



# MOLDOVA



BY THE  
NUMBERS

3.3 MILLION  
COUNTRY POPULATION

~11,000  
JEWISH POPULATION

1921  
JDC ENTRY DATE

Though it's Europe's poorest country, Moldova is home to vibrant Jewish life with a rich legacy — roots and traditions JDC is proud to have helped build and sustain for the future.

For more than 100 years, JDC has helped care for Moldova's most vulnerable Jews and cultivate a Jewish future, creating programs and initiatives that are hopeful, authentic, and inspiring for the country's next generation of Jewish leaders.

From the 1903 pogrom in its capital, Chişinău, to the horrors of the Holocaust, as well as the decades of repression during the Soviet regime, Moldovan Jews

have weathered a challenging history. But despite this past, the country's Jewish communities are rich in spirit; each day, they work to build Jewish life that is vibrant, dynamic, and relevant.

Moldova has long been a focal point of JDC's work. From the organization's earliest years, JDC

has supported Jews in need and sustained Jewish communities. Since the start of the Ukraine crisis, we're still on the ground, continuing our vital activities in Moldova by providing refugees with food, shelter, accommodation, and the spiritual support of a global Jewish family.

## JDC in Moldova: A Snapshot

### CARE FOR THE VULNERABLE

The collapse of the Soviet Union threw many Moldovan Jews into poverty. And today, with rising inflation and meager pensions, a significant portion of Moldova's Jews struggle to survive on as little as \$2 a day.

Despite these challenges, JDC is there, providing aid to those who need it most. Each day, JDC delivers life-saving aid to more than 2,000 poor elderly Jews and over 300 vulnerable children through Hesed social welfare centers in Chişinău and other cities. This assistance includes homecare, social programs, and food and medicine assistance, as well as initiatives for children with disabilities and Jewish communal programming.



Students attend class at a JDC-funded school. Chişinău, Moldova. Late 1920s, early 1930s.  
Photo: A. Lalevitz, G. Schleiffer.





## CULTIVATING A JEWISH FUTURE

Jewish life in Moldova is three decades into a post-Soviet renaissance. JDC was a large part of helping make that story happen, and we continue to support the next generation of Jewish life.

Thanks to JDC programs, Moldova has become a major center of vibrant Jewish life in the former Soviet Union (FSU). On any given day, more than 8,000 people participate in JDC community-building initiatives across the country. In addition, Chişinău's Volunteer Center was the first to be established in the FSU, a program that now operates in more than 53 cities and 7 countries.

For Jewish youth, JDC helps support numerous social, cultural, and leadership initiatives. Programs like Active

Jewish Teens (AJT) — the Jewish youth leadership network that spans 63 cities across the former Soviet Union in partnership with BBYO and the Genesis Philanthropy Group — as well as children's programming at JDC-supported Jewish Community Centers (JCCs), help Moldova's newest generation cultivate their own sense of Jewish life. And many young Moldovan Jews discover a larger Jewish world at Szarvas, the JDC-Ronald S. Lauder Foundation international Jewish summer camp in rural Hungary.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, JDC mobilized its on-the-ground team, as well as youth volunteers, to care for Moldova most vulnerable Jews, establishing hotlines and other essential services in a matter of days.



*An elderly JDC client receives life-saving supplies for the winter cold.*

The pandemic exacerbated loneliness and isolation amongst the elderly. In response, JDC launched JOINTECH — a range of technological innovations that enhanced the breadth and depth of our work while ensuring we could continue to meet the full range of our clients' needs. JOINTECH helps combat loneliness amongst isolated Jewish seniors by distributing specially designed smartphones that enable them to connect with family, friends, and their larger Jewish community, especially when in-person gatherings are not possible.

JOINTECH also facilitates a remote training program and online reporting platform for homecare workers, as well as food security initiatives, sparking further innovation in the region. JOINTECH in the FSU is powered by funding from the Claims Conference, JDC Board Member Marshall Weinberg, the Jewish Community Federation of Richmond, and UJA-Federation of New York.

Years into the pandemic, JDC is still there for Moldova's vulnerable and elderly Jews. We've continued providing homecare in a safe manner, delivering masks, gloves, and transportation to homecare workers. We're also delivering supplemental food, medicine, and emergency care to those in need, building on our century-long commitment to Moldova's Jews.

## JDC in Moldova: Images Across Time



**Images from left:** Elderly JDC clients enjoy a Shabbat meal at a JDC-supported Hesed social welfare center. Chişinău, Moldova. 1997. A young girl knits at a JDC-supported school. Chişinău, Moldova. 2000s. Photo: Yuri Kazakov. Children enjoy a free lunch as part of JDC's "Let My Children Grow" program. Chişinău, Moldova. 2003. Photo: James Nubile. Families gather for a Shabbat meal at a JDC-sponsored program. Chişinău, Moldova. 2003. Yuri Kazakov.

