



Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues

Task Force Summary:
Master Plan for the Promotion of Employment in Arab Society
Israel Democracy Institute and Portland Trust

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Introduction

The following summary outlines the main points of a master plan for the promotion of employment in Arab society. The plan was developed in 2019 by Dr. Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya of the Israel Democracy Institute and partner at the Portland Trust, economist Nitza Kasir, and Ayman Saif, partner at the Portland Trust, in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and the National Council of Arab Mayors. The plan approaches employment as a comprehensive issue beyond the qualities and experiences of any individual job candidate, and thus makes recommendations in five major areas that inform the Arab employment in Israel: **education, welfare, vocational training, job creation, and tourism.**

The full 700-page master plan is robust, detailed, and based on extensive qualitative and quantitative research in all five focus areas. The summary below aims to facilitate a broad understanding of the scope of the plan and the conclusions of its research via bottom-line goals and major recommendations. For the sake of efficiency, detailed data and discussion about existing gaps and recent trends supporting a comprehensive list of recommendations are not included. For greater detail, a 100-page summary of the proposal can be accessed in Hebrew [here](#).

Please note that many of the recommendations refer to specific national and civil society programs in the field by name. While it is beyond the scope of this summary to integrate descriptions and provide context per program, where possible, links to the program description or website are included.

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Education

Data shows that resource and achievement gaps between Israel's Hebrew and Arabic public education streams span infrastructure, personnel, financial resources, matriculation, standardized test results, and access to higher education. These gaps place Arab students, who constitute about 23% of all elementary school students in Israel and about 26% of all high school students (245,000 and 194,000, respectively), at a disadvantage upon entering the labor market.

The education chapter is the longest one in the employment proposal, identifying gaps and setting goals and recommendations at key points of the system from early childhood through completion of higher education: **budgets, infrastructure, early childhood education, teaching quality, language learning, informal education, dropout rate, psychometric (matriculation) exams, and higher education.**

Budgets

According to the authors of the study, disparities in per-capita budgets between the Hebrew and Arabic public remain and Arab education is under-resourced. In recent years, the government has gradually begun to implement differential (preferential) budgeting for Arab education to close state-funding disparities. However, some education funding is local, meaning gaps further derive from the fact that most Arab municipalities are among the lowest ranking socio-economic localities on Israel's socio-economic index and struggle to allocate sufficient resources to education.

Goals:

- Complete the differential budget reform for elementary and middle schools by the start of the 2021-2022 academic year. This budget allocates additional education funds to under-resourced populations, including Arab communities.
- Expand differential budgeting reform to Arab high schools with an emphasis on lower quintiles, by 2021.¹

Recommendations:

- Create a differential budgeting mechanism for high schools, with an emphasis on the weak and the weak-medium quintiles in the socio-economic index.
- Abolish the requirement for local authorities to match state-provided funds.
- In cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, improve and enforce efficient transfer of educational budgets to local authorities oversee the funds transfer mechanism through the local authority and apply administrative-legal sanctions to authorities that delay the transfer of funds.

¹ Distribution according to the socio-economic background of students of each institution. The indices of the institutions are divided into quintiles: strong, medium-strong, medium, medium-weak, weak.

Infrastructure

Goals:

- Construct additional classrooms within five years: 1,945 classrooms in East Jerusalem, 1,176 in the Bedouin sector, 178 in the Druze sector, and 1,062 in other Arab communities.
- Construct schools in unrecognized Bedouin localities within two years.
- Reduce all infrastructure gaps, according to criteria established by the Ministry of Education, within two years.

Recommendations:

- Formulate a minimum infrastructure standard for every school, teacher, and student.
- Devote 30% of the total construction budget for educational institutions to Arab educational facilities for 10 years or until existing gaps are reduced. Until this construction is complete, authorities must fund for alternative education structures.

Early Childhood Education

Goals:

- Within five years, 30% of Arab children ages 0-2 study in state-sponsored childcare centers.
- By 2023, all Bedouin children in the Negev of compulsory school age should be in formal educational frameworks.
- Construct kindergarten classes in the Negev, including in the unrecognized villages.
- Match the budget for the number of hours for kindergartens between Jewish and Arab education within a year.

