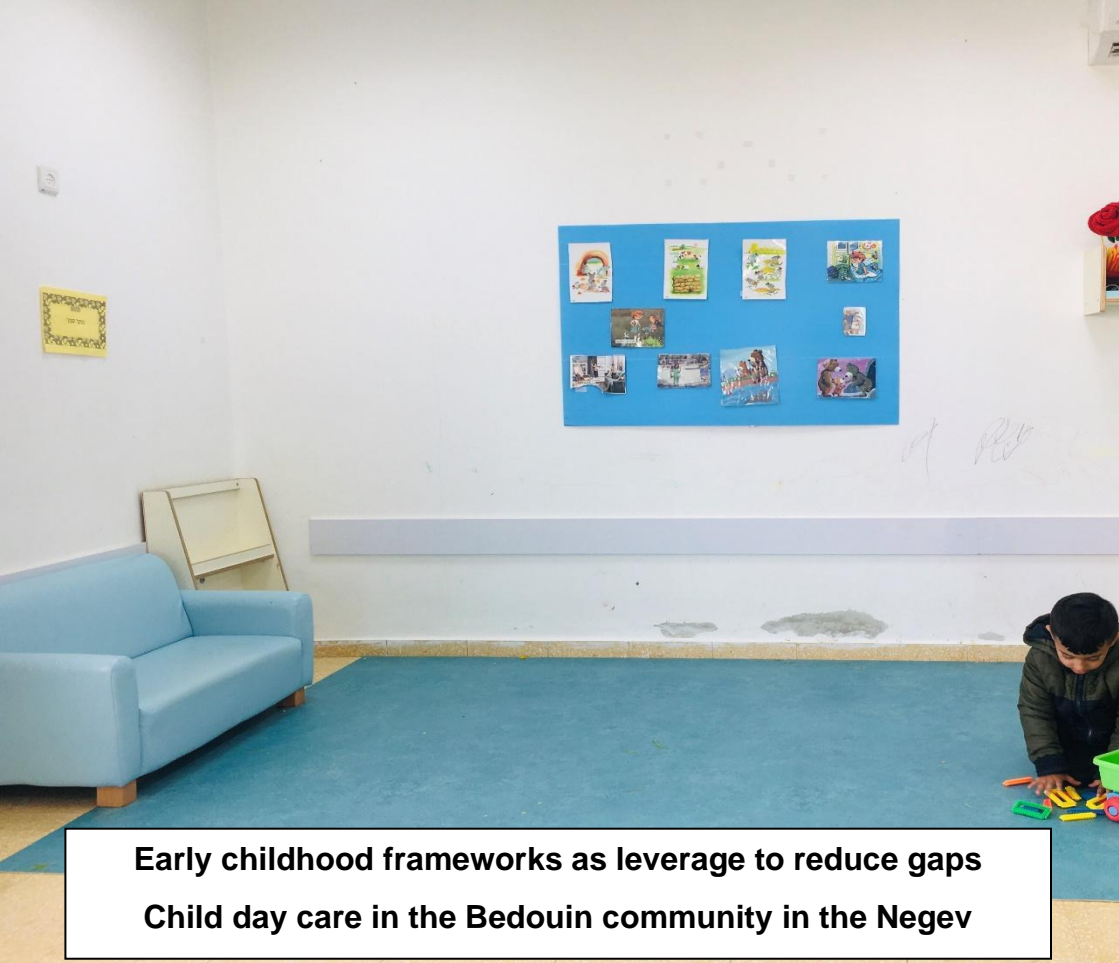




منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية
פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי
Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality



**Early childhood frameworks as leverage to reduce gaps
Child day care in the Bedouin community in the Negev**

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality (NCF) was established in 1997 to provide a place for Arab-Jewish collaborative efforts in the struggle for civil equality and the advancement of a shared society, mutual tolerance and coexistence in the Negev/Naqab. NCF is unique in being the only Arab-Jewish organization that remains focused solely on the 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, 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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In accordance with the law, the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality is proud to note that as a result of cooperation with friendly countries and international organizations that promote human rights, most of the funding for our activities comes from "foreign entities."

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2. Introduction

It is customary in western countries that the State promotes services for early childhood, with two goals in mind that respond to needs both in the educational/social sphere and the economic sphere. First, the framework's aim is to educate and nurture knowledge and skills of the toddlers and thus prepare them for the upcoming stages of their lives, especially school. These frameworks are crucial for the development of toddlers and children. Children who are in deficient frameworks or have no frameworks at all will face difficulties in acquiring basic tools and skills for life.¹

Second, frameworks for early childhood also serve economic needs. Participation of children in such a framework enables their parents to go out to work, helps the family's livelihood and contributes to the economy. These frameworks especially help women, who are the ones that usually care for the children, to

¹ Smadar Moshel 2015, Literary Review on the subject: Early Childhood Education As Leverage to Reduce Inequality: Research, Policy and Practice, page 1, <https://tinyurl.com/so7tql7>

go out and integrate in the labor market on a permanent basis. With no geographic or economic accessibility to early children frameworks, it is usually the mothers who have to give up on participation in the labor market. Subsidized education frameworks for early childhood are essential for low income families as they enable both parents to go out to work and ensure basic income to the family.²

In Israel, public services provided to preschoolers are not heavily budgeted by the State. According to the OECD, the national expenditure for children from birth to age 3 in Israel is lower than the average in the developed countries. In 2016 the annual expenditure per child was \$2,971 compared to a \$12,080 average in the OECD³. Only one third of the preschoolers in Israel attend frameworks supervised by the State,⁴ which means that most educational costs of preschoolers are financed by the parents. One of the implications of the lack of public, accessible and affordable frameworks is

² Negev Coexistence Forum in the Negev, 2018, “A Look at Arab Bedouin Women’s Employment in the Negev: a report on the occasion of International Women’s Day, March 2018” p. 20, <https://tinyurl.com/yd85nhct>

³ OECD, 2019. “Providing Quality Early Childhood Education and Care”, pp.234-236: <https://tinyurl.com/rwrzsuk> <https://tinyurl.com/y46wqr8e>

⁴ The OECD report refers to all preschool children, including those in private frameworks.

that it impairs the participation of women from vulnerable socioeconomic groups in the labor market.

