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Reducing Socio-Economic Gaps Between Traditional-Tribal Minority Populations and Majority Population Groups

An International Review

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This study was part of a multi-faceted research program for the Government of Israel's five-year plan to promote the wellbeing of the Bedouin in the Negev, carried out in cooperation with the Senior Division for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev



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About the research program of the five-year plan for the Bedouin in the Negev

The research program was jointly funded by the Senior Division for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. It spanned 3.5 years and includes an array of topical studies including education, children with disabilities, employment, and local government, as well as cross-cutting studies evaluating the five-year plan work programs; the values, strengths, and challenges of the Bedouin population and their leaders; key indicators of the health, economic, and social wellbeing of the Bedouin population; and an integrative assessment of the five-year program.

The research program was carried out as a cooperative effort between The Office for the Socioeconomic Development of the Bedouin in the Negev (OSBDN) and the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB). The OSBDN led the choice of issues to be studied and provided feedback on the research. MJB coordinated the research program and was responsible for the quality of the studies.

Abstract

Background

The Bedouin population in the Negev is ranked in the lowest socio-economic cluster in Israel. Government Resolution 2397 on a five-year socio-economic development plan for the Bedouin population in the Negev for 2017 to 2021 was aimed at reducing gaps between the Negev Bedouin population and the general population in Israel and enhancing the integration of the Negev Bedouin population into Israeli society and economy. The Senior Division for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bedouin Society in the Negev (as of 2021, at the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs; hereinafter: the Division) was in charge of implementing the resolution. The five-year plan for 2017 to 2021, pursuant to Government Resolution 2397, was evaluated in a study conducted by the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. The study examined the implementation of the five-year plan and the contribution of each of its parts and of the plan as a whole and presented recommendations ahead of the next five-year plan (for 2022-2026), specifying the steps required for maintaining, modifying, or improving its planning and implementation.

As part of the study, the Division commissioned the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute to conduct an in-depth review of the best practices employed by various countries to reduce the social and economic gaps between minority populations with characteristics similar to those of the Bedouin population in the Negev and the majority population in their countries of residence. The review examined the strategies adopted by governments to cope with the difficulties involved in the implementation of plans for the development of minority populations in various areas of life, such as the five-year socio-economic development plans implemented in Israel. The review was based on the premise that, among other things, such difficulties stem from differences in culture and values between the traditional-tribal minority populations and the general population in their countries of residence, much like the difficulties encountered in Israel, where cultural and values differences as well as attitudes about the government and the change processes the government seeks to promote in the Bedouin population come into play in this context.

Goal

The goals of this review were: (1) to learn from the experience of other countries about the strategies adopted and the ways of coping with the barriers involved in the implementation of plans for reducing socio-economic gaps between traditional-tribal minority populations with characteristics similar to those of the Bedouin population

in the Negev and the general population in their countries of residence; (2) to map the best practices (including the tools and actions) employed by various countries in line with the unique culture and values of the traditional-tribal minority populations to assist headquarters officials and field personnel in the implementation of policy for reducing socio-economic gaps.

The review is intended to serve as a basis for improving the development and provision of services for the Bedouin population in the Negev in view of its unique characteristics, its needs, and the barriers and challenges that it faces, and to assist headquarters officials and field personnel in the implementation of policy.

Method

The review was based on various information sources: academic articles published in the international literature; evaluation studies of government plans for selected minority populations (the Roma (Gypsies) in Europe, the Sami in the Nordic countries, and the Aborigines in Australia and Canada); government websites; and the websites of NGOs and other organizations involved in the promotion of services and rights for these populations. The information was collected from March to August 2021.

The minority populations were selected for this review in consultation with the study commissioning body based on the criteria defined considering the characteristics of the minority populations, their countries of residence, and the characteristics of the government plans for these populations.

Key findings

Four main government strategies were found effective in reducing the socio-economic gaps between traditional-tribal minority populations and the general population in their countries of residence: (1) establishing ties between the traditional-tribal community and the government; (2) promoting the active involvement of the traditional-tribal minority population in all stages of the government programs for this population: planning, development, implementation, and evaluation; (3) developing locally adapted solutions in line with the unique culture and values of the traditional-tribal minority population; (4) cultural adaptation of services and programs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The review indicates that enhancing the collaboration with all parts of the Bedouin population in the Negev (men and women, youth and adults, town residents and villagers, etc.) while addressing the unique values and needs of this population would be helpful in: (1) establishing trust and cooperation between the government

and the Bedouin population in the Negev and its representatives; (2) developing culturally adapted solutions on the local level; (3) working together for change and development while strengthening the local leadership; (4) providing culturally adapted and accessible public services; and (5) successfully implementing programs for the socio-economic development of the Bedouin population in the Negev. It has been further shown that a planned, systemic, structured, and consistent effort was undertaken by each of the reviewed countries to bring about a real change. Such an effort requires the allocation of significant resources over time, in the program planning and development stage as well as for funding in the implementation stage.

Given these conclusions, four practical recommendations are suggested:

1. **Action should be taken to strengthen the ties between the Bedouin population in the Negev and the government;**
2. **The active involvement of the Negev Bedouin population should be promoted** in all stages of the government programs development, implementation, and evaluation;
3. **Locally adapted solutions should be developed** in line with the unique culture and values of the local population, which would enable the development of infrastructures of cultural, social, and environmental capital and their sustainment; at the same time, **local business entrepreneurship and innovation should be promoted and developed;**
4. **Services and programs in various areas of life**, including education, health, higher education, welfare, finance, and employment, **should be culturally adapted to the local population.**