Interviews

**1) Muli Spiegel  
 Architect, Director of Engineering and Planning Department, The settlements in the Golan. Head of logistics infrastructures in emergency**

**Introduction:**

The interview was conducted with Muli Spiegel, Director of the Engineering Department, via phone call on April 26, 2024, at 11 AM Israel Time. The main goal was to understand the operations of the first response team in the Golan settlements.

**Background Information:**

Muli oversees logistics for his settlement's first response team, which is well-maintained and taken very seriously. The team is structured into specialized units responsible for Medical, Psychological, Logistics, Combat, Rescue, and other emergency responses. This division is a common organizational strategy across many towns in the Golan settlements.

**Key Insights:**

Our discussion with Muli highlighted the necessity of designing a system that effectively delineates and connects various operational 'circles' or teams. These could be geographical, as in towns within the same settlement, or functional, as in different emergency response units. It's essential to facilitate proper communication among these circles, recognizing that while each team has distinct requirements, they share core attributes that necessitate coordination.

**Challenges and Limitations:**

Muli shared insights from his research on the towns near Gaza, suggesting that improved inter-town communication could have mitigated civilian damages in past events. The absence of such communication underscores a significant challenge**.**

**Existing Solutions:**

According to Muli, many teams currently rely on WhatsApp for communication. He is aware that some settlements have adopted specialized applications to aid in coordination, yet there is no unified platform that meets the diverse needs of all teams across the settlements.

**Additional Notes:**

Muli recommended engaging with leaders of various emergency teams for more direct insights and has facilitated connections to them.

**Conclusion:**

A key takeaway is the need to develop a universal, yet adaptable, framework that meets the collective and individual needs of all emergency teams. Critical to this will be the strategic planning of the circles—both geographic and functional—that are essential for organized and efficient response coordination.

**2) Roee Tavor** Chairman of the Residential Resilience Team in Kanaf settlement (southern Golan Heights)

**Introduction:**

The interview was conducted in person with Roee Tavor, who leads the residential resilience team in Kanaf, on May 1st, 2024, at 12 PM Israel Time. The primary purpose was to learn how resilience and first response teams in a high-risk settlement function during normal conditions and emergencies.

**Background Information:**

Kanaf operates in a highly organized manner, with the resilience team collaborating closely with the first response team. The resilience team includes several groups: health, logistics, welfare, education, and spokesperson. Roee voluntarily leads the residential resilience team in Kanaf. The first response team consists of 30 members, while each resilience team has around 5 members.

**Key Insights:**

After our discussion with Roee, we realized that the management of emergency teams, both during routine and crisis situations, needs improvement. We learned that even high-risk settlements like Kanaf rely on WhatsApp and phone calls to manage operations, and that a user-friendly interface could enhance the effectiveness and usability of the different teams. Roee emphasized the need for an app that integrates all aspects of both routine and emergency operations and facilitates communication among the teams. For routine operations, he suggested incorporating as many useful features as possible to manage the teams. However, during emergencies, the focus should be on essential features to ensure the first response teams can operate effectively. Roee also mentioned the need for an interface that serves the entire Regional Council to provide a broader and cross-settlement perspective. Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of integrating the mobile app with a desktop version, envisioning a setup where a computer using the desktop version could mark important details on the application’s map, helping mobile users see updates and allowing the coordinator to maintain an overview of the situation.

**Challenges and Limitations:**

Roee pointed out several challenges and limitations that are likely to arise. For instance, he expects a lack of GPS availability, which is crucial during both routine and emergency situations. He also noted that internet connectivity might be lost during emergencies, further complicating communication and coordination. Additionally, Roee emphasized the importance of the application having all the features currently in use; he mentioned that they had previously tried an app that was missing some essential features, leading them to abandon it and revert to using WhatsApp groups. To ensure the new app is adopted and utilized, it must fully accommodate their operational needs.

**Existing Solutions:**

Currently, the coordination of patrols and shifts for the locals is managed using an Excel spreadsheet. Additionally, each residential resilience team and first response team communicates and organizes via separate WhatsApp groups.  
 Roee also mentioned that both the response team and the residential resilience team use a 'Motorola,' which is a walkie-talkie communication tool operating on different radio frequencies. Therefore, integrating a similar feature into our app would be unnecessary, as they would not use it at all if it were included.