Although many experts recommended that preschool education services be the responsibility of the Education Ministry, they are still under the auspices of the Department of DayCare and Family in the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry (hereinafter, Labor and Welfare Ministry). The daycare services are subject to two main legal regulations: the Dormitory Control Law⁵, and the Toddler DayCare Supervision Law (October 2018)⁶. Part of their stipulations became valid in the 2020–2021 school year⁷, while the remaining stipulations will gradually become valid within the next 5 years.

In Israel, the admission of children of working mothers to the supervised system is based on uniform criteria formulated by the Labor and Welfare Ministry. The goal of assistance is: “encouraging the integration of

⁵ State Of Israel , Daycares Control Law 1965 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y3rpek3p>

⁶ State of Israel, Daycare for Toddlers Control Law, 2018 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y6t9mryn>

⁷ Maria Rabinowitz, 2019. Frameworks for Preschoolers, Knesset Research and Information Center, p. 2 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/y69hymff>

mothers in the labor market”⁸. The financial assistance is given mainly to working mothers, mothers who are students and unemployed mothers who are entitled for unemployment allowance. The right to be admitted to daycare is based on employment status and number of working hours⁹.

The Israeli government set a goal of increasing the employment rate of Arab women to 41% by 2020¹⁰. However, some of the actions needed to achieve this goal are not being carried out properly. As for Arab Bedouin women in the Negev, the government is even further behind the goal. In 2016 only 32% of the Bedouin women (ages 25–64) in the Negev were employed¹¹. The employment rate of Bedouin women in the Negev is

⁸ Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry, Tests for providing supports of the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry, the Department for Daycares and Pre School Playgroups: Participation of the State in Tuition Fees of Daycares and Preschool Playgroups, 2018 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/yxq92jdg>

⁹ Kol Zchut, degrees of funding participation in daycare and playgroups (term), 19.02.20 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/w45ym68>

¹⁰ Government resolution 1994 of 15.7.2010, Employment goal for 2010-2020 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/ybk9mmh6>

¹¹ Finance Ministry, “Weekly Economic Review, November 03, 2019”. p 11

substantially lower than the employment rate of Jewish women in the southern region”¹²

In this document we will examine the daycare services in the Bedouin villages in the Negev. We will first point to the delay and discrimination in promoting these services, namely building daycare centers and operating them. We will then concentrate on the obstacles in populating the daycare centers that were already built, especially economic obstacles. We will also deal with the implications of the delay in developing services for employment of Arab Bedouin women in the Negev and the issue of narrowing inequality.

The conclusion will present the argument that subsidized and supervised frameworks for early age children can serve as a significant tool for narrowing the social and economic gaps in Israel. It is therefore crucial to ensure that such daycares be opened in all the Bedouin locations in the Negev, that they be subsidized according to the needs of the Bedouin community, and address the ongoing discrimination of this community.

¹² Negev Coexistence Forum in the Negev, 2018, “Perspectives on Arab Bedouin Women Employment in the Negev: a report on the occasion of International Women’s Day, March 2018” p. 16-25

3. The importance of early childhood frameworks for the development of children and the provision of equal opportunities

In the last decade there is more and more evidence to the fact that there is an unequivocal affinity between high quality early childhood education and the development of toddlers and equal opportunities¹³. It was found out that gaps in children's achievements are already being expressed in very early stages of infancy and that in most cases they stem from socioeconomic gaps¹⁴. These gaps shape the lives of our children from the first years of their lives and are manifested in later stages of their development, in the formal education system. Research shows that there are cognitive and emotional gaps between children from high socioeconomic levels and children from low

¹³ Manuel Trachtenberg in collaboration with Hadar Zer Aviv, Ron Leizer and Ehud Uziel, 2019. "Turning the Pyramid upside down", Vision and Policy for Preschoolers in Israel. The Shmuel Neeman Research Institute for National Policy. p. 4, <https://tinyurl.com/ra6am74>

¹⁴ See 1, p 3

socioeconomic levels, and that these gaps are already apparent at a very early age¹⁵.

The quality of the daycare is of great importance in narrowing the gaps and for the development of the toddlers. The size of the group and the ratio between the toddlers and caregivers influence the quality of the daycare and the services given. It is also important to enable a supportive learning environment and ensure positive interaction between the toddlers and the caregivers. In order for the daycare center to contribute to the development of the child it is important to have an educational-social nurturing environment. In addition, in order to ensure quality care it is essential to allocate training hours and professional development to the caregiving staff¹⁶.

In view of the aforementioned, the Israeli government set the goal of “inverting the pyramid” and improving the early childhood education system. But in fact, the resources allocated are rather limited. Therefore, the accessibility to early childhood frameworks is limited, the quality is low and the costs imposed on the parents are high. That is, the service is not equal but rather

¹⁵ see 1

¹⁶ See 1, p 8,9

contributes to widening the gaps¹⁷. As stated by Ms. Sima Hadad, deputy chairwoman of the Council for Early Childhood: “we provide low quality education to those most vulnerable”¹⁸.

4. Daycare as means to promote women’s employment

Daycare is one of the means to enable parents, especially women, to take part in the labor market. In Israel, public daycares subsidized by the government, operate for children with working parents and for children from low socioeconomic families. Contrary to the private daycares, the public daycares are supervised by the Labor and Welfare Ministry.

In Israel, the Compulsory Education Law applies to children from 3 years of age, which means that from the end of paid maternity leave to the time that the State has an obligation to provide education, there are

¹⁷ Manuel Trachtenberg in collaboration with Hadar Zer Aviv, Ron Leizer and hud Uziel, 2019. “Turning the Pyramid upside down”, Vision and Policy for Preschoolers in Israel, The Shmuel Neeman Research Institute for National Policy. p 4 (Hebrew), <https://tinyurl.com/ra6am74>

¹⁸ Refaela Goichman, Future Generations Conference, deputy chairwoman the early childhood council: “we give weak education to the most vulnerable”. The Marker, 12.3.2019, <https://tinyurl.com/svg62hw>

at least two and a half years in which the right to education is not met by a proper public service.

Most children in Israel from birth to the age of 3 (approximately 76% in 2016) attend private frameworks that are not supervised by the Labor and Welfare Ministry and are not subsidised, while only a minority of children attend public supervised frameworks. In the Arab society the situation is even worse: in 2016 only 16% of the children in the Arab villages attended public frameworks supervised by the State¹⁹. The situation in the Bedouin community is much worse: based on NCF's inquiry, in 2019 only 750 Arab Bedouin children in the Negev (2.5% of this population) attended supervised daycares.

