

منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية  
פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי  
Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

# Perspectives on Arab-Bedouin Women Employment in the Negev/Naqab

International Women's Day, March 2018



**Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality** | In 1997, a group of concerned Arab and Jewish residents of the Negev/Naqab (Israel's southern desert region) established the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) to provide a framework for Jewish- Arab collaborative efforts in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of mutual tolerance and coexistence. NCF, also known as "Dukium" ("co-existence" in Hebrew), is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the specific problems confronting the Negev/Naqab. NCF considers that the State of Israel fails to respect, protect and fulfill its human rights obligations, without discrimination, towards the Arab-Bedouin citizens in the Negev/Naqab. As a result, the NCF has set as one of its goals the achievement of full civil rights and equality for all people who make the Negev/Naqab their home.

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**Research and writing:** Ben Fargeon

**Cover photo:** Riḍa (Kifāḥ) Abu al-Qi'ān

**Back cover photo:** Huda Abu al-Qi'ān

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## Introduction

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the right for work and fair wage was recognized by various international covenants. The historic Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, stated the right to work as part of the basic human rights:

*"Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*

*Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*

*Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection". (Article 23).<sup>1</sup>*

The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was ratified by Israel in 1991, also acknowledges this important right: "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts [...] The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development..." (Part III , Article 6).<sup>2</sup>

The right to work in Israel is not embedded in the State's basic laws, however some verdicts of the National Work Court acknowledged that work is a right for the realization of economic and social needs of the individual. For example, judge Barak asserted that: "One of the rights of the workers is to work. It is not a constitutional right [...] it is a liberty [...] sometimes it is also perceived as a positive right which burdens the State to do as much as possible to provide work. (...) The worker has a sort of proprietary right for work. He has the right not only for respectful earning but also to enjoy his work in something he is trained for, to be engaged in work and not to be idle".<sup>3</sup> Various elements of the rights to working conditions and fair wages of the National Labor Organization are present in the Israeli legislation, such as Wage Protection Law, Minimum Wage Law and Guaranteed Minimal Income Law. Also, Basic Law: Freedom of Occupation, legislated in 1992, gave a push to the right for work, at least in the aspect of freedom in choice of occupation. Nevertheless, in view of changes in the structure of the labor market that occurred in Israel since the late 1980s, offensive working patterns – such as part-time jobs, unorganized work, employment by contractors etc. – have become more prevalent in the sector of disadvantaged workers.<sup>4</sup>

Both the international covenants and the Israeli laws and rulings mentioned above, recognize the fact that the right to work and earn fair wage is a basic human right. Fair wage enables a person to live a dignified life, especially in view of the trend in many countries, including Israel, where

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, 1966. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adopted and ratified by General Assembly on 16 of December 1966.

<sup>3</sup> Labor Appeal 359/99, **Le'a Levin v. Broadcasting Authority**. Verdict delivered 28.2.2011.

<sup>4</sup> Noga Dagan Buzaglo, 2007. *The Right for Work in Israel: A legal and budgetary view*. Adva Center.

governmental services such as social welfare, health and education are eroding. In addition, the covenants recognize the State's obligation to take measures that will promote full employment to its entire population. While in Israel this obligation does not find expression in legislation, it can be examined by analyzing the government's policy in creating work options, developing qualifications for the labor market and integrating people in the work force.

One of the weak spots of the Israeli economy is the integration of the Arab and ultra-orthodox Jewish populations in the labor market. Generally, especially low participation in the work force is attributed to ultra-orthodox Jewish men and Arab women.<sup>5</sup> While the socio-economic situation of the Arab population is low compared to the Jewish population, the situation of the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab is even worse.<sup>6</sup> This community is characterized by high rate of unemployment and poverty, and wide gender gaps in employment and wages. Through the years several committees and governmental plans dealt with the issue of raising employment rates of the Arab-Bedouin population in large and Arab-Bedouin women in particular, aiming to take out families from the poverty cycle.

This report will deal with the various aspects of Arab-Bedouin women employment in the Negev/Naqab and will show how the incompetence of the State's authorities to promote employment within the Arab-Bedouin population in general and within the women population in particular, has brought this population to its present situation. Although the fact that Arab-Bedouin women do not go out to work is usually being attributed to cultural barriers of their society, many studies show that practical limitations such as poor public transportation system, lack of daycare services, poor education system, overt and covert discrimination by employers, language difficulties and more are actually the main reasons for exclusion of Arab-Bedouin women from the labor market. The report will show how the change from the government's passive policy to an active one for the increase of employment rate finds expression in committees and various government decisions. It will also examine whether the change of policy did indeed bring an increase of employment and fair wages to the Arab-Bedouin women of the Negev/Naqab.

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<sup>5</sup> Assaf Adiv, TheMarker, 2010. [The Investment in Arabs: Just a fig leaf for the OECD.](#)

<sup>6</sup> According to the grading of the Central Bureau of Statistics for local authorities all the Bedouin localities in the Negev/Naqab are in the lowest socio-economic cluster. For more details see: [Discrimination in Numbers – Collection of Statistical Data – The Bedouin Community in the Negev/Naqab/Naqab.](#)

## Arab-Bedouin Women's Work – Historic Overview

Before the establishment of the State of Israel the economy of the Arab-Bedouins in the Negev/Naqab was mainly based on seasonal agriculture and herding. All family members, women, men and children, participated in this economy, with the women taking an active and significant part. Men and women were jointly responsible for running the household, herding the flock, working the land and looking after the tent. The women, in addition, weaved tents and prepared food from the products of the land and flock.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, the Arab-Palestinians, including the Bedouins, who remained within its borders, were concentrated in certain areas under martial law. In the Negev/Naqab this area was called Siyāj, the area between Be'er Sheva, Arad and Dimona. While the main reason for concentrating the Arab-Bedouin population in this area was the dispossession of their historical lands for the benefit of Jewish settlements and to use the lands for other state needs. This practice had severe social and economic implications on the Arab-Bedouin society, especially on women. For the women, the loss of lands where they used to tend to the flock and cultivate the land, meant they lost their participation in the household's economy. As a result, their economic role and consequently, their social role was reduced to raising and nurturing the children.<sup>7</sup>

The urbanization process of the Arab-Bedouin society of the Negev/Naqab which started in the 1970s, a process forced by the Israeli government with no cooperation with the Arab-Bedouin population, only intensified the shrinking opportunities for employment of the Arab-Bedouin women. While in the villages the women had a rather wide personal space, the government's planning of the townships did not take into consideration the elements of traditional Arab-Bedouin culture and the negative effects the urbanization process will have on the available space for women.<sup>8</sup> The Arab-Bedouin township lacked investments in occupation infrastructures, vocational training and education, which led to severe shortage of employment opportunities in the townships and growing dependence on the economy of the Jewish sector. This resulted in gender polarization of the economic roles – the men worked outside of their townships and the women stayed at home. Thus, mature women moved from rural life to urban life where all their qualifications became irrelevant. Most of them were illiterate and did not know any Hebrew. Due to their community's dependence on the Jewish economy, women lost any possibility for employment. The situation of young women who were born into the existing urban reality was not better. The education system in the Arab-Bedouin townships suffered, and still is suffering, from budget discrimination and a faulty opportunities structure<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the women of the young generation are still forced to overcome many structural barriers in order to succeed in the labor market. This will be discussed later in the report.

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<sup>7</sup> Avinaom Meir, 1997. *As Nomadism Ends: The Israeli Bedouin of the Negev/Naqab*. Pp. 161-162.

<sup>8</sup> Tovi Fenster, 1999. *Space for Gender: Cultural Roles of the Forbidden and the Permitted*. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space (17): 227-246.

<sup>9</sup> Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2006. *Between tradition and modernization: understanding the problem of female Bedouin dropouts*. British Journal of Sociology of Education 27(1): 3-17.

Usually, an urbanization process brings about reduction of poverty, an increase in employment opportunities, and improvement in the education system. Nevertheless, this did not happen with the urbanization of the Arab-Bedouin community, a process which was forced on them as part of the land ownership dispute with the State of Israel. The seven townships established by the government did not offer modern infrastructure to enable easy transfer from a traditional society to an urban one. On the contrary, these townships are an example for a failing urban planning which did not take into account the needs of the community, lack of investment in infrastructures, and discrimination in budgets. It is therefore no wonder that these townships are at the bottom of Israel's socio-economic scale.

For those who stayed in the unrecognized villages, the situation was as harsh. Because the state of Israel does not recognize tens of Arab-Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab, their residents are deprived of social and political rights. As long as the State does not recognize these villages, they have no access to water and electricity infrastructures, sewage disposal, paved roads or public transportation. Health and education institutes are in shortage as well, and those that exist were established during the 1990s only after legal struggles with the State. According to the Planning and Building Law, all the buildings in the unrecognized villages are considered illegal and therefore are bound to the State's demolition policy, which take severe economic, physical and psychological toll on the residents. This reality leaves the residents of the unrecognized villages, men and women alike, unable to enter the employment market. While the older women managed to somewhat keep their traditional way of life, because of changes to the economic structure, women of the younger generation were forced to go out to work in order to maintain a dignified existence. Nevertheless, as we will see later in the report, the structural barriers to go out to work are plenty and therefore only few women enter the labor market.

## Statistical Data on Employment of Arab-Bedouin Women in the Negev/Naqab

The information in this chapter is mainly based on official data of the State of Israel as given by the Central Bureau of Statistics, reports by the Knesset's Data and Research Center and reports from research institutions that examined the employment issue of the Arab society in Israel in general and the Bedouin society in particular. It must be noted at the outset that the State's collection of data on the Arab-Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab is incomplete, especially regarding the unrecognized villages. It is therefore difficult at times to present a full picture of the employment situation or to have segmentation of the data by group population, gender, age and location. Not collecting data on a regular basis is one of the State's expressions of policy that intentionally neglects the Arab-Bedouin population. The first change in the government's policy should be to assess the situation of the Arab-Bedouin community based on full and updated data. However, many times figures are unavailable. An example to the State's neglect to sample the socio-economic situation of the Arab-Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab was revealed in the poverty report of the National Insurance Institute of Israel published in 2016. In this report, for the first time in four years, data was collected on the poverty of the Arab-Bedouin population. This report revealed the extent and depth of poverty, especially amongst Arab-Bedouin children.<sup>10</sup>

The figures in the next chapters will examine the matter of employment of Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab compared to the general Arab population in Israel, and to Bedouin men and Jewish women in the Negev/Naqab. These comparisons will highlight the gaps between sectors and also the fact that Bedouin women are marginalized both gender wise and ethnic wise.

### Labor Force Participation

Diagram 1 shows the labor force participation rates<sup>11</sup> in the years 2005-2016 of Arab men, Jewish women and Arab women in Israel. A slow trend of increase in the labor force participation of the three groups can be observed, but also the big gap between Arab men, Jewish women and Arab women. The gap remains constant throughout the years and stands on about 40%. The figures give a clear picture of the employment situation of women in the Arab sector – immense gaps between them and their counterparts in the Jewish sector and Arab men.

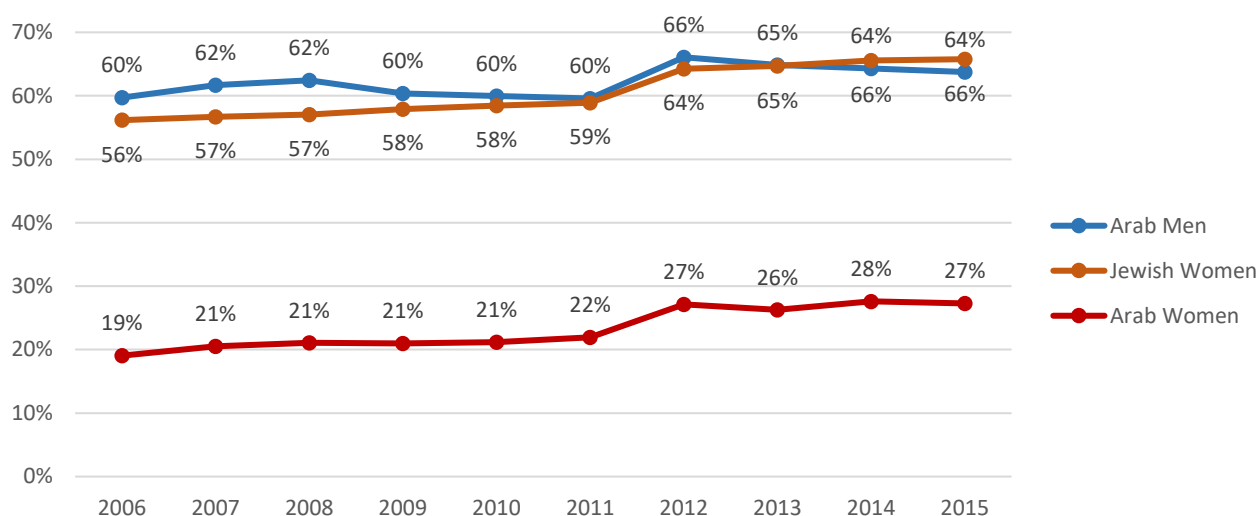
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<sup>10</sup> Miri Andebald, Daniel Gottlieb, Oren Heller and Lahav Kradi, 2017. *Dimensions of poverty and social gaps – annual report 2016*. National Insurance Institute of Israel.