Recommendations:

- Develop incentives to encourage private landowners to allocate property for the construction of daycare centers in Arab localities.
- Designate a specific budget for the construction of kindergartens in unrecognized Bedouin localities.
- Compensate for the difference in hours of education between Jewish and Arab students because of the additional school day in the Jewish education system.²

Teaching Quality

Goals:

- Within five years, the general matriculation rate of Arab students should equal that of Jewish students.³

² While Jewish kindergartens meet Sunday-Friday, many Arab kindergartens meet Sunday-Thursday.

³ Bagruyot (matriculation exams) are a key component of completing high school in Israel. This goal aims to bring the matriculation exam completion rate of Arab students to equal that of Jewish students, thus enhancing their eligibility for higher education.

Recommendations:

- Diversify and expand professional development and further education opportunities for teachers of core academic subjects.
- Offer an incentive package to encourage early retirement for older teachers.
- Improving methods for placing and assessing teachers and their performance.
- Establishing rigorous criteria for determining the quality of lecturers in teacher training college programs.
- Improve the caliber of teachers by setting a minimum threshold of matriculation scores for admission into teacher training college programs.

Language Learning

Arabic

Goals:

Raise the average reading score among Arab citizens of Israel on the next PISA test (The Program for International Student Assessment, administered to 15-year-old students around the world every three years) to 500.

Recommendations:

- Add three weekly hours of Arabic language classes for all Arab students.
- Create periodic tests to examine students' language abilities and monitor progress.
- Arab language instructors should take refresher courses on linguistic instruction at least once every two years.

Hebrew

Goals:

- Raise the average score on Arabic-speakers' Hebrew exams by seven points from 2021-2026.

Recommendations:

- Over the next four years, the Ministry of Education should increase the number of native Hebrew-speaker Hebrew teachers by 20% (5% each year).
- **The "Occupational Hebrew" program** should be extended to all Arab schools in Israel by the beginning of the 2022 academic year.
- A nationwide assessment of all schools should be performed in 2021.
- Prioritize Hebrew instruction in first and second grades by increasing weekly instruction hours and implementing additional strategies.
- Encourage formal and informal interactions between Jewish and Arab students in order to increase Arab students' Hebrew language exposure.
- Exercise pedagogical supervision over Hebrew instruction in Hebrew rather than in Arabic.
- Biology or physics should be taught in Hebrew in all Arab schools.

- Establish training courses in teacher training colleges for teaching Hebrew as a second language within two years.
- Support the integration 16-18-year-old Arab students into Jewish-majority workplaces during summer vacation

English

Goals:

- Raising the rate of those taking “five units” matriculation exams (the highest and most advanced level) by ten percentage points, so that 30% of Arab students will be taking 5 units by 2026, and 50% by 2030.
- Raise the average matriculation grades in English to at least 105 among Arab undergraduate students in academic colleges by 2026.
- Increase the rate of Arabs who reach the level of exemption in English on psychometric exams by ten percentage points by 2026.

Recommendations:

- Raise the average matriculation score of English teachers in the Arabic school system to a level of 111 in five English units or eligibility for a full exemption in English in psychometric exams.
- Add three hours of weekly reinforcement in English for Arab students in first and second grades of the weakest quintiles.
- Add 500 native English-speaking English teachers by 2026 (100 each year).
- Fund English-language summer camps for municipalities that fall in the four lowest socioeconomic rankings (out of ten) by the summer of 2021.

Informal Education

Goals:

- At least 50% of the Arab students ages 6-18 participate in informal education activities by 2024.
- Train 200 informal education professionals each year in 2021-2026.

Recommendations:

- Develop supervisory and quality control systems for informal education professionals by 2022.
- Develop in-depth training to build a cadre of high-level informal educators in Arab society.
- Increase the percentage of Arab participants in the "cadets for informal education" program to 50%.
- Increase the overall rate of volunteering in community initiatives by 10%.
- Establish professional programs to support formal education teachers transitioning into the field of informal education, subject to their suitability for the field. Encourage outstanding students to work in the informal education field by awarding scholarships.

- Continue the financial allocation under GR-922 for the five years following the end of the program.
- Conduct formal evaluations of all informal education activities and formulate recommendations for each local implementer accordingly by 2022.
- Establish and budget for centers similar to the [Tamar Center](#) in each local authority until 2023.
- Expand the Ministry of Education's plan, titled "Institutes for Community Leadership in Arab Society" to allow for 200 additional individual participants annually.

