

Israel today is in a unique position in the international development arena: It began as a developing country, and continued to be so for many years after its establishment as a state in 1948. Many of us remember the austerity measures of the 1950s and the early 60s - the shortage of basic commodities and food rationing.

At the same time, Israel received generous assistance from friendly countries, international organizations and from Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora. The fact that we were able to overcome severe challenges and build a strong society with an advanced economy enabled us, for the first time, to share our knowledge and technologies with other developing and newly independent countries. This tradition was bequeathed to us by the founders of the State of Israel. We are honored to continue this tradition 50 years later.

Since its inception in 1958, MASHAV - Israel's National Agency for International Development Cooperation - has been dealing with issues that lie at the heart of international development efforts. We are proud to be one of the oldest international development agencies in the world.

MASHAV is unique in two very important aspects:

- **Proven solutions to development challenges** - making available the wealth of knowledge and expertise accumulated in Israel for more than 60 years to meet today's development challenges.
- **The message that difficulties and development challenges are surmountable.** If one considers the hardships that Israel had to face: difficult climatic conditions; large waves of new immigrants arriving from different countries and backgrounds; a hostile neighborhood; very poor infrastructure; and few natural resources - then success is possible for other countries as well.

As a small agency, MASHAV has to carefully plan its programming in order to bring about the desired impact and change. Therefore, the following guidelines were set:

- Concentrate on fields and disciplines in which Israel has a comparative advantage, know-how and experience;

- Be effective: result-oriented and demand-driven instead of supply driven;
- Develop horizontal partnerships and focus on capacity building rather than investing in infrastructure.

A single individual can change an institution, a community, policy, and reality. This is our inspiration. Israel could have chosen not to be involved in the field of international development cooperation in light of its own difficulties. But that was never the case. We are proud that in spite of our own challenges we did not spare any effort in sharing what was relevant to our own development experience for the benefit of others.

MASHAV will continue to put special emphasis on programs in the Middle East. Cooperation between neighbors will undoubtedly lead us to a better understanding of one another, to economic prosperity, and to regional stability and peace. We believe that cooperation between professionals can, and should be used to forge bonds of peaceful coexistence. The joint programs which are being carried out between Palestinian, Jordanian, Israeli and Egyptian experts serve as a real testimony to what may be achieved when people work together towards a common goal.

There is no single approach to overcoming the immense development challenges before us. We take pride in what our small nation has contributed throughout the decades, and we will continue to contribute towards the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals. We remind ourselves that emerging from the past is a journey, not a destination. And achievements along this journey - be them small or large - help us touch the lives of millions of people around the globe. Development is a partnership that requires the commitment of all.

Sincerely,

Haim Divon
Head of MASHAV
Israel's National Agency for
International Development
Cooperation