From conversations NCF held with directors of welfare departments and daycare workers in the Bedouin villages, it appears that most families cannot afford the costs or are not interested in this service since the payment constitutes a significant portion of their income. This, in spite of the fact that for disadvantaged families subsidised daycares are a necessity as they can enable both parents to go out to work²⁰.

¹⁹ Ministry of Justice, 2018. Summary report: the interagency team to deal with the negative implications of polygamy, p. 130, 131

²⁰ See 19

As said, the Israeli government set the goal of an employment rate of 41% of Arab women in Israel by 2020²¹. If the government really wants to move forward, even if belatedly, in achieving its goal for Arab women's employment, especially Bedouin women in the Negev, it must enable them to go out to work²². To do this, there is a need to increase the efforts to ensure accessible frameworks and adopt designated policies for removing barriers that prevent women from going out to work. Such as: developing employment and industrial centers in close proximity to the Bedouin settlements, promoting appropriate and accessible public transportation and coping with the entire complex of problems of the educational institutions in the Bedouin settlements in the Negev²³.

Expanding the accessibility to early childhood frameworks in the Arab society is of great economic importance as it will enhance the integration of women into employment. This perception is widely accepted

²¹ Fuchs, H., & Friedman, T. (2018, March). Arab Israeli Women Entering the Labor Market: Higher Education, Employment, and Wages. Retrieved from http://taubcenter.org.il/wp-content/files_mf/arabisraeliwomeninthelabormarket.pdf

²² See 19, p 131

²³ See 2, pp 16-25

among decision makers and has gained support in the documents of the National Economic Council, among others²⁴.

²⁴ The National Economic Council, Education Ministry and the Ministry of Social Equality, 2015. "Cultivation and Extraction of Human Capital in Israel - the education system as an engine for economic and social integration of the Arab society, a comparative analysis and guidelines". p. 7

5. Gaps in the coverage of Daycares: Jews versus Arabs

Children who attend daycares and other frameworks supervised by the Labor and Welfare Ministry are entitled to financial subsidies based on the parents' income. The purpose of this assistance is to promote women's participation in the labor force²⁵. Research conducted by the Ministry of Economy analyzing the data of 2013/2014 identified considerable gaps, on the national level, in the coverage of daycare services.

The findings show that, in fact, the weakest populations are using less services of recognized daycares and family centers than the population in middle class areas. Especially low coverage of daycares was found in Arab settlements²⁶, as is evident in the following figures:

²⁵ Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry, 2018. "Tests for subsidies by the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry, the Department for Daycares and Playgroups, participation of the State in costs of tuition in daycare or playgroup". p. 2. <https://tinyurl.com/yxq92jdg>

²⁶ Osnat Fichtelberg, March 2016. The coverage of certified daycares and playgroups according to local authorities. Ministry of Economy, Research and Economic Administration. p. 3-7

1. The coverage rate on the national level of recognized daycares and pre-nursery playgroups in 2013/2014 was 24.2% (out of which, 20.3% in daycares)²⁷.
2. The coverage rate in 157 Jewish municipalities was almost double of that in 84 Arab municipalities – 28.2% versus 15.7%²⁸.
3. In the Jewish municipalities most of the children attended daycares while in the Arab municipalities most of the children attended pre-nursery play groups²⁹.
4. In the Jewish municipalities 1,592 daycares were operating while in the Arab municipalities only 79 daycares were operating, i.e., for every 20 daycares in the Jewish sector there is only 1 in the Arab sector³⁰.
5. The number of children attending daycares and pre-nursery play groups in the Arab municipalities

²⁷ See 25. p. 3

²⁸ See 25. p.8

²⁹ See 25. p.8

³⁰ Osnat Fichtelberg Bermetz, 2016. Coverage rate of dormitories and nurseries recognized by local authorities. Ministry of Economy, Director of Research and Economics, p. 8:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6bb3wf7>

amounts to a quarter of the number of children in the Jewish municipalities³¹.

6. In 2019 a third of the budget for subsidizing daycares (390 million shekels out of a budget of 1.2 billion) was given to Jewish orthodox families. This data raise concerns about discrimination between populations, and in particular towards the Arab society³². According to data from the Day Care Department, the number of Arab children staying in supervised settings was only 8,522 (approximately 7.9% of all children staying in supervised settings). This data shows that Arab toddlers receive less than 8% of early childhood services³³.

6. Daycares in Arab municipalities and in the Bedouin community in the Negev

In the past most of the number of subsidized and supervised daycares for early childhood that were built was based on the number of dwelling units in the

³¹ see 25. p. 8

³² Shahr Ilan. One third of the daycare subsidy budget goes to the students, Calcalist, 09.12.2019: <https://tinyurl.com/ta36mgw>

³³ Ibid

neighborhood, regardless of the employment situation in the area. Usually, when a new neighborhood was built a daycare was part of the plan, but building a daycare in an existing neighborhood involved a complex and lengthy bureaucratic process with problems of allocating land and finance – a process that took many years³⁴.

Although there is some increase in the number of daycares in the Bedouin recognized villages in the Negev in the last few years, most of the Bedouin children ages birth to 3 are still not attending supervised and subsidized educational frameworks. For example, in the regional councils El Kasum and Neve Midbar, which claim to provide services to 77,000 people³⁵, only one daycare is operating, in the village of Bîr Haddāj³⁶. This

³⁴ Ella Shachar, “A Longitudinal Study of the Effect of Subsidized Child Care on Maternal Earnings” – Discussion Paper, Bank of Israel, November 2019, p.13: <https://tinyurl.com/rns2ws2>

³⁵ Ministry of the Interior. Recommendations of the team to examine interior ministry grants for residents registered in the Bedouin tribes in the Negev. Presented to Mordechai Cohen, director general of the ministry. 26 November 2018. Table 15. The data published by the ministries are different from one another. For example, according to the education ministry for 2018, the number of residents in the regional council El Kasum is 46,039 and in the regional council Neve Midbar 33,032. The numbers were seen on 23rd November 2019.

