, orphan and home-based care efforts.
3. The Tikkun Olam Initiative will forward to interested JRF congregations and members AIDS Advocacy Alerts from the Coalition.
4. The Tikkun Olam Initiative will work with the Coalition to promote awareness of this important issue on World AIDS Day.

Additional Information or Context:

The Jewish obligation to respond to the AIDS crisis derives from the Jewish values which require that we not stand idly by when others are suffering, that we help heal the sick.

Our obligation is also driven by *pikuach nefesh*, the mitzvah which requires us "to save life" and the mitzvah of *bikkur cholim*, visiting and tending to the needs of those who are suffering from illness.

We are taught that every person is created *betzelem elohim* - in the image of God - and therefore deserves basic human rights and dignity. As we learn in the Talmud, "Each person, tall or short, deformed or normal, sinner or non-sinner, has a life whose value is infinite, equal to the value of the entire world."

As Jews, we must act in the world in response to need, regardless of race, religion or nationality, acting as Jews doing our part to help heal the world. We need to do this work because our faith, our history and our texts mandate our obligation to address poverty, hunger, oppression and disease wherever we encounter them. We need to do this work because we are enjoined to remember what it means to be strangers. We need to do this work because we are instructed that these are the ways of peace.

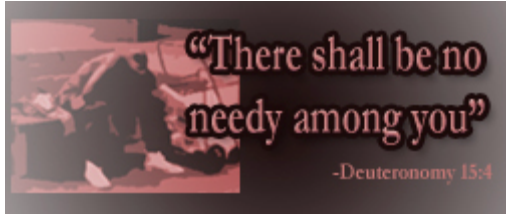
In addition, Jewish attention to the crisis imposed by this pandemic will make us better local citizens. As we become active around HIV/AIDS in Africa issues, we will, in many cities, become partners with one of the few U.S. groups that is focused on the African AIDS problem, African-American clergy and community leaders. The opportunity exists to create partnerships of critical importance in our communities as we work on an immense and pressing world problem.

Becoming an active member of ***The Jewish Coalition Responding to HIV/AIDS in Africa*** allows us to become Jewish global citizens. In doing so, we make a better world for ourselves, our neighbors, and our children

The Jewish Council on Public Affairs (JCPA)

<http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org/>

JRF supports JCPA Confronting Poverty Campaign



JRF, a member of the Jewish Council of Public Affairs and an affiliate member of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, joins in supporting the JCPA's 2007-8 National Anti-Poverty Campaign.

INTRODUCTION:

The JCPA proposes the launching of a national anti-poverty campaign to:

- Re-energize the organized Jewish community around combating domestic poverty
- Strengthen the natural connection between direct service and anti-poverty advocacy in the Jewish community
- Enhance and coordinate anti-poverty activism taking place in communities around the nation
- Foster partnerships between agencies to further the goals of the initiative
- Ensure that poverty becomes a first-tier issue in the 2008 elections
- Provide technical assistance to Jewish organizations for social justice work; and
- Attract new members both affiliated and non-affiliated with the organized Jewish community, particularly young people.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING:

Community engagement will be structured according to working groups— *clusters* organized according to different aspects of poverty centering on issues such as:

- Hunger and Food Insecurity
- Affordable Housing
- Environmental Justice and Poverty
- Healthcare
- Education

Through the campaign, these clusters will meet via conference call at least once a month to set priorities and advocacy/service goals, share best practices, and coordinate programming for

maximum effect. When anti-poverty legislation relevant to a particular cluster needs grassroots action, the JCPA will help the communities mobilize activists. When a particular community service project draws large numbers of young people to the CRC, that community will share materials with other members of the cluster to help duplicate successful results. These working groups will be the force behind the campaign, ensuring grassroots involvement and continuity of activism and community service.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMING:

- JCPA Executive Director and local communities will be taking the food stamp challenge
- Monthly themes around the Jewish holidays for the campaign's first year
- Network and Partnership Opportunities
- Online Activist Manual and Reference Guide and development of a poverty Speaker's Bureau
- Consultation and Technical Assistance

OTHER ONGOING CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

- Weekly D'var Torah on domestic poverty issues.
- Monthly nationwide calls to highlight themes that do not necessarily fit into one specific cluster or monthly theme, but should be mainstreamed into the entire campaign. Ideas include: poverty and disability, public-private partnerships to address poverty, poverty and gender, the role of business, poverty amongst the elderly, poverty and immigration, children's poverty, and poverty and globalization.

