

The Contribution of Assistance from the Bezeq Corporation to Improving the Situation of Families in Extreme Distress

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The study examined the contribution of assistance provided by an association established by employees and pensioners of the Bezeq Corporation. The association, known as *Halav* (Milk, Bread and Eggs), aims at assisting children from families in extreme distress who suffer from a lack of food. Assistance is provided throughout the year to families with children aged 1 to 14 who are clients of welfare departments and who are known to suffer from food insecurity. Each family in the *Halav* Association program is issued a "Supercard" voucher, which enables them to purchase a monthly allotment of basic food products at the "Supersol" supermarket nearest to their home. The study compared a research group of 56 families that receive assistance from the *Halav* Association with a control group of 46 families with similar socio-demographic characteristics that do not receive assistance. Among the families participating in the study are those who are defined as being in "extreme distress" as well as those who are not defined as such but that showed low and very low food security. In addition, the adults experienced higher levels of food insecurity than did the children. Furthermore, levels of food insecurity among the families in the research group were found to be more severe than among those in the control group. The predictors of insecurity were state of health and number of children in the family: among families with four and more children, severe food insecurity was more prevalent than among families with fewer children. The findings revealed that assistance from the *Halav* Association contributed to improving the general situation of the families participating in the program. For example, it enabled the children to bring food to school, and improved the children's academic performance as well as their social

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situation. Among the families that received assistance for a longer period (over six months), the improvement was more substantial than among the families that received assistance for a shorter period. Hence, the findings indicate that consistent, long-term assistance which enables families to purchase basic food products contributes to improving their overall situation.