<sup>11</sup> Employment rate is measured by two central dimensions: participation rate in the work force which include those who work and those who seek work; employment rate – the number who are actually employed (not including job seekers). Those who actually look for work are classified as non-employed and those who are unemployed and don't look for a job are classified as not in the work force.



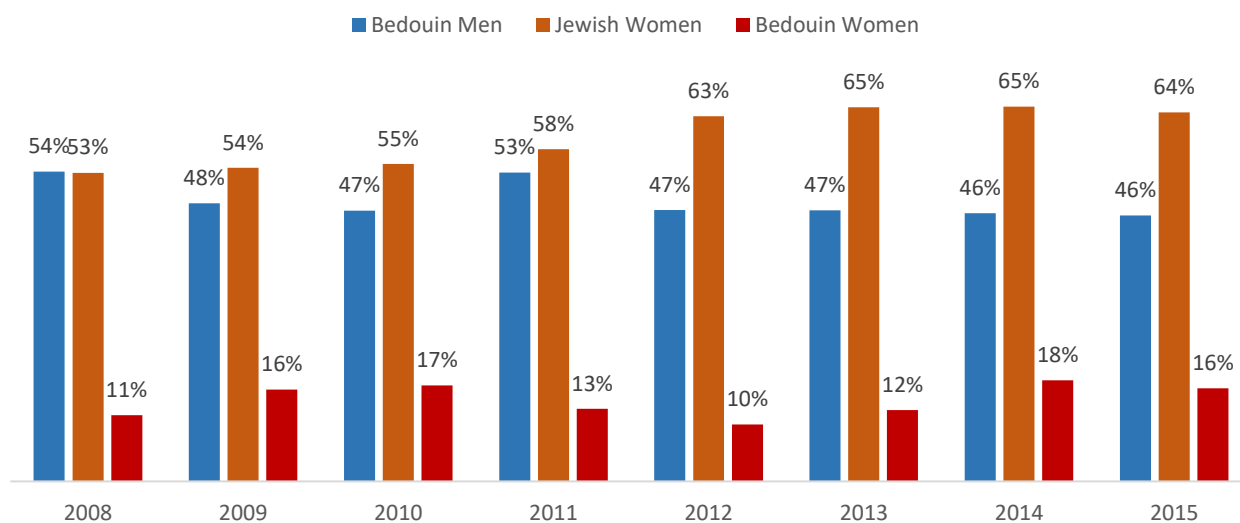
**Diagram 1: Labor Force Participation in Years 2006 – 2015**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, manpower surveys for 2008-2015, tables 8.1-1.22.

Diagram 2 shows the rate of labor force participation of Bedouin women, Bedouin men and Jewish women in the Negev/Naqab. As in Diagram 1 this diagram also shows significant differences between the groups. One can clearly see a moderate but steady increase in Jewish women's participation rate and on the other hand, instability in the participation rate of the Bedouin women and men. It appears that if in 2008 the participation rate of Bedouin men and Jewish women was at the same level, a gap opened along the years and reached 18% by 2015. In the same year, the gap between Bedouin men and women stood on 30%, while that between Bedouin women and Jewish women stood on 48%. The gap between Arab women and Bedouin women from the Negev/Naqab is also high and stood on 10% in the last years. These are major gaps which will be addressed later in the report.

**Diagram 2: Labor Force Participation Rate for Ages 15+ in the Be'er Sheva Region in Years 2008-2015**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, manpower surveys for 2008-2015, tables 8.1 and 1.22.

Labor force participation rate does not differentiate between full-time job, part-time job or unemployment. When the figures are examined more in depth, it can be observed that not only

Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab have the lowest participation rates, but out of those who do work, less than half are employed in full-time jobs. Table 1 shows that the gaps are mainly gender related. It shows that just as in the case of unemployed women, the role of caring for the home and children remain the role of both Jewish and Bedouin working women.<sup>12</sup> In addition, this figure indicates that although unemployment rates in Israel are low, they do not present the full picture as only half of the women work full-time jobs. This fact makes it difficult for women to acquire jobs of good quality, to reach a status in their organizations, or become professional in their field.

**Table 1: Job Scope of Labor Force Participants in 2015 by Group and Gender<sup>13</sup>**

		FULL-TIME JOB <sup>14</sup>	PART-TIME JOB <sup>15</sup>
WOMEN	<b>Bedouin (Negev/Naqab)</b>	48%	36%
	<b>Arab<sup>16</sup></b>	48%	34%
	<b>Jewish (Negev/Naqab)</b>	51%	34%
MEN	<b>Bedouin (Negev/Naqab)</b>	76%	12%
	<b>Jewish (Negev/Naqab)</b>	71%	17%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, manpower survey 2015, Tables 1.22 and 8.1.

Report by the Knesset Research and Data Center indicates that 40% of Arab women working part-time reported that one of the main reasons for not working full-time is being unable to find available positions. In comparison, the figure amongst Jewish women is about 14%.<sup>17</sup> This gap shows that many Arab women work in part-time jobs not by choice and would have been full participants in the labor market if circumstances were different.

To sum up, it can be determined that Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab suffer from double or even triple marginality in the labor market. In 2015, 30% of the Bedouin population above age 15 participated in the labor force compared to 45% of the general Arab population and 67% of the Jewish population in the Negev/Naqab. As for women participation, only 16% of Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab participated in the labor force compared to 64% of Jewish women in the Negev/Naqab and 27% of Arab women in the whole of Israel. It seems that the trend of increase in labor force participation rate skipped the Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab. The gaps indicate that the Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab are a disadvantaged sub-group within the Arab women in Israel which, in itself, is a disadvantaged group.

<sup>12</sup> Shelly Mizrahi Simon, 2016. *Employment of Arab women*. The Knesset Research and Data Center

<sup>13</sup> The percentages in the table do not add up to 100% in each group since the unemployed category was not included.

<sup>14</sup> According to the Central Bureau of Statistics a job of 35 hours or more per week is considered a full-time job.

<sup>15</sup> According to the Central Bureau of Statistics a job of up to 34 hours per week is considered a part-time job.

<sup>16</sup> Including Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab.

<sup>17</sup> See supra note 12.

## Job Seekers

The above data by the Central Bureau of Statistics is based on self-reporting to manpower surveys. The data of the Israeli Employment Service is a count of people registered for employment in the employment bureaus. Therefore, these figures can serve as a reliable index not only to the number of unemployed but also to the rate of job seekers.

According to the Israeli Employment Service data for 2016, 19.5% of Arab-Bedouin women<sup>18</sup> in the ages 25-65 in the south region were registered as job seekers. On the other hand, the rate of Arab-Bedouin men job seekers was 13.7% and only 5.9% for Jewish women. In comparison, the national rate for this age group was 4.2%.

Table 2 shows differences in the time periods for job seeking between Jewish and Arab women. While most Jewish women find a job in a relatively short time, almost a third of Arab women search for a job for more than a year. The long period of time for job search has many negative implications: besides the loss of income and the added burden on the household, searching for a job for such a long time may result in despair and disbelief in the ability of the woman to start working or go back to work. According to a report by the Knesset Research and Data Center, the rate of Arab women in the ages 25-65 who were discouraged from job seeking<sup>19</sup> was 44% out of the total women discouraged, 2.5 times more than their proportion of the total women population in this age category.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 2: Unemployed Women Ages 25-64 by Time of Job Search and Group in 2015**

<b>Time of job search (weeks)</b>	<b>Jewish Women</b>	<b>Arab Women</b>
<b>1-4</b>	27.9%	<b>14.2%</b>
<b>5-8</b>	16.1%	<b>15%</b>
<b>9-13</b>	13.3%	<b>_21</b>
<b>14-26</b>	19%	<b>17%</b>
<b>27-52</b>	13.7%	<b>15.3%</b>
<b>+53</b>	10%	<b>31.2%</b>

Source: Knesset Research and Data Center, *employment of Arab women, table 6.*

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<sup>18</sup> Refers to the yearly average in 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Those that do not participate in the weekly labor force, but want to work, could have started working if offered an appropriate job and were looking for a job in the last 12 months excluding the last 4 weeks prior to the survey.

<sup>20</sup> See supra note 12.

<sup>21</sup> Data unknown and/or small number of cases.

## Unemployment

Another indicator of the number of job seekers is the unemployment rate. This rate is calculated as the percentage of people out of the total work force who actively searched for a job in one of the employment bureaus. Table 3 shows the average unemployment rate in 2017<sup>22</sup> in the Jewish and Bedouin localities in the Negev/Naqab, according to the data of the Israeli Employment Service.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the table presents the percentage of women seeking jobs in each locality. There is a considerable gap of unemployment between the Jewish and Bedouin localities. The unemployment average in the Bedouin townships in 2017 was 16.6% while the national average was 5.3% and the average in the south region without the Bedouin townships stood on 5.2%. Amongst the Bedouin localities, two stand out with notable unemployment rates: 'Ar'arah an-Nagab with 25.1% and the regional council Al Qasoum with 30.3%.

**Table 3: Unemployment Rates and Women Job Seekers in Selected Jewish and Bedouin Localities in the Negev/Naqab, 2017**

Locality	Unemployment Rate	Percentage of women job seekers out of total job seekers
Hūrah	13.4%	58.2%
Ksīfih	21.0%	61.5%
al-Lagiyyih	15.2%	56.0%
'Ar'arah an-Nagab	25.1%	58.0%
Rahaṭ	12.2%	59.4%
Šgīb as-Salām	13.5%	61.9%
Tal as-Saba'	15.4%	56.4%
Neve Midbar	16.3%	61.0%
Al Qasoum	31.3%	60.2%
Be'er Sheva	5.0%	54.1%
Arad	5.0%	55.8%
Yeruham	8.1%	52.0%
Netivot	6.5%	57.3%
Omer	1.4%	62.7%

Source: Israeli Employment Service.

<sup>22</sup> Excluding December.

<sup>23</sup> Unemployment rate of the localities as calculated by the Israeli Employment Service refer to the sum of job seekers out of the number of people in the work force. Job seekers are defined as those reporting to the employment bureau at least once a month looking for job and not working. Work force is defined as the number of salaried and self-employed (as appear in the data of the National Insurance Institute of Israel) in addition to job seekers.

Among both Jewish and Bedouin localities women are demanding jobs more than men, although they comprise 50% of the population. In the Bedouin localities, 60% of job seekers are women, compared to about 55% in the Jewish localities. This figure, just as the above figures, indicates that the Arab-Bedouin women are actively seeking ways to participate in the labor market, but with no success.

Comparison of the unemployment figures over a period of time shows a positive trend. Average unemployment in the Bedouin townships decreased from 26.6% in 2010 to 16.6% in 2017. This is a significant decrease, but it does not indicate the quality of jobs or wages of those who entered the employment circle. In order to assess these parameters, figures on level of wages and type of occupation in the Bedouin community have to be checked.