CONCLUSION:

As the Confronting Poverty campaign is implemented, Jewish communities across the country will engage in community service and anti-poverty activism in a broader and deeper sense. Within the Jewish community, there will be a strengthened connection between the services we provide and the advocacy needed to affect systemic change. Our partners -- other faith groups, civil rights organizations, unions and businesses, and government officials -- will recognize the Jewish community's commitment and our activism will inspire deeper and more powerful relationships that will strengthen coalitions around our other priorities, including Israel. Finally, as momentum builds, the profile of poverty will be raised in town halls, school houses and political campaigns across the country, galvanizing a true national commitment to take the concrete steps needed to significantly reduce poverty in the next ten years.

If you are interested in joining the JCPA campaign or receiving resource materials on how to take the food stamp challenge, please e-mail Melissa Boteach, mboteach@thejcpa.org, or call her at 202-212-6039.

The Jewish Coalition for Disaster Relief

http://www.jdc.org/jcdr_main.html

JCDR allows a unified Jewish response to natural and man-made crises that occur outside of North America.

Comprised of 45 primarily North American Jewish organizations that are national in scope, the Coalition represents the full spectrum of Jewish life and demonstrates the age-old Jewish tradition of tikkun olam, or helping to repair the world.

By working together, duplication is avoided, activities are coordinated, and the most efficient use is made of donor dollars. The JCDR supports specific projects with funds donated primarily, but not exclusively, by the North American Jewish public. All funds raised by the Coalition are used for non-sectarian activities that assist the most needy victims of disasters, regardless of religious affiliation.

http://www.jdc.org/media_res/mr_sitrep_jcdr_myan0506.pdf

Myanmar Cyclone Relief

Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar with winds of 120 miles (190 kilometers) per hour when it struck the coast on May 2 and 3, sending the sea surging as much as 12 feet (3.5 meters). The government declared a state of emergency in five low-lying provinces, mostly in the Irrawaddy delta, where villages were flattened by winds and rain. Yangon sustained a direct hit, which downed power and communications lines. Damage was most severe in the delta region, where the effects of extreme winds were compounded by a sizable storm surge.

How to Help:

Checks can be made out to JDC: Myanmar Cyclone Relief, and sent to:

JDC: Myanmar Cyclone Relief, P.O. Box 530, 132 East 43rd St. New York, NY, 10017.
Credit card donations can be made via our Website at www.jdc.org, or by phone to 212-687-6200.

Mazon – A Jewish Response to Hunger

<http://www.mazon.org/>



Founded in 1985, MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger is a national, nonprofit agency that allocates donations from the Jewish community to prevent and alleviate hunger among people of all

faiths and backgrounds.

Each year, MAZON grants over \$3 million to more than 300 carefully screened hunger-relief agencies, including emergency food providers, food banks, multi-service organizations and advocacy groups that seek long-term solutions to the hunger problem.

OUR PHILOSOPHY:

MAZON ("food" in Hebrew) believes our dual purpose is to provide for those who are hungry today, as well as to address the systemic causes of hunger and poverty, both domestically and globally.

Although grants are provided to many organizations serving the Jewish poor, in keeping with the best of Jewish tradition MAZON believes it is important to respond to all who are in need. Read more about hunger and the Jewish response.

OUR SUPPORT:

Through MAZON, Jews give voice to the Torah's call for justice. More than 850 synagogues throughout the United States have affirmed "partnerships" with MAZON, thereby embracing the traditional Jewish commitment to sustain the hungry. Learn more about becoming a MAZON partner.

MAZON also enjoys the support of over 100,000 individual donors, who incorporate social justice and hunger relief as crucial components of their everyday lives. MAZON's supporters help hungry people by donating three percent of the cost of weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and other joyous and life-cycle events; by contributing to MAZON at the High Holy Days, Chanukah and Passover; and by making contributions in honor or in memory of friends and loved ones. Learn more about how you can help fight hunger.