³⁶ Three daycares were built in the regional council Neve Midbar but they are inactive. In January 2020 the first daycare was opened in Bîr Haddāj.

situation is contrary to the government's promises to narrow the gaps and the aforementioned policy to increase the participation of Arab women on the labor market.

In 2014, the Economy Ministry, which was then responsible for the building of daycares, declared a newer, more equilibrating method for budgeting and building daycares. Among other changes, it was promised that 20% of the daycares will be allocated to the Arab population. Later on, as part of the Government's resolution 922, it was raised to 25%³⁷. This change was presented as a significant step of affirmative action. In 2018 the budget for building daycares (for the entire population) was 371 million shekels³⁸, 25% of this budget was supposed to go to the Arab municipalities. In 2019 an additional sum of 350 million shekels was added to help build more than 100 daycares every year³⁹.

³⁷ The Committee for the Advancement of Women's Status and Gender Equality in the Knesset. Tracking the implementation of constructing daycares -budget and execution. Protocol no. 173. 19.06.2017

³⁸ Ronit Sapir, Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services, 2018 report. p. 218

³⁹ Labor, Welfare and Social Services spokesperson's announcement. "In 2019 the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry allocates 350 million shekels for building new daycares in the local authorities . 20.02.2019

At the same time it was promised that the processes will become shorter and more efficient by giving the responsibility for planning and building to the local authorities, instead of the existing procedure where operating organizations of daycares were responsible. In addition, it was asserted that the procedure under which, when communities with few resources are unable to actually build daycares, the unused balance of the budget is transferred to more established authorities.⁴⁰.

Despite the new plan to expedite the building of daycares, many of the funds were not used at all and some of them were returned to the State Treasury. In a meeting of the Labor and Welfare committee in July 2018, the Welfare Minister complained that he is “stuck with 100 million NIS designated for Orthodox Jews and Arabs” and the Treasury is preventing him from diverting the money to the periphery⁴¹.

Data provided at the beginning of 2019 by the Department of Daycares to the Knesset Research

⁴⁰ Ella Shachar, “A Longitudinal Study of the Effect of Subsidized Child Care on Maternal Earnings” – Discussion Paper, Bank of Israel, November 2019, p.13: <https://tinyurl.com/rns2ws2>

⁴¹ Knesset Labor and Welfare Committee Meeting 2/7/2018. “report by Labor, Welfare and Social Services minister on the activity of his ministry - presenting plans and reporting execution.

Center indicates that out of the 551 daycares planned for building in the years 2014–2018, only 202 were built and received the stamp of approved daycare. In other words, only 37% of the planned facilities ever reached execution⁴².

Out of the 202 daycares only 13 daycares, approximately 6% were built in Arab communities⁴³. This points to a profound failure in implementing the policy which was designed to narrow the gaps. It seems that in actuality the implementation of the Labor and Welfare Ministry only deepens the gaps⁴⁴.

According to NCF's findings, despite Resolution 922 regarding affirmative action, there is, as of now, no equitable allocation for building daycares for Bedouins in the Negev, as is evidenced by the extremely slow

⁴² Maria Rabinowitz, there p. 24. See also Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry, Ministry's workplan for 2019 (presented to Knesset Labor and Welfare Committee on 02.07.2018). Remark: according to the data given to the Knesset Labor and Welfare Committee by the Labor and Welfare Ministry in July 2018, 134 daycares were built in 2017 and 108 in 2018. The reason for the reporting gaps is unclear and maybe the number refers to daycares which received budgetary approvals.

⁴³ Maria Rabinowitz. Frameworks for early childhood. Knesset Research and Information Center. 14 July 2019. p. 24

⁴⁴ see 42

pace of opening and populating them. Today, the planning and construction procedures still take a very long time and when there are significant delays in building daycares, the Department of Daycares sometimes recalls the funds and transfers them to established municipalities (under a “first come first served” system)⁴⁵. Despite the procedure that is supposed to ensure affirmative action, its application in reality still discriminates and perpetuates the gaps between the periphery and the more populated center of the country in general, and between the Jewish population and the Bedouin in the Negev in particular.

⁴⁵ Meeting of the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women Status and Gender Equality on the subject “ follow up of the implementation of building daycares - budgets and execution. 19 June 2017



Inactive daycare in the township Šgīb as-Salām (Segev Shalom).
Photo: Sara Huzeil, 2019.

According to NCF's findings (as shown in appendix 1) 9 daycares operated in 2019 in 6 Bedouin municipalities. Seven more daycares have been completed but are empty and are not yet operating due to obstacles inhibiting their opening. This delay prevents provision of educational services for young children and prevents women from participating in the labor market. The delay in operating the daycares in the Bedouin society also delays a long hoped for increase in family incomes.

7. Obstacles preventing the building of daycares in Bedouin communities in the Negev

The Daycare Department is responsible for licensing, supervision and subsidizing daycares and pre-nursery playgroups for children under the age of 3. Daycares that receive a stamp of approval from the Department are supervised and those attending them are entitled to subsidies.

As previously mentioned, until 2014 building daycares was carried out by the organizations that also operated them. These organizations had difficulty in meeting the tasks of planning and building which resulted in delays, especially in disadvantaged municipalities and in the Arab society. In August 2014 the Ministry of Economy, at that time in charge of daycares, decided to discontinue the method of providing financial support to the organizations building daycares based on support qualifications.

The new method, which was based on allocating a budget to the local councils for planning and building, was designed to bring about an acceleration in the pace of daycare construction. The new method of funding included 3 budgeting routes: a new route for

accelerated construction, a transitional route for completing existing projects, and a special “planning” route which was designed for disadvantaged localities which have trouble allocating resources to complete the planning process up to the granting of a construction permit. This route is completed when the construction permit is granted and then the local authority must continue the process in the new route⁴⁶. In practice it seems that despite the change in method, the pace of establishing daycares is still slow and the obstacles standing in the way of construction and operation are many.

At a hearing held on the subject in the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women’s Status in March 2018, the Sikkuy non-profit organization presented a mapping of “problems and obstacles preventing equitable accessibility of the service”⁴⁷. These obstacles are manifested in the work of the local authorities as well as the work of Government offices. It is notable that many times, even when the obstacles

⁴⁶ State Comptroller, “the State’s actions to encourage the integration of the Arab population into employment . Annual Report No. 66 c for 2016. p 51.