### Wage Gaps

Table 4 presents the average wage of salaried workers, men and women, in the Bedouin townships, recognized villages (regional councils) and unrecognized villages in 2014. Several Jewish localities are included for comparison purposes. Data shows that both men and women of the Bedouin localities earn lower wages by tens of percentages from the average wage in Israel, which in 2014 was 8,465 NIS. In addition, Arab-Bedouin women earn significantly less than Arab-Bedouin men – for example, in Rahaṭ a woman earns 54% of a man's salary, in 'Ar'arah an-Nagab 42% and in Neve Midbar 69%. In all the Bedouin localities, the average wage was less than the minimum wage which was 4,300 NIS in 2014.<sup>24</sup> As for the differences between the Jewish and Arab populations in the south region, the average wage in the Jewish localities was 7,479 NIS while in the Bedouin localities the average wage was 5,063 NIS. Namely, in the Jewish localities the income was in average higher by 47% than in the Bedouin localities. Segmentation of the data cannot show the gaps in the average wage between Jewish and Arab-Bedouin women in the south, however a short study of table 4 reveals that the gaps are enormous and wider than the gaps between Jewish and Arab-Bedouin men. Although there are no figures as to the average wage of women in the unrecognized villages, it is obvious that the general average in these villages is significantly lower than that of the townships and the recognized villages. In fact, only in Rahaṭ salaried workers earn in average less than the salaried workers in the unrecognized villages.

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<sup>24</sup> All-Rights (Kol Zchut) website, [Minimum wage \(right\)](#).

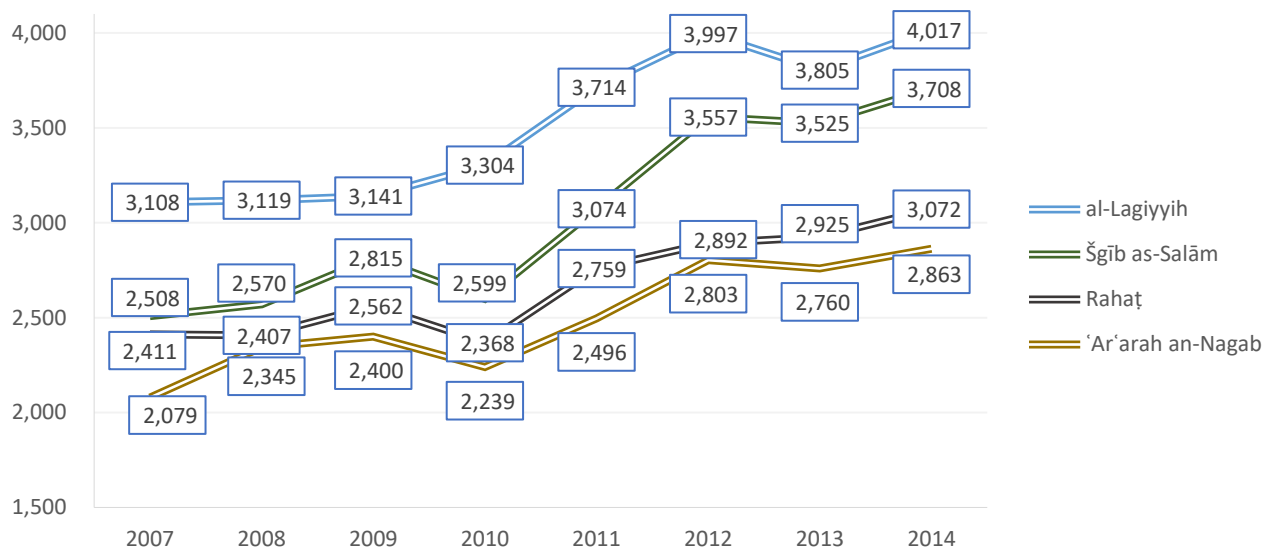
**Table 4: Average Wage of Salaried Workers by Gender and the Percentage of Salaried Workers Whose Wage is Lower than the Minimum Wage in 2014**

Locality	Average wage of salaried worker			Percentage of salaried workers whose wage is lower than min. wage
	General	Women	Men	
Hūrah	5,738	4,245	6,467	46%
Ksīfih	5,331	3,642	6,158	48%
al-Lagiyyih	5,358	4,017	6,136	52%
‘Ar‘arah an-Nagab	5,660	2,863	6,837	48%
Rahaṭ	4,671	3,072	5,723	56%
Šgīb as-Salām	5,045	3,708	5,748	49%
Tal as-Saba‘	5,127	3,474	5,979	53%
Neve Midbar	5,516	4,200	6,094	47%
Al Qasoum	5,053	3,028	5,836	49%
Unrecognized Villages	4,797	-	-	55%
Be‘er Sheva	7,790	6,234	9,468	39%
Arad	6,988	5,184	9,008	43%
Yeruham	7,096	5,524	8,553	41%
Netivot	5,925	4,896	7,101	48%
Omer	15,071	11,721	18,754	24%

*Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, collection of the local municipalities; Data regarding the unrecognized villages – National Insurance Institute of Israel*

Diagram 3 allows us a perspective on the average wage of Arab-Bedouin women workers in the Negev/Naqab over a period of time. It arises from the data that a significant increase in wages occurred between the years 2007-2014. The steepest increase occurred in Ksīfih (not in the diagram) with 52.2% increase in wages. On the other hand, the lowest increase occurred in Raḥaṭ – 27.4%. In all the other government townships the increase in wages for those years was 30-50%.

**Diagram 3: Average Wage of Salaried Working Women in Selected Localities, 2007-2014**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, collection of the local municipalities 2008-2015.

These are indeed significant wage increases but, to understand whether this is part of a general trend or a specific improvement of the situation of Arab-Bedouin women of the Negev/Naqab, figures must be compared to other populations. In the case of Arab-Bedouin men, the highest increase for those years was in 'Ar'arah an-Nagab – 40.6%. In the other Bedouin localities, the increase for men was 30% during the same period. Similar to the Arab-Bedouin women, Arab-Bedouin men also witnessed a significant increase in wages, however slightly lower. The figures for working women in the Jewish localities also show a double figure wage increase– in Be'er Sheva 32.8%, in Netivot 42.3%, Yeruham 37.1% and Omer 28.2%. The national figures for the years 2007-2014 show an average wage increase of 25.5% for salaried workers in Israel.<sup>25</sup>

The figures thus show that wage increase for Arab-Bedouin women of the Negev/Naqab was higher than the increase for Arab-Bedouin men, Jewish women or in Israel in general, for the period reviewed. Although this is an encouraging figure, one should bear in mind that in absolute terms the gaps are still wide since the average wage in the market in general increased significantly. The figures show that at least for the salaried workers there is a trend of closing the gap between the Arab-Bedouin women and the other populations.

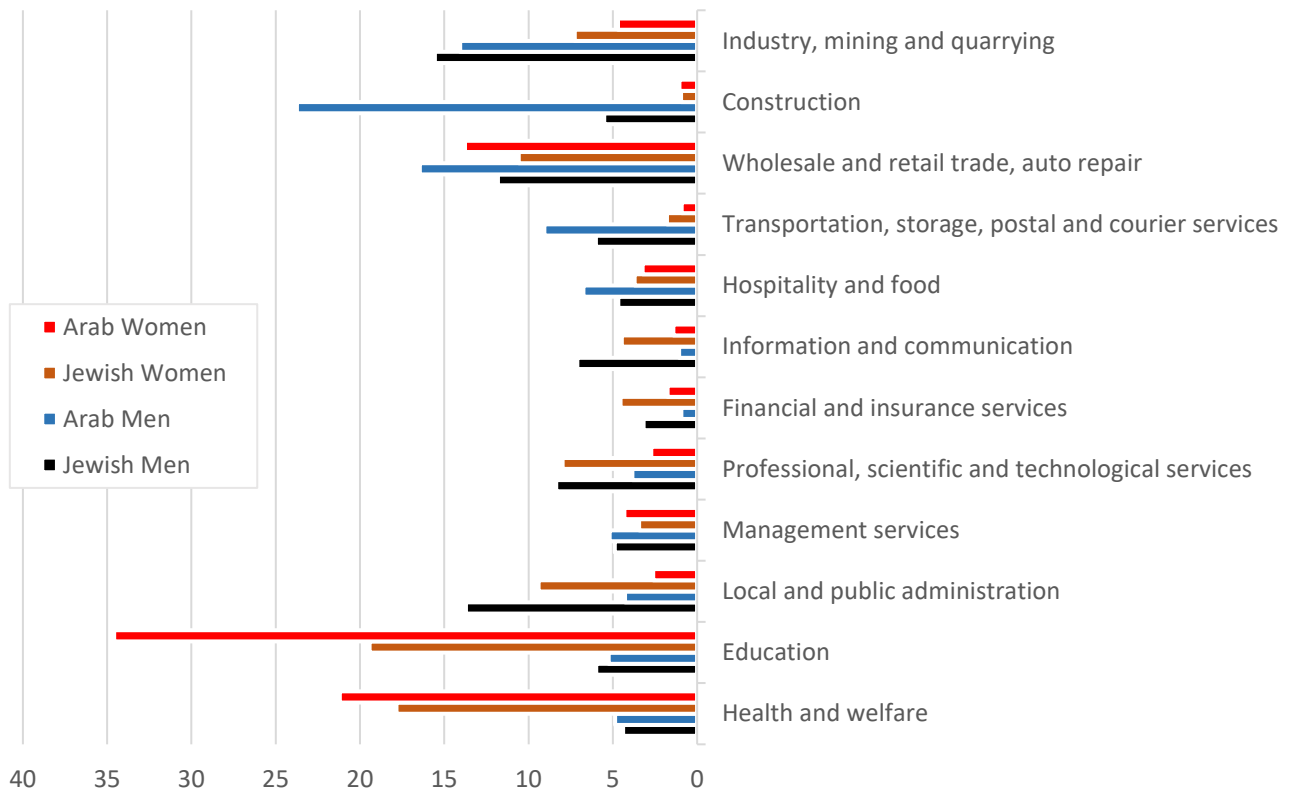
<sup>25</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, collection of the local municipalities 2007-2015.

**Distribution by Economic Sector**

The above data sheds light on the participation of Arab women in general and Bedouin women specifically in the work force and the trends in wages in the last couple of years. However, in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the situation, the issue of the economic sectors in which these women work has to be addressed, for this data might explain their relative low wages.

Diagram 4 shows the distribution of Jewish and Arab employed women in 2016. The main differences between Jewish and Arab women can be seen in several categories. In the education sector, Arab women hold a higher percentage than Jewish women - 34% and 19% respectively. In other sectors, Jewish women have higher representation. For example, 8% of Jewish women work in professional, scientific and technological services compared to 2.7% of Arab women. Also, in the communication, information and public administration fields the gaps are significant. These gaps are even more evident considering the sectors where Jewish women are more present and the average salary is higher, as can be seen in table 5. Average wages in the information and communication sectors is 19,297 NIS. In professional, scientific and technological services 13,347 NIS, and in local and public administration 14,597 NIS. In the education branch on the other hand, the average wage is only 7,822 NIS.

**Diagram 4: Percentage of Employees According to Economic Sectors, Groups and Gender (2016)**



Source: Central Bureau of statistics, Statistical yearbook of Israel 2016, table 12.12.



