

Dear friends and partners,

This past summer, with the recent escalations of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the violence of the war on Gaza, the Arab minority in Israel suffered from many forms of racism and discrimination, projected mainly into public spaces such as shopping centers, healthcare centers, and universities.

During this period, the Arab minority in Israel also experienced the internal conflict of being both citizens of Israel and Palestinian Arabs: while they highly sympathized with their people in Gaza, they also feared for their lives, being possible targets of the bombing. At the same time, it was encouraging to see the important and critical role played by the Arab municipal leadership during these hard times. Arab local leaders were present in the field, allowed their citizens to protest, thus legitimizing those protests, ensured that the protests were civilized and non-violent, kept contact with the police forces and checked that they did not abuse their authority, and so maintained their citizens' security and freedom of speech.



Injaz Center Continues to Empower Arab Mayors for Leadership

Working to empower Arab leadership and provide them with essential knowledge, skills and tools to enable them to lead processes of social change and economic development, Injaz held a 3-days seminar for newly elected Arab mayors on 21 January 2014 in the Dead Sea, which was attended by 33 new Arab mayors and 6 veteran mayors. The seminar focused mainly on the management of municipal deficits, sources of municipal funding, planning and housing in Arab towns, and community empowerment, believing that working on these issues simultaneously could greatly benefit the local authorities, and ultimately, the citizens.

During the seminar, the mayors met and engaged

in a process of brainstorming with government officials, policy and decision makers: Mr. Haim Bibas (head of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel), Mr. Amir Levy (Budget Supervisor of the Finance Ministry), Mr. Yaron Turel (Head of Local Planning Committees Department of the Ministry of Interior), Mr. Bentzi Liberman (Director of the Israel Lands Authority) and other experts in fields of concern to Arab local authorities. The discussion aimed to identify issues and obstacles hindering the development of Arab towns, and preventing Arab mayors from actualizing their visions and aspirations. During this session,

central governance officials acquired a better and more comprehensive understanding of the Arab society's actual and specific needs, and expanded their knowledge regarding daily obstacles and challenges facing Arab mayors. The government officials expressed sincere willingness for better, more efficient cooperation with Arab local governance officials, and stressed their desire for progress in the Arab society.

Another session in the seminar took the form of a panel, with the participation of 4 veteran Arab mayors, who presented their most prominent projects and recent successes and provided the newly elected mayors with inspiration and food for thought. The most significant message conveyed through the panel discussion is that, while

success depends largely on the characteristics of the community and the town, the most critical ingredient for success is a proactive mayor, who assumes responsibility over the situation, takes the initiative to promote projects, and works according to a long-term strategic plan and vision.

Conference on Policy Research: “Funding and Income Sources for Arab Local Authorities”



(From left to right) Eran Nitzan, Deputy Director of Budgets in the Finance Ministry; Ron Gerlitz, Co-Executive Director, Sikkuy; Shawki Hatib, Past Head of the National Committee of Arab Mayors; Abed Al-Salaam, Mayor of Iksal; Ayman Seif, Director of the Authority for Economic Development for the Arab Sector in the Prime Minister's Office; Dr. Nahum Ben-Eliya, Academic Research Director

In March 2014, Injaz Center, in partnership with Sikkuy launched the new policy research on tax rates in Arab municipalities, the product of our joint Bridges to Equality project. well- and diversely-attended conference in Nazareth demonstrated the importance and power of bringing together, around one table, senior government representatives and Arab mayors to advance cooperative efforts to achieve equal allocations of government resources and budgets to Arab citizens. The conference marked the publication of the path-breaking Sikkuy-Injaz policy research/recommendations. [“Funding and Income Sources for Arab Local Authorities”](#).

The research refutes the widely-held misconception that low tax collection rates by Arab municipalities are the major cause of budget disparities between Arab and Jewish municipalities. Instead we found



that the key factor causing the low income and very limited funding sources of the Arab municipalities

when compared to neighboring Jewish towns, is the extremely limited base of non-residential tax-paying properties (commercial and governmental) within the Arab towns. This is the result of successive government's failure to develop commercial and industrial zones in the Arab localities and the failure to locate large government facilities in Arab towns. The research findings maintain that blaming the Arab municipal leaders as holding primary responsibility for the budget inequalities constitutes not only a mistaken policy analysis but is an example of victim blaming that should be rejected by all stakeholders who are committed to equality and social justice.

Working with the Senior Officials in Arab Local Authorities

The fifth seminar of the Forum was dedicated to Social Welfare and took place in Jerusalem on 30-31 January, with participation of 29 Arab senior officials, including Heads of Social Welfare Departments from several Arab local authorities. The first session focused on dealing with obstacles preventing the optimal utilization of budgets for social welfare departments, while presenting statistical data and operative recommendations, based on a research Injaz Center conducted in partnership with Sikkuy (Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality). During this session the participants were encouraged to see the importance of developing the social welfare departments as a means to spur community development, resulting in great social and economic benefits and contributing to the creation of a more flourishing and prosperous economy in Arab towns.

The seminar also included a special panel, with the participation of **Mr. Moti Vinter** (Deputy Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services), **Ms. Galit Raichman** (Deputy Director



of Budgeting and Economic Department in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services), and **Ms. Ahova Krekover** (Head of Organizational Management of Local Authorities in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services), in which they discussed with the participants the budgets utilization of Arab social welfare departments, and policies of the Ministry for the appointments of social workers in Arab municipalities, in

comparison to Jewish municipalities.

Another session in the seminar was led by **Mr. Amin Taha** (expert in social welfare budgeting, budget management and budget analysis), who provided the participants with the tools to deal efficiently with the complexity of the social welfare department budgets.