⁴⁷ Sikkuy Association , 2010. “From Barriers to Possibilities: Mapping barriers and policy recommendations for equality between Arabs and Jews in Israel”. p. 8

are manifested on the local level, the authority, as well as the professional and economic capability to deal with them, lie in the hands of Government offices.

7.1 Barriers in planning

In general, most of the local Arab authorities do not submit requests for the development of daycares because they have difficulty dealing with a variety of barriers. Even in cases where applications are submitted, the localities often fail in getting the permit because of barriers in the application process. Most of the local Arab authorities did not finish the planning stage and did not receive a building permit which would have enabled them to apply for an interim budget. Specifically, it was apparent that local Arab authorities abstained from applying for building daycares due to shortage of lands for building and lack of valid development plans that designate lands for public purposes. The situation in the Bedouin local authorities is even worse because much of the vacant land is subject to ongoing ownership claim actions. For example, that is the situation in Ksīfih where only one daycare is operating while the construction of the second one is on hold, most probably because of opposition from the land claimants.

7.2 Barriers in organization

In many of the Arab local authorities the engineering departments are weak professionally and lack resources. In many of them there is a real shortage of engineers⁴⁸. In addition, there is no efficient mechanism to map the needs of the municipality or of preschoolers, whether on the governmental office level, or on the level of the local authority. For example, in Araara a daycare was built but many of the parents claim that it is located too far from the children's homes. Because of the distance and the lack of adequate public transportation, most of the parents did not sign up their children to the daycare. The parents explained that they cannot afford pay for both the attendance in the daycare and the transportation as well⁴⁹.

7.3 Barriers of finance: Many of the Arab authorities fear that building more daycares will cause large unexpected expenses that will push the local authority to exceed its budget into a heavy deficit. Since the provision of services provided by daycare

⁴⁸ Rasam Hamaisi 2019, Planning and Developing of the Arab Communities in Israel. Tami Steinmitz research Center for Peace. Tel Aviv University. pp 142-143.

⁴⁹ Negev Coexistence Forum Research. 2018-2019

centers is not mandatory by law, contrary to education services which are dictated by the Mandatory Education Law, local authorities that are in financial distress prefer to provide only kindergarten services and other educational services that they are bound to provide by law. This barrier is the cause of many delays in the establishment of daycares⁵⁰.

Even municipalities that start building daycares face difficulties. Usually, additional costs that are not included in the original budget provided by the Daycare Department crop up. Municipalities that are in the 1–4 socioeconomic clusters are unable to finance the additional costs, especially the Bedouin municipalities in the Negev who are ranked in the lowest socioeconomic cluster.

Daycare is not just a framework to provide supervised care: in order to nurture social, educational and cognitive skills, the daycare has to provide high quality educational and nurturing

⁵⁰ Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women Status and Gender Equality on the subject “ follow up of the implementation of building daycares - budgets and execution.” 19 June 2017; 13 March 2018

services, including, among other things, proper equipment, toys, games, and playground apparatuses. Most of the Bedouin local authorities are concerned that they will not be able to finance long-term continuous daycare operations. For example, while the Labor and Welfare Ministry does not budget in full the equipping of the daycares, the local authorities find it very difficult to finance essential unbudgeted equipment. These barriers create, not once, a situation in which daycares stand empty and unused. The difficulty in allocating resources for equipment for daycares is especially prevalent in Bedouin municipalities: in the Hura township, during the last seven years only one daycare has been operating (out of 3 existing buildings) because there was no budget to renew the existing equipment or replenish it⁵¹.

7.4 Difficulties in ensuring the continuity of planning and building

As was previously noted, in the new procedure of the Daycare Department there is no response on

⁵¹ Following visits carried out by NCF as part of preparing this report.

the part of the local authorities to the issue of planning and building barriers. In addition, the procedure follows the principle of first come, first served. Namely, if the authority does not meet the payment dates, the permission to establish a daycare is revoked and the funds go to the more established authorities. For example, in 2016, about 110 million shekels were transferred from low socioeconomic ranked authorities to established ones as the authorities who were granted the funds were unable to meet the first requirement of presenting a contract with a construction contractor. These budgets were transferred to authorities who have no problem in meeting ongoing payments. As a result, in practice established authorities enjoy budgets that were intended for authorities in the 1-4 socioeconomic clusters⁵².

⁵² Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women and Gender Equality, "Monitoring the Implementation of Daycare Construction - Budgets and Execution", 19 June 2017.

7.5 Lack of aid in overcoming barriers

The Ministry of Social Equality pledged, to the Knesset's Committee for the Advancement of Women's Status and Gender Equality, that local authorities who are in the process of building will be accompanied and assisted in completing the application process. But it later became clear that the Ministry is not connected to the online system which deals with building applications of the local authorities and therefore it has no access to the applications. In 2017–2018 MK Aida Toma Suliman, chairwoman of the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women, demanded again and again that the Labor and Welfare Ministry form an administration that will accompany the local authorities in the process of planning and building and act to remove the existing barriers⁵³. Representatives of the Labor and Welfare Ministry expressed willingness to promote such a move, but later on withdrew their support and the administration was never established.

The obstacles, reviewed here, have resulted in the fact that to this day the promise to speed up construction

⁵³ Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women Status and Gender Equality on the subject “ follow up of the implementation of building daycares - budgets and execution.” 19 June 2017; 13 March 2018

and to equalize the services given to the Arab society was not fulfilled. According to a review done by “Sikkuy” regarding daycares in Arab municipalities between 2011–2017, **half of the Arab municipalities that received a budget for daycares did not complete their establishment.** Moreover, in the second half of the said time frame, 18% of the building processes were stopped due to various barriers. Also, in the daycares that were established, the local authorities did not meet the attendance goals that were set (number of children attending the daycare)⁵⁴.

The State Comptroller in his 66c report for 2016 on “the State’s actions to encourage incorporation of the Arab population in employment” stated that this budgeting mechanism perpetuates gaps: *“The Daycare and Preschool Playgroups Department (...) did not adjust the mechanisms set for budgeting daycares to the unique needs and barriers of the Arab municipalities (...) the result is that precisely the places that are most in need for frameworks for preschoolers are benefiting from them least, and this undermines the realization of*

⁵⁴ Sikkuy Association, 2010. “From barriers to opportunities: mapping barriers and policy recommendations for Equality between Arabs and Jews in Israel”. p. 8

*government policy to integrate Arab women into employment and reduce gaps*⁵⁵.