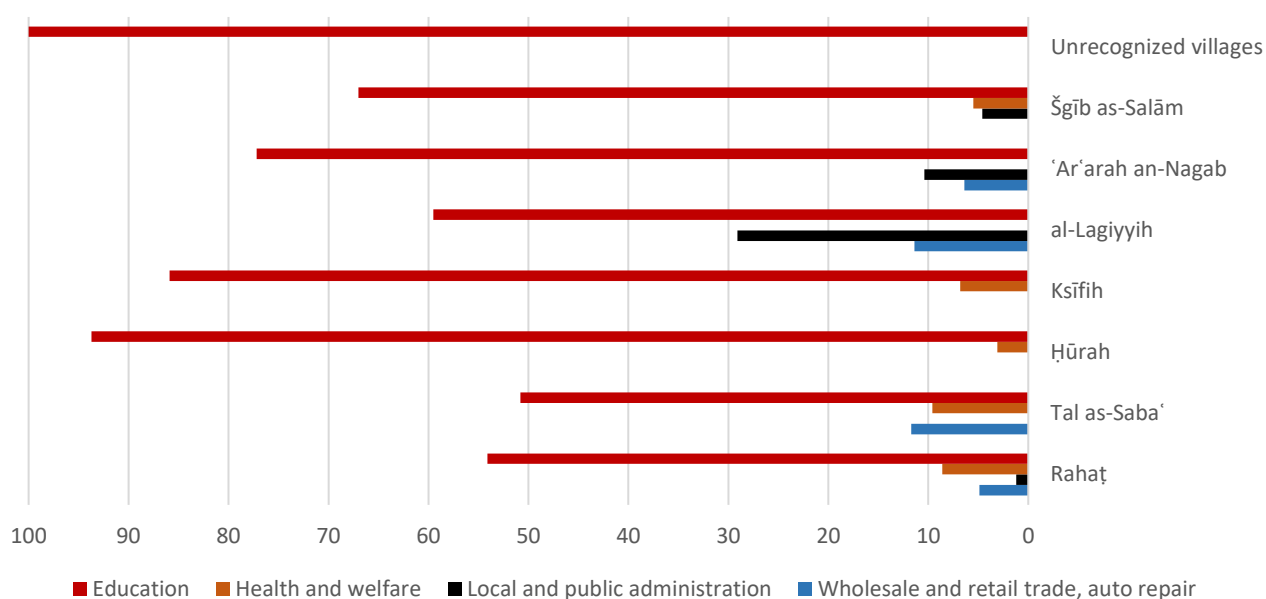
**Table 5: Average Wage for Salaried Workers According to Economic Sectors 2016**

Sector	Industry, mining and quarrying	Construction	Trade	Transportation, storage, postal and courier services	Hospitality and food	Information and communication
Salary (NIS)	13,494	8,941	8,358	10,910	4,510	19,297
	Financial and insurance services	Professional, scientific and technological services	Management Services	Local and public administrations	Education	Health and welfare
	16,997	13,374	5,402	14,597	7,822	8,632

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, statistical yearbook of Israel 2016, table 12.40.

Current data do not allow a more detailed segmentation as the latest data available for the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab is from 2008, as presented in diagram 5. Although comparing table 4 and 5 is difficult due to time differences as well as changes to the definitions of occupations, the resemblance and differences between the data on Arab women in diagram 4 and Bedouin women in diagram 5 can be seen clearly. The education field is central in both populations, nevertheless it is much more dominant among the Bedouin population. Another major field in which Arab women and Bedouin women from the Negev/Naqab are employed is health and welfare. It can also be learned from the data that the differences between the two populations underline the fact that Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab are even more disadvantaged than Arab women. The lack in variety of occupation opportunities and the focus on low income professions are more prominent with the Bedouin women, which in turn explains their low wages.

**Diagram 5: Distribution of Bedouin women employed in the Negev/Naqab according to economic sector.**



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, data analysis of 2008 census (economic sectors in which number of employed women was very low in all localities were omitted).

## Barriers in Entering the Labor Market

In view of the above data the question is why do Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab participate in rather small numbers in the labor market. Research suggested two types of barriers: those who see the Arab culture in general, and the Bedouin culture in particular, as a patriarchal society which prevents women from entering public domain and therefore places restrictions preventing women from leaving their localities or even their home; and there are those who see the policy of the State of Israel as the main reason for existing barriers to integration of the Arab society, and especially the integration of Arab women, in the labor market.

According to a report by Adalya, the organization, in charge of preparing the socio-economic plan for 2017-2021 for the Bedouin population, the low proportion of Arab-Bedouin women participating in the labor market stems from two main reasons: one, the Arab-Bedouin society, being a patriarchal society, puts pressure on women to work in their residence locality, and since there are not enough job opportunities in the Bedouin villages, many of the women remain without working options; second, it is difficult for Arab-Bedouin women to integrate in the labor market in the Be'er Sheva metropolis due to language barriers, low level of education, lack of day cares and transportation obstacles.<sup>26</sup>

Yanai and Krauss claim that when observing the Arab society in Israel, it should be noted that the structure of the political economy and patriarchy work in interrelationship. Their article shows how the structure of limited opportunities for women and the State's cooperation with conservative forces in the Arab society play together in limiting women from going out to work. In other words, the Arab culture should not be seen as a static factor that has reservation from women going out to the public domain, but rather as a dynamic entity that changes according to economic and social circumstances. When the State does is inactive in loosening barriers for employment of Arab women, it strengthens conservative patterns and reproduces the patriarchal power structure.

In this chapter we will try to find out what are the main barriers confronting Arab-Bedouin women who wish to join the labor market, how these barriers developed in view of the serious government neglect of the Bedouin localities, and to what extent this neglect reinforces conservative traditional patterns. We will present the 4 main barriers as appears from academic research, policy research, government reports and field information. In addition, we will show how the struggle between the Arab-Bedouin citizens and the State concerning the issue of land ownership worsens the barriers, as can be seen clearly in the unrecognized villages.

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<sup>26</sup> Adalya, 2015. *Strategic plan for socio-economic promotion of the Bedouin population in the Negev. Stage A – State of affairs and defining core issues*, page 91.

## Education

Many researches point to education as the decisive factor in women's participation in the labor market and promotion of their social status. In minority groups, this apparatus is intensified and education acts as a tool for exiting the social marginality of gender and ethnicity.<sup>27</sup> As said, historically the Arab society, as well as the Bedouin one, was under martial law until 1966 and therefore had no access to services such as welfare, education, employment and health. Until the end of the martial law, the only Arab-Bedouins that had access to education were children of Sheiks, who had close connections with the authorities. These children were sent to study in schools in the north part of Israel.<sup>28</sup> Thus, almost a whole generation, women included, had no access to any kind of education. After 1966, and more so after the establishment of the government townships in the 1970s and 1980s, elementary schools and high schools were opened in the Bedouin localities. However, these schools lacked equipment and installations compared to the schools in the Jewish education system.<sup>29</sup> Just as in the time of the martial law, even after the townships were established many families did not send their daughters to receive education since schools were co-ed- meaning it was not aligned with traditional Bedouin customs.

For the residents of the unrecognized villages the situation was even more difficult. Only 10 elementary schools were opened in these villages, all of them in temporary buildings and even in worse conditions than the schools in government townships.<sup>30</sup> The State did not strictly enforce the Compulsory Education Law in the Bedouin localities and accepted the girls' inaccessibility to education. Moreover, it did not build accessible schools in or close to the villages (especially in the unrecognized villages) and did not allow parents to open separate schools for boys and girls. Many Arab-Bedouin girls were excluded from the education system or dropped out early in the process. An appeal to the Supreme Court demanding the opening of a high school in the village of Abu Tlūl, was approved after seven years of legal struggle.<sup>31</sup> This situation mainly harmed girls living in the villages and their dropout rate was over 60% until the beginning of the previous decade. In a survey carried out in some of the unrecognized villages in 2004 by women's organization Sidreh, the rate of illiteracy amongst women over 30 years old was 80%.<sup>32</sup> As part of the pressure on the residents to relinquish their claims on the land and relocate them to the government townships, the Israeli government

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<sup>27</sup> Haled Arar and Muhand Mustafa, 2009. *Higher education and employment of Arab women: barriers and changes*. In: P Azaiza, H Abu Bakr, R Herz-Lazarowitz, A Ganm (editors). *Arab women in Israel: State of Affairs and View to the Future*, pp. 259-290.

<sup>28</sup> Ismael Abu-Saad, 1995. *Bedouin Arab Education in the Context of Radical Social Change: what is the future?*. *Compare* 25(2): 149-160.

<sup>29</sup> Ismael Abu-Saad, 1997. *The Education of Israel's Negev Bedouin: Background and Prospects*. *Israel Studies* 2(2): 21-39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Supreme Court of Justice 2848/05, **Fatma Abu Sabila (Ali) et al. v. Ministry of Education et al.** Plea for order nisi, dated 20.03.2005.

<sup>32</sup> Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2013. *The Construction of Inequality of Arab-Bedouin Women in the labor market*. In R Pedhazur (ed). *The Bedouins in the Negev: a Strategic Challenge for Israel*, pp. 18-27.

refuses until today to establish proper education institutes in the unrecognized villages.<sup>33</sup> There are no high schools in the unrecognized villages and in order to complete 12 years of education, the students have to walk for miles or depend on transportation. This fact mainly harms Bedouin girls.

As for the school year 2016/17, 94 elementary schools and 41 high schools operate in the Bedouin localities. 76,000 students attend these schools.<sup>34</sup> There are 10 elementary schools in the unrecognized villages but no high school, in spite of the fact that the population of the unrecognized villages amounts to a third of the Arab-Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab.

The main problems faced by the Bedouin education system is dropout, low achievement rates in matriculation exams, low standard of infrastructure and severe shortage of class rooms. In 2016 the rate of 17-year-olds youngsters not studying was 29.3%. After a sharp increase in the years 2007-2012 (from 23% to record high of 43%), it appears that there has been some improvement and the dropout rate is receding. Nevertheless, the dropout rate is still high compared to the general population. In 2015, the dropout rate of 17-year-olds in the general Arab population was 13%, and 5% in the general population.<sup>35</sup> A study by the Knesset Research and Data Center shows that the main school dropout in the Bedouin society occurs in the transition from intermediate school to high school, where most of the students who dropped out were in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the survey found out that contrary to the past, the dropout rate is nowadays higher among boys than girls. Data from recent years shows that 27% of the boys and 22% of the girls who studied in seventh grade did not complete 12 years of education. The rate of girls who didn't complete 12 years of education is 6% in the Arab population and 5% in the general population. The huge gap of dropout rates between the Bedouin population on the one hand, and the Arab society and general society on the other hand, shows the crisis of confidence in the Bedouin education system. The figures concerning the matriculation exams and the low acceptance to higher education, result in many families pulling out their children from the education system, if it does not offer them a matriculation certificate of quality or acquiring a profession. Gottlieb and Abu Badr found that the largest drop among pupils in the unrecognized villages is due to inaccessibility to basic infrastructures, such as electricity, water, health, public transportation and distance between home and school.<sup>37</sup> It seems that when obstacles are many and the chances for matriculation certificate are slim, many boys and girls drop out before completing their high school studies.

According to the mentioned research by the Knesset Research and Data Center, the Ministry of Education acknowledges the severe shortage of about 1,200 class rooms and kindergartens in the

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<sup>33</sup> Michal Rotem and Neve Gordon, 2017. *Bedouin Sumud and the Struggle for Education*. Journal of Palestine Studies 46(4): 7-27.

<sup>34</sup> Eti Weissblai, 2017. *The Bedouin Education in the Negev/Naqab – State of Affairs*. Knesset Research and Data Center, page 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., diagram 11, page 30.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., diagram 12, page 30.

<sup>37</sup> Yuval Yanai and Vered Kraus, 2009. *Culture or Opportunities Structure: Why Palestinian Women Join the Labor Market in Small Numbers?*. In: P Azaiza, H Abu Bakr, R Hertz Lazarowitz, A Ganm (ed). Arab Women in Israel: State of Affairs and a View to the Future, pp. 237-258.

Bedouin localities. Nevertheless, the number of classrooms allocated in the budget each year fulfills only 20-60% of the needs recognized by the ministry itself. In the years 2011-2016 only 794 classrooms were budgeted of which only 309 were built. The total budget the Ministry allocated for classrooms in the Bedouin education system in the Negev/Naqab was 646.5 million NIS for the years 2011-2016, but only 225.6 million NIS were transferred to the local Bedouin authorities for building classrooms. The severe shortage of classrooms keeps growing and it seems that the authorities are not doing enough to disentangle the obstacles and work cooperatively with the local authorities to reduce gaps.

