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Examination of the Work Plans for the Socio-Economic Development Plan for the Negev Bedouin: 2017-2021 (Government Resolution 2397) Final Report

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Abstract

Background

In February 2017, Israel's cabinet approved Government Resolution 2397 on a five-year socio-economic development plan for the Bedouin population in the Negev for the years 2017 to 2021. The resolution aims to close gaps between the Negev Bedouin population and the general Israeli population and is focused on four core areas: education and social services, economy and employment, infrastructure development, and strengthening the local authorities. Twelve government ministries and four statutory authorities are partners to the resolution and its implementation, while the Department for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev (at the time the resolution was approved – at the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development; as of 2020 – at the Ministry of Economy and Industry; and as of the end of 2021 – at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs; hereinafter: the Department) is in charge of implementing the resolution. The Department asked each of the partners to the resolution to present a detailed work plan, including indicators and objectives for the implementation of the plan. In January 2018, the Department published a book comprising the proposed work plans (hereinafter: the work plan book). This book serves as a unique planning tool. It is also designed to serve as a basis for monitoring and following up the implementation of the long-term, inter-ministerial government resolution.

In January 2020, the Department asked the Quality Assurance team at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to conduct a study to examine to what extent the work plans for the implementation of Government Resolution 2397 served their purpose as a tool for planning, following up, and implementing the government resolution. The study is intended to contribute to the improvement of the work plans ahead of the implementation of the next five-year plan. To that end, the following aspects were examined: the best practices and principles of operation for formulating work plans for government resolutions, specifically complex and inter-ministerial resolutions; the way in which the work plans of the partners to government resolution 2397 were formulated; the quality of the formulated work plans; and the plan implementation monitoring and follow-up activities.

The study comprised three parts, which are presented in this report: (1) an international comparative review¹; (2) an evaluation of the development process of the work plans for the implementation of government resolution 2397 and plan implementation follow-up²; (3) an analysis of the work plan book³.

Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

1. Work plans are an essential tool for promoting the implementation of government resolutions. However, to ensure the quality of a work plan and its effective use, it should be developed based on strategic planning and management standards, which bear on its development process and the related practices and principles of operation as well on the structure of the work plan and its constituting elements.

An optimal work plan should include the following elements: a description of the current situation; goals and objectives; tasks and preparatory steps for task implementation; output and outcome; budget; and monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. The work plan development process should include the following features: collaboration with stakeholders in the plan development; provision of clear-cut instructions for the formulation of the work plan; development of the work plan within a fixed and short time frame; and establishment of control mechanisms and timetables for implementation.

The work plan book for government resolution 2397 is unique in that, unlike other government work plan books, it encompasses the work plans of several government ministries for a multi-year government program. Furthermore, it is focused on the implementation aspect of the resolution rather than just dealing with the declaratory aspect.

2. As regards the development process of the work plans for government resolution 2397, it was found that:
 - The representatives of the partner ministries tended to rely on work plans previously developed for their respective ministries.

¹ Lento, T., Dolev, H. & Levi-Zohar, A. (2021a). *Work plans: A tool for implementing government resolutions – An international review*. RR 855-21. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

² Lento, T., Shenhav, E., Dolev, H., Levi-Zohar, A., & Kedem-Kadish, L. (2021c). *Work Plans for Government Resolution 2397: Development Process Evaluation and Plan Implementation Follow-Up*. RR-873-21. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

³ Lento, T., Shenhav, E., & Dolev, H. (2021b). *Analysis of the Work Plan Book: "The Socio-Economic Development Plan for Negev Bedouin: 2017-2021 (Government Resolution 2397)"*. RR-865-21. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.

- The development of the work plans for government resolution 2397 met with various difficulties. Many of the officials who took part in the development process lacked expertise in the field of planning and strategy. Besides, the strict and detailed instructions for the formulation of the work plans delivered by the Department, while perceived as reflecting the Department professionalism, were especially challenging for some of the partners, who were not accustomed to applying such high standards when preparing annual work plans for their ministries.
3. The **work plan implementation follow-up** activity of the Department is of the highest importance as it is helpful in incorporating the government resolution in the routine work of the ministries and strengthens the collaboration between the ministries.
 4. As regards the **quality of the work plans** comprised in the work plan book, it was found that:
 - The work plans prepared by the partners to the government resolution are not all of the same quality; the plans do not always include all the essential constituting elements and do not always comply with the required accuracy of presentation. The task of defining outcome indicators proved to be especially challenging for the partners.
 - The structure of the work plan book supports most of its set goals.

Key recommendations

1. To define uniform standards regarding the structure of work plans.
2. To assist the partner ministries in developing work plans that are in line with the government resolution.
3. To upgrade the format of the compiled set of work plans to allow for its constant and ongoing updating according to the changing circumstances and needs, using, for instance, a digital platform in place of the print format of the work plan book.
4. To enhance transparency and thus, the trust of the Bedouin population in the work done by the government.
5. To strengthen and standardize the collaboration between the partners to the government resolution both at the planning stage of the work plans development and at the implementation stage.
6. To promote the continuous use of the mechanisms for monitoring and following up the work plans implementation, specifically the steering committee meetings, which are a most effective means of strengthening collaboration, establishing trust between the partners, and enhancing transparency.