



Improving the Economic Resilience and Performance of Arab Local Authorities

Literature Review and Interview Findings

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وزارة المساواة الاجتماعية
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الهيئة الخمسية لتطوير المجتمع العربي
تحت إشراف الخزانة العامة للحكومة العربية

تقديم
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Abstract

The present study is a preliminary learning stage in a research project on the condition of the Arab local authorities in Israel (including, among other areas, their economic and social status and level of governance) and the government's main intervention programs concerning the authorities. The study was commissioned by the Authority for the Economic Development of the Minorities Sector at the Ministry for Social Equality and the Advancement of Women in Israel. It is part of a series of studies accompanying *Takaddum* (Arabic for "Progress") – a multi-year economic program for reducing gaps between the Arab population and the population at large in Israel by the year 2026. The program places significant emphasis on local authorities since they are a key factor in developing Arab communities and in providing services to their residents.

Objectives

The overall objectives of the research project are:

1. Help understand the condition of Arab local authorities
2. Assess the economic resilience and performance of each of the Arab local authorities
3. Identify both measurable and non-measurable factors that may be related to aspects of resilience and performance.

The study will indicate potential courses of action and help develop programs to strengthen the Arab local authorities in the future.

The objectives of the literature review were:

1. Assess the existence of theoretical and empirical information on the resilience and performance of local authorities
2. Help identify factors that may affect the performance of local authorities, and specifically the Arab local authorities in Israel
3. Build the infrastructure for the entire study.

Method

The information in the review focused on the Arab local authorities in Israel and their condition. In addition, information from around the world was reviewed to ascertain basic principles related to the resilience and performance of local authorities and processes of change in them. Information was collected in from two types of sources by:

- Searching the relevant professional literature using keywords on the internet and academic databases and by searching other sources cited in the literature identified 'sources recommended by experts' and sources familiar to the research team based on its previous studies.
- Conducting in-depth interviews with three content experts familiar with the field of local administration in general and the Arab local authorities in particular, and conducting shorter background conversations with additional experts.

Findings

The review indicates that as a rule, the Arab local authorities in Israel are weak in terms of their economic performance and resilience compared to their Jewish counterparts. This weakness is due to both the socioeconomic situation of the population living in the Arab local authorities and to the complexity of the relations between the majority and minority groups in Israel. The review identifies several key weakness factors, which are due partly to structural and governmental barriers, as well as to historical circumstances, and partly to internal factors in Arab society and the local authorities themselves: the way government balance grants are calculated, difficulties in collecting local taxes, planning barriers and shortage of land reserves that can enable development for the public benefit and for increasing the local authorities' revenues, limited staff, the population's low trust in the local authorities and relatively low participation in governing processes, as well as the rising tide of crime and violence. In addition, the review indicates principles related to the measurement and characterization of economic resilience and performance in local authorities, as well as initiatives attempted in various countries to improve the performance and resilience of local government, and whose applicability to the Arab local authorities in Israel may be examined.