The gaps between the Bedouin society and the general society can also be seen in the results of matriculation exams. Not only that the dropout rate of the Bedouin society is the highest in the country, but even out of those who complete 12 years of education, not all complete it with a full matriculation certificate. Furthermore, even less students obtain a matriculation certificate that will enable them to enter higher education.<sup>38</sup> In order to accurately represent the rate of those entitled (boys and girls) to matriculation certificate, the following figures will refer to the whole cohort, and not only to those who reached 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In 2014, only 30.3% of 17-year-olds Bedouin youngsters were entitled to a full matriculation certificate. In that year the rate of the Arab population (excluding Bedouins and Druze) was 47.8% while in the general population (excluding ultra-orthodox Jews and Bedouins) the rate was 65.5%.<sup>39</sup> When segmenting the data according to gender, significant gaps can be seen between boys and girls in all populations. In the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab, 42% of the girls and 19.2% of the boys are entitled to matriculation certificate. In the Arab society (excluding Bedouins and Druze) 61.1% girls and 35.3% boys were entitled to matriculation certificate, while in the general population (excluding orthodox Jews and Bedouins) 73.9% of girls and 57.5% of boys were entitled to matriculation certificate. As seen, although the girls in the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab have a clear advantage over the boys, still their achievements, compared to the Arab society and the general population, fall behind. It is not only the figure of low achievements that is worrisome, but also the stagnation over time in the percentage of girls entitled to matriculation certificate compared to the rise occurred in the Arab population and the general population. In 2007, 41.3% of Bedouin girls were entitled to matriculation certificate compared to 45.8% in the Arab sector and 62.9% in the general population. In other words, while girls in the Arab society (excluding Bedouin and Druze) experienced 15.3% rise in the years 2007-2014, the figure of eligibility for matriculation certificate of girls in the Bedouin community stayed almost the same. Figures for the eligibility of Bedouin girls for a matriculation certificate fit for university are not encouraging either. In 2014, only 30.2% of the Bedouin girls were eligible to matriculation certificate fit for higher education compared to 47.2% Arab girls (excluding Bedouin and Druze) and 62.1% in the general population (excluding ultra-

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<sup>38</sup> Matriculation certificate that meets the minimum requirements for admission to academic institutions.

<sup>39</sup> Hagit Sofer-Forman, Yonatan Eyal, Suzan Hasan Dahar and Moria Frankel, 2016. *The plan for the promotion of growth and economic development of the Bedouin population in the south (Government resolution 3708): first report*. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Center, page 135, table 4a.

orthodox Jews and Bedouins). Much like eligibility for matriculation certificate, eligibility for matriculation certificate fit for higher education has seen a very slow increase in the rate of the Bedouin girls compared to the rest of the Arab population. In 2007, 27.3% of the Bedouin girls in the Negev/Naqab were eligible for university fit matriculation certificate compared to 37.6% Arab girls (excluding Bedouin and Druze). Namely, between 2007-2014 there was a 10% increase in the Arab girls population compared to only 3% increase in the Bedouin girls population of the Negev/Naqab in legibility for university fit matriculation certificate.

When dropout rate is high and the quality of matriculation certificate is low it is no wonder that the Bedouin population finds it hard to break the walls of higher education in Israel. Studies that explored the entrance of Arab-Bedouin women of the Negev/Naqab to higher education, a phenomenon that accelerated in the last 2 decades, show that institutional barriers such as the Psychometric Entrance Tests which are culturally biased, age limits in some faculties, language difficulties, public transportation and finance difficulties, prevent their entrance in larger numbers.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the Arab-Bedouin girls have to tackle structural barriers within the Bedouin society which in part still holds conservative views as to the role of women. That is to say that even those few who graduated from high school with matriculation certificate fit for higher education have to cope with institutional and cultural barriers in their attempt to acquire higher education. Figures show increase over the years of Arab-Bedouin women of the Negev/Naqab entering universities and colleges. However, this increase occurred also in other sectors of the Israeli society due to the expansion of the higher education system. Until 1988, only 12 Arab-Bedouin women graduated (B.A. degree) from Ben Gurion university,<sup>41</sup> while in 2016, 64 Arab-Bedouin women graduated (compared to 21 Arab-Bedouin men) with B.A. and M.A. degrees.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, compared to the general population, the Bedouin society is still left much behind in acquiring higher education. Figures for school year 2014/15 show that while the average for higher education students in universities and colleges at the ages 20-29 from Bedouin governmental townships was 2.6-4.9%, the average in the Arab localities was 9.1% and the nation-wide average was 14%.<sup>43</sup> Many of the Arab-Bedouin boys and girls are not accepted to faculties which have vital importance in improving the socio-economic situation of the Bedouin society such as engineering, science or health, and therefore many of them study abroad, in Jordan, the West Bank or Eastern Europe.

The historical education gaps are the main factor that explains the current employment rates of Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab. Usually, women who acquired matriculation certificate and entered the high education system have no difficulty in finding jobs. Many of them are employed in the public services such as education, welfare and health and some of them in professional jobs,

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<sup>40</sup> Ismael Abu-Saad, 2016. *Access to higher education and its socio-economic impact among Bedouin Arabs in Southern Israel*. International Journal of Educational Research, 76: 96-103.

<sup>41</sup> Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2005. *First in higher education: The Meaning of Primacy Among Educated Bedouin Women*. Research for partially filling the requirements for PhD in philosophy, page 24.

<sup>42</sup> Tamar Center, 2017. *Education in the Bedouin society in the Negev/Naqab according to national findings*, page 14.

<sup>43</sup> Shlomo Swirsky and Etti Konor-Attias, 2017. *Social State of Affairs 2016: The Wages are Increasing but Do Not Match the Increase in Growth*. Adva Center, pp 25-31.

including managerial jobs.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, women who didn't complete high school education find it hard to acquire steady employment with fair wages and are forced to temporary or partial jobs, which do not require education or special skills such as cleaning, textile work, agriculture etc.

We argue that education, or more precisely lack of education, is the main factor preventing women from entering the labor market. If the education system in the Bedouin localities (starting from preschool age, an issue discussed later) was budgeted appropriately and adjusted to the needs of the Bedouin community, then the gaps of labor force participation, quality of jobs and level of wages between the Arab-Bedouin women and the general population would have narrowed down significantly. As long as there is shortage in classes, neglected education facilities, high dropout rates and low-quality matriculation certificates, the gaps in the education system will trail into the labor market and maybe even be intensified. If the State will continue to use the disadvantaged education system as a political tool to pressure the residents of the unrecognized villages who comprise over a third of the Arab-Bedouins living in the Negev/Naqab to move to the townships, those who will suffer most are women. In the better case, women will become unskilled laborers and in the worst case they will simply be unable to integrate into the labor market.

### Preschool Frameworks

Same as the failing education system in the Bedouin localities, so is the preschool system which is facing many problems. The preschool system has a double role: it has the utmost importance in the development of toddlers and young children and those who attend faulty frameworks or don't attend them at all will have difficulties in acquiring basic skills that will serve them all their life.<sup>45</sup> In addition, these frameworks allow women, who usually tend to the nurturing of the children, to go out and join the labor market on a continuous basis. For low income families, subsidized education frameworks are a must for both parents to go out to work. With no geographic and/or economic accessibility to education frameworks for preschoolers, the mothers are those who need to give up on participation in the labor market.

The Compulsory Education Law in Israel starts at age three, which means that from the end of paid maternity leave and the State's obligation to provide education there is a period of at least two and a half years. In order to encourage women to join the labor market and vocational training, the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services is acting to establish and supervise daycares. Children who attend facilities which are supervised by the Ministry are eligible for subsidies based on the parents' income. It is worth noting that most children in Israel (76%) aged 0-3 attend private daycares which are not supervised nor subsidized, and only few attend daycares supervised and subsidized by the State.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2017. *Class Identity in the Making: Professional Palestinian Women in the Negev/Naqab*.

<sup>45</sup> Studies show that investment in preschool age is the most effective in developing the skills needed for future success in studying, career and healthy lifestyle.

<sup>46</sup> Lior Datal, TheMarker, 2018. [The shortage of day cares in Arab localities is getting worse](#).

The situation in the Arab sector is even worse since there is a severe shortage of daycares and the number of children in supervised daycares is much lower than the number in the Jewish sector. According to the report of Israel Women's Network, in the Arab localities there is one daycare per 2,000 children compared to one daycare per 250 children in the Jewish sector.<sup>47</sup> In 2016, only 16% of toddlers aged 0-3 in the Arab localities were in daycares supervised by the State compared to 28% in the Jewish sector.<sup>48</sup> The government is aware of the discrimination in the budgeting of daycares in the Arab sector and in 2014 the budget allocation system for building daycare was changed in a way that was supposed to benefit the disadvantaged localities, especially the Arab ones. The purpose was to accelerate the building processes and reduce bureaucratic barriers.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, in a discussion of the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, it was revealed that in spite of the new allocation system, the Arab localities received in 2014 only nine million NIS out of the 200 million NIS total budget for building daycares.<sup>50</sup> The failure continued in 2014-2016, whereas 110 daycares were built in the Jewish sector compared to only five in the Arab sector.<sup>51</sup> Similar to the other Arab localities there is a daycare shortage in the Bedouin villages and townships as well. In 2015, only six daycares, with 384 children, operated in the Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab.<sup>52</sup> For comparison purposes, Modiin Ilit and Rahat are two similar towns by size of population and socio-economic grading (both are graded in the lowest cluster by the Central Bureau of Statistics). In Modiin Ilit 28% of preschoolers attend 21 daycares, while in Rahat only 3-6% preschoolers attend daycares. The number of daycares and children attending them are meagre relative to a population of about 240,000, a third of the Negev/Naqab population.

Also, as regard to supervised nurseries there is no adequate answer to the shortage of facilities for the ages 0-3. As of July 2015, there were 213 supervised nurseries in the Bedouin localities in the Negev/Naqab with 991 children (about 3.5% of the children). Although there is an increase in the number of children attending the nurseries, most of them are children directed there by the welfare agencies and not working families.<sup>53</sup>

It is in the interest of the State to encourage Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab to go out to work but it appears that the options for nurseries and daycares in the Bedouin localities are scarce. Precisely because the Bedouin population is poor and disadvantaged it is important that the State will provide more than average education options, and not less, in order to remove barriers which will enable women to work and provide.

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<sup>47</sup> Ya'ara Mann, 2017. *The Parent Trap: Israel's Early Childhood Education and Care Policy*, The Israel Women's Network, page 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Economy, executive order 9.3. *Local authorities budget for planning and building of day cares*, dated 14.08.2014.

<sup>50</sup> Meeting of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality. *Follow up on the implementation of day care building – budgets and execution*, dated 23.06.2015.

<sup>51</sup> Meeting of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality. *Follow up on the implementation of day care building – budgets and execution*, dated 19.06.2017.

<sup>52</sup> See supra note 39, table 26, page 86.

<sup>53</sup> See supra note 39, page 87.



As mentioned, the State is obliged to provide free education from age three. Despite the law, the State does not provide enough kindergartens for the ages 3-6 in the Bedouin localities and many of the children remain without preschool education. According to the figures supplied by Sikkuy Association, which follows the situation of kindergartens in the Bedouin localities, in the school year 2015/16, 4,843 children of the Bedouin localities were not enlisted in kindergartens. This number represents 20.8% of the Bedouin children in kindergarten ages. The regional councils Al Qasoum and Neve Midbar suffer the most from the severe shortage of kindergartens. 48% of the children in Al Qasoum and 63.7% in Neve Midbar did not enlist to Kindergartens. The percentage for ages four and five are somewhat lower but still not sufficient. Part of the explanation for the high percentage is that these councils provide services to the unrecognized villages around them where the State refuses to build kindergartens. The fact that such a big number of children do not have education frameworks stems mainly from the severe shortage of kindergartens but also from inaccessible roads, problematic location of the existing institutions and the continuous violation of the State's obligation to provide transportation to the children of the unrecognized villages.<sup>54</sup> In the years 2011-2016, while 99 kindergarten classes were budgeted for Bedouin localities in the Negev/Naqab, only 42 of them were completed. In the same years only six classes were built in the regional councils although the budget was for 28.<sup>55</sup> This failure was brought to the attention of the Education Committee of the Knesset which demanded a solution to the problem of shortage in kindergarten classes in the Bedouin localities in the Negev/Naqab. In response, the Ministry of Education took upon itself to put 97 transportable structures in the regional councils by the beginning of the current school year. So far only about 30 kindergartens operate while all the others are in different stages of planning, setting up and placing.

The incompetence of the State to provide such a basic service puts the authorities in a position where it violates its own law. Not only that children find themselves with no educational frameworks, sometimes until elementary school, the mothers are the only ones to carry the burden of discrimination. This situation forces many women to stay at home and harms their ability to go out to work. Years of neglect and failure to provide education frameworks for ages 0-3 and 3-6 demonstrates how the State reinforces patterns by which the main victims are women, that part of them and maybe even most of them, would have wished to join the labor market if educational solutions for their children was available.