It is not the first time that the State Comptroller criticised the Department. In 2010 the comptroller indicated that the gap and inequality exist because where there are no supervised daycares or the demand for them is smaller than the supply, the parents suffer discrimination as they have no opportunity to enjoy a supervised framework for their children and a proper subsidy that they are entitled to by their socioeconomic status⁵⁶.

In the discussions of the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of Women it was said again and again that the existing planning and building mechanism prevents many populations from receiving service. The Committee demanded that the Labor and Welfare Ministry find a solution to the problem by providing an assistance mechanism for authorities with difficulties. Despite that demand, the Daycare Department has yet to find a proper solution to the problem.

⁵⁵ State Comptroller, "The State's Actions to Encourage integration of the Arab Population Into Employment". Annual Report No. 66 c for 2016. p. 12

⁵⁶ State Comptroller, "Daycares and Preschool Playgroups". Annual report No. 61 b for 2019, pp. 1305-1340

8. Obstacles in subsidizing daycare for Bedouin parents

As mentioned above, in addition to the obstacles to planning and building of daycares, for Bedouin families there are barriers in populating the daycares, which are related, in part, to the cost of attendance.

The Trachtenberg Committee that was established following the social protest in 2011, noted several policy goals. First, quality education in early age contributes greatly to learning, thinking and personal and social skills. Second, the committee identified the need to ease the economic burden of the middle class by easing access to and lowering costs of social services. It especially emphasized the need to ease the burden of young families whose parents pay a large portion of their income for education and nurturing frameworks. The third point emphasized by the committee was the need to assist both parents to go out to work while, in parallel, creating incentives to achieve this goal.

In light of the above, the committee recommended expanding the availability of daycares at regulated costs while at the same time taking measures to improve the services. Specifically, it was recommended to change the mechanism for subsidizing children of

Arab women who work part time and subsidizing the attendance of 7,000 Arab children in daycares, in a gradual process that will come into full fruition in 2015⁵⁷. But it seems that this recommendation was carried out only in part. The State Comptroller's report, published in 2016, indicated that in the 2015 school year only 2,679 Arab children whose mothers were working part time, were subsidized. As such, only 40% of the goal set by the Trachtenberg Committee, which was later adopted by the government, was accomplished⁵⁸.

In the last four years (2016–2020), the costs of daycares services have gone up considerably: costs for babies rose at a cumulative rate of approximately 11.2% and of approximately 12.2% for children. It was found that the lower income was per capita, the increase in parental payments was higher⁵⁹.

On the eve of the 2020 school year there was an increase in tuition fees for daycares and pre-nursery playgroups while at the same the State decreased its subsidy. For example, the fee for a baby in daycare for

⁵⁷ State Comptroller, "The State's Actions to Encourage the Integration of the Arab Population into Employment", Annual Report 66 c for 2016. p. 50

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ilanit Bar. Analysis of the rise in tuition fee in daycares and playgroups controlled by the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry. Knesset Research and Information Center. November 2019.

parents who earn 0–2,100 NIS per person (rank 3) increased by 176 NIS and by 143 NISs for a child⁶⁰. Bedouin families find it hard to pay the cost of daycares and the high price increase significantly reduces the viability of going out to work. This increase in tuition fees, coupled with the reduction of Labor and Welfare Ministry subsidies, has resulted in the parents paying more while the education frameworks are getting less budget, which may harm the quality of the service.

Studies show that high costs of care frameworks reduces the feasibility of employment for mothers, while subsidizing those costs among some populations will increase the chances for women to go out to work⁶¹. Bedouin families are large: according to 2017 data, the size of the average Arab family in the Beer Sheva region was 6.54 persons compared to 3.3 persons in Jewish families⁶². It is important to note that 66.6% of the Bedouin families are poor and rate of poverty among

⁶⁰ The indicated costs are for daycares not managed by NGOs. The costs for daycare managed by NGO are 142 shekels for baby and 11 shekels for child. See Ilanit Bar

⁶¹ Negev Coexistence Forum in the Negev, A view on employment of Arab Bedouin women in the Negev: Report for International Women's Day, March 2018; Ella Shahrar, 2012. The cost of caring for preschoolers and its impact on women's work offerings". Israel Bank . p. 1

⁶² Central Bureau of Statistics. Household estimates in communities of 50000 or more

individuals is 72.9%. Among the Bedouin children in the Negev, 79.6% live in poor families⁶³.

A salaried employee who earns the current minimum wage, which is 5,300 NIS, and has to pay 1,019 NIS for his baby in daycare, spends about 19.2% of his income for this purpose⁶⁴. In practice, many Bedouin women earn much less than the minimum wage. For example, an average salaried woman employee from Rahat earned 3,725 shekels (data of 2017) and therefore had to pay 27% of her salary for one child in daycare. This calculation does not include other expenses which in part stem from the many obstacles Bedouin women face when they want to join the labor market, such as: lack of access to public transportation, lack of employment centers and industrial areas near their localities, and more.

When the family's income per person is limited, it is difficult to allocate resources for early childhood

⁶³ The National Insurance Institute, The measure of poverty and social gaps. Annual report 2018. Jerusalem December 2019. Table 12, p 28. 5300 shekels is the minimum wage set by law as of 1/12/2017

⁶⁴ Table of tuition fees at non-profit dormitories for the year September 2019.

<https://employment.molsa.gov.il/Employment/DayCareCenters/Parents/tuitionDayca>

re/TavlatMeonotMalcar_2019.pdf

education frameworks. The economic factor (tuition fees) influences the decision of the parents to leave the child in the care of the family, such as at the grandmother's or aunt's house, and not send the child to a daycare. Alternatively, the cost affects the mother's decision to go out to work because her income is usually low and the deduction for the daycare tuition and the expenses involved makes going out to work not worthwhile.

This creates an absurd situation in the Bedouin communities: the establishment of daycares is meant to facilitate the integration of Bedouin women into the employment circle but the families find it hard to pay the high tuition fees and therefore they don't take advantage of this service as is evident in the occupancy rate of the daycares.

