



Higher Education for Arab Citizens of Israel Realities, Challenges and New Opportunities¹

Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues

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¹ In this paper figures relate to those institutions of higher education – both universities and colleges - that are budgeted by the Israeli Council for Higher Education's Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC or VATAT in Hebrew), 28 in all. We would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Merav Shaviv and the staff at the Council for Higher Education's Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) for their generosity in sharing their data, insights and expertise.

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I. Introduction

In Israel today, access to higher education stands as a critical bottleneck to the economic development and integration of Arab citizens into mainstream society. Higher education is not only the number one factor for entering Israel's labor market, in large measure, it also serves as a pivotal point at which the various groups and segments of Israel's diverse and divided society mix.² Within Israel's Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Israeli government there is growing awareness of both the social and economic costs incurred as a result of low rates of Arab participation in higher education, and the fact that gaps will not close fast enough without effective and strategic corrective measures. Given the rise in awareness and activity on this issue, this paper aims to provide a general overview of access to higher education for Arab citizens of Israel, present the principal government and civil society initiatives, and identify opportunities to learn more, further enhance access and close the existing gaps.

Higher Education—A Critical Gateway

The importance of Arab citizens' access to higher education is underscored when viewed against the backdrop of key economic and demographic data. Significant gaps between Arab citizens of Israel and the Jewish majority exist in almost all walks of life —economic development, education, infrastructure, housing, etc. —and impact quality of life for individual Arab families, Arab communities and the Israeli public as a whole. Arab citizens of Israel comprise a little over 20% of Israel's citizens, or approximately 1.5 million people. According to the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druze and Circassian Sectors at the Prime Minister's Office ("Authority for Economic Development"), 51% of all Arab families and over 62% of all Arab children live in poverty, compared with 15% and 23.8% among Jewish citizens, respectively. On a national level, Arab citizens contribute only 8% of Israel's total GDP, with an estimated annual loss of around NIS 31 billion to the economy.

In recent years, a number of studies have shown that higher education is a prerequisite to advanced, quality employment in Israel's highly developed job market, and therefore a precondition to reducing poverty and fulfilling the economic potential of Israel's entire citizenry. While Arabs with university or graduate degrees still have greater difficulty

² At the JFN Conference in March 2012 Prof. Manuel Trajtenberg, Chairman of the CHE's Planning and Budgeting Committee, defined this issue as one of Israel's "strategic priorities" and said "if there is a single place where the fragmented Israeli society can become a shared society, I think this place is university campuses".

integrating into the job market compared to their Jewish peers, higher education is still the factor that makes the greatest difference. According to data collected by the Authority for Economic Development, the employment rate for Arab citizens (between ages 18-66) is 44%, an average of 66% for men and 22% for women. Of these, however, Arabs with higher education are employed at a rate of 81%.

Yet, Arab students currently comprise only about 12% of all Bachelor's degree students.³ This rate drops even further to 4-8% in more advanced degrees and a mere 2% among academic staff. Education statistics illustrate that participation gaps begin earlier than in higher education and are already apparent in high school. On average, Arabs complete 11 years of study compared to an average of 14 years among Israeli Jews.⁴ Each year, only 63% of Arab youngsters reach the 12th grade (compared with 93% of Jewish youngsters of the same age group) and only 28% of every Arab age group achieve a complete matriculation certificate (*Bagruyot*) (compared with 51% of their Jewish peers). Due to poorer quality of education in many of the Arab schools, a large number of Arab students do not receive high school education that is up to academic standards, leaving them unprepared for matriculation certificate exams and unqualified to be admitted to universities/colleges.

Government Response—New Strategic Investments in Education and Economic Development

Since 2010 a number of major governmental actions introduced measures to improve economic development for Arab citizens of Israel by enhancing access to and success in Israel's higher education institutions and job market:

- The Israeli government established the Authority for Economic Development and allocated relatively large sums to enhance employment and economic development within Arab society as well as to support integration of Arab employees into the Israeli market.⁵ Today the Authority is in charge of executing programs of over NIS 2 billion in four activity areas: (i) empowering Arab

³ "A major difference between Israeli higher education and that of the UK or USA is that a Bachelor's degree in Israel is often specialized [...]. Educational programs, which prepare students for a certain vocation do not require the completion of a Bachelor's degree first, as in the United States. Instead, specialized education such as medicine or law starts directly; programs generally lasting longer than a normal Bachelor's degree and teaches this one area of study exclusively." Source: Educations.com: Study_Guide_Israel.

⁴ According to data presented by the Authority for Economic Cooperation, from a historical perspective, these numbers show ongoing improvement from the 1980s, at which time average years of study for Jewish citizens was 11 years, and for Arab citizens 8 years of study. Nonetheless, this data also shows that gaps between the two groups still remain.

⁵ These include Decision No. 1539 from March 2010 allocating NIS 778 Million for a 5-year plan on Economical Development of Minorities settlements; Decision No. 2861 from February 2011 allocating NIS 681 million for the development of the Druze sector; and Decision No. 3211 from May 2011 allocating NIS 350 million for the development of Bedouin communities in Israel's North.

municipalities, (ii) advancing the business sector, (iii) enhancing employment, and (iv) advancing human resource development. Within this last area, higher education plays a critical role.

- As part of the Trajtenberg Committee recommendations following the social justice protests of 2011, the government allocated NIS 750 million to enhance employment and employment-oriented education.⁶ Most of this budget will go to “removal of barriers preventing the Arab population from integrating into the workforce, especially inasmuch as Arab women are concerned” (e.g. providing employment training to Arab women who have 10-12 years of education and subsidizing day-care centers).⁷ The rest aims to enhance accessibility to employment centers by subsidizing transportation and working with potential employers.
- The CHE’s Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) signed its latest periodic Multi-Year Agreement with the Ministry of Finance in October 2010 which allocated, among other sums, NIS 305 million towards the development and implementation of a strategic, long-term approach to enhancing accessibility to higher education for Arab youngsters. Following this budgetary allocation, a special Committee to Enhance Accessibility of Higher Education to Arab Society was formed and recently finalized a Six-Year Strategic Plan (“Six-Year Plan”) with substantial increases of both government attention and funding. The Six-Year Plan is further detailed in [Section IV](#), below.

These issues have also been a central component in the ongoing dialogue between the State of Israel and the OECD. As part of Israel’s membership process, the OECD’s Employment, Labor and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC) published a survey of Israel’s labor market and social policies. Two out of the committee’s five broad areas of recommendations for improvement were (i) enhancing employment opportunities for disadvantaged populations (mainly Arab and Haredi), and (ii) closing gaps in education, (a third area addressed the need to develop public infrastructure – especially transportation – in the periphery and Arab localities, and particularly in the Bedouin sector).⁸

⁶ And an additional NIS 250 million was allocated to resolve the housing problems in Arab localities.

⁷ Governmental resolution no. 4193 from January 29, 2012.

⁸ Israel was required to submit a progress report on these issues within two years of its acceptance into the OECD. This report, which includes details regarding governmental responses to the OECD’s recommendations, was published in June 2012 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry: <http://brookdale.jdc.org.il/Uploads/PublicationsFiles/OECD-Progress-report-ENG-September-2012.pdf> (higher education is discussed in chapter 5 “Addressing Barriers to Work for Minority Population Groups through Education”).

While a number of efforts addressing these issues were in place prior to the recent wave of government initiatives, current attention is generating focus and momentum. The following paper begins with a [general overview](#) of higher education participation rates along a number of indicators and then identifies the [principal barriers](#) facing Arab youngsters that wish to integrate into higher education institutions. This is followed by an outline of the most recent and comprehensive government initiative on higher education, [the Six-Year Plan](#) developed by the Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council on Higher Education, and a preliminary [mapping of civil society efforts](#) currently supported by philanthropic sources. The paper concludes with [ideas for follow up](#).

II. Arab Participation in Higher Education⁹

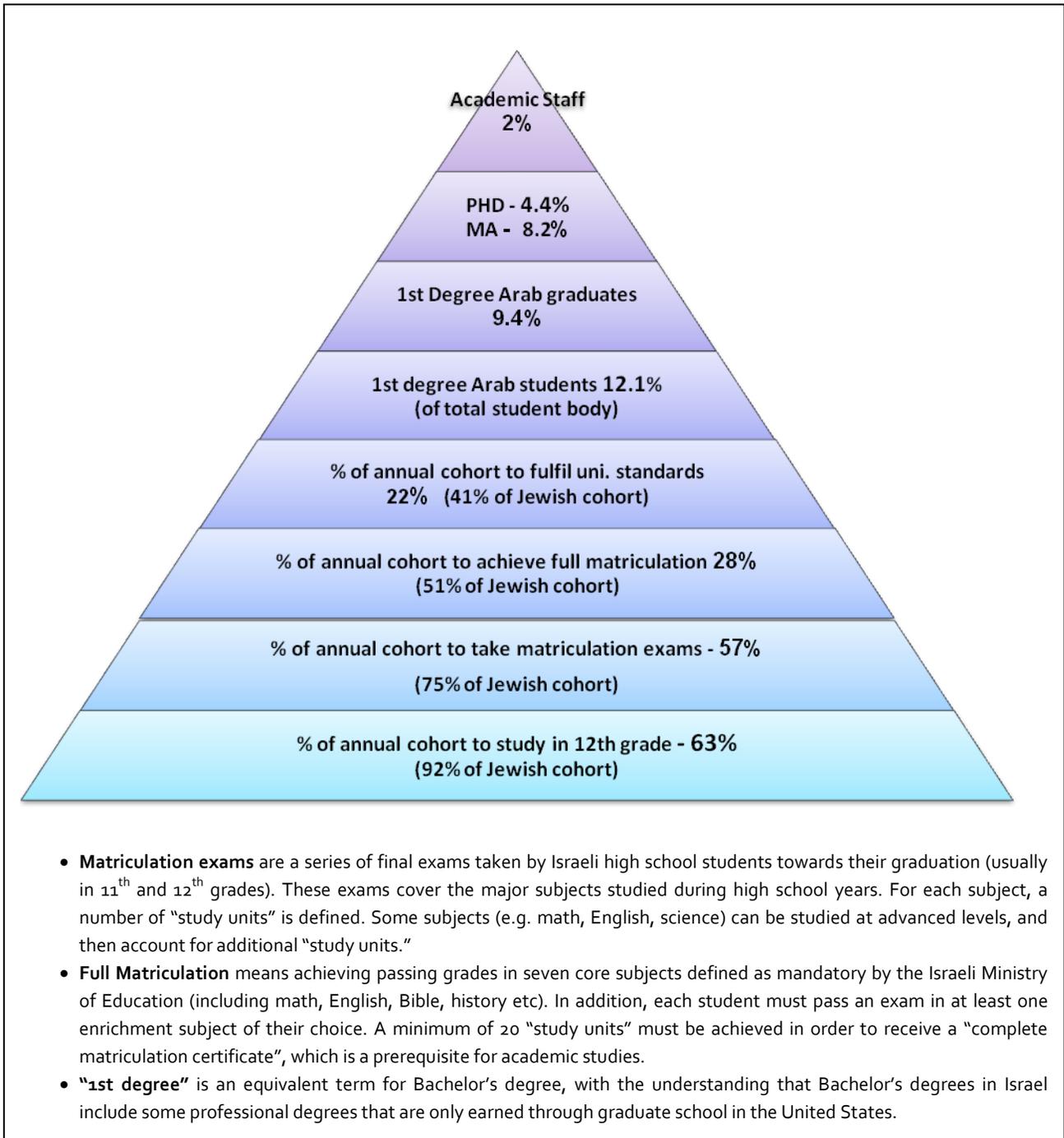
Over the past few years, a concerted effort has been made to gather accurate and updated information regarding the status of Arab citizens, including in the field of higher education.¹⁰ While not all data is available yet, the overall picture clearly indicates significantly lower achievement levels among Arab students before and into higher education, and consequently, under-representation in Bachelor's degree programs, advance degrees and among academic staff.

The following chart illustrates disparities in achievement and participation from the 12th grade (bottom of the pyramid) through faculty positions (tip of the pyramid). As the reader moves up the pyramid, the trend of comparatively lower representation grows more pronounced. (*See Figure 1.*)

⁹ When not written otherwise, the source of this data is the Israel Council of Higher Education's Planning and Budgeting Committee

¹⁰ It is important to note that data still varies depending on the source

Figure 1: Comparative Arab Success Rates at Higher Education Milestones



Behind the numbers in Figure 1 there is a multi-faceted reality:

- a) **First year dropout rates:** Successfully completing the first year of study and continuing onto the second year has been identified as a substantial challenge for Arab students. In 2011 the average dropout rate of Arab students in the first year was 15.4% compared to 10.8% among Jewish students, constituting an overall gap of 4.6%, though the numbers differ for universities and colleges.
 - **Universities** – In universities, the gap is a little smaller, with a difference of 4.2% between Arab student dropout rates and those of Jewish students.
 - **Colleges** – In colleges, the gap rises to 6.4% on average, and is even higher in the engineering colleges where 25% of Arab students drop out, compared with 14% of Jewish students, or a gap of 11%.
- b) **Concentrated areas of study:** For numerous reasons, (traditional patterns, absence of role models, and lack of awareness and information, to name a few), Arab students tend to concentrate in certain areas of study. This leads to a “market failure” whereby there are unemployed professionals in some fields (e.g. teachers), and missed opportunities for employment in others (e.g. computer engineering and finance). See the following examples:
 - Percent of Arab students in heavily concentrated fields:
 - Pharmaceutical studies – 42% of all students are Arabs
 - Nursing – 36%
 - Education – 23%
 - Medicine – 22%
 - Percent of Arab students in significantly underrepresented fields:
 - Engineering and architecture – 6% of all students are Arabs (not including civil, chemical and medicinal engineering)
 - Business administration – 5%
- c) **Percent of Arab students in Israeli universities and colleges:** Arab students constitute a disproportionate minority in most Israeli universities and colleges with a few notable exceptions such as the University of Haifa and a number of colleges:
 - Haifa – 32.5%
 - Technion – 16.9%
 - Hebrew University – 11.6%
 - Tel-Aviv University – 9.8%
 - Open University – 8.4%
 - Ben Gurion University – 4.4%

- Bar Ilan University – 3.5%
 - A few colleges have a relatively high percentage of Arab students – Zfat Academic College (56%), Western Galilee College (43%), Kineret College (30.4%) and Jezriel Valley College (19.5%) while in the rest of the colleges Arab students constitute less than 15% of the student body.¹¹
- d) **Gender:** In 2011, 67% of the Arab students studying in Israel were women, and 33% were men. This does not take into consideration Arab youngsters who go to study abroad.
- e) **“Jordanization”:** The past decade has seen growth in the trend of young Arabs going to study outside of Israel, especially in Jordanian universities. According to a recent study¹², in 2006-7 this number was around 5,400 students, and some estimates place the number closer to (or even greater than) 10,000 today. Most of these students go to Jordan for pharmaceutical and medical studies. According to the same study, most Arab students would rather study in Israeli institutions, but existing barriers—especially entrance requirements and difficulties adjusting to Israeli institutions—make the Jordanian option more appealing. Although it is more expensive to study there, Jordan is geographically close and has the added draw of Arabic language and culture. This trend is seen as a negative development for a number of reasons:
- Jordanian diplomas are often not recognized by—or are unattractive in—the Israeli job market, making it more difficult for graduates to find work upon their return;
 - Socialization in Jordan creates additional cultural barriers to integration into Israel’s mainstream economy and society;
 - Studying and living in Arabic does not help the students develop Hebrew language skills, which are then necessary for their professional advancement in Israel.

The statistics and trends listed above indicate that, for Arabs in Israel, the path to higher education is currently both constrained—leading to lower achievement and participation rates—and ill-aligned with Israel’s employment market and economic trajectory. The next section looks more closely at the specific barriers and

¹¹ The [Nazareth Academic Institute](#) (NAI), the first academic college (not a teacher’s college) established in an Arab locality, is a new model in higher education that was developed over the past three years. NAI academic degrees are recognized by the CHE, but since the institute is not yet funded by the State of Israel it is not included in this tally. While NAI is open to both Jewish and Arab students, and has a mixed Jewish-Arab academic staff, at present all of its students are Arabs.

¹² Khaled Arar and Kussai Haj Yehia “‘Jordanization’ of Higher Education Among Arabs in Israel”, *Floersheimer Studies*, The Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2011 (Hebrew)

obstacles that encumber Arab students from effectively integrating into higher education in Israel and ultimately disadvantage them economically.

III. Barriers and Challenges Related to Higher Education

Numerous barriers have been identified as impeding entrance, academic success and graduation of Arab students in Israeli academia. In this paper we have intentionally focused on barriers to higher education leaving aside barriers to successful integration in the job market which is obviously an important and related topic, but one which should be dealt with in a separate paper. Major barriers include:

- a) **Inadequate high school education:** Relatively poor education levels in the Arab public school system, especially Arab high schools, mean most Arab youngsters begin their journey into higher education (and consequently modern employment opportunities) at a disadvantage, especially where English, math, sciences and critical thinking study skills are concerned. The poorer quality of education leaves Arab high school students unprepared for matriculation certificate exams, unqualified to be admitted to institutions of higher learning, as well as ill-equipped to deal with studies at higher academic levels.
- b) **Language barriers:** A lack of proficiency in Hebrew and English is a major barrier for Arab students. Hebrew and English are usually the third and fourth languages for Arab youngsters, respectively, following Spoken Arabic (spoken at home and in the Arab public education system in Israel) and Literary Arabic (studied in Arab schools).
- c) **Underdeveloped study and critical thinking skills:** Exam performance and studies show that Arab students fall behind in these fundamental areas as a result of inferior education in many of the Arab schools.
- d) **Matriculation certificate:** A disproportionately low number of Arab students pass all the exams required for a complete matriculation certificate and even fewer achieve matriculation that is up to academic standards, both necessary to be eligible for higher education.
- e) **Psychometric exam:**⁴³ Successfully passing the exam is a major barrier for Arab youngsters. Over the years repeated measurements show a 100 points difference (out of a total 800) between average score of Jewish and Arab youngsters.

⁴³ The psychometric exam is a comprehensive standardized test that covers mathematics, verbal reasoning, and English language skills. It is heavily weighted as a component of admission to higher education

- f) **Pre-academic courses:** Although Arab students could benefit greatly from pre-academic preparation, very few Arab students participate in available courses. This stems from numerous causes including (i) lack of courses that are well-suited to the particular needs of Arab students, (ii) negative stigmas associated with pre-academic studies (i.e., as a sign of weakness, or a waste of time), (iii) a lack of awareness of their importance and potential benefits, and (iv) financial costs that deter or obstruct participation.
- g) **Lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the Israeli system of higher education:** Arab students are generally less prepared to navigate the higher education system including exploring options and resources available to them, completing the application process, selecting fields of study, learning about and attaining scholarships, comparing between institutions, etc.
- h) **Housing and transportation:** A shortage of dorm rooms, difficulties renting apartments in major cities, and cultural restrictions for traditional Arab women make commuting a necessity for many. However, most Arab students live in Arab villages on Israel's periphery where public transportation is unavailable or inadequate, making travel times long and transportation cumbersome and expensive.
- i) **Economic barriers:** With 51% of Arab families living under poverty levels and many more living near poverty, there is great need for financial assistance for higher education. But scholarships for Arab students, both for pre-academic courses and for tuition fees, are scarce as many are conditioned on Army/national service. Culturally, there is also at times a resistance among Arab students to seeking external assistance as this is perceived as weakness.
- j) **Age restrictions:** A number of universities place minimum age restrictions (19, 20 or even 21) on acceptance into various academic fields and clinical professions (e.g. medical school, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy), and in social work schools.¹⁴ As Arab students begin their higher education around the age of 18 (because they do not serve in the IDF), this presents a major barrier.¹⁵
- k) **Cultural and peer group differences:** Arab students arrive at the university at least two years younger than their Jewish peers, as soon as they graduate from high school. For Arab students, higher education is often the first time they leave their

¹⁴ "Universities Continue to Place Barriers on Entry for Arab Youth," *Dirasat: Arab Center for Law and Policy*, 2010, <<http://www.dirasat-aclp.org/index.asp?i=664>> (Hebrew: http://www.dirasat-aclp.org/files/Dirasat_Age_Limit_2010.pdf).

¹⁵ In fact, this is one of the reasons that Arab youngsters go to study in Jordan and elsewhere, where they can begin their studies immediately after high school graduation.

local community, leading to a very difficult personal experience and even culture shock. This makes the first year especially challenging.

IV. The Council of Higher Education's Six-Year Plan

Formally called the "Six-Year Plan to Enhance Accessibility of Higher Education for the Minority Population in Israel", this NIS 305 million plan provides an overarching strategy to remove these barriers and addresses weaknesses along the path to higher education for Arab citizens—from high school through advanced degrees and into employment. The Six-Year Plan was launched as a pilot in 2010 and will be taken to scale over the next four academic years. The following section outlines target areas and initiatives included in the plan, and that will be funded by the PBC upon acceptance of proposals submitted by colleges and universities.

a) High School

Education counseling centers: Based on the understanding that many of the barriers faced by Arab students in higher education stem from their high school years, the PBC will fund the establishment of counseling centers in Arab localities. These centers will provide a wide variety of tools and services supporting high school students on the path to successful academic studies and career, including group and individual counseling, assistance in and subsidies for psychometric courses, Hebrew and English language proficiency, leadership skills and job fairs and outreach to businesses and future employers. The PBC is working with JDC-Israel to set up these centers, as JDC is a key partner in the National Hesegim Program.¹⁶ The idea is that these centers will be integrated into the One-Stop Employment Centers JDC-Israel is currently constructing in 21 Arab localities in partnership with the Israeli Government. In parallel, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will also provide substantive funding for a similar, employment-oriented program (based on the Trajtenberg Committee's recommendations), which JDC-Israel will match. (See [Section VI, Part \(c\)](#), below for additional details on funding structure and matching opportunities.)

b) Pre-Academic Preparation

Incentives, support and services: Pre-Academic preparatory courses can increase Arab student eligibility and readiness for higher education. As referenced above, barriers to participation in these courses span cost, geography, awareness and stigma.

¹⁶ The Hesegim ("Achievements") Program was established in 2002 with the purpose of enhancing accessibility to higher education among populations living in Israel's periphery. It is a collaboration between the CHE, the Ministries of Housing and of Defense, JDC-Israel, the Gross Foundation, Aluma and local authorities. It includes local counselors who work with around 20,000 high school students annually. Hebrew website: <http://hesegim-program.org.il>

Part of the Six-Year Plan includes establishing incentives and supports and awareness-raising.

- **Incentives:** Excellence scholarships will be awarded to 20% of Arabs participating in pre-academic that continue to first year studies.
- **Support and services:** A host of resources will be available to Arab students participating in pre-academic courses improving Arab students' chances for success (e.g. academic Hebrew and English skills). Supporting services will include, but not be limited to: funds to cover Psychometric course expenses, personal guidance, reimbursements for transportation and dormitories, among others.
- **Awareness-raising:** There will also be a special budget to re-brand and market pre-academic courses to Arab society, to counter the existing negative attitudes and lack of awareness about options available.

c) **First Year Success**

- **"One Step Ahead":** This program is a short, intensive preparatory course which will be funded for all first-year Arab students in the month prior to the beginning of their first academic year. It will include crash courses in fundamental academic skill areas such as Hebrew and writing, as well as preparation to minimize the initial cultural shock many Arab students encounter upon entering higher education institutions. This model is based on the preparatory courses developed and implemented by the Technion, Haifa University and others (See [Section V](#), for additional details on university programs).
- **First year support program:** One of the major components of the Six-Year Plan, this program aims to address the phenomenon of high dropout rates among Arab students during their first academic year. The Program is a national expansion of the mentoring and support model developed in the Technion. This model includes a wide variety of on-campus services such as academic and cultural mentoring, group and individual guidance, Hebrew and academic writing skills among others.
- **"[Bridges to Other Universities Pilot Program](#)" with [the Open University \(OUI\)](#):** OUI is a distance learning university with an admissions policy that makes higher education accessible to all adults, without prerequisites (specifically not requiring a Psychometric exam). The Bridges to Other Universities pilot program, which is a matching scheme between OUI and the CHE, grew out of the OUI's "Soft Landing" program to enhance accessibility to higher education in Israel for Arabs. The pilot includes 95 Arab students in the first year (beginning in 2012-2013), who are divided into four groups. Each group registered for a distinct cluster of courses aimed to create a bridge to programs in Economics, Social Work or Nursing at other Israeli universities. The program includes first year assistance in academic

Hebrew and English, computer skills, course tutorials in Arabic, Arabic translation of exams and assignments, as well as scholarships which cover tuition costs and provide modest living stipends. OUI students who will earn the required grades in the specific disciplines can then transfer to another university as second-year students, receiving full credit for their first year, or continue their studies at OUI. (See [Section VI Part \(c\)](#) for matching opportunities.)

d) **Career Development and Graduate Studies**

- **Second and third year career courses:** Universities and colleges will receive a budget to provide career development courses and services for second and third year Arab students, including CV writing, interview skills, job fairs etc. These will most likely be based on Kav Mashve's Career Centers model (See [Section V, Part \(b\)](#), below).
- **Academic excellence graduate scholarships:** The PBC will offer a number of full scholarships to excelling Arab students that continue onto advance research. The PBC plans to offer 25 two-year scholarships to MA students, 14 three-year scholarships to PhD students, and 25 one-year scholarships to Post-doc students. Universities and colleges receiving these students will participate in funding the scholarships.
- **Maof scholarships for Arab staff:** Seven Arab academic staff members will be integrated into different universities and colleges through a three-year scholarship as part of the Maof Program. Maof is a partnership between the CHE and the Kahanoff Foundation in existence since 1995 that has been integrated into the Six-Year Plan. Funding for this program will come from the PBC, with matching from an anonymous foundation.

e) **Additional Quotas for Arab Students**

The PBC subsidizes tuition costs of every higher education student in state-funded universities and colleges in Israel.¹⁷ In 2011, a special budget was created to add 900 additional spots for Arab students at colleges exclusively. At present, there are "empty quotas", meaning that colleges and universities could still absorb additional Arab students if eligible candidates apply. The aim of the Six-Year Plan is therefore to provide the support services required not only to serve students already eligible and accepted but to increase the numbers seeking enrollment overall.

¹⁷ Depending on the student's field of study, annual subsidies (paid directly by the PBC to the institution of higher education) vary greatly, but the average annual cost per student is NIS 22,000 in universities, and around NIS 17,500 in colleges.

Implementation and Further Development

As mentioned above, the PBC's Six-Year Plan has been implemented in pilot form over the past two years.¹⁸ The current academic year, 2012-2013, will be the first in which this Program will be implemented at full scale. In October 2012, the PBC invited all state funded higher education institutions to submit funding proposals for programs aligned with the Six-Year Plan focus areas. To be eligible, each institution must develop a support and guidance system led by senior academic staff and create an Arabic version of their website. Beyond the basic guidelines, the PBC's funding model allows each university or college to design programs based on their needs and based on the number of Arab students enrolled at their institution with additional funding available for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and for students studying in underrepresented fields (e.g. engineering). Sustained funding will depend in part on the percentage of Arab students who successfully transfer to their second year.

The PBC will evaluate the individual programs that were submitted and implemented by universities and colleges to assess success and projected impact, as well as identify gaps in the current model and areas that the government has difficulty funding (e.g. subsidies for transportation, scholarships and living expenses).

V. Preliminary Mapping of Non-Governmental Initiatives¹⁹

Many of the programs adopted by the Six-Year Plan were initially developed in the field by innovative non-governmental and philanthropic efforts. The section below identifies a number of high-impact projects and initiatives currently in implementation. Some of them were already adopted and scaled up by government matching, while for others it still remains to be seen how implementation of the Six-Year Plan will affect them. Nonetheless, it is important to note that such philanthropic initiatives will continue to address needs that are beyond the reach or are complementary to current PBC programs. These initiatives not only build critical bridges for key populations, but fuel continued innovation in searching for solutions.

¹⁸ It is important to note that supporting services for Arab students have consistently been part of PBC allocations prior to the Six-Year Plan, but not as part of a comprehensive approach and at significantly lower levels of funding.

¹⁹ We would like to sincerely thank the various funders, professionals and representatives who have so generously shared their data with us. In the process, we heard that many have been eagerly waiting for more data-sharing and collaborative exchange on these (and other) issues. We very much hope this mapping is a service to all and a step towards greater and more frequent exchange. We apologize that due to lack of space we were able to include only brief summaries of selected examples. Additional models exist in colleges, universities and schools around the country. Projects are presented, as much as possible, in a chronological order, from high school through university acceptance and success to integration in the employment market.

The following selection is a broad mapping of programs available to Arab students and depicts the range of programs rather than serving as an exhaustive list. Though most programs provide services that support Arab students' through a number of different phases, the list is arranged in a roughly chronological order from high school through career development.

High School & Preparatory Programs

- a) [Israel Association of Community Centers \(Matnassim\) "Budding Scientists" program:](#) This program aims to improve student achievement in Bedouin high schools in the Negev and has been ongoing, and expanding, since 2005. Beginning with three locations, it now receives government funds to work in all seven Bedouin towns as well as through the Abu Basma Regional Council that serves the newly recognized and the unrecognized villages. Through this program, the top 5% of students in grades nine to twelve receive academic assistance in preparation for higher education. In total this amounts to about 250 students in each grade or 1,000 students throughout the Negev. There is after-school tutoring in math, English and science, preparation for the psychometric exam, as well as activities to increase leadership and critical thinking. About 75% of the participants are girls. More than 80% of the students that complete these courses enroll in some type of higher education. The Authority for the Development of the Negev and Galilee provides about half the funding with matching from the Association of Community Centers, local authorities, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation, and Gary Jacobs.

- b) [Kav Mashve – Career Training Program for Arab High School Students:](#) This program aims to orient Arab high school students and their families to the Israeli education system and job market, by providing support in planning for their higher education and future career. As listed in the barriers section above, both the lower quality of Arab high schools and the lack of adequate familiarity with the Israeli higher education system and modern employment market result in many young Arabs selecting fields that are not in line with the needs of the Israeli market (e.g. pharmacists, teachers etc.) The program consists of 5 meetings of 4 academic hours each for every participating high school student, including meetings with the student's parents to develop a higher education plan towards a meaningful career. Students receive intensive counseling on education choices, visit academic institutions and successful businesses, and meet successful members and role models in their community. The program is a joint initiative of Kav Mashve with the Israeli Ministry of Education, and governmental funds are matched by JFNA's

Social Venture Fund, Central New Jersey NESS Fund, and the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation.

- c) **Al Nuhud's Pre Academic Project:** The Pre-Academic Project aims to increase the number of Bedouin women who graduate from high school with a complete matriculation certificate and the number of Bedouin women who enter and succeed in academia. Based at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, each year the Pre-Academic Project supports about 100 high achieving young women in 10th-12th grades. The project includes weekly enrichment classes in Hebrew, English, math, critical thinking and computer skills to help participants achieve high scores on matriculation and psychometric exams. Additional training in life skills for the university environment and beyond includes monthly workshops on advocacy, empowerment and leadership, and additional programming on group dynamics, gender issues, communications tools, and conflict resolution. There are also occasional cultural and study tours and activities throughout the year. Transportation is provided for all participants. The Project also helps students complete the university application process. The program is supported by JFNA's Social Venture Fund, Ben Gurion University (in kind), Boston Jewish Women's Foundation, and the Netherlands Embassy.
- d) **Rashi Foundations' TAFNIT Program:** Tafnit (Hebrew for "turnaround") is a strategic initiative launched in 2000 to close educational gaps between underachieving students and their classmates throughout Israel, and to reduce the disparity between low-performing schools in weak communities, and schools in the center of the country. At the same time as working with students directly, Tafnit also works to develop teachers' and principals' capacities. Implemented in schools with low rates of matriculation success throughout the country, including Arab schools in the north and Bedouin schools in the Negev, Tafnit targets 10th-12th grade students challenged in one particular matriculation subject and works with them to overcome this obstacle and achieve a complete matriculation certificate. Tafnit works with the Ministry of Education and local municipalities to select participating schools. Principals then take part in planning the individual programs including recruitment and training of Tafnit coordinators and teachers, and overseeing preparation of learning materials, coordination of 6 weeks of intense after-school study with a teacher and class tutor, a three-day study marathon, test preparation, and lessons. Tafnit has enabled a high percentage of participating students to improve performance and achieve complete matriculation. The project is supported by the Israeli Ministry of Education with matching from the Rashi

Foundation, JFNA's Social Venture Fund, Goldberg Trust, Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, and two anonymous donors.

- e) **[Luna Art Fund's Mechina Program](#)**: This preparatory program aims to address the extremely low percentage of Arab students in academic art departments. In most academic art, design, and architecture departments in Israel, Arabs comprise less than 5% of the student body. This is due to numerous factors, including the huge gap in the prevalence and quality of art education in Arab schools relative to Jewish schools, and the fact that Arab kids receive meager exposure to art, fewer visits to cultural institutions, and lack extra-curricular informal art education. The pre-academic course includes 200 academic hours of Hebrew language skills, art history and art production, and culminates in the development of an individual art portfolio. Graduates of the program are better qualified and prepared to apply to higher education programs in the visual arts. The program was established by the Luna Art Fund at Minshar Art School in Tel Aviv, as a free pre-academic program. This model has recently been adopted by Shenkar College in Ramat Gan and currently runs with the Foundation's support also at Oranim Academic College. The program is open to any Arab high school graduate interested in higher education in the visual arts, design, architecture, film, art therapy and art education.

University and College Programs

- a) **[Technion Pre-academic Courses and Mentoring](#)**: The Technion has developed two comprehensive program models to assist Arab students integrate and succeed in the university environment.
- **NAAM**: NAAM—a Hebrew acronym for 'Excelling Arab Youth'—is a robust pre-academic and scholarship program that supports and encourages Arab excelling Arab youth to enter engineering and science tracks at the Technion, ultimately improving Arab integration into Israel's science and engineering industries. Founded by Mr. Eitan Wertheimer and late Brigadier General (res.) Avner Barazani in 2006, the program includes financial and academic support for each student from the pre-academic stage to graduation, including coverage of a Psychometric course, full academic tuition, financial aid for rent or dormitories and living expenses. The program features one track of preparatory support for excelling high school students, and a second track for excelling students already studying at the Technion. Over the years, 275 Arab students have benefited from this program (of which 31 have already graduated) with results being

greater diversification of the students' fields of study and high rates of academic success and job placements.

- **First Year Support:** The second program, funded for the past decade by the Landa Family Fund, is a preparatory and mentoring program for every first year Arab student entering the Technion. The program includes a 5-week "crash course" in Hebrew, English and Math prior to the beginning of the first year, and ongoing group and individual counseling for academic, social and cultural challenges. Counseling is provided by designated university staff as well as by excelling Arab students from the advanced years. As a result, there has been a significant decrease in dropout rates (from 28% in 2001 to only 12% in 2011) and more equal distribution of students across fields of study. The CHE has adopted this program model and is implementing a national expansion as part of the Six-Year Plan.
- b) **[Haifa University's Support Services:](#)** Haifa University offers an array of supporting services to Arab students. These begin with a five-day "one step ahead" academic orientation and skill-building intensive course before the beginning of the first year. In addition, as part of the services provided to all Bachelor Degree students, Haifa University employs two full time Arab academic consultants who help Arab students access academic assistance, personal guidance, enrichment courses and career counseling.
- c) **[Ben Gurion University "Buds in the Desert" program:](#)** The "Buds in the Desert" Program builds upon the success of 15 year old "Medical Buds in the Desert" that helped Bedouin students enter and integrate into the Faculty of Health Sciences. With funding from the Kahanoff Foundation, two programs were launched for 2012-2013 academic year that follow the same format – "Humanities and Social Sciences Buds in the Desert", and "Natural Sciences Buds in the Desert". The programs allow Bedouin students whose psychometric and matriculation certificate results don't meet the university's requirements, to enter certain academic tracks as first year students. These students then receive assistance as they complete their first year so they meet university standards by the time they reach year two. The program begins with a rigorous selection process, after which selected students participate in an accelerated summer course that includes scientific reading and writing skills in Hebrew and English, computer skills, leadership skills and interpersonal communication. In the second stage, the selected students are integrated into different departments—five to eight students per department. At the end of their first school year, those with grade point averages of seventy-five or more are accepted as second-year students and receive

a full exemption from courses they have already taken. During their studies they are mentored, advised, and receive individual and group guidance, tutoring, and assistance in courses that are difficult for them. They also participate in career development workshops in cooperation with Kav Mashve. The Arnow Family Fund, which for over 15 years has been funding scholarships for female Bedouin Students at Ben Gurion University and in 1997 has established the Center for Bedouin Studies and Development at BGU, is working to ensure the provision of adequate scholarship funding for those in the program and the provision of other necessary student support services, not covered by the Kahanoff Grant.

d) **Hebrew University's Arab Students' Equality Program**: In 2008 Hebrew University established a Unit for Equal Opportunities for Arab Students, with the understanding that, for Arab students, acceptance into the university is only one of numerous hurdles on the way to successfully completing their studies. First year bachelor degree students can choose from a selection of services outlined below:

- Summer English language studies before the first academic year;
- An orientation day for Arab students from all the university's campuses (Mount Scopus, Ein Carem, Givat Ram and Rehovot) with informational sessions on the services available to Arab students, a meeting with senior Arab academic staff and campus tours;
- Group and individual mentoring by more advanced students to address issues such as personal dilemmas, time management, future job opportunities etc.;
- Academic mentoring, a major service provided to about 60% of all first year Arab students, provides group classes focusing on the most important introductory courses and on courses of special difficulty where there is usually a high failure rate. Mentors are excelling students from advanced years;
- Cultural activities every other month aim to expose Arab students to local Arab literature and enable encounters with local Arab writers; and
- Personal counseling is available to Arab students throughout their study years by Arab social workers that serve as the Head of their Unit.

Beyond these services, additional programs are run independently by various departments, such as the law school, the school of social studies and the pre-academic department.

- e) **Tel Aviv University's "SAWA" Program:** The Sawa ("Step") program, supported by the Kahanoff Foundation, starting the current academic year, aims to aggregate, widen and systemize the services provided by TAU to Arab students since 2003. It operates under the University Dean's Office in collaboration with the Kahanoff Foundation. The aims of the Program are to reduce dropout rates among Arab students, help them succeed in their studies and better integrate them into the academic environment. It includes assistance on a wide variety of issues including academic, social, emotional and financial support, as well as career guidance and orientation. A senior staff member (preferably Arab) heads the program for each faculty where it is implemented. The focus of the program is on first year students, but some supportive services will continue later on.
- f) **100 Bedouin Engineers at Sami Shamoon College of Engineering in Beer Sheva:** This is a multi-year project initially established to recruit 100 young Bedouin men and women to complete their engineering degree by 2017. The program consists of a comprehensive support package that includes tuition scholarships, academic and social support, mentoring, tutoring, individualized teaching, educational guidance, travel expenses and parental/community involvement. The program is currently in its 6th year, and has exceeded its initial goals with just over 100 Bedouin students currently participating, about a third of whom are women. The students are studying towards degrees in chemical, electrical, mechanical, civil, software, and industrial engineering. The program is funded by the Sami Shamoon College with support from JFNA's Social Venture Fund, Central New Jersey NESS Fund, Baron Eric de Rothschild & Coexistence Fund, and Rosenzweig Coopersmith Foundation.
- g) **500 Excelling Arab Women:** This project was recently initiated by the Authority for Economic Development at the Prime Minister's Office and will be implemented by the Sahnin Teachers' College over the next few years.²⁰ NIS 4 million was budgeted to integrate young Arab women who have excelled in their high school studies into higher education fields that are in high demand. The project is budgeted for 500 women participants to receive pre-academic and academic assistance, as well as career counseling and accompaniment. The Sahnin Teachers' College won the governmental tender to implement the project.

²⁰ In accordance with governmental Resolution 2289 of September 2010. This is not a philanthropic initiative, but is included as it a new model that specifically targets Arab women.

Special Focus on Leadership and Career Development

- a) [Rothschild Caesarea Foundation's "Rothschild Ambassadors"](#): This organization, which is an arm of the Caesarea Foundation, was established in October 2010 in order to invest in students from Israel's geographical and social periphery. The Ambassadors are 400 Israeli students, between 19-27 years old, 80 of whom are Arabs (20%). After a rigorous and multi-phased recruitment and selection process, each Ambassador receives a full scholarship, living expenses and a broad set of support and training opportunities throughout his/her Bachelor's studies with possible additional support thereafter. Ambassadors receive personal and group guidance, leadership training and practical experience through participation in planning and implementation of social change projects in selected locations (specifically as mixed groups of Jewish and Arab Ambassadors).
- b) [Kav Mashve – Career Centers for Arab Students at Universities](#): The first Career Center was established in early 2008 to facilitate the integration of Arab college graduates into employment that is commensurate with their education and qualifications. Today Kav Mashve Career Centers operate in all Israeli universities, providing training programs designed to meet the needs of Arab students, as well as the tools and means necessary to integrate effectively into the labor market. The Centers aim to change attitudes about career development among Arab college students and graduates and offer training courses according to market needs. Students are supported with CV writing, interview preparation, individualized guidance, job placement and Career Marathon Days. This model, which will likely be integrated into the Six-Year Plan, will eventually be integrated into all universities' systems. Faculty teams at each participating academic institutions will undergo multicultural and career development training and will eventually take leadership of the Center. This project is funded by JFNA's Social Venture Fund, UJA New York Federation, and Central New Jersey NESS Fund.

VI. Ideas for Follow Up: Possible Interventions and Opportunities

As presented in this paper, closing gaps and enhancing access to higher education for Israel's Arab citizens is an important component of Israel's continued development. The various elements presented here, including the unprecedented Israeli government attention, funding and resources; the numerous ongoing efforts by civil society actors (universities, colleges and NGOs); and the newly collected data, knowledge and insights on this issue, all create a number of opportunities for North American Jewish leaders who wish to learn more or strengthen this effort.

- a) **Community education and awareness-raising:** The fact that higher education has come to the forefront for the government of Israel and numerous donors creates valuable education and engagement opportunities for North American Jewish organizations. Leading professionals from the CHE, Israeli universities, colleges and non-governmental organizations can present the opportunities and barriers in enhancing access to higher education for Arab citizens to local Jewish organizations, foundations and leaders. Education and awareness-raising can also happen by incorporating these issues in organizational newsletters, seminars and missions to Israel.
- b) **Strengthen existing initiatives:** With government funding and recognition, many existing initiatives can now be scaled up. The government alone, however, cannot provide all the resources necessary to take each initiative to the next level while working on a national strategy. Leaders from the North American Jewish community can play a role through financial and professional support of successful initiatives like the ones listed above. Professional and philanthropic relationships between North American organizations and those in the field can generate better practices and results on the ground, prevent duplication of efforts, and raise the professional standard overall.
- c) **Matching Opportunities—the PBC’s Six-Year Plan:** Initiatives launched as part of the Six-Year Plan often have a co-funding component whereby PBC funding is contingent upon the implementing institution, non-governmental organization, or external donors participating in program costs. Matching schemes allow government funding to go further while encouraging deeper commitment within the implementing institution and broader participation throughout the philanthropic world. (See [Section IV](#) of this paper for a more detailed description of the programs described below.)
- **Education Counseling Centers:** The PBC is working closely with JDC-Israel to establish Educational Counseling Centers that will be integrated into JDC-Israel’s One-Stop Employment Centers. Through TEVET²¹, JDC-Israel’s partnership with the Israeli government on employment, JDC has a special financial status for matching government programs and as such will need to provide 25% matching from the total cost of the entire project. In addition to the substantial sum allocated for the project by the PBC, the Ministry of Trade and Labor allocated a substantial sum as well (due to the connection it has to

²¹ [TEVET \(Hebrew initials for "Momentum for Employment"\)](#) is an organization created as a partnership between JDC-Israel and the Israeli Government in order to enhance employment opportunities to disadvantaged populations, with the understanding that employment is the key factor through which poverty can be reduced.

enhancing employment), and asked Tevet to be the implementer. JDC-Israel is preparing a holistic matching program for both government bodies that would leverage philanthropic funds for this issue at a 1:3 ratio.

- **“[Bridges to Other Universities Pilot Program](#)” with the [Open University \(OUI\)](#):** as mentioned above, implementation of this pilot program has begun in the current academic year for 95 Arab students. PBC funding is contingent upon the Open University providing matching funds at a 2:3 ratio (i.e. for every \$3 provided by the PBC, Open University must raise \$2). (See [Section IV, part \(c\)](#) for additional program details.)
 - **Academic Excellence Graduate Scholarships:** Scholarships provided for Arab researchers in the MA, PhD and Post-doc programs stand to dramatically increase the quantity of Arab students in graduate programs. Current PBC funding is available for a limited number of students per graduate program (see [Section IV, part \(d\)](#)). These scholarships are contingent on 15-20% matching funds from recipient universities and are an opportunity for philanthropic support. For a discussion of financial support for Arab students during their Bachelor’s degree studies, see [Part \(e\)](#) of this section, below.
- d) **Complementing governmental investments:** Although government investment in this issue is significantly higher than before, gaps and needs are still larger than what the Six-Year Plan can cover alone. Whether or not programs are not specifically conditioned on matching funds, they can be substantially upgraded if matching funds are made available. For example, universities and colleges will require additional funding to provide services to all Arab students, as well as to enable mentoring in smaller groups, more individual counseling hours, additional subsidies for pre-academic courses, dormitories and transportation, and the like.
- e) **Discuss “missing pieces” with the PBC and universities:** The PBC’s programs do not include a number of important elements for integrating Arab students into Israel’s higher education institutions, including:
- **Creating a pluralistic, diverse and culturally-sensitive campus:** An important conversation that university donors can have with their grantees relates to issues that do not always require much funding but can go a long way in making higher education more accessible and accommodating to Arab citizens. This could include, for example: making sure there are Arab-language signs everywhere; ensuring that all student services are also provided in Arabic; ensuring Muslim, Christian and Druze holidays are respected and taken into account as part of the exam schedule; checking that cultural sensitivities are

respected in the dormitories; and investing in encounters and shared society work between Jewish and Arab students. Funding for some of these elements can be included in the programs that institutions will present to the PBC, but the donors and "friends of" organizations could play a supportive role.

- **Bachelor's degree scholarships:** Financial support for Arab students during their Bachelor's degree studies is increasingly recognized as a critical issue. As mentioned above, scholarships in Israel are often conditioned on army or national service, and are thus unavailable to the vast majority of Arab students. Moreover, as Arab students often come from low socio-economic backgrounds, costs of transportation, rent, dormitories and other living expenses present a major barrier to higher education. Yet, financial assistance for these expenses is often not included in existing scholarships and government programs. The PBC has not been able to include this issue in their Six-Year Plan and is concerned that this omission might detract from the plan's success. The PBC is therefore looking into the possibility of building a special philanthropic fund to assist Arab students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. Philanthropy could have a major role in creating dedicated scholarships for needy Arab students, and ensuring that scholarships already provided by funders to needy Israeli students in general are awarded by the universities to both Arab and Jewish students. Philanthropic investment of this kind has already been proven effective through the work of the Arnow Family Fund for Bedouin women at Ben Gurion University, the Kahanoff Foundation's creation and support of MAOF scholarships for Arab faculty, and Ethan Wertheimer's scholarships for excelling Arab youth at the Technion. One model that currently exists in Israel for Haredi students, is a collaboration between the CHE and several philanthropic bodies. In that model, an implementing body (a Haredi organization) mediates between needy Haredi students and Israeli banks that provide convenient loans to the students. Based on each student's needs, field of studies, and academic success, the loans become grants upon graduation through the scholarship fund.
- f) **Monitoring, data collection and information sharing:** Although the variety of programs underscores the diversity and range of needs within Arab society in Israel (by gender, geographical location, socio-economic levels, religious/traditional background etc.), the overall population of Arab students in Israeli universities and colleges is relatively small, making follow up on progress easier. Ongoing and rigorous data collection by the relevant institutions (high schools, the PBC, universities, colleges) is important for monitoring the success of the various

models, ascertaining progress and allowing necessary modifications and improvements. Funders can serve a critical role in requiring proper evaluation as part of their grant process, aligning their evaluation requests with the needs of the larger vision established by the PBC in its Six-Year Plan, and allocating sufficient grant funds to make evaluation possible. Likewise, sharing evaluation results with other funders in the field would serve overall efficiency, coordination and strategic decision making.