#### Employment Centers and Industrial Parks

Another significant barrier that makes it difficult for Arab-Bedouin women to integrate in the labor market is the short supply of job opportunities in the Bedouin localities. The Bedouin townships were established without sufficient employment infrastructure, such as commerce or industrial parks, and therefore their residents depend on employment outside their localities. Table 6 presents some interesting findings which shed light on the employment opportunities for men and

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<sup>54</sup> Administrative Appeal 36246-12-17, **Alnasara et al. v. Ministry of Education et al.** Verdict, delivered 10.01.2018.

<sup>55</sup> See supra note 34, table 6.

women in the Bedouin localities of the Negev/Naqab. High percentage of Arab-Bedouin women work outside their place of residence while the men mainly work in their localities. While there was a decrease in the rate of Arab-Bedouin women working outside their place of residence in the years 2008-2014, there was no clear trend for men and their employment rate outside of their place of residence varies along these years. Compared to Jewish and non-Jewish women who work outside their place of residence, the rate of Arab-Bedouin women is constantly higher by far.

**Table 6: Rate of Workers Employed Outside Their Place of Residence in 2008-2014<sup>56</sup>**

	Non-Jews		Jews		Arab Bedouins (Negev)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>2008</b>	54%	35%	58%	46%	28%	88%
<b>2009</b>	54%	36%	58%	46%	31%	84%
<b>2010</b>	55%	35%	59%	46%	13%	68%
<b>2011</b>	56%	33%	59%	46%	53%	80%
<b>2012</b>	57%	36%	64%	49%	84%	89%
<b>2013</b>	55%	34%	63%	48%	64%	58%
<b>2014</b>	53%	34%	64%	50%	47%	73%

*Source: Arab-Bedouin (Negev/Naqab) column - Myers-JDC-Brookdale, Government Resolution 3708: first report, table 32; "Jews" and "non-Jews" columns – Central Bureau of Statistics, manpower survey 2015, table 2.43.*

Face value, the figures are surprising since the expectation is that gaps between Arab-Bedouin men and women who work outside of their localities will be at least similar to the general population. Contrary to this assumption, the figures show that it is the Arab-Bedouin women who mostly work outside of their localities. It can be assumed that shortage of employment opportunities within the Bedouin localities, coupled with impaired public transportation and shortage of education facilities for children, reinforces patriarchal patterns that prevent women from going to work outside of their localities and thus result in low employment rate of Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab. On the other hand, the figures show that many Arab-Bedouin women work outside of their localities and therefore it can be assumed that if there were conditions facilitating their going out to work, more women would join the labor market.

Various reports that dealt with programs to encourage employment in the Bedouin sector warned about the severe shortage of local commerce, craft and industrial parks. For example, the Adalya organization in their consulting report for the socio-economic development plan for 2017-2021, indicated that the Bedouin localities lack businesses that generate employment opportunities, a fact that harms mainly women. The report indicates that there is a shortage of commerce areas and offices and therefore many businesses remain unopened or are improvised in their residence areas.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> From 2012 the data refers to the total labor force (including those who serve in the army, mandatory and standing).

<sup>57</sup> See supra note 26, page 110.

Until the 1990s there were no industrial parks in the Bedouin localities and it took many years until such parks were established and developed. Only in the beginning of this decade significant steps were taken in developing industrial parks such as Idan Hanegev, south east of Rahat, and the industrial park in Šgīb as-Salām. In addition, as part of various government resolutions, it was decided to establish industrial parks in Bīr Haddāj, Abu Grīnāt, Umm Batīn and Shoket junction, as well as the expansion of the existing industrial parks in Šgīb as-Salām and ‘Ar‘arah an-Nagab. Nevertheless, as pointed out later in the report, the establishment and development of industrial parks face many difficulties mainly lacking development, management, finance and skilled manpower.<sup>58</sup> Apart from the industrial park Idan Hanegev, which is considered to be a success, all the other industrial parks face substantial barriers in their development and marketing.

When the economy in and close to the Bedouin localities of the Negev/Naqab face planning, building, financing and managerial barriers, the employment opportunities remain limited and do not facilitate the development of a "market enclave". Such a market usually develops in minority groups as a way to create a more accessible employment environment, and in certain conditions to increase employment rates. It seems that this is not the case in the Bedouin localities and especially not for women's employment. In order to develop employment opportunities for women the government has to create critical mass of jobs supply in and close to the Bedouin localities so women, especially those who are limited from going outside of their area, could find accessible employment. It seems that the situation nowadays is impossible for most Arab-Bedouin women – job opportunities are little, there are no education frameworks for children, and the education system is failing. Without strong employment infrastructure within the localities many women will have to give up on entering the labor market and employment rate for Arab-Bedouin women will remain low.

### Public Transportation

Another barrier preventing women from entering the employment market, which is tightly linked to the shortage of commerce and industrial parks in the Bedouin localities, is the poor public transportation infrastructure. Not only that there is a shortage of businesses generating employment within the Bedouin localities, the transportation possibilities in and from them to employment centers in the Be‘er Sheva metropolis are insufficient. While the inter-city transportation in the planned townships is improving, in most of the recognized and unrecognized villages there is no public transportation and numerous barriers prevent its development. Until 2009 there was no public transportation in the Bedouin localities. At that year the first public bus line from Rahat to Be‘er Sheva started to operate. In 2010, public transportation started to operate from the planned Bedouin townships. Until 2015, the volume of public transportation grew significantly but still not in full response to the needs of the Bedouin community, and definitely less compared to the parallel Jewish localities.<sup>59</sup> Except for Rahaṭ and Hūrah, there is no local public transportation in any other Bedouin locality, a fact that harms mainly women as they are the main users of local buses since few women

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<sup>58</sup> See supra note 39, page 37.

<sup>59</sup> See supra note 26, pp. 164-166.

in the Arab society hold driving licenses.<sup>60</sup> While the situation of inter-city public transportation has somewhat improved in the planned townships in the last couple of years, the situation in the recognized and unrecognized villages, where about half of the Bedouin population resides, remains inadequate. Although recognized more than a decade ago, still public transportation in most villages of the regional councils Al Qasoum and Neve Midbar does not enter the villages. Except for Abu Grīnāt, Drījāt and Gaṣir as-Sirr, in all other villages the buses only stop on the main road and the residents have to walk considerable distances from the village to the bus stop.<sup>61</sup> Lack of paved roads fit for public transportation prevents the entrance of buses into the villages and sometimes even to certain roads in the townships.<sup>62</sup> Same as other services and basic infrastructure the State refuses to provide to the unrecognized villages, physical infrastructures that will enable buses to enter the villages do not exist as well. It seems that with the passing of years the situation of public transportation in the unrecognized villages only deteriorates. For example, bus stops along routes 31, 40 and 60, which served many residents of the recognized and unrecognized villages, were cancelled.<sup>63</sup> Nowadays, even the option of walking some miles to the bus stop does not exist.

It was proven that efficient public transportation helps to significantly increase the number of Arab-Bedouin students (mainly women students). Establishing direct bus lines between Bedouin townships and Sapir College in Sderot brought to a growth of up to 69% in the number of Arab-Bedouin students. Between the years 2008-2014 the number of female Arab-Bedouin students in the colleges tripled (!) much thanks to adequate public transportation.<sup>64</sup> This figure shows how good public infrastructure, in only a short period of time, can bring significant changes.

Public transportation is key in making sure every-day needs of the Arab-Bedouin community are met. Whether it is the need to reach the work place, school or university, and even commerce and entertainment centers. As previously presented, the Bedouin townships were planned without employment possibilities within the localities and therefore accessible and tailored public transportation is critical for integration and perseverance of Arab-Bedouins in the labor market. Women of low socio-economic status are those who endure most hardships as a result of a failing infrastructure, as they do not own a car and depend on public transportation for their mobility.

Public transportation in the Bedouin localities only existed in the planned townships since the last decade and is almost nonexistent in the recognized and unrecognized villages. This significant barrier will continue to be an obstacle for the entrance of Arab-Bedouin women into the labor market.

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<sup>60</sup> Knesset Research and Data Center, 2015. *Public transportation for the Arab Population – State of Affairs in some localities.*

<sup>61</sup> See supra note 39, page 74.

<sup>62</sup> See supra note 39, page 78.

<sup>63</sup> See supra note 39, page 80.

<sup>64</sup> See supra note 39, page 78.

## **Government Policy for Promoting Employment of Arab-Bedouin Women in the Negev/Naqab**

The Arab population in Israel has been subject to discriminative policy in all areas of life as part of the national conflict that preceded the establishment of the State of Israel. This policy was even more strongly implemented on the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab in view of the long-standing lands dispute. In fact, until the beginning of the last decade there was no specific government plan dedicated to the improvement of welfare of the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab, in spite of the fact that for many years this has been the poorest and most disadvantaged population in Israel. In this chapter, we will briefly review the government's motives and actions in promoting employment in the Arab sector. Afterwards, we will address in detail the programs of the last years which were designed specifically for the socio-economic improvement of the Bedouin community in the Negev/Naqab, focusing on the actions taken to promote women's employment.

At the beginning of the current decade the Israeli government started to realize the necessity to invest in the Arab population and several governmental programs, with unprecedented investments, were launched. These programs did not stem from the understanding that Arab-Israeli citizens are entitled to equal rights, but rather as a result of the changes in the Israeli economy- a shift from a policy of social economy characterized by welfare state, to a neoliberal policy. The changes occurred in the mid-1980s and more so under Ariel Sharon's government, with Benjamin Netanyahu as Minister of Finance. Under this economic regime the public expenditure was cut significantly and the State relinquished its responsibility by privatizing the social services and by making deep cuts to allowances. One of the direct result of the new policy was a blow to the already disadvantaged sectors such as the ultra-orthodox, Arabs, single parent families and immigrants that were pushed into deeper poverty.

In the years 2007-2010 Israel started its negotiations for joining the OECD. In response, the OECD published a report criticizing the ailments of the Israeli economy claiming that until these ailments are addressed Israel will not be able to join the OECD.<sup>65</sup> Amongst the OECD's main findings was the long-standing discrimination of the Arab population, mainly in the fields of education and employment. The OECD's firm recommendations for the integration of the Arab population, especially Arab women, in the labor market was the reason behind the change in the government's policy and brought about attempts to increase the employment rates of Arab population.

In 2010, a committee headed by Prof. Zvi Eckstein examined the employment policy in Israel and formulated recommendations for expanding the circle of employees in Israel, especially populations with low rate of participation such as Arab women, Jewish ultra-orthodox men and people with disabilities. The committee stated that in order to increase the employment rate the government will have to form an employment support system. For the Arab sector the committee recommended several steps such as: increasing accessibility to work places, subsidized day cares, technology

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<sup>65</sup> See supra note 5.

education, placement centers, training courses etc.<sup>66</sup> The government adopted the recommendations in Government Resolution 1994 and stated that its goal for employment of Arab women (aged 25-65) will reach 41% by the year 2020.<sup>67</sup> In addition and in parallel to the above, the government decided on several programs to promote employment in the Arab sector by allocating funds for employment centers, professional training, accessibility to financial credit and more.<sup>68</sup>

As a direct result of its resolutions, the Israeli government acknowledged the special need in reducing barriers for Arab women who wish to join the labor market. Accordingly, exclusive programs were formed for women, such as "Eshet Chail", subsidized day cares, nursing studies and integration in technology schools.

#### Program to Promote Economic Growth and Development for the Bedouin Population in the South of Israel 2012-2016

For the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab, which was identified as the weakest in the Arab sector, a unique Five-Year plan was formed. The plan which was approved on September 2011 and implemented in the years 2012-2016, was part of the Praver-Begin plan to regularize the issue of Bedouin settlements in the Negev/Naqab. While the plan for the regularization of the Bedouin settlements was shelved, the socio-economic Five-Year Plan was adopted by the government with a budget of 1.26 billion NIS.<sup>69</sup>

According to the government's resolution, the main goals of the plan were: improving the economic situation of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab, strengthening social and communal hubs, reinforcing the local authorities, as well as local leadership. The resolution also states that in order to achieve the goals, extra emphasis must be placed on investment in women and young people, especially in the areas of employment and education. According to the Five-Year Plan, one of the main means to increase the employment rate was to create six employment centers (henceforth Ryan Centers), in addition to the two existing ones in Hūrah and Šgīb as-Salām, by which such centers will be in all townships and regional councils. The main roles of Ryan Centers are: directing to employment and training classes, developing connections with employers, and working alongside different factors in the community. One hundred and one million NIS were dedicated for the centers and it is estimated that the budget was used up in full.<sup>70</sup> From figures of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services, it appears that between the years 2012-2016 12,494 people attended the program, half of them women. Nevertheless, while the rate of work placement for men was 62%, the

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<sup>66</sup> Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, *The committee for examining the employment policy: final report*, 3 June 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *Government Resolution 1994: Employment Goals for 2010-2020*, 15 July 2010.