It was recently announced that the National Economic Council, in the Prime Minister's Office, aided in conducting a pilot program in a daycare in Ksīfih to test a plan for reducing the cost to parents for sending a child to daycare in the Bedouin communities. The

findings have not yet been published, but we were told that the occupancy of the daycare is now full⁶⁵.

The Bedouin community is one of the most disadvantaged communities in Israel. For decades this community has been subject to discriminatory policies in government allocations, such as allocations to local authorities⁶⁶. The urbanization processes and providing of services to the Bedouin localities started noticeably late, and even when the services were established their quality was lower than those in the Jewish localities⁶⁷. Israeli governments have invested a lot of efforts in the forced concentration of the Bedouins into urban localities as part of a long struggle over lands. However, these efforts did not result in establishing localities that provide adequate services and infrastructures that will enable

⁶⁵ Conversation between Sara El Huzeil and a source at the local council Ksifi. 13.10.2019

⁶⁶ Eran Razin, Budget gaps between Arab and Jewish localities: did the gap narrow? Policy document. Floersheim Institute .1999

⁶⁷ Arnon Ben Israel and Avinoam Meir, "On urbanization, suburbs and deterioration - the Bedouin townships in the Negev". pp 40-49. In Reuven Pedhatzur (ed). The Bedouins in the Negev a Strategic Challenge for Israel. Netanya. Abraham Daniel Center for Strategic Dialogue. 2013

economic development. Even today the physical infrastructures and government services provided to the Bedouin communities in the Negev, in the townships, and in both recognized and unrecognized villages, are partial and of poor quality⁶⁸. These factors have pushed the community into financial hardship and severe poverty. A major difficulty is reflected in the labor market as many members of the community suffer inferiority in competition for a place in the labor market, because of exclusion and discrimination, among other reasons. As women of an ethnic minority, the Bedouin women in the Negev suffer from doubled discrimination and exclusion that forces them into poverty, unemployment or employment at low wages and inappropriate conditions⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ Ismail Abu Saad, "Social-Political changes and the development of the formal education system in the Bedouin community in the Negev, Dilemmas and challenges. pp 28-39. In Reuben Pedhazur (ed) *The Bedouins in the Negev - Strategic Challenge for Israel*. Netanya. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue. 2013

⁶⁹ Sarab Aburabia-Quider, *Building Inequality among Arab Bedouin Women in the Negev Labor Market*". pp 18-27. in: Reuben Pedhazur (ed)



The Bedouins in the Negev - Strategic Challenge for Israel. Netanya. Daniel Abraham Center for Strategic Dialogue. 2013

About 70% of the Bedouin children in the Negev live below the poverty line. Photo: Lila, Hashan Zana 2017

In the face of the longstanding discrimination and its dire consequences on the economic situation of the community, it is important to ensure adequate subsidies for children in daycares in this community, as part of implementing the principle of affirmative action.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

Professionals who deal with preschoolers think that Israel needs to “invert the pyramid”. It has to make a profound perceptual change that will be reflected in the emphasis on preschoolers since it is a critical stage in the development of children that does not fall short of the importance of later stages of education and even exceeds them. Change in the policy of preschoolers’ education can lead to narrowing the gaps – that start in infancy and widen over the years – “and make a crucial contribution to striving towards fundamental equality

of opportunity, gender equality and a balance between professional fulfillment, and parenting and family”⁷⁰.

However, in the Bedouin communities in the Negev this change is far from realization. The data shown above indicates that the government’s policy that started in 2014 did not achieve its goal. In spite of recommendations by governmental committees and governmental resolutions – the number of daycares in the Arab communities in the Negev is still meager. Only 12 daycares in 7 localities are operating while 7 other daycares are complete but stand idle due to obstacles that delay their opening and their occupancy. Despite some improvement in coverage of daycare service costs, it is still very little as compared to that of the average population.

According to the State Comptroller report, the DayCare Department failed miserably in promoting the construction and populating of daycares in the Arab communities. The new budgeting and construction system that was introduced in 2014 did not overcome the obstacles and was not suited to the needs of the

⁷⁰ Manuel Trachtenberg in collaboration with Hadar Zer Aviv, Ron Leizer and Ehud Uziel, 2019. “Reversing the Pyramid”, Vision and Policy for Preschoolers in Israel. The Shmuel Neeman Institute for National Policy Research. p. 4

Arab communities in general and those of the Bedouin communities in the Negev in particular. Avenues of assistance in planning and construction were not made adequately accessible. As far as is known, no current mapping of the needs and preferences of the residents of Bedouin authorities has been conducted. In addition, no significant organizational effort to provide information and training to the Bedouin authorities was made and no employee has been appointed to promote the removal of obstacles.

In addition, the existing tuition fee does not encourage Bedouin families to register their children in daycares. The rise in tuition fees for the 2019–2020 school year made signing up for daycare even harder and less profitable financially, which made it more difficult for Bedouin women to join the labor market.

In view of the gap in the availability of frameworks for preschoolers in the Bedouin communities in the Negev as compared to availability on a national level, the Labor and Welfare Ministry has to change its policy and adopt a consistent preference policy for the Bedouin community: not only in allocation for construction but also assistance in realization of construction budgets and in subsidizing the attendance of Bedouin children in daycares.

Recommendations

In the field of planning and construction

- The Labor and Welfare Ministry has to reexamine the authorities' mechanism for planning and construction of daycares since it failed to achieve the goal of expediting the construction and the policy did not lead to narrowing the gaps.
- The DayCare Department has to adopt the recommendation of the Committee for the Advancement of Women and to urgently establish an assistance mechanism for the planning, construction and operation of daycares. This step will result in the removal of obstacles and make the construction processes of daycares shorter, especially in the Bedouin localities.
- The scope of allotments for building daycares in the Arab communities in the Negev must be increased immediately and a goal of achieving equal rights must be set: bringing the attendance rate in these communities to that of national daycare within five years. Also, strategic thinking is needed, as well as conducting a survey to assess the needs in all the Bedouin communities in the Negev.

- Based on that survey, a special allotment has to be made for the construction of daycares and pre-nursery playgroups in the regional councils Neve Midbar and El Kasum. This allotment must be accompanied by special budgeting to finance engineering departments in these councils. A goal has to be set to bring the number of daycares in these councils within 5 years to be similar to the national rate.
- The Labor and Welfare Ministry must intervene and impose all its weight in order to urgently remove local barriers which delay the opening of daycares already built and their occupation. It must ensure that the daycares will open their doors without delay during the current school year. It is not enough just to ensure appropriation. The Ministry has the responsibility to ensure fast and efficient actuation.

