

# **The Program for Improving the Quality of Education in Arab Kindergartens**

## **Formative and Summative Assessment Study**

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# Abstract

## Background

In 2014, the Department of Preschool Education at the Ministry of Education, JDC-Ashalim and the Bernard van Leer Foundation developed a unique program for improving the quality of education in kindergartens belonging to the Arab education system in Israel (hereafter, *Program*). The program implemented a community working model, practices, and modes of operation. It operated for six years in ten municipalities countrywide, representing different groups in Arab society in Israel. Its *overarching objective* was to advance preschoolers in the Arab population and narrow developmental gaps between them and children in the general population. The program's *interim objectives* were to enhance the quality of the educational environment; improve the quality of preschool teaching and learning by improving the quality of the professional development of the pedagogic professionals (superintendents, educational supervisors, kindergarten teachers and assistants); enhance the quality of kindergarten interactions; and facilitate parental partnerships. The program encompassed 153 kindergartens (15-18 classes in each community), including fifty in the Bedouin municipalities in the Negev, and 102 in central and northern Israel. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute followed the program, conducting a formative and summative assessment study in 2016-2020.

## Objectives

Provide the program's developers and operators with ongoing information about the challenges and successes in implementing the program, and assess its outcomes from a variety of aspects.

## Participants

All parties involved in operating the program over its six-year lifespan – from the 2014/15 to the 2019/20 schoolyear: kindergarten teachers and assistants in the 153 participating kindergartens and the 45 kindergartens in the comparison group; preschoolers and their parents in the participating kindergartens; educational supervisors and superintendents employed by the program; program representatives in the municipalities and representatives of the program's partner organizations – the Ministry of Education, JDC-Ashalim, and the Bernard van Leer Foundation; and regional directors.

## Methods

The research design combined quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### Instruments

**(1) The CLASS observation instrument (Classroom Assessment Scoring System; Pianta et al., 2008)** was used for two observation rounds. In November 2017-March 2018, we observed eighty kindergartens: 46 included in the program and 34 from the comparison group. In June 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we observed thirty kindergartens (18 and 12, respectively), but only in communities in northern Israel where studies continued regularly.

**(2) The “Perspectives” survey** was developed by the Department of Preschool Education in the Ministry of Education. The teachers in all program and comparison kindergartens had completed the survey prior to implementation, providing data on 332 children in the program communities and 180 in the comparison communities. The survey was readministered in all those kindergartens prior to the end of the program. Forty-nine teachers (35 from the program kindergartens) completed the survey on 140 and 60 children in the program and comparison groups, respectively.

**(3) A questionnaire for educational supervisors** was completed by eleven supervisors who participated in the program at its early stage, and by ten towards its end.

**(4) A teacher questionnaire** was completed towards the end of the program by 125 out of the 153 participating kindergarten teachers.

**(5) A superintendent questionnaire** was completed towards the end of the program by the ten superintendents.

**(6) A parent questionnaire** was completed towards the end of the program by 256 parents from the ten program communities.

**(7) Administrative information forms** were compiled by the research and program teams. They were filled out twice (in 2018 and 2019) by the regional directors together with the community program teams.

**(8) A kindergarten mapping form** was administered by the program team to all participating kindergarten both at the start of the program in 2016 and in 2018. The research team analyzed the data and presented them to the program operators.

**(9) Semi-structured in-depth interviews** were conducted with senior officials in the preschool education system of each community. Interviews were conducted each year, for a total of fifty.

## Key Findings

Progress was achieved in the program's four core areas. First, the program improved the *educational environment* in the kindergartens, including the designing of classes, courtyards and play areas, to better match the children's various educational needs. Second, the program contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning by *supporting the professional development* of the pedagogical professionals (superintendents, educational supervisors, teachers and assistants) by providing training and ongoing support, addressing both the content areas of quality education and management and supervision skills. Third, the program improved *interactions* in the kindergartens. The participating kindergartens increased average score in the three CLASS areas: emotional support, kindergarten organization and management, and learning support. Finally, the program strengthened *parental partnership and involvement* in educational practice in the kindergarten and in the community in general. One of the major processes in this regard was the establishment or reinforcement of an engaged parental leadership or an active PTA committee within the kindergarten, and the election of parent representatives for regular participation in the meetings of the community forum on preschool education.