Dropout Rate

Goals:

- Reducing the dropout rate to 3% among Arab boys and to 1.1% among Arab girls within three years.

Recommendations

- 100% of the schools that meet the dropout prevention budgeting criteria from the 2021 school year and onwards can apply for special funding from the Ministry of Education.
- In order to promote dropout reduction, ensure that the budgeting protocols (i.e. local matching requirements) for supervision and regular visitation are not a barrier.
- Establish an economic incentive for schools and communities to reduce their dropout rates.

Psychometric (higher education admissions) Exams

Goals:

- Raise the average of psychometric scores in Arabic to 520 by 2026.
- Formulate an alternative to psychometric tests within 3 years.

Recommendations:

- Provide 5 minutes of extra time per chapter automatically for examinees in the Arabic language in light of the objective time differences in reading questionnaires.
- Conduct psychometric preparatory courses in all Arab schools within two years.
- Promoting a program to award vouchers for psychometric courses to Arab high school graduates who volunteer in the community after graduating from high school.
- Explore collaborations with [the Feuerstein Institute](#) or a similar institute as an alternative to the psychometric examination in Arab society.

Higher Education

Goals:

- Reducing the number of Arab students studying in higher education institutions outside of Israel by half - 7,000 students, of which no more than 2,500 study in the Palestinian Authority, by 2024.
- Increasing the number of students in high-tech fields of study by 1,000 annually.

- Reducing the proportion of Arabs applying for the teaching field of study to 10% of the total number of students.
- Increase the number of Arab students applying to high-tech fields to equal that among Jewish students.
- Increasing the rate of Arab students participating in Israeli academia - in line with their age group.

Recommendations:

- Expand the academic and vocational high school guidance counselor program operating under the Council for Higher Education's "[Road Program](#)"⁴ to all high schools in the Arab education system.
- Make *mechina* (gap year programs between high school and university or military service) available and accessible to the Arab population.
- Allow medical students to be eligible for the Irteka Scholarship once again.
- Broaden the focus of Arab colleges beyond training teachers to a wider range of subjects, with an emphasis on technological subjects.
- Promote a large-scale Arabic-language campaign regarding the benefits of studying in Israeli high education institutions.

Welfare

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the Israeli government has pursued a policy of sharp cuts in welfare benefits. Disadvantaged populations were most adversely affected by these cuts, including the Arab society, whose poverty rates jumped above 50%.

The welfare cuts were intended to encourage people to find jobs. However, according to the authors, employment alone did not guarantee a way out of poverty among vulnerable population groups. Rather, jobs need to provide a living wage and a clear career path with advancement potential. For Arab citizens of Israel, and women in particular, this is challenging due to geography, limited education, and lack of access to professional networks. The authors thus suggest a number of steps to ensure that Arab Citizens can attain quality employment, as well as reduce the number of Arabs who are below the poverty line and in need of welfare services.

The document describes recommendations and goals related to three key areas: labor grants, employment programs, and local welfare departments. Broadly speaking, these recommendations focus on ensuring that Arabs access existing support systems and that successful programs are further expanded in terms of content and participation.

⁴ National Program to make higher education accessible to the Arab, Druze, Circassian and Bedouin communities.

Negative Income Tax⁵

Goals:

- Raise the rate of grants in Arab society to the national average.

Recommendations:

- Complete a survey every two years on trends in eligibility and receipt of work grants segmented by population groups, gender and geographical areas. Through this survey, it will be possible to deduce why the Arab population's participation rate is low.
- Raise the rate of those who exercise their eligibility in Arab society to the national average.

Employment Programs

The "Woman of Valor" Program

Goals:

- Expanding the program to Arab and mixed localities.
- Increase the wages of Arab women and the number of women with high-earning jobs.

Recommendations:

- Map and survey locations that require additional Woman of Valor groups and locations that do not currently have the program but would benefit from it.
- Add additional program coordinators in large municipalities, where the need arises.
- As most Arab women participating in the program have low salaries and limited number of jobs, the program should include a designated budget for vocational training.
- Improve coordination between the program and the government.