OUR GRANTEES:

MAZON's grantees reflect the diversity of hunger in the United States and across the globe. With MAZON's assistance:

- Project Angel Food in Los Angeles continues to deliver meals to home-bound AIDS patients and people with other life-threatening illnesses;
- Sustainable Food Center in Texas is able to put at-risk youth to work selling produce at local farmstands;

- the White Earth Land Recovery Project in Minnesota continues its traditional food program to combat diabetes and improve tribal health on the White Earth Indian Reservation;
- St. John's Bread and Life in New York City keeps the doors open at one of the metropolis' largest soup kitchens;
- SeaShare in Washington salvages 1.3 million pounds of fresh salmon, halibut, sole and turbot and brings it to the tables of hungry people around the state;
- Food Research and Action Center in the District of Columbia offers advocacy leadership and technical support to anti-hunger programs around the country;
- Jewish Family Service of Central New Jersey operates the only kosher food pantry in its county;
- International Medical Corps brings desperately needed food to seriously malnourished children and pregnant women around the world;
- Table to Table in Tel Aviv rescues excess food from catered events and uses it to provide 2,500 meals each week to people in need.

OUR HISTORY:

Founded on the heels of the Ethiopian famine of 1985, MAZON was conceived as a bridge between the abundance in the Jewish community and the desperate need felt by millions of hungry people around the world.

MAZON Founder Leonard Fein recognized the injustice of this disparity – the Jewish community's annual expenditures on catered celebrations, on the one hand, and the devastating Ethiopian famine, on the other – and formed MAZON as a response.

Historically, rabbis did not allow celebrations to begin until the community's poor and hungry people were seated and fed. MAZON offers Jews a symbolic way to observe this tradition by donating 3% of the cost of life-cycle celebrations, such as bar/bat mitzvahs, weddings, anniversaries and other joyous occasions, to help feed those who are less fortunate.

In 1986, the first year of MAZON's grant making, MAZON distributed \$20,000 in cash grants to four hunger-relief organizations. To date, MAZON has made thousands of grants, totaling more than \$40 million, to the most effective hunger-relief organizations in the United States, in Israel and in developing countries around the world.

Myanmar Relief:

Tragically, Cyclone Nargis struck the impoverished country of Myanmar, traditionally known as Burma, on Saturday, May 3, 2008. The cyclone hit with 130 miles per hour winds and brought a

surge of water measuring 12 feet high that destroyed land and million of homes. According to various media outlets, the death toll has reached over 22,000. Over 41,000 are reported missing, and over one million people, who are homeless, are in need of food and emergency assistance. The pleas of these vulnerable people have reached our heart, and MAZON is joining the massive international relief efforts.

MAZON has partnered with long-time grantee, International Medical Corps (IMC), to provide vital assistance to help the survivors of the deadliest unprecedented natural disaster to hit Myanmar in recorded history. MAZON has committed an initial grant of \$10,000 to IMC for its relief efforts.

As of May 15, 2008, IMC received visas and has deployed to Myanmar to deliver life saving medicine and medical supplies. IMC has secured millions of dollars worth of donated medicines, medical supplies and other relief items that will provide initial care to approximately 50,000 people for a three-month period, including IV solutions and antibiotics to treat acute respiratory infections, diarrheal disease, cholera, malaria, dengue and typhoid fever. Once the immediate emergency has subsided, IMC will begin the hard work of rebuilding the health, sanitation and food systems.

Cyclone-ravaged Myanmar is the largest country in Southeast Asia and is also the poorest due to the ruling of a reclusive military government. This largely rural country has an estimated population of 50 million people. Tragically, the region that was harshly hit by the cyclone is the highly populated (24 million people) Irrawaddy Delta including Yangon (Rangoon), the nation's main city. The Irrawaddy Delta is also known as the cornucopia land, which yields most of the country's rice and crops. Since the cyclone hit, food has been scarce and the latest reports state that crowds of hungry survivors are storming shops in quest for food and clean water.



<http://www.rcrc.org/>

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice brings the moral power of religious communities to ensure reproductive choice through education and advocacy. The Coalition seeks to give clear voice to the reproductive issues of people of color, those living in poverty, and other underserved populations.