## Recommendations

- The Ministry of Education should adopt the program's content areas in the process of developing the pedagogic professionals.
- The educational supervisors and kindergarten superintendents should use the CLASS instrument in their ongoing work to assess the quality of kindergarten interactions.
- Municipal authorities should continue leading the work on preschool education in the communities. It is essential for each community to have a leading team (including a kindergarten superintendent, supervisor, leading teacher, counsellor, community coordinator and the education department director) to promote preschool work and community collaborations.

# Executive Summary

## 1. Background

Arab children's participation in preschool education is essential for their development, and the quality of their educational settings is therefore all-important. The kindergarten's social, pedagogical and emotional environment shapes the children's experience and may facilitate as well as obstruct their social, behavioral and academic development. Children from disadvantaged families, in particular, stand to gain the most from high-quality preschool education.

In 2014, the Department of Preschool Education at the Ministry of Education, JDC-Ashalim and the Bernard van Leer Foundation developed a unique program for improving the quality of education in kindergartens belonging to the Arab education system in Israel (hereafter, *Program*). Its *overarching objective* was to advance preschoolers in the Arab population and narrow developmental gaps between them and children in the general population. The program's *interim objectives* were to enhance the quality of the educational environment; improve the quality of preschool teaching and learning by improving the quality of the professional development of the pedagogic professionals (superintendents, educational supervisors, kindergarten teachers and assistants); enhance the quality of kindergarten interactions; and facilitate parental partnerships.

The program was active for six years in ten local authorities countrywide: Abu Snan Local Council, Yanuh-Jat Local Council, Arabe Municipality, Iksal Local Council, Misgav Regional Council, Jaljuliya Local Council, Umm al-Fahm Municipality, Rahat Municipality, Al-Kasom Regional Council, and Neve Midbar Regional Council. These communities represented different groups in the Arab population in Israel: Arabs from ethnically mixed communities, Bedouin-Arabs from northern and southern Israel, Muslims and Druze. The program participated 153 kindergartens (15-18 classes in each community). In the small communities, all kindergartens participate, where as in the large ones only some of them did. The program was active in 50 kindergartens in Bedouin communities in the Negev and in 103 kindergartens in central and northern Israel. The local authorities selected had a well-functioning urban system, officials committed to preschool education, ethnically mixed supervision, and a history of successful collaboration in implementing intervention programs – in other words, local authorities were the changes of successful implementation were high. The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute followed the program, conducting a formative and summative assessment study in 2016-2020.

## 2. The Study

### 2.1 Objectives

1. Provide the program's developers and operators with ongoing information about the challenges and successes in implementing the program.
2. Assess the program's interim outcomes from the following aspects: practices of kindergarten staff and educational professionals in the communities, and parental awareness and involvement in their children's education.
3. Assess the program's final outcomes in terms of improved learning functions as required upon the transition to first grade, according to the Ministry of Education's standards.

### 2.2 Participants

All parties involved in operating the program over its six-year lifespan – from the 2014/15 to the 2019/20 schoolyear: kindergarten teachers and assistants, and preschoolers and their parents in the participating kindergartens; educational supervisors and superintendents employed by the program; program representatives in the municipalities; and representatives of the program's partner organizations – the Ministry of Education, JDC-Ashalim, and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

### 2.3 Methods and Instruments

The research design combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. The literature distinguishes between measuring change and the ability to attribute it to the intervention, and other interventions or changes in the environment that may affect the results. This distinction is made by measuring changes in comparison groups. For the purpose of this study, eight comparison communities were selected for kindergarten observations and the survey about the child ("Perspectives"). They were selected based on the similarity between the comparison communities and kindergartens and those the program communities and kindergartens in key attributes – size, population type, characteristics of the preschool education system and socioeconomic status. An additional emphasis was placed on selecting communities that were not under the responsibility of the participating superintendents. Among the three Bedouin local authorities in the Negev that participated in the program, one was used for comparison.

The instruments used were:

1. **CLASS observation instrument (Classroom Assessment Scoring System; Pianta et al., 2008).** For the first time in Israel, the program used a reliable and validated instrument developed in the US to improve kindergarten interaction. The instrument calculates the correlation between the scores obtained by kindergartens in each

of the three CLASS areas – emotional support, kindergarten organization and management, and learning support – and improved child outcomes in the emotional and academic areas.