<sup>68</sup> See for example: Government resolution 4193 for the increase of participation rate in the labor force following the recommendations of the committee for socio-economic change (Trachtenberg Report); Government Resolution 1539 for the economic development of localities in the minorities sector (plan of 12 localities).

<sup>69</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *Government Resolution 3708: Program for promoting economic development and growth of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab*, 11 September 2011.

<sup>70</sup> Tali Rothchild Bitner and Noa Rosenfeld, 2017. *Follow up report: Plan for promoting economic development and growth of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab*, Citizen Empowerment Center, page 6.

rate for women was only 34%.<sup>71</sup> The Myers-JDC-Brookdale report, which evaluated the program, found that between the years 2012-2014 only 53% of the women placed at a job worked full-time, compared to 90% of men. Large numbers of jobs arranged were of minimum wage or close to minimum, when the hourly wage at that time was 25.2 NIS per hour for women and 26.8 NIS for men. In addition, there was a gap in the job persistence of women and men- 86% of men and 66% of women were employed one year after their placement.<sup>72</sup>

The expansion of Ryan Centers in the Bedouin localities brought about some achievements but it seems that the difficulties and challenges are still significant. First, it should be noted that although the number of people (men and women) placed at work in the years 2012-2016 amounted to 6,234, it is estimated that the number of unemployed people in the recognized Bedouin villages is 37,236.<sup>73</sup> It can be assumed that the number of unemployed will be much higher if the residents of the unrecognized villages will be taken into account. The relevance of Ryan Centers to the population of the unrecognized villages should be questioned. Discussions we held with professional people in the Centers revealed that the people in the unrecognized villages do not benefit much from the services offered by them due to the geographical distance and lack of accessible public transportation to and from the centers. Second, many employers are reluctant to hire people from these villages and demand an address in one of the recognized villages in order not to be obliged to provide transportation. Our discussions, as well as the data given above, indicate that women face difficulties in placement and those who are placed are usually employed at low wages.

The government's resolution stated that the Ministry of Economy will enhance the operation of vocational trainings and 10 million NIS were allocated for the Five-Year Program. The Ryan Centers are to operate and direct people to these training courses. There are two main formats that Ryan Centers offer for vocational training: training by the Ministry of Economy and training by private businesses (financed by Ryan as well). According to the data from the Ministry of Economy, which appear in the evaluation report of Myers-JDC-Brookdale, there was a sharp decrease in the number of Arab-Bedouins in the training of the Ministry of Economy, which reached the low level of 51 people in 2013 and 60 people in 2014. The rate of Arab-Bedouin women out of the total Arab-Bedouins in these years is absurdly low (2-4%).<sup>74</sup> Contrary to the trainings giving by the Ministry, the number of Arab-Bedouin participants in trainings by businesses rose. In 2007, the number of Arab-Bedouins who participated in these training courses was 491 and the number rose to 1057 by 2014. The percentage of Arab-Bedouin women, from the total of Arab-Bedouins, rose as well to 30% in 2014. However, this figure is still relatively low compared to the rate of women in general which is over 60% in recent years.<sup>75</sup> There is no data on the percentage of dropouts from these programs and how many of those who completed the training are working in the profession they acquired. It seems that these training

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<sup>71</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, *Work Plans: The program for socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab 2017-2021 (draft)*, January 2018, page 67.

<sup>72</sup> See supra note 39, pp. 23-26

<sup>73</sup> See supra note 71, page 67.

<sup>74</sup> See supra note 39, table 12, page 48.

<sup>75</sup> See supra note 39, table 13, page 48.

courses are designed mostly for Arab-Bedouin men and the participation of women in them is insufficient.

Another training area for which the Ministry of Economy was responsible was training for practical engineering. The program ASHBAL started operating in 2013 in several colleges in the south. The students (Arab-Bedouins) in this program are entitled to scholarships, stipends, travel refunds and personal guidance by the college staff and a personal guide from the Ryan Centers. The program is a continuation of the "Shiluv" program, which operated in the years 2007-2013. The significant changes between the two programs is that in ASHBAL the Arab-Bedouin students are part of the regular classes, a wider selection of colleges participate in the program, and also a bigger variety of practical engineering courses is offered. Since ASHBAL started operating only in October 2014, and it takes two and a half years to complete the studies, there is only partial and sometimes contradictory data as to the numbers of students, percentage of dropout, percentage of diploma graduates and percentage of students joining the industry. Compiling the figures, we note that since the beginning of the program about 300 students participated (with 25-32% of women).<sup>76</sup> This rate is similar to the 23% rate of women in the non-Bedouin population in these colleges in 2014. The dropout rate of Arab-Bedouin students is estimated at about 35%, while the rate of the general student population in the technology colleges is estimated at 20%.<sup>77</sup>

According to the Myers-JDC-Brookdale report, the Arab-Bedouin students faced many social and learning difficulties. Beside the need to adjust to college life, Arab-Bedouin students had little basic knowledge, language difficulties and insufficient learning habits. In addition, the graduates of the program indicated that they found it difficult to cope with the discrimination in the labor market. It seems that the many difficulties the Arab-Bedouins face result in exceptional high percentage of dropout. The program provides the Arab-Bedouin students a preparatory course of a month and a half where they study English, Hebrew, mathematics, learning skills and career centers. However, it might be that a course of a month and a half is insufficient and it should be longer and include individual guidance, in order to prevent dropout. Also, the high-tech world is characterized by its social inhibition where many of the companies recruit workers based on social network "a friend brings friend". This situation causes discrimination where groups which don't belong to the social circle cannot integrate into these companies. An incentive to employers in this particular field should be considered in order to breakthrough this significant barrier, and allow more graduates to be placed in quality jobs that fit their profession, instead of the current situation where many of them end up in teaching positions.

Another channel of the Five-Year Plan to advance employment of Arab-Bedouin women was to promote business entrepreneurship through the Agency for Small and Medium Businesses within the Ministry of Economy. The agency's activity in the Bedouin localities was poor prior to the implementation of the Five-Year Plan, and due to recent changes in the operating body of the

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<sup>76</sup> See supra note 71, page 72.

<sup>77</sup> See supra note 39, page 53.



program the number of beneficiaries is rather low and stands on few hundreds each year.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, it is doubtful whether the agency's activity made any significant changes in the efforts to improve the situation of the Arab-Bedouin self-employed who are below the national average rate.

In this respect the SAWA program for women by the Koret Economic Development is a beacon of light. This program is based on microfinance with mutual guarantee for disadvantaged populations as formulated by Nobel Prize laureate Prof. Muhamad Yonas from Bangladesh. The program started in 2016 with Arab-Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab and since then was expanded to other places in Israel.<sup>79</sup> In view of its success, the Agency for Small and Medium Businesses joined the project and since 2010 is financing 50% of its activity. The project assists women of limited financing and business skills with community loans and guidance. Already, 1,484 loans were given to Arab-Bedouin women between the years 2011-2014 for various businesses: commerce (clothing, cosmetics, toys etc.), beauty treatments, sewing and growing and selling of animals.<sup>80</sup> A study carried out by the Koret Fund on the SAWA program found out that the main beneficiaries were indeed the target audience, namely women from low socio-economic clusters. The program raised the family income by monthly average of 2,000 NIS and in addition, increased the women's independence in the family's financial decisions. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the program operates mainly in the townships and does not reach women in the recognized and unrecognized villages.<sup>81</sup> In these villages, where accessibility to public transportation and support infrastructure for employment is scarce, the project can bring significant change since many of the businesses operate from home.

In addition to the direct programs for the increase of employment rate mentioned above, the Five-Year Plan set some steps that were aimed to ease barriers faced by Arab-Bedouin women (and Arab Bedouins in general) in entering the labor market such as: improving public transportation, establishing and subsidizing nurseries and daycares, developing industrial parks and improving the education system in the Bedouin localities. The figures presented in the previous chapter show that although many funds were allocated, barriers still exist in the support infrastructure for employment.

From the beginning of the Five-Year Program, 24 million NIS were allocated for increasing the number of children in facilities for preschool children (nurseries, day cares and afternoon child care).<sup>82</sup> Although the budget was utilized, the number of children in these education frameworks did not rise (it even went down amongst children with working parents) and still in most of the Bedouin localities not even one daycare was built.<sup>83</sup> Also, the public transportation, especially in the regional councils and the unrecognized villages is not functioning properly and failing. The Five-Year Plan allocated 276 million NIS to the Ministry of Transportation for improving the accessibility of the Bedouin population to education and employment by expanding the spread of public transportation and developing main transportation roads. It seems that the only successes are the increase in the number and frequency

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<sup>78</sup> See supra note 39, page 59.

<sup>79</sup> Koret Economic Development Funds, [SAWA Direct Non-Bank Loan Fund](#).

<sup>80</sup> See supra note 39, page 65.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> See supra note 70, page 8.

<sup>83</sup> See supra note 39, page 89.

of inter-city bus lines in the planned townships and transportation to universities and colleges. As for the recognized villages (regional councils) and unrecognized villages, no real progress was made and the infrastructure problems such as unpaved roads and narrow roads still prevent the entry of buses into the villages. Even after the Five-Year Plan was concluded, the development of employment areas close to the Bedouin villages, which can increase job opportunities, still faces significant barriers and most of them remain undeveloped. The budget in the plan for developing industrial parks in the Bedouin localities was 141.5 million NIS but it is estimated that in most industrial parks the budget will not be fully utilized. Between the years 2012-2015, out of the 1908 dunams planned, only 390 dunams were marketed.<sup>84</sup> It seems that besides the industrial parks Idan Hanegev in the Rahat area, all other parks face development, marketing and managerial barriers.

#### Socio-Economic Development Plan for Negev Bedouin Population 2017-2021

In August 2016, the government of Israel decided to extend the Five-Year Plan for the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab to the years 2017-2021.<sup>85</sup> It was also decided that the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab will receive their share of Government Resolution 922 for the development of minorities in the years 2016-2020. In February 2017, the five year socio-economic plan for the years 2017-2021 (henceforth the New Five-Year Plan) was approved with a budget of 3.12 billion NIS, of which 1.37 billion NIS were allocated from Resolution 922.<sup>86</sup> The government's resolution, approving the new five year plan stated that one of the core areas of the plan is the issue of employment, with some programs that should concentrate on women's employment. It is still early to evaluate the program that had started only a year ago but from parliamentary question raised by the Knesset committees to the government, it appears that no work plans were approved yet. Nevertheless, from the government resolution and from the draft work plans presented to the Ministry of Agriculture, the body that will implement the plan, we note that on one hand if indeed the investments will be made it will be remarkable but, on the other hand, there have been worthy programs in the previous five year plan that were abandoned. We will hereby review some of the programs that are linked directly or indirectly to the issue of women's employment and relieving barriers for their integration in the labor market.

As mentioned, one of the main barriers for the integration of women in the employment market is the shortage in education facilities for children. The new five year plan acknowledges the low standard of the existing education facilities, as well as the severe shortage of 1,200 school classes and kindergartens in the Bedouin localities. For this purpose, 1.18 billion NIS were allocated for building 1,205 new school classes and 238 kindergartens until 2021. This is an ambitious goal, considering the failure of the Ministry of Education to build in the last couple of years, especially in the regional councils Neve Midbar and Al Qasoum. The present five year plan, similar to the previous

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<sup>84</sup> See supra note 70, page 5.