In the field of developing services

- The Labor and Welfare Ministry must act to improve the services provided by the preschool frameworks and increase the supervision on the daycares in the

Bedouin localities in order to ensure an adequate level of service. This will increase the level of trust of the Bedouin families in the daycares and contribute to solving the problem of populating the daycares.

In the field of subsidizing

- The current situation absurdly involves waste of public money. The Labor and Welfare Ministry must act decisively to expand the frameworks for preschoolers so that they are more accessible to working parents as well as to parents who don't participate in the labor market on a regular and continuous basis. To do this, changes in the subsidizing and eligibility conditions must be made.
- A preferred subsidization key must be set for children in the Bedouin community in the Negev in order to make the attendance in daycares financially worthwhile and thus help women go out to work and break the cycle of unemployment and poverty. In this context, the pilot in expanding the subsidy that is taking place in Ksīfih should be completed as soon as possible so as to derive lessons from it without delay. Another recommendation is to enact a

reduction of NIS 300 per month for each child/toddler.

- In order to overcome the barriers of populating the daycares, it is necessary to enable a period of reduced rates during which the parents will get to know the frameworks and learn to recognize the benefits of daycares.

Additional recommendations:

- Move the DayCare Department to the Education Ministry
- Analysis carried out by the Knesset Research Center raises concerns in regard to the delivery of partial information relating to the group targeting of children populations in preschool frameworks⁷¹. The DayCare Department must publish current and up to date data on the construction, budgeting and populating of daycares, especially with regard to the Negev. The situation in which this information is inaccessible to the public undermines public

⁷¹ Ilanit Bar. Analysis of the rise in tuition fees in daycares and playgroups controlled by the Labor, Welfare and Social Services Ministry. Knesset The Center for Research and Information. 13 November 2019.

confidence in the government authorities. It is also necessary to ensure that if there are NGOs that operate services, they will act transparently with their information.

- At a hearing of the Committee for the Advancement of Women's Status in the Knesset held in March 2018, the Daycare Department promised that the website it operates will be translated into Arabic. However, as of November 2019 the site was not translated as promised. It is only proper that the Department act quickly to fulfill its promises.
- The number of children in daycares didn't go up but rather went down so it is recommended that a Daycare discount Committee be formed⁷²

⁷² Shahr Ilan, 2019. The committee is delayed and day care centers are complaining about huge losses.
<https://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3776005,00.html>

Appendix 1 – Distribution of daycares in the Bedouin localities in the Negev, October 2019⁷³

Locality	No. of daycares operating	No. of classes operating	No. of children in daycares	No. of daycares not operating	No. of daycares in construction stage	Observations
Rahat	4 daycares: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - El Bashir daycare - Site 2 daycare 	9 classes in the 3 daycares of the municipality	It is estimated that 301 children attend the municipality			

⁷³ Negev Coexistence Forum Research. 2018-2019

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site 5 daycare - one daycare of the association "Maayan Hashlom" 	3 classes in the "Maayan Hashalom" daycare	y's daycares 67 children in the Maayan Hashalom daycare			
Hūrah	1 daycare of the municipality	3 classes	44 children	2 – the local council is in legal proceedings against The Labor and Welfare	-	Difficulties in population due to economic barriers. Additional dormitories are needed to make it

				Ministry (delay in granting the symbol		easier for many women to join the job market.
Ksīfih	1 daycare of the local council	3 classes (additional classes are planned to be open later on)	50 children	-	1 Placed on land in a claim for ownership.	Difficulties in population due to economic barriers, lack of awareness, resistance due to a claim to land ownership.

						4 more daycare centers are needed.
al-Lagiyyih				1 daycare in construction stages. Not operating due to disagreement regarding who will operate the daycare		

Tal as-Saba^c	3 daycares: - 2 regular - one multipurpose daycare (open until 19:0) ⁷⁴	9 classes	220 children (80 children in each daycare)	-	one planned in construction	Most of the children in the dormitories were referred by welfare.
Šgīb as-Salām	1 daycare of the local council	3 classes but only to active	35 children	3 daycares inactive	-	Difficulties in population due to economic barriers.
Ar^carah an-Nagab	1 daycare of the local council	2 classes	44 children	-	-	Economic barriers and distance

⁷⁴ A multi-purpose residence does not come into consideration in the weighting of ordinary day care centers.

						from home (no means for transportation).
Regional Council El Kasum	-	-	-	-	-	
Regional Council Neve Midbar	1 daycare operating in the village of Bīr Haddāj	3 classes	337 children	2 inactive daycares, one in Abu Grīnāt, the second in Abu Tlūl aš-Šahbī	Budgeted construction of 4 more daycares.	Delays in obtaining a building plaque, and ownership claims.

Index 2 – Average monthly salaried income, 2017, in Bedouin localities

Locality	Average monthly salaried income NIS⁷⁵	Average female monthly salaried income NIS⁷⁶	Rate of employees salaried below minimum wage⁷⁷
Rahaṭ	6,593	3,725	56.7%
Ḥūrah	6,921	4,583	50.1%

⁷⁵ Mark Rozenberg, 2019. "Wages and income from work according to localities and various economic variables 2017". National Insurance Institute Research and Planning table 5. <https://tinyurl.com/tpch63z>

⁷⁶ see remark 57

⁷⁷ Mark Rosenberg, 2019. Wages and income from work by locality and various economic variables, 2017", National Insurance Institute Research and Planning Administration, table 1 <https://tinyurl.com/tpch63z>

Ksīfih	7,043	4,215	49.9%
al-Lagiyyih	6,625	4,463	55.2%
Arʿarah_an-Nagab	7,364	3,259	53.9%
Šgīb as-Salām	6,218	4,084	53.4%
Tal as-Sabaʿ	6,254	3,657	59.2%
Umm Batīn	5,284	3,669	62.2%
as-Sayyid	6,642	2,848	53.6%

Bīr Haddāj	5,052	2,578	66.1%
Bedouin tribes	5,530	2,872	57.9%



منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية

פורום דו קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי

Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality

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