2. The observations were supposed to be conducted in two rounds in 80 randomly selected kindergartens, in both the program communities (46 kindergartens) and the comparison communities (34). In practice, the observations were completed only in the first round – November 2017-March 2018). The second was planned for March-June 2020, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, including social distancing and the closure of the entire education system, observations were held in June 2020 in thirty kindergartens (18 program and 12 comparison kindergartens), only in communities in northern Israel where studies continued regularly.
3. **The “Perspectives” survey.** In order to obtain a baseline assessment of the children’s performance in kindergartens not yet exposed to the program, the teachers were asked to evaluate them based on a list of questions based on the “Perspectives” survey, developed by the Ministry of Education’s Preschool Education Department. In May-June 2016, prior to introducing the program, the teachers in all 83 program kindergartens and in eight comparison communities (45 kindergartens) completed the survey, providing data on 332 children in the program communities and 180 in the comparison communities (each teacher was asked to complete the survey for four randomly selected kindergartners). The survey was readministered in all those kindergartens prior to the end of the program, in May-June 2020, in all kindergartens where it had been initially administered. The assumption was that the children with regard to whom the survey was completed by the end of the program had been involved in it throughout their preschool education years. Forty-nine teachers (35 from the program kindergartens) completed the survey on 140 and 60 children in the program and comparison groups, respectively.
4. **A questionnaire for educational supervisors** – before and after supervision. The first questionnaire was administered in February 2018 and completed by eleven supervisors who participated in the program. The second was administrated toward the end of the program, in May 2020, and completed by ten supervisors. The small-group supervision process took place between March and June 2018. The questionnaire asked the supervisors about their professional work and relations with the kindergarten teachers and superintendents, their job satisfaction and difficulties. They were also asked about their own personal and professional development process in the course of the program.
5. **A teacher questionnaire** was administered in June-July 2019 to examine changes in the teachers’ perceptions and kindergarten practices, their challenges and difficulties on the job, and their relations with the supervisors and superintendents. The questionnaire was completed by 125 out of the 153 participating kindergarten teachers.



- 6. A superintendent questionnaire** was administered in January 2020 to assess the superintendents' satisfaction with the program, their practices, challenges and difficulties, and their relations with the supervisors, kindergarten teachers and the municipality. It was completed by the ten participating superintendents.
- 7. A parent questionnaire** was administered towards the end of the program, in May-July 2020, in order to learn about the parents' relations with their children and the kindergarten setting, collect general information about the family and child, and understand what the parents think about the preschool education in their community. The questionnaire was completed by 256 parents from the ten program communities.
- 8. Administrative information forms.** The research and program teams created four forms: (1) annual summary of activities in the various forums (community coordinator, instructor, superintendent and local program partner forums, and in some communities also a parent forum); (2) information summary about program activities with parents; (3) questions for the program coordinator; and (4) information summary about teacher education activities as part of the program. The forms were filled out twice (in 2018 and 2019) by the regional directors together with the community program teams.
- 9. A kindergarten mapping form** was administered by the program team to all participating kindergarten both at the start of the program in 2016 and in 2018. The form included general information about the kindergartens' physical condition, about the educational programs provided to the kindergarten staff, and on the teachers' needs in terms of professional development and kindergarten equipment. The research team analyzed the data and presented them to the program operators.
- 10. Semi-structured in-depth interviews** were conducted at the beginning and end of the program with senior officials in the preschool education system of each community (for example, the director of the education department or preschool officer, superintendents, and sometimes also the municipal treasurer or general director). Interviews were also conducted with the program partners – JDC-Ashalim regional coordinators, the Bernard van Leer Foundation representative, the Director of the Preschool Education Department of the Ministry of Education, and the Coordinator of Preschool Education in Arab and Bedouin Society in the Ministry of Education. From the program's second year to its fourth, interviews were held only with some of the officials in each community. All interviews addressed expectations of the program, issues in its implementation, its integration in other preschool activities in the community, feedback on its contribution and satisfaction with its implementation. A total of fifty interviews were conducted.

### 3. Key Findings

#### 3.1 Preparations for Community Implementation

Towards the program's implementation, three regional directors were appointed by JDC-Ashalim, based on geographic deployment. Their job was to explain the program's concepts to the participants and help implementing it. In addition, community preschool committees were created, and community coordinators were appointed to help implement the program's community working model. Finally, a community leader was selected – a municipal official tasked with leading the program – as was a community leading team made up of the superintendent, a supervisor, a leading teacher, a counselor, the community coordinator and the education department director.

