



Civil Service for Israel's Arab Citizens and Voluntarism inside the Arab community in Israel¹

***Mapping the existing civil service reality, structure, trends, obstacles and
opportunities for philanthropy***

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¹ This paper addresses the issue of National/Civil service. *Shnat Sherut*, a different track of post high-school voluntarism is called "a year of service" but, is not covered in this paper. *Shnat Sherut* allows youngsters who are active in a youth movement to postpone their army service by one year and spend that year volunteering as youth guides in the framework of their movement or elsewhere. It operates via the various youth movements and through the Ministry of Education and does not have any formal benefits or status attached to it.

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Executive Summary

This paper aims to create a base of data, analysis and potential suggestions regarding civil/national service for Israel's Arab citizens that will allow a contemplation and strategy-building process to follow. The current system of national/civil service in Israel involves numerous actors – the Civil Service Administration, government ministries, NGOs, private funders, etc. and has evolved incrementally into a complex, multi-level bureaucracy. The establishment of the formal National/Civil Service Administration under the Prime Minister's Office in 2007 was part of a gradual move to open up the option of national/civil service to additional groups in society that do not (for the most part) serve in the Israel Defense Forces including Haredi men, Arab citizens, disabled individuals and youth from the periphery that are not recruited by the army. Over the past decade, controversy among the Arab community regarding civil service and the current governmental system has tainted the participation of Arab youth and yet over the last few years a number of leading Arab and Jewish civil society activists have worked to develop alternative models of voluntarism in the Arab community.

Formal system:

Currently there are approximately 13,000 civil service volunteers in Israel, of which some 1,300 are Arab (including Bedouin and Druze). Four to five bodies (some overlap exists) make up the civil service system: (i) Responsible body – the Administration; (ii) Funding/Operating bodies that pay for volunteer slots; (iii) Recognized bodies responsible for placement and management of volunteers; (iv) Beneficiary organizations of the volunteers, and (v) informal content providers. As of 1994, when the "Law for the Absorption of Released Soldiers" was legislated, those who complete civil/national service are entitled to the same basket of benefits as those completing the same period of time in army service. The basket is provided by the Released Soldiers' Fund in the Ministry of Defense and includes a wide variety of financial, professional and other benefits.

In addition to Arab organizations that have developed alternative models of voluntarism, a few Jewish organizations are supporting and promoting independent voluntarism tracks to peripheral communities and Arab youth specifically. Such programs are informal in the sense that they are not recognized by the State or by any formal body.

Trends identified include:

(i) Growing controversy vs. growing demand: The establishment of the Civil Service Administration created dual and even paradoxical trends. On the one hand, it heightened the controversy around this issue inside the Arab community, while on the other hand it created significantly greater interest and demand for this program amongst Arab youth; (ii) Alternative models in the Arab community: Inside the Arab community a few serious and professional voices have emerged that are viewing voluntarism as an important and necessary phenomenon and are creating alternative models to that of the State; (iii) Internal reflection process: over the past couple of months, and notwithstanding ongoing vocal and at times vociferous opposition to civil service, some of the Arab leadership has begun an internal thinking process to re-examine this issue; (iv) In the US, the issue of voluntarism and contribution of youth to their own community has become extremely high on the agenda.

Suggested next steps:

Next steps include potential philanthropic assistance to lay the groundwork for a strategic shift. This includes (i) scaling up bottom up efforts inside the Arab community and (ii) upgrading the existing system by increasing the number of Israeli Arab volunteers and the quality of their program. In addition, this paper addresses political issues not necessarily related to philanthropy including obstacles and opportunities.

I. Background and aim of this paper

The current system of national/civil service in Israel involves numerous actors – the Civil Service Administration, government ministries, NGOs, private funders, etc. and has evolved incrementally into a complex and multi-level bureaucracy. National Service was initially created in the 1950s for religiously observant girls who did not serve in the IDF. The establishment of the formal National/Civil Service Administration (hereinafter referred to as the Administration) under the Prime Minister's Office in 2007 was part of a gradual move to open up the option of national/civil service to additional groups in society who do not serve in the IDF (e.g., Haredim, Arab citizens, disabled individuals and youth from the periphery that the army does not recruit). As such, the Administration was charged with funding volunteers from these specific populations and advancing their participation in civil/national service.