<sup>85</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *Government Resolution 1877: Plan for socio-economic development for the Bedouin society in the Negev/Naqab*, 11 August 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *Government Resolution 2397: Program for promoting economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab-2017-2021*, 12 February 2017.

one, is also unclear about the goals concerning day cares and nursery care facilities. The government's resolution states briefly that the department for nursery care in the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services will allocate funds from its budget for the Bedouin population based on resolution 922. The Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality did not receive clear answers concerning the situation of the existing day cares – how many children attend and how many building requests were placed by the Bedouin authorities for new facilities.<sup>87</sup>

Contrary to the previous plan, the new five year plan gives emphasis to the integration of the Bedouin population in higher education institutes, with a budget of 110 million NIS. To the best of our knowledge, until the beginning of 2018 no detailed work plan was published and the only existing plan for this purpose (at a pilot stage) is "Sha'ar La'academia" (a Gateway to Academy) in Sapir College.<sup>88</sup> Although no detailed plan was published, the goals set by the Ministry of Education for the integration of Arab-Bedouin students, men and women, are an increase of 26% for B.A. and M.A. graduates and 55% for Ph.D. until 2021.<sup>89</sup> The budget of ASHBAL for practical engineers, men and women, will continue in the new plan with a budget of 37.5 million NIS.

It appears, from the new five year plan that the nine Ryan Centers, which operate in the villages and regional councils, were instructed to give priority to women in some of the programs. The goal is that at least 70% of the new participants will be women and 55% of the vocational education will be for women. In 2016, about 50% of the participants in Ryan Centers were women and 15% of the vocational education courses were for women. Thus, at least as for reaching the program's goals, there is a willingness to remedy the situation by giving priority to women.<sup>90</sup> Yet, it is unclear how these goals will be achieved.

One of the conclusions from the previous Five Year Plan was that one of the barriers for integration of the Bedouin population in the employment market is the language barrier, especially amongst women. Therefore, a program called 'Hebrew for Employment' was opened with a budget of five million NIS for 2,500 participants. Based on the goals set, it appears that the program is designated mostly for women (1,600 compared to 700 men), but the expectations for their integration in the employment market are rather low and stand on 33% placement and with only 5% of them to earn wage of 6,500 NIS and above. As mentioned above, the placement rates for women through Ryan Centers stands on 34% and the question is why such a low bar was set since the Hebrew course was supposed to improve the chances of women to integrate in the labor market.

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<sup>87</sup> Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, *Arab-Bedouin women's employment in the Negev/Naqab – implementation of resolution 2397 program for socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab, 2017-2021 – summary report*, 22 February 2018.

<sup>88</sup> Program for integrating Bedouins from the Negev/Naqab in B.A studies in various fields, with preparatory courses in the first year, help and guidance such as language reinforcement, academic reinforcement, skills reinforcement, personal guidance, financial assistance – stipends, tuition fees, honors scholarships, educational equipment, cultural accessibility, consideration of holidays, public transportation accessibility and travel refund.

<sup>89</sup> Reply to freedom of information request from the Ministry of Education, dated 21.01.2018.

<sup>90</sup> See supra note 70, page 67.

Although in the previous Five Year Plan there were many obstacles in developing industrial parks in the Bedouin localities, no extra funds were allocated to this issue in the New Five-Year Plan. From information given to the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality by a representative of the Ministry of Economy, it appears that in the 'Ar'arah an-Nagab industrial park there are still development works being carried out, in area B of Šgīb as-Salām industrial park 15 dunams remain un-marketed, in Abu Grīnāt there are some obstacles preventing its marketing, and the industrial parks of Bīr Haddāj and Umm Batīn are still at the stages of planning and development.<sup>91</sup> It is puzzling why no decision was made to add more funds for improving the management of these industrial parks which will enable speeding up their development and marketing, as was already decided in 2012. It is even more bewildering why it was decided to entrust the development of commerce and craft in the Bedouin localities, with a 25 million NIS budget, in the hands of the Authority for Development and Settlement of the Bedouins, which operates within the Ministry of Agriculture. It would have been more appropriate to entrust this subject in the hands of experienced and professional bodies such as the Ministry of Economy.

One of the programs not budgeted in the New Five-Year Plan is the program for vocational education. Instead of reinforcing this program and increasing the number of women participating, which is very low compared to the general public, this field was left to Ryan Centers without proper budgeting. It seems that there were no lessons drawn on this matter from the previous plan and instead of reinforcing the budget of the program, diversify the vocational subjects to fit women and set goals for their integration, the decision was to discard the program.

## Summary and Conclusions

The Bedouin community of the Negev/Naqab is suffering economic hardships and poverty and finds it difficult to emerge from its distress. One of the difficulties finds its expression in the labor market where many of the Arab-Bedouin community face inferiority when competing for jobs due to their low level of education and skills acquired in the education system, and due to exclusion and discrimination. The status of Bedouin women in the employment market is marginal even compared to Bedouin men or other Arab women in Israel. As women of ethnic minority, they are subject to intersectional oppression structures which push them to poverty, unemployment or employment at low wages and unfit conditions.

In this document we attempted to show changes that took place in the Arab-Bedouin women's employment since the establishment of the State of Israel to date. The dispossession of the Bedouin community from its land and the attempts to urbanize them brought changes in the socio-economic role of the Arab-Bedouin woman, in many cases a change to the worse. If in the past the Arab-Bedouin woman had an active role in the economy of the household, the urbanization processes have

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<sup>91</sup> Discussion on the implementation of the Five-Year Plan for the socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab 2012-2016 and the Five-Year Plan the years 2017-2021 in the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality on 27.02.2018. The information was provided orally.

diminished her role to that of nurturing the children, increased her dependence on the man and brought more limitations on her movements. The planned townships did not offer modern structures that will ease the transition from a traditional society to a modern one and in several ways women's status deteriorated. Thus, many women remained with no access and no relevant skills to the employment market.

The figures given above show that participation of Arab-Bedouin women is significantly lower compared to other populations. In 2016, 16% of Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab were part of the labor market compared to 27% of Arab women in Israel and 64% of Jewish women in the Negev/Naqab. The rate of Jewish and Arab women participating in the labor force is growing, but the continuous improved trend of Bedouin women is slow and moderate and does not meet the needs of the families. In addition, less than half of the working women hold full-time jobs. Unemployment in the Bedouin villages is of the highest in the country and according to the data, women comprise the majority of job seekers. The gaps between Arab-Bedouin men and women and between Arab-Bedouin women and Jewish women in the Negev/Naqab are also evident in the difference in wages that sometimes reaches tens of percentages. Analyzing the economic sectors, we note that Arab-Bedouin women usually possess jobs with average low wage such as education, health services and welfare. The nearly one positive trend arising from the data, is the rise in wage of Arab-Bedouin women, which has reached its highest point so far, more than in the Jewish women sector and the Bedouin men sector. However, it should be remembered that in absolute terms the gaps remain deep.

There are structural and cultural explanations to the low participation of Arab-Bedouin women in the labor market and their low wage. These factors are usually feed one another. The State's incompetence in providing accessible and qualitative education system, especially in the unrecognized villages, only reinforces patriarchal norms that do not attribute much importance to women's education. High dropout rates, low eligibility to matriculation and small number of women that are accepted to higher education, directly harm the chances of women to integrate into the labor market, especially in sectors with rewarding wages.

Another barrier that makes it difficult for women to join the employment market is the severe shortage of education structures for toddlers and children. In spite of the fact that the Bedouin society is a poor one and needs subsidized frameworks for preschoolers, the number of government nurseries and daycares is insufficient. The State of Israel does not fulfill its obligation to build kindergartens for the Bedouin population, resulting in a fifth of the Arab-Bedouin children at the ages 3-6 excluded from the national education system. This situation drives many mothers to give up on joining the labor market as it is not worthwhile financially.

The Bedouin localities were built with no employment infrastructure and as a result, the Bedouin economy is dependent on employment opportunities from the Jewish sectors and high percentage of the Arab-Bedouin women work outside of their residence place. The shortage in commerce and industrial parks in the Bedouin localities drive women to give up on integration in the employment market because they are expected to stay close to home. If we take into consideration the fact that percentage of car ownership is low and public transportation is failing, we have two significant

barriers that reduce the possibilities for Bedouin women to go out to work and are forced to stay at home.

In the last decade, there has been a change in the government's policy regarding the socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab, which stems from the understanding that the neglect eventually harms the national economy and productivity. The change in policy found expression in the Five-Year Plan for 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 as well as the inclusion of the Bedouin population in government resolution 922 which is designed to advance economic development in the general Arab population. Nevertheless, these plans face many difficulties.

The total sum of government resolutions and programs for the increase of employment rate in the Arab society did not bring the desirable results for Bedouin women in the Negev/Naqab. In 2012, the employment rate of Bedouin women in the ages 25-64 was 12% and by 2016 it only rose to 19.2%.<sup>92</sup> Although the government's aim is to reach 41% of employment rate for Arab women by 2020, none of the designated programs for the Bedouin population have any secondary goals for materializing these desired goals. This is a very aggravating fact in view of the fact that Adalya, which was chosen to assist in preparing the socio-economic plan for 2017-2021, recommended to set a goal of 33% employment rate for Bedouin women, similar to the current employment rate of all Arab women in Israel.<sup>93</sup> Worse than that, there is no structured and designated program for increasing the employment rate of Bedouin women and therefore there is no entity to provide a clear picture on the specific barriers women face in entering the employment market, set parameters and follow up their implementation. Nowadays, in some of the programs there is priority for women, but in order for us to witness significant changes in employment rates, there is a need to adopt programs dedicated to women, as well as a support system that will reduce the barriers Bedouin women are facing. Public transportation tailored for women, nurseries and day cares, employment areas within the villages are only some suggestions of a system that will encourage employment. To great extent, these components are not part of the governmental programs and it seems they are not in the process of planning either. In addition, although the government resolution of the Five-Year Plan explicitly stated there should be proper representation of women in the public follow-up committees, it is mostly a small number of Arab-Bedouin men who represent the community. In this situation the needs of women are overlooked. It is therefore imperative to include women organizations who work for the promotion of Arab-Bedouin rights as they can forward change.

The blatant and intentional disregard of the men and women of the unrecognized villages casts a shadow on the Five-Year Plan huge investments. As long as the only reference in the plan regarding the residents of the unrecognized villages, who comprise one third of the Bedouin population of the Negev/Naqab, is in stepping up the enforcement on illegal building and house demolitions, it is doubtful that the programs will meet their goals. The issue of land ownership arises repeatedly in each research and each report conducted on the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab. The State's

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<sup>92</sup> See supra note 12, table 9.

<sup>93</sup> Adalya, 2016. *Strategic plan for socio-economic promotion of the Bedouin population in the Negev/Naqab. Stage B – defining core issues and strategic directions*, page 47.

refusal to find a just solution in cooperation with the Bedouin population fixates the difficult situation and has its ramifications on development possibilities in all areas of life – employment, education, health, housing and more. In the unrecognized villages there are hardly any infrastructures or governmental services, and the basic services that are available were achieved only after long legal battles. This is a governmental policy aimed at making life unbearable for the residents of the unrecognized villages, forcing them to waive their claims for land ownership and move to dense urban localities. In the recognized villages and government townships there are also land ownership claims, and as indicated by the State Comptroller, the government unwillingness to settle land issues is raising difficulties in providing services in the unrecognized villages.<sup>94</sup> The geographic, social and economic isolation from formal employment market leads many women, especially in the unrecognized villages, to “economy of survival” by which they are required to establish an economic safety net of production and commerce of traditional products for their families and acquaintances.<sup>95</sup>

The employment solutions offered by the State cannot be homogenous to all Arab-Bedouins of the Negev/Naqab. The State must recognize the differences between circumstances and constraints of Bedouin women living in townships, regional councils and unrecognized villages. The knowledge and experience of women organizations in the Negev/Naqab have much significance since they have direct connection to the field. These organizations were involved in successful projects that were tailored to the Arab-Bedouin women population, who found it difficult to integrate in the labor market. The government must work in cooperation with these organizations and finance projects that proved successful. Notwithstanding, it is the government’s responsibility to invest in the education system in all the Bedouin localities, from preschool to high school, in order to provide real and equal opportunities to the young generation.

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<sup>94</sup> State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel, *Annual Report 66c: The State’s Actions to Encourage the Integration of the Arab Population in Labor Force*, pp. 958-959, 24 May 2016.

<sup>95</sup> Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder, Avigail Morris and Heather Ryan, 2018. *The economy of survival: Bedouin women in unrecognized villages*. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 149: 80-88.





منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية  
פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי  
Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality



## Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

Tel: 08-6483804 | P.O. 130, Omer 8496500

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