#### 3.2 Program strengths

The interviews with the individuals involved in implementing the program suggested the following program strengths: comprehensiveness; long duration that enabled in-depth implementation; ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Education's Department of Preschool Education; uniqueness (matching needs identified in the field) versus standardization of work processes; raising the issue of preschool education on the municipalities' agendas and increasing their commitment thereto; pooling resources and help in raising funds to improve preschool services from various bodies such as the National Insurance Institute and the Ministry of the Interior; the ripple effect on non-participant kindergartens and teachers; the knowledge accumulated in the program and shared across the local authorities through learning in the multi-municipal teams led by the superintendents and visits of teachers from other municipalities in the program communities; the professional discourse and decision-making in the various community forums, based on data provided by the research team throughout the program duration; the learning kits and trainings developed; and the recruitment of superintendents as essential to program implementation and the reinforcement of kindergarten complex managers' role.

#### 3.3 Major Implementation Challenges

**Organizational structure:** Difficulty in structuring the relations and dividing the responsibilities between the professionals involved in leading the processes in the communities; difficulty in establishing the professional status of the supervisors vis-à-vis the superintendents and kindergarten staff.

**Professional development:** Difficulty in formulating an effective framework for the superintendents' professional development and in connecting them to the processes experienced by the supervisors under the program; partial participation of assistants in further education activities; and personnel turnover that made it difficult to maintain the program's professional development continuity.

**Work with parents:** Difficulty in recruiting more parents (especially fathers) for engagement and participation in kindergarten and community activities; difficulty in improving the kindergarten staffs' ability to work with parents, particularly those with functional difficulties.

### 3.4 Interim Program Outcomes

**1. Improving the educational environment.** The courtyards in 96% of the participating kindergartens were renovated, and the supervisors, teachers and assistants took a course on "Organizing the Educational Environment". In addition, an Arabic language kit was developed on this subject. Most (86%) of the kindergarten teachers suggested that the games were accessible to the children; 82% suggested that the kindergarten was a convenient place to be in, and that the space met the children's needs, allowing for their free movement. Conversely, only 69% suggested that the maintenance of the courtyard, facilities and services was adequate, and that there was no safety hazard. Compared to 21% their counterparts in central and northern Israel, 41% of the kindergarten teachers in the Negev reported that their kindergarten's maintenance was inadequate.

**2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning through development of the pedagogical professionals** (superintendents, supervisors, teachers, and assistants). In the course of the program, significant resources were invested in professional development, as follows.

- *Educational supervisors.* To promote the supervisors' professional development, two countrywide trainings were conducted, and a professional development team was formed, including experts on CLASS from teacher training institutes, to provide small-group supervision in this area. The participating supervisors' workload was reduced: as part of the program, they were responsible for 15 kindergartens each, compared to 30 kindergartens normally, and one day per week was allocated to them for each community in order to provide program supervision to kindergarten teachers.

The interviews indicated that the frequency of supervisor visits to kindergartens participating in the program was higher than non-participating kindergartens. More than half (57%) of the kindergarten teachers reported that the supervision had indeed changed; 50% rated the supervisors' contribution to better communication with the superintendent as "high"; and 46% rated the supervisors' contribution to organizing the educational environment as "high". According to the supervisors, what distinguished their role in their program was the counselling they received in the field and the follow-up on their work; their significant learning in the program; the shared language created with the kindergarten teachers; the smaller number of kindergartens under their responsibility; peer learning and teamwork; and the small-group supervision.

- *Kindergarten teachers.* Trainings on a variety of subjects, including the educational environment, positive kindergarten interactions (based on the CLASS model), and discourse and work with parents, curricula and core subjects, kindergarten management and children at risk. Forty courses for kindergartens were held on various issues, attended by some 220 kindergarten teachers in ten groups every year. Nine learning days were provided to kindergarten teachers and assistants in the communities.

The teachers reported that their relations with the children improved: they listened to them more, paying closer attention to their needs, and allowing them greater space to play and lead activities. The teachers also reported that their learning created a shared language with the supervisors. Most (88%) reported that the courses and workshops in the program were different than those ordinarily provided by the Ministry of Education. Two thirds (63%) reported that the greatest impact of the program was on their work on organizing the educational environment; only 38% rated the program's impact on teamwork as "high"; only 23% rated the program's impact on work with the municipality as "high".