This trend of opening up national service to additional groups is the result of numerous social and political processes that gradually led to a conception of service that went beyond only army service. It also stemmed from the understanding that civil/national service is a significant asset to the State of Israel, to Israelis in general and to the individual volunteers. According to research, youth voluntarism, especially in regards to weak and marginalized populations, offers a significant opportunity for empowerment and integration into the wider society while also contributing to strengthening and upgrading capacities (e.g., personal esteem, education and social services) inside these weak communities. Supporters of extending civil service to the entire non-military serving population list numerous advantages both on the national level and for the individual volunteers. On the national level, civil service is seen as an opportunity to invite weaker and marginalized groups to help carry the burden of the physical and social development of the country and to enhance Israeli identity amongst marginalized groups. Moreover, this period offers the volunteering groups a spring board to inclusion in the labor market by enhancing skills and introducing them to numerous new opportunities. On the personal level, civil service offers volunteers coming from marginalized communities and weak backgrounds the potential to improve personal skills (e.g., English language courses, preparation for the psychometric exam², development of life skills and leadership skills, etc.), and thus is often a rehabilitative framework

² The Psychometric Exam in Israel is similar to the SAT in the US – it is an external test of math, English and logic skills that is a prerequisite to get into most of the institutions of higher education in Israel. This test is often mentioned as one of the notable obstacles for the integration of Arab youth in higher-education – and thus also in the economy – of Israel, as Arab youth traditionally score much lower than average grades on this test. (According to research conducted by Dirasat – Arab Center for Law and Policy in 2008 on Disparities in Education, the average score among the Jewish population is 570 out of 800, while among the Arab population it is 460 out of 800. <http://www.dirasat-aclp.org/index.asp>)

for them. Finally, voluntarism helps to create a sense of social responsibility and social solidarity between youth volunteers, their communities and the state.

A second trend that has emerged over the past decade is controversy among the Arab community regarding civil service in general and in the current structure of governmental system specifically. This controversy has tainted the entire sphere of youth voluntarism inside the Arab community, and specifically the participation of Arab youth in civil service. Consequently, a number of leading Arab and Jewish civil society activists have worked, over recent years, to develop alternative models of voluntarism (community voluntarism or gap year programs) in the Arab community. Such models aim to offer a substitute to the formal system and to help legitimize the issue of voluntarism in the eyes of the wider Arab community and especially the Arab leadership.

The delicacy of issues related to Israeli Arabs and civil service in Israel and the additional sensitivity regarding the involvement of North American Jewry in such issues, calls for a deep learning process. This paper aims to create a base of data, analysis and potential suggestions that would allow a contemplation and strategy-building process to follow.

The paper is based on over 35 interviews and discussions conducted between September 2009 and January 2010 with policy makers, government representatives, Jewish and Arab academics and civil society activists and funders involved in these issues, as well as on extensive readings of research reports, position papers and other relevant materials.

The paper addresses: (I) A detailed description of the historical development and existing structure of the governmental civil/national service system; (II) An analysis of current trends regarding civil service and alternative models, and (III) Obstacles and opportunities for change as well as suggested action steps.

II. The historical development and existing structure of the governmental civil/national service system

A. Historical development

Aiming to enhance the participation of Arab citizens in civil service is part of a larger process aiming to create strategic policies regarding the growing phenomenon of civil/national service in Israel. This process gained momentum in Israel in the last decade and the inclusion of Arab youth in civil service was recommended by the Lapid Committee³ (established to implement the recommendations of the Or Commission of Inquiry⁴). In 2005, the government established a special committee under the title "The Institutionalization of Civil-National Service" that was headed by David Ivri⁵ (known as the Ivri Committee), which looked broadly and strategically at how to institutionalize civil service in Israel as an alternative form of service for populations that do not serve in the IDF. This committee recommended the establishment of a National/Civil Service Administration as an interim body that would work to streamline the existing systems, legislate a national approach to the issue, and lead to the establishment of a state-run Civil Service Authority. In August 2007, the government adopted the recommendations of the Ivri Committee in governmental decision No. 2295 and established the interim National/Civil Service Administration (*Minhelet*) under the Prime Minister's Office.⁶

The role of the Administration is to oversee the entire sphere of national/civil service, to promote new and innovative initiatives that would allow new populations to volunteer for civil service (Haredim, Arab citizens, disabled individuals and youth from the periphery that are not accepted into the IDF), and to work on a holistic law to institutionalize national/civil service. After the 2009 elections the Administration was moved to the Ministry of Science; its Director Dr. Reuven Gal resigned and a temporary freeze was put on this process. Currently a substitute director, Yaakov Amar, manages the Administration and a search committee has been established to choose

³ On September 14, 2003, two weeks after the publication of the Or Commission Report, the government appointed a ministerial committee to study the Commission's recommendations. The committee was headed by Deputy PM and Minister of Justice, Yosef (Tommy) Lapid. The Lapid Committee submitted its report on May 31, 2004.

⁴ A State Commission of Inquiry, headed by Supreme Court Justice Theodor Or, nominated by then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak to investigate the October 2000 events, including the behavior of the security forces and the instigators and organizers of the clashes. In the report of its findings and recommendations, published on September 1, 2003, the Or Commission identified the root causes of the events as government discriminatory policy, police behavior, and radicalization of the Arab sector's leadership. The Or Commission called on the government to institute a policy of genuine equality for the state's Arab citizens, and to allocate budgets that would reduce the gaps in areas such as education, housing, industrial development, and employment.