**Additional Notes:**

Roee highlighted that they make an effort to document every significant event. For instance, after a real event, they try to create a comprehensive file that details everything that happened and what could be improved. However, he also noted that such files are typically shared via WhatsApp and tend to get lost in the chat history, making them difficult to track and reference later.

**Conclusion:**

The interview with Roee Tavor provided valuable insights into the operational challenges and needs of the residential resilience and first response teams in Kanaf. The reliance on basic tools like WhatsApp and Excel sheets for critical communication and coordination highlights the necessity for a more robust, integrated application tailored to both routine and emergency scenarios. The new app must encompass all existing functionalities to ensure adoption and must be reliable even in conditions where GPS and internet connectivity are compromised. Additionally, improving the documentation and accessibility of important post-event reports is essential for ongoing improvement and accountability. This conversation underscores the importance of developing a user-friendly, comprehensive tool that supports the unique demands of high-risk settlement operations.

**3) Hagit Geva & Itamar Cohen** Chairman & Vice Chairman of the Residential Resilience Team in Givat Yoav settlement (southern Golan Heights)

**Introduction:**

The interview was conducted in person with Hagit Geva, who leads the residential resilience team in Givat Yoav, and Itamar Cohen (who joined via phone) as the vice chairman, on May 1st, 2024, at 5:30 PM Israel Time. The primary objective was to explore how resilience and first response teams in a high-risk settlement operate under both normal conditions and in emergencies.

**Background Information:**

The Givat Yoav settlement includes several resilience teams: logistics, health, education, spokesperson, welfare, and first response. Hagit described the first response team as integral to the resilience teams. The first response team consists of 30 members, while each of the other teams includes 5 members. Their current main tools for interaction include WhatsApp and a few walkie-talkies.

**Key Insights:**

It was clear from the discussion that a strict hierarchy exists among the different roles within the settlement. Hagit, as the head of the resilience team, makes overarching decisions, with Itamar assisting as her deputy and handling specific responsibilities. Each team is led by a team leader who manages the team and is accountable for updating both Hagit and Itamar. They have experimented with various applications in the past, such as Avia, but abandoned them due to complex user interfaces, emphasizing the critical importance of user experience (UX). Itamar highlighted that each role should have appropriate permissions, advocating for a simplified, minimalistic mobile app for general team members and a more complex web application for leaders. They expressed a strong desire for a feature that allows marking significant locations on a permanent map, which could be viewed as a detailed image with various sectors. Furthermore, they seek an easy-to-use interface to create and assign generic tasks across teams, ensuring visibility of task status and completion.

**Challenges and Limitations:**

The teams anticipate issues with GPS reliability, expecting to operate without GPS connections. They also face challenges in navigating specific scenarios, such as identifying the correct locations in emergencies, (Ex: difficulty in determining the right Cohen household during a fire incident when multiple Cohens reside in the settlement). The primary challenge, as stated by Itamar and Hagit, is developing an application that is intuitive and user-friendly.

**Existing Solutions:**

The resilience teams in Givat Yoav currently rely on WhatsApp, phone calls, and a limited number of walkie-talkies for communication. Hagit also has access to a satellite phone. They maintain a file listing every household in the settlement along with map locations.

**Additional Notes:**

Hagit and Itamar offered their assistance during the app's development and design processes to ensure a comprehensive understanding of operational requirements. They also provided a Zoom recording from a colleague at the southern border, explaining her perspective on how different response teams should operate.

**Conclusion:**

The interview with Hagit Geva and Itamar Cohen provided profound insights into the operational dynamics and technological needs of the Residential Resilience Team in Givat Yoav. The conversation underscored the significance of a well-crafted user experience in the successful adoption and functionality of digital tools aimed at enhancing coordination and communication. The need for differentiated access and functionalities tailored to various roles within the team was emphasized, reflecting a thoughtful approach to meeting diverse user needs. Moving forward, the challenge lies in creating an application that combines ease of use with comprehensive features to facilitate efficient and precise responses in a range of emergency scenarios. Hagit and Itamar's willingness to engage in the development process and share additional resources illustrates their commitment to enhancing the resilience capabilities of Givat Yoav through innovative solutions.