- *Assistants.* The pre-implementation mapping indicated that only 30% of the assistants had received any training relevant to their role (this was true of only 10% in the Negev). The program held forty training groups for assistants, attended by some 95 assistants in ten groups each year.

The teachers reported that by the end of the program, 68% of the participating assistants received relevant training. Two thirds (62%) reported that these trainings helped in developing a shared language with them, in working with the children (the assistants became more considerate and attentive to the children's needs), and in buttressing the assistants' status as key members of the kindergarten staff.

- *Superintendents.* In the first two years of the program (2016-17), a working forum for superintendents was held, designed to promote peer learning and enrich their toolkit. In the third year (2018), work with the superintendents included mainly individual organizational consulting, and the Ministry of Education undertook to deepen the work with the superintendents, emphasizing their responsibility for the program and the understanding that they needed managerial more than pedagogical tools. In the last year of the program, in order to meet the superintendents' need for in-depth acquaintance with the CLASS instruments in order to create a shared language with the supervisors and teachers, a three-session workshop was held with the superintendents, moderated by the two CLASS professional instructors who had accompanied the supervisors in the small-group supervision process.

The superintendents reported on the tools they received from the program and applied in other communities where they were employed: organizational management, forming joint committees, implementing a shared systemic language, forming a leading team, implementing a community work plan in each community;

cultivating relations with parents and holding workshops with them. By the end of the program, the superintendents reported that it helped increase the parents' trust in the public preschool system, leading to increased registration in municipal as opposed to private preschools. Finally, they mentioned the importance of the work with the leading team and preschool forum on a shared community vision for all preschool professionals.

**3. Improving the quality of kindergarten interactions,** as assessed by the CLASS instrument. A study on 3-6 year-olds from 11 states in the US calculated a basic threshold score for each of the CLASS areas (emotional support, kindergarten organization and management, and learning support) essential for promoting child development (Burchinal et al., 2010). The percentage of participating kindergartens that met the threshold scores in the three areas increased from 44% at the beginning to 72% at the end of the program.

Another comparison was made with standards used in the US Head Start Program.<sup>1</sup> This federal program provides comprehensive quality services in education, health and nutrition for preschoolers from low-income families. The program emphasizing the quality of the settings it operates by maintaining high standards of personnel and interventions. The percentage of participating kindergartens that met the Head Start threshold score increased from 22 at the start of the program to 44 by the time it ended. Note that by the end of the program, 28% of the kindergarten still received a score lower than the Head Start threshold in two or three areas.

**4. Work with Parents.** The inputs provided to parents in the course of the program included supervision, parent-child enrichment activity, peak events and parent partnership. The administrative information system on work with parents in the participating kindergartens indicated that in 2019, between two and fourteen activities were held with parents, for a total of 74 activities (not all as part of the program). The activities were divided into informational workshops (on subjects such as literacy and the transition to first grade) and community activities such as creating a learning garden and daytrips. On average, seven kindergartens and 150 parents participated in the activities in each community. More than half (54%) of the activities were continuous – from several meetings over a limited period to meetings throughout the year; the rest were one-off activities. The parents were asked whether the kindergarten teacher involved them in making decisions on various kindergarten activities such as birthdays, parental activities or afternoon activities for children. Two-thirds (62%) answered “often” or “always”, and the rest answered “seldom” or “never”. It was found that

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<sup>1</sup> <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/office-head-start-ohs>

the kindergarten teachers' reports were similar to the parents' reports on the various aspects asked about. The parents participated in PTA meetings and kindergarten activities, but the teachers still believed it necessary to intensify the partnership. Note that the parents reported that they considered the kindergarten teacher a source of advice, and suggested that she often consulted them on how to improve their child's progress at home.

### **3.5 The Program's Final Outcome: Improving Learning Functions**

Comparison of the children's average scores in various functional areas (socioemotional, communication, language and speech, cognitive and emergent literacy) at the start and end of the program revealed that by the end of the program there was a moderate drop in the scores of the participating kindergartens. This was probably due to the COVID-19 pandemic that erupted during the year when the data were collected. The drop in the scores of the comparison kindergartens was sharper. Thus, it may be assumed that participating in the program prevented an even sharper drop in the scores.

## **4. Summary**

The program for improving the quality of education in Arab kindergartens in Israel is comprehensive, addressing several aspects: developing the educational environment, training and supervision for kindergarten staff and teams supporting the teacher's work, promoting partnership with parents, and establishing the community mechanisms supportive of preschool education.