⁵ David Ivri formerly served as Deputy IDF Chief of Staff, Director General of the Ministry of Defense and Director of the National Security Council.

⁶ Responsibility for National service had previously been with the Ministry of Welfare, and the report of the Ivri Committee in fact mentions that "*the representative in the Committee of the Ministry of Welfare opposes the opinion of the majority, suggesting that responsibility for civil service should remain under the Ministry of Welfare*".

a new head - estimated to be hired in early 2010. In parallel, the Administration is expected to present to the government draft legislation to institutionalize and streamline the entire sphere of national/civil service within the coming month.

B. Numbers and current structure

Currently there are approximately 13,000 civil service volunteers in Israel, of which some 1,300 are Arabs (including Bedouin and Druze). The minimum period for service is 40 hours a week for 12 months and approximately 20% of volunteers continue on to a second year. According to regulations, a volunteer cannot work for profit while volunteering and can study only on a part-time basis (special exceptions are approved based on socio-economic need).

The cost per year of each volunteer is called a *Teken* (per-person voluntarism slot, in plural *Tkanim*). This cost varies. Those who leave home and go to live in communes cost about 26,700 NIS a year (approximately \$7,200), while those who stay at home cost about 17,400 NIS a year (approximately \$4,750). These funds cover a very small stipend, travel costs, insurance, cost of guides/coordinators and overhead for the Recognized Bodies (see page 9). The *Teken* is considered to be meager in terms of what it provides for the volunteers (e.g. one guide per 50 volunteers, minimal guidance and enrichment), especially those volunteers that continue to live at home, which most Arab volunteers do.

Broadly speaking, four to five bodies make up the civil service system and are relevant to each civil/national service volunteer (whether Arab or Jewish):

1. Responsible body (the Civil Service Administration): The Administration is the body with overall responsibility for all national/civil service volunteers and monitors all 13,000 volunteers (Jewish and Arab alike). It is also the body responsible for compiling and approving the list of all those eligible to receive the benefits.
2. Funding/Operating bodies - Payment for the slots: Numerous bodies of different types fund and oversee the operational aspects of the work of civil service volunteers. Independently of each other, and to varying degrees each year, these bodies issue and pay for a certain number of *Tkanim* (voluntarism slots). About two thirds of all volunteers are paid for by governmental bodies. From those, the Civil Service Administration funds about 1,100, while other governmental ministries (Education, Welfare, Health, Industry, Justice, Internal Security, etc.), fund additional volunteers. The Administration and each Ministry issue tenders according to spheres they are interested in finding volunteers for, the criteria for the selection of volunteers, etc. They have wide discretion regarding the specifications of the spheres and

definition of the target populations and at times include an element of training as part of the preparation of the volunteers for their work (e.g., training by Ministry of Health personnel on how to implement public health awareness raising work in Mother and Child Clinics). The final third of the volunteers is funded by various foundations and civil society organizations (educational institutions, hospitals, etc.) that also pay to receive volunteers.

3. Recognized Bodies - Placement and management: There are 7 NGOs (see page 11) that are recognized by the State to manage and place all 13,000 civil/national service volunteers. Some of the NGOs have been active for a few decades with religiously observant Jewish girls, while others are newer. The most recently recognized NGO (recognized in 2007) is also the only Arab NGO of this group, although Arab volunteers are employed by most of the 7 NGOs. These bodies respond to the tenders issued by the funding bodies and, in turn, develop projects with educational, health, welfare and other facilities that are interested in 'employing' the volunteers. They then present a request for funding according to the guidelines of these tenders (e.g., presenting a project to the Ministry of Education for 50 volunteers to work in schools in Haifa or to the Administration for 15 youngsters to work in welfare in Rahat). If they win the tender, they receive the funds from the funding body and are responsible for recruiting, placing, managing and overseeing the volunteers' work. These bodies also issue a graduation certificate that proves successful completion of civil/national service. A couple of these bodies, such as Civic Equality for All, also provide additional content (group support, personal empowerment, education, etc.) to the volunteers.
4. Beneficiaries of the volunteers: These are the bodies where the volunteers serve - such as schools, hospitals, old age homes, welfare departments, sports programs, youth movements, etc. At times, these bodies are one and the same as the private funding bodies (e.g., hospitals employing volunteers that they fund). At times, they are subsidiaries of the formal funding bodies (e.g., the Ministry of Education funding volunteers in schools). At other times, the beneficiaries can be independent of the funding body. The beneficiaries actually employ and oversee the volunteers on a daily basis. Some of them (e.g. *Hashomr Hatza'ir* and *Hano'ar Ha'oved VeHalomed* youth movements, Hapoel Tel-Aviv Educational Program, Tapuah, etc.) also provide the volunