



Institute of Training Community Leaders and Municipal Workers in the Arab Community
Making an Impact in the Community

With the goal of strengthening Arab civil society, we are pleased to report that six courses were carried out in Arab communities throughout Israel with the MEPI grant SIS70008GR201. The division of the courses was based on three spheres of influence which we believe are central to the shaping of the Arab minority living in the State of Israel: Educational Leadership; Women's Management and Leadership; Local Council Proficiency.

Educational Leadership

The ***Empowering Educational Leaders in a Minority Group*** course works towards empowering educators to reach an open democratic partnership culture in the Arab schools and to help recognize the disadvantage of centralistic behavior. Tools and strategies gained through the course help to internalize and to nurture participatory democratic behavior. Civic education is intended to inculcate commitment to a democratic regime and internalization of a world view of human and citizens' rights. Civic education is also intended to nurture civic responsibility, civic involvement and civic initiatives of the active citizen.



According to the report of the participants, the course contributed to an organizational change within the school and the education system. One of the participants, who is the assistant principal of a school, noted: ***"The project gave us tools and methods for educational initiative within the school and the community. We learned better how to construct a strategy for the school."*** Principal Kamal noted: ***"The participants came back to the school with initiatives, to run teachers' meetings in an effective manner, to make the teaching staff a coherent group, communication and cooperation within the school, a joint organizational culture."***

A large number of initiatives flourished. Operation and development of effective parents' committees in the school, Health Week in the school, planning Students' Day, these are all projects that reflected on society and the community and brought the school closer to the community.

The course assisted the participants in initiating activities and projects themselves. For example, in the city of Sakhnin the participants began working on volunteering initiatives: clean-up of public places, establishment of neighborhood committees in the city and their attachment to the municipality. Four neighborhood committees were established in the southern part of the city. In addition, excellent students in the school have begun tutoring students with difficulties in their studies. Many initiatives in the field of the environment have also begun. One participant noted that she has organized activity on the subject of the environment and she emphasized: ***"We eat from the same earth, drink the same water and breathe the same air. I initiated a project with our Jewish neighbors in the Sakhnin-Misgav Region."***



All those involved in the project noted the importance of the projects to their organizations themselves and to the community at large. The Arab sector, the organizations and institutions need empowerment and especially a change in positions and attitudes, learning tools for implementing projects. Therefore the project of educating for active citizenship and educational climate and the involvement of the Arab local authorities is a strategic need and assists the Arab community to maintain a normal life, as well as more effective management within the organization itself. It is well known that the education system is a central factor within the Arab community as well as in the local authority. Therefore empowerment of both of these organizations advances the Arab community, its objectives and goals.



Women's Management and Leadership

Arab women in the State of Israel are exposed to double discrimination – both because they are women and because they are Arabs. The rate of participation in the workforce is lower, arising not only from a lower level of education and the lack of job opportunities, but also from the traditional norms regarding the mobility of women. Our program attempts to encourage the participants to become responsible for their own future and for the improvement of their status as a group. We recognize that this process is the hardest from amongst all target groups.

The first part of the course was designed to help the women strengthen their personal sense of self, work with their immediate and extended families, and begin to function as a group. Emphasis was placed on communication, the change process, assertiveness, taking the initiative, management styles, the Koranic basis for women's empowerment, human rights, and working in the community. For many participants, the course gave them the support to approach their spouses for permission to work outside of the home, as well as the confidence to take part in the job interviewing process.

The second part of the course provided the participants with financial training to help implement projects in their community. Major activities instituted by the participants included: 2 Hebrew courses, 1 computer course, and 1 English course. The participants are currently working on opening a coffee house, as well as a day care center in the village.



"I thought at first "I'll give it a chance." I was very surprised. I was shocked to find that the group has a vision and wants to improve the village. It's not just women getting together and talking about their families. Before, they were just living. Now they have a purpose in their life" Participant, Social Worker

Local Council Proficiency

The emphasis of the program was to improve the professional level of the employees, in order to improve their connection with the community and to raise the level of services provided by the employees. This process has already brought about positive results and we are convinced that it will bring more in the future. In all of the departments which had participants in the in-service training program, the theories which they learned are being implemented – mapping the needs and requests of the residents on different levels; for example: how urgent is the need, referring the request to the appropriate clerk in order to expedite the service. There is cooperation between the various departments, which finds expression in requests from the public. That is to say, following the program the handling of requests from the public is handled in an efficient and effective manner. Department heads have asked us for advice in constructing a series of meetings for their departments, in the spirit of the training which a portion of their staff has undergone.