On 29-30 May, the sixth seminar of the Forum was held in Jerusalem, focusing on reducing disparities between Arab and Jewish communities in the field of education. During the first session of the seminar, 20 Arab senior officials and heads of education departments engaged in a discussion with **Mr. Naser Abu Sa** (consultant of the Minister of Education), who presented Ministry of Education policies intended to close the gaps between Arab and Jewish communities, and contribute to creating a highly educated new generation of Arab citizens who could eventually join the social and economic activities on both the national and the local levels.

The second day of the seminar included a thorough, comprehensive discussion with **Mr. Tamir Ben Moshe** (Deputy Director of the Ministry of Education), who addressed specific challenges facing education departments in Arab local authorities. Concluding the session, Mr. Ben Moshe encouraged the participants to approach him more often for advice, and stressed his willingness to go through an expanded process of joint problem-solving with the participants.

Additional Property Tax Revenues Granted to Arab-Bedouin Local Authorities Not Enough

In the recent article “**Please Implement Properly**” by **Ghaida Rinawie-Zoabi**, Executive Director of Injaz Center, published in the financial journal **The Marker** on 8 September 2014 (see translation attached), she criticizes the government’s distribution of tax revenues collected from commercial and industrial zones in the Negev. Despite the additional tax revenues to be granted to Arab-Bedouin towns, the new distribution is not enough to overturn the unjust policy of lower resource allocations to Arab municipalities as opposed to Jewish ones. However, she acknowledges that this step could be a significant starting point towards a gradual increase in Arab local authorities’ budgets, and makes Injaz’s work all the more critical, in its endeavor to empower these local authorities with the ability to better manage and utilize their increased income.

Mapping of Government Calls for Proposals

Injaz Center’s R&D unit is currently conducting a mapping of all calls for proposals that were published by government institutions in the past three years, in order to determine which calls for proposals Arab local authorities responded to, which were approved, and which were rejected.

The research also examines the reasons for rejection and/or not responding to these calls for proposals.

Upon the completion of the research, we will use the findings as a tool for advocacy, working with government officials to alter the criteria of these calls for proposals to better meet the Arab community’s particular needs and characteristics; at the same time, we will work with senior officials in Arab local authorities to enhance their capacity to properly respond to these calls for proposals.

What is particularly worth noting is that government institutions publish several calls for proposals every year, providing local authorities with tens of millions of shekels. Therefore, enhancing the Arab local authorities’ capacity to better respond for these calls for proposals has great potential towards increasing their income and improving their socio-economic status.

Creating Regional Networking for Economic Development

Realizing the tremendous power of cooperative efforts and collaborations to improve economic development, Injaz Center came to the strategic decision to carry out a special project aiming to establish partnerships between neighboring municipalities in three clusters: the Northern Triangle, the Southern Triangle, and the Western Galilee. The goal of this project involves establishing regional networking and a joint vision for economic development.

Over the past six months, Injaz Center introduced the concept of regional networking to Arab mayors throughout the country, and succeeded in recruiting 9 Arab mayors and their senior official staff to join a process of regional economic development, by convincing them of the great benefits it could yield to their towns and their regions as a whole. Mayors and senior officials expressed great enthusiasm about the cooperation with Injaz Center and sincere willingness to commit to a long-term process that would lead to adopting Injaz’s values of innovation, dedication, professionalism, efficiency and public participation.

In the three clusters, a municipal steering committee is currently operating and working to reach a consensus regarding planning and implementing a joint project that could yield the greatest economic benefits for the cluster.

A particular achievement in the Southern Triangle was the decision to establish a regional management corporation, a statutory body with legal status, which would be charged with better managing, developing and expanding “Lev



Haaretz” – an industrial zone in the jurisdiction of Kafr Qassem. The process of establishing the regional management corporation is now in its finalization stages, and will be completed once all the required authorizations and permits are issued.

Land Use and Urban Planning in Arab Towns – Engineers Course

In order to address the complexity of the planning and housing situation in Arab towns, Injaz Center has designed a special course for local city engineers in Arab towns. Through this course, we are able to assist Arab city engineers by building their capacity to tackle problems hindering them, such as obstacles to the process of gaining approval for outline plans for their towns, and providing them with proper and sufficient skills to enhance the efficiency of their work.

This course is designed by experts in the fields of land use, planning and housing: **Mr. Kais Nasser** (a lawyer and doctoral student who specializes in planning and housing), **Ms. Einas Khorshid Fahoum** (expert in architecture and urban planning), and **Mr. Orwa Sweitat** (City Planner and Organizational Consultant). The course also involves academic research on planning and housing in Arab towns, while addressing relevant legal and practical aspects.

In addition, **Ms. Einas Khorshid Fahoum** is closely accompanying and mentoring two Arab localities (Baqa Al-Gharbiya and Ar'ara), in order to advance the process of acquiring up-to-date plans, and assimilate efficient work procedures in these municipalities.

Catalyzing Environmentally Sustainable Development in Arab Towns



In 2014, we reached a significant milestone in our work towards raising awareness among Arab communities, especially among Arab leadership, to environmental issues and environmental sustainability. Injaz Center in partnership with Heschel (Center for Environmental Sustainability) conducted research regarding opportunities and obstacles to accessing government funding for issues of environment, energy and public health. This research is the fruit of nearly one year of mapping of the availability of funding opportunities for Arab municipalities, and an analysis of the compatibility of government calls for proposals with the particular needs of Arab communities. A research paper, based on the findings was produced to provide Arab municipal leaders with a tool for advocacy, and will be distributed in our upcoming conferences for both the public and the municipal leaders. A special conference to present the new research is planned on 2 December 2014.