RCRC was founded in 1973 to safeguard the newly won constitutional right to abortion. The Coalition founders were clergy and lay leaders from mainstream religions, many of whom had provided women with referrals to safe abortion services before the Supreme Court legalized abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. The founders believed that there would be at most a ten-year struggle to secure the right to choose. In fact the struggle is far from over. It has changed and intensified, and the stakes are growing.

Today, the Religious Coalition comprises national organizations from major faiths and traditions, religiously affiliated and independent religious organizations, affiliates throughout the country, the national Clergy for Choice Network, Spiritual Youth for Reproductive Freedom chapters, The Black Church Initiative, and individuals who support reproductive choice and religious freedom..

While our member organizations are religiously and theologically diverse, they are unified in the commitment to preserve reproductive choice as a basic part of religious liberty.

Our rational, healing perspective looks beyond the bitter abortion debate to seek solutions to pressing problems such as unintended pregnancy, the spread of HIV/AIDS, inadequate health care and health insurance, and the severe reduction in reproductive health care services. We support access to sex education, family planning and contraception, affordable child care and health care, and adoption services as well as safe, legal, abortion services, regardless of income. We work for public policies that ensure the medical, economic, and educational resources necessary for healthy families and communities that are equipped to nurture children in peace and love.

Secure Communities Network

<http://www.scnus.org/>

Working together for more than two years, member agencies of the Jewish community, security experts and law enforcement officials have established the Secure Community Network as a primary vehicle to facilitate sharing of information and policy protocols concerning Jewish communal security...

Why SCN?

SCN (Secure Community Network) is part of the Jewish community's response to heightened security concerns in the United States. Through SCN, the organized Jewish community is coordinating and addressing critical safety and security needs in addition to establishing national standards for improving security at the local level.

For SCN membership, your organization should be affiliated with the Conference of Presidents. Click http://scan.ujcfedweb.org/content_display.html?ArticleID=139103 to learn more about SCN, or register to become a SCN member now.

The World Union for Progressive Judaism

<http://wupj.org/>

The World Union For Progressive Judaism is the international umbrella organization of the Reform, Liberal, Progressive and Reconstructionist movements, serving 1,200 congregations with 1.7 million members in 42 countries. The World Union strengthens Jewish life in Israel and worldwide by establishing and supporting modern, pluralistic congregations and institutions, developing Jewish communal and youth leadership and advancing social justice.

Progressive Judaism is rooted in the Bible, especially the teachings of the Hebrew Prophets. It is founded on authentic manifestations of Jewish creativity, ancient and modern, particularly those that stress inwardness and desire to learn what God expects from us: justice and equality, democracy and peace, personal fulfillment and collective obligations.

The practices of Progressive Judaism are anchored in Jewish thought and tradition. They seek to extend the range of observance by granting full equality to all Jews, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation, while challenging laws that are contrary to Judaism's fundamental principles.

Of the 12 million Jews in the world today, nearly one-third live in countries where Jewish life is weak and where there are few opportunities for meaningful Jewish practice. It is the World Union's goal to ensure that all Jews have access to the vibrant Jewish life that can best inspire them spiritually and bring their communities together practically. We are committed to this sacred task.

Quick Facts

- 42 countries with Progressive congregations*
- 1,200 Progressive, Liberal, Reform and Reconstructionist congregations around the world.
- 1,500 youths participating in weekly activities in 60 youth clubs in the former Soviet Union.
- 2,000 Jewish, Christian and Muslim families receiving pre- holiday food assistance in Israel.
- 16,000 members of Netzer Olami, the World Union's international youth movement.
- 45,000 family members reached through Progressive Judaism's pluralistic Jewish Studies program in Israeli public schools.
- 1,700,000 people affiliated with the World Union's constituent movements globally.

- \$54 million the goal of the World Union's fund-raising campaign to support congregation-building, youth activities, leadership training, education and social action.

** Argentina, Aruba, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Curacao, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, France, Germany, Honduras, Hungary, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Latvia, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Poland, Puerto Rico, Russia, Saint Thomas, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Surinam, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.*