Argentina’s Jewish community is as unique as it is resilient. Through economic crises, terrorist attacks, and the COVID-19 pandemic, JDC has been right by their side, serving the most vulnerable and cultivating the next generation of Jewish leadership in Latin America.

Jews have sought refuge in the Americas since 1492, when they were expelled from Spain. But it wasn’t until the 19th and 20th centuries that Jewish life flourished in Argentina, when the country welcomed larger, steadier flows of Jewish migrants from Europe. Argentina’s Jews drew upon both Latin American and European cultural traditions to create their own sense of home. This meant building communities like Moisesville, a Jewish farming colony that gave rise to the phenomenon of the Jewish gaucho (cowboy).

JDC has supported Argentina’s Jews when they needed it most. That includes aid following the attack on the Israeli embassy in 1992, the 1994 suicide bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) Jewish Community Center, Argentina’s economic collapse in 2001, the 2008 financial crisis, and recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Argentina’s Jewish community is a model of perseverance and joy — and JDC is proud to help build its future.

JDC in Argentina: A Snapshot

**HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

In 2001, when Argentina’s economy collapsed, Jewish communities faced high inflation, mass unemployment, and financial insecurity. JDC responded quickly, working closely with its local partners to deliver crucial aid to the country’s most vulnerable Jews. By mobilizing a cross-country network of local Jewish organizations, JDC delivered food and other essential supplies to more than 36,000 Jews in Buenos Aires and 14 remote Jewish communities, where resources were scarcer and prices higher. JDC also launched Baby Help, a program that provided essential care and social support — like meals, medical services, strollers, and clothing — to vulnerable children.

In addition to providing direct assistance to the most vulnerable Jews, JDC continued working with community organizations to build and strengthen their capacities. These efforts helped local organizations in Buenos Aires provide lifesaving assistance to
vulnerable Jews from 2010 until 2020, when the pandemic began. In the provinces, JDC never stopped providing humanitarian assistance to the fourteen Jewish Communities outside Buenos Aires, supplying food, housing, and medicine. In 2018, JDC launched the Kidum program in those communities to strengthen local capacities and achieve self-sustainability. And in 2020, due to the consequences of the pandemic JDC resumed humanitarian support in Buenos Aires.

**CULTIVATING A JEWISH FUTURE**

Through leadership initiatives, like the LEATID Training Program for Community Leaders — annual seminars that bring together outstanding Jewish professionals from around the region — JDC invests in Argentina’s Jewish future. LEATID provides courses in management, fundraising, and leadership to ensure that Argentina’s local Jewish organizations have the resources they need to thrive. LEATID also partners with the Kaplan Leadership Initiative, a global JDC program that promotes and sustains Jewish life worldwide by training and supporting Jewish communal professionals.

JDC also runs Kisharon, a training program for young leaders, in partnership with AMIA (Buenos Aires Kehillah), the Conservative Synagogues, and the Federation of Maccabiah JCC Argentina. During the pandemic, JDC also helped launch Kisharon at Home, a program that equipped community leaders with crisis management skills. Overall, this program helped Jewish communities respond to the pandemic efficiently and strengthen their resilience.

**COVID-19 RELIEF**

When COVID-19 struck Argentina, the local Jewish community was still dealing with the fallout from the previous economic crises. The pandemic compounded their financial insecurity, leaving many — including the community’s sizable middle class — without the means for basic necessities.

That’s why JDC partnered with the main Jewish welfare organizations in Buenos Aires (AMIA the Buenos Aires Kehillah, Tzedaka Foundation, and Chabad Foundation) to provide cash assistance for food, medicine, and utilities to the “new poor,” middle class families hard-hit by the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, JDC has also hosted webinars and workshops in the fourteen outlying communities to train local Jewish leaders — including professionals and volunteers, JCC executive directors, principals of Jewish Day Schools, and elderly-care providers — on how to address pandemic-related challenges.

In partnership with AMIA, JDC also spearheaded Maavar, a professional development program for people aged 45 and older designed to retrain and reintegrate them into the workforce. Maavar offers intensive entrepreneurship and management courses for both new and experienced business owners.

And in partnership with AMIA, The Buenos Aires Kehilah, JDC also launched Virtuali, a pilot program that promotes digital literacy amongst elderly Jews, preventing social isolation by teaching them how to use technology. More than 100 volunteers and 180 elderly people participate in this program.

**JDC in Israel: Images Across Time**