The "Breathe Wide" Program

Goals

- Institute the Ministry of Welfare "Breathe Wide" program in all Arab and mixed localities within 5 years.
- Set an employment and wage rate target for Arab women participating in the program based on existing employment rates and average wages.

Recommendations:

- Social workers and family accompaniment should be assigned to all Arab and mixed localities that do not currently have the program within five years.

⁵ A system within the income tax framework in which people earning below a certain income level receive supplemental funds from the government instead of paying taxes.

- Due to the low employment rates of Arab women, emphasis should be placed on removing barriers to successful labor market integration.

Welfare Departments in Local Authorities

Goals:

- Adopting a progressive budgeting method in which the final budget per recipient will be inversely related to the socio-economic ranking of the locality by the Central Bureau of Statistics.
- Social workers should be distributed to local authorities based on a formula that accounts for the authority's general rate of residents in need of assistance.
- Maximize the ability of local authorities from the lowest four socio-economic rankings (out of ten) to employ social workers and utilize their services in accordance to the Ministry of Welfare standards for their locality.

Recommendations:

- Create a ranked funding rate that corresponds to the economic status of authorities according to their socio-economic status with the Central Bureau of Statistics,
- Full transparency regarding the allocation principles of the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services.
- Re-examine the formula for allocating social workers and correct it so that there will be equal distribution based on the needs of each local authority.
- Allocate funding for social workers in accordance with the amended allocation formula so that weaker local authorities, including Arab authorities, receive what they need. The existing allocation gap should be reduced within five years.

Vocational training

Employment data indicates that existing vocational training frameworks do not significantly advance its graduates in the labor market, particularly for Arab women. Thus, the master plan recommends creating a unique and tailored initiative for vocational training for Arab society, with an emphasis on women. The plan also describes a clear link between Hebrew language skills and employment rate among Arab women. For many women, their lack of Hebrew remains a significant barrier to employment. There are currently three main frameworks that provide Hebrew classes for adults: Riyan Centers, the employment service, and preparatory courses for vocational training. The plan recommends increasing the number of women studying in these frameworks and improving the quality of Hebrew education.

Goals:

- Develop and launch a new vocational training initiative for Arab society based on existing [Riyan Centers](#).⁶This effort should include an additional focus on strengthening employer relations.

⁶ Riyan Centers for the Advancement of Employment in Arab, Bedouin, Druze, and Circassian Society in Israel were established at the initiative of the Israeli Government and the JDC and began operating in 2007.

- Increase the annual number of students in preparatory courses for Hebrew language studies to 20,000 students per year, within 5 years.

Recommendations:

- Recruit and train Hebrew teachers (including from Jewish society).
- Develop pedagogical materials for Hebrew and improve existing teaching materials
- Standardize the different levels of study.
- Formulating an online course that is it accessible to the target population.
- Use the infrastructure of the Rayan Centers, youth centers, internships, employment programs and employment service to operate these preparatory courses.
- Monitor student and alumni progress and conduct research on best practices through the new vocational training initiative.
- Design and update vocational training programs in the initiative based on current research and the unique needs of Arab society.

Job Creation

The master plan includes a chapter on the supply and demand for diverse jobs in Arab society, which it describes as critical for increasing employment. To create demand for work in Arab society, it is not only necessary to create jobs, but to ensure that employment opportunities are accessible and reflect the unique obstacles in Arab society. The plan includes several approaches including government programs, regulations, and incentives to encourage employee diversity across **five sub-sections: industrial and commercial zones, private sector, career ladders, entrepreneurship, and the public sector.**

Industrial and Commercial Zones

Goals (by 2026):

- 10% of Arab localities have industrial zones.
- After the 10% goal is achieved, the industrial zone budget for Arab society should align with the percentage of Arab citizens of Israel out of the total population.
- Complete all industrial zones currently planned or under development.
- Plan and develop approximately 1,000 dunams of new industrial zones in Arab localities.
- Include Arab authorities in existing industrial areas.
- Continue to allocate 42.5% of the general budget for marketing, development, and management of industrial zones to those in Arab areas or in shared Jewish-Arab areas.

Recommendations:

- Adopt the Director of Industrial Development at the Ministry of Economy multi-year plan since 2016.