The program has promoted the educational environment in the participating kindergartens in support of child learning and development, including redesigning the classrooms, courtyards and play areas to meet the children's various educational needs.

The program emphasizes support for the development processes of pedagogical professionals (superintendents, supervisors, teachers and assistants). The supervisors and teachers spoke well of the professional development process they had undergone in the program and the uniqueness of the trainings provided. They also noted the supervision's positive impact on their communication with the superintendent and on organizing the educational environment. Finally, they noted the program's positive influence on the assistants' work and the assistants' relations with them and with the children.

The program's main contribution to the superintendents was gaining experience in managing the leading team in the municipality (the leading teacher, supervisor, kindergarten coordinator, counsellor, community coordinator and director of the education department). This element became central to their work and contributed to processes

of shared thinking and cross-fertilization, and to a sense that there are others with whom the burden may be shared. Nevertheless, formulating an effective framework for the superintendents' professional development and bringing them closer to the processes undergone by the supervisors and teachers posed a challenge and only in the program's last year did the superintendents study the CLASS instrument, which was essential for creating a shared language for the supervisors and teachers.

To promote the quality of kindergarten learning, the program also acted to improve social interactions within them. It was found that in the participating kindergartens, the average score of the three CLASS areas (emotional support, kindergarten organization and management, and learning support) increased.

With regard to the program's final outcome – improving the learning functions required by the end of kindergarten – by the end of the program, a moderate drop was found in the scores of the participating kindergartens, compared to the beginning of the program. Nevertheless, the drop in the scores of the comparison kindergartens was sharper, possibly indicating that participating in the program managed to prevent an even sharper drop in the participating kindergartens' scores.

Finally, the program also improved work in the preschool area on the municipal level by implementing a municipal working model, including practices and modes of operation.

## **5. Recommendations**

### **Professional Pedagogical Development**

1. The Ministry of Education should continue formulating an effective framework for the superintendents' professional development in order to create a shared language with the supervisors and kindergarten teachers around the program's content areas.
2. The Ministry of Education should continue with the professional development of the pedagogical supervisors in the program's content areas in order to establish their professional status as educational leaders. The work process with the supervisors has been highly appreciated by those involved, and yet additional intensive and ongoing investment by the ministry is required to establish their professional status vis-à-vis the superintendents on the one hand and the kindergarten staff on the other.
3. We recommend that the supervisors visit the kindergartens more often – we suggest one supervision day per week per 20 kindergartens.
4. Work with the kindergarten complex managers should be further strengthened, as they can play an important role in the kindergarten staff's professional development. Moreover, the distinction between the supervisor and the manager's role should be clarified.

5. Following the progress in improving the quality of the kindergarten staff, we recommend further strengthening teamwork, particularly in kindergarten management, in joint work with the assistants and in the division of roles between them and the teachers.
6. The pedagogical aspect of the assistants' role should be further strengthened, including by providing the option of professional development in keeping with their work at the kindergarten.
7. We recommend that supervisors and superintendents adopt the CLASS instrument in their ongoing work in the kindergartens.
8. We recommend including the CLASS content areas in the kindergarten teachers' evaluation policy.

### **Work with Parents and the Municipality's Role**

1. We recommend continued improvement of the kindergarten staff's abilities to work with parents, particularly fathers and parents with functional difficulties.
2. The municipal authorities should continue leading, taking responsibility, and strengthening the preschool area.
3. The municipalities should continue maintaining the kindergarten courtyards and facilities and ensure there are no safety hazards.

### **Communities in the Negev**

1. We recommend providing additional support to the professionals in the Negev due to their unique challenges: the relatively short tenure of kindergarten teachers, the distances between the kindergartens in each community and between communities, and the infrequent visits of supervisors due to lack of time.
2. Local human resources should be further cultivated in the Negev. The municipalities and the Ministry of Education should continue developing ways to enhance the effectiveness of efforts to improve the quality of existing employees. In these efforts, technical barriers should be taken into account, including the timing and location of training workshops, the language used (Arabic-speaking facilitators should be recruited), and the compensation for the participating professionals.

### **General recommendation**

1. The evaluation of the program and its outcomes should continue. This study has conducted the CLASS observation during the COVID-19 crisis and only in northern Israel. We recommend a follow-up study to assess the impact of program participation on the teachers' work by the end of the program in all participating communities.