The Private Sector

Goals:

- Increase the percentage of employees at non-Arab businesses who are Arab citizens to 10% by 2025.

- Create economic incentives to encourage employee diversity hiring practices at Israeli businesses, with an emphasis on large companies.
- Incentivize large and important companies to operate or have offices in Arab localities.

Recommendations:

The recommendations for the private sector fall into two broad categories: increasing employee diversity at major companies in the Israeli economy and attracting these businesses to Arab localities.

- Require large companies to employ a designated workforce diversity specialist.
- Publish an annual index of employment diversity in key companies.
- Formulate a track for attracting key companies to industrial zones in Arab localities, following the model Director General of the Ministry of Industry Directive [4.49](#) (track for attracting factories to Bedouin localities in the Negev).⁷
- Provide government support for companies that will allow staff to work in rented offices near their area of residence in Arab localities.

Career Ladders

Goals:

- Raise the annual number of Arab women participating in the government [4.17 Program](#)⁸ by 200.
- Raising the number of requests for support submitted to the Investment and Development Authority submitted by Arab-owned businesses or workers from Arab localities to 10% of the total requests.
- Increase the number of Arab workers joining the [4.20 Program](#)⁹ to 150 per year.

Recommendations:

- Creating a track for minimum wage employees within the **4.17 Program** that allows for the submission of applications for support even in minimum wage employment. This track should only be available for population groups with low employment rates, including Arab women, and operate in localities with high unemployment rates.
- Increase marketing efforts of the [4.18 Program](#)¹⁰ in Arab society.
- All Arab localities should be eligible for support under **the 4.18 Program**.
- **Program 4.20** should expand due to the increase in the number of Arab students in high-tech fields.

⁷ In accordance with Government Resolution 2397 of December 2, 2017, the Ministry of Economy and Industry, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, formulated a route to attract industrial plants to industrial areas in the Bedouin local authorities in the Be'er Sheva sub-district.

⁸ Supporting businesses in Israel by contributing to the employee's wage costs at various rates and times. A joint program of the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance.

⁹ A Ministry of Economy program, which aims to assist Arab students studying technological subjects to integrate into the high technology industry.

¹⁰ A program of the Ministry of Economy that financially assists investors interested in establishing or expanding businesses or relocating them to national priority areas.

- The Investment and Development Authority should receive a budget increase of NIS 31 million in order to implement these recommendations.

Entrepreneurship

Goals:

- Raise the percentage of Arab women participants in the [SAWA Program](#) to 3% of working-age Arab women.

Recommendations:

- Invest additional government resources to expand the SAWA program.

Public Sector

Goals:

- Increase the proportion of Arab employees in the civil service to 15% by 2022.
- At least 10% of employees in each government ministry should be Arab or ministries should increase the rate of Arab employees by 3% by 2022.
- Increasing the number of Arabs municipal employees in mixed cities by at least 600.

Recommendations:

- Promote a new government resolution with the previously described goals for integrating the Arab population into the civil service.
- Establish an inter-ministerial team to supervise and implement the resolution. The team should include representatives of the Civil Service Commission, the Authority for the Economic Development of Minorities, the Ministry of Finance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Prime Minister's Office.
- Pass amendments to the Government Companies Law and the Municipalities Ordinance, which will require adequate representation for all of Arab society and not just for the Druze population.

Tourism

The tourism chapter differs from the rest of the document in that it does not offer concrete goals and suggestions. Rather, it presents a range of ideas and proposals for generating tourism in Arab localities and increasing Arab employment through the tourism industry. The following bullets summarize the authors' main suggestions:

- Conduct extensive research into developing tourism in Arab localities including mapping exiting attractions and areas with tourism potential.
- Rebrand and market Arab localities as tourist destinations.
- Encourage domestic tourism to Arab localities.
- Encourage Jewish and Arab entrepreneurs to build tourist attractions in Arab localities.
- Allocate space for tourist sites in localities' master plans
- Establish tourism departments in Arab localities

- Encourage tours of Arab localities for senior civil servants to explore economic development possibilities, including in tourism.
- Fund professional development associations in the tourism field in Arab localities and ease the requirements and entry into the field for Arab women.
- Increase in the vocational training budget of the Ministry of Tourism with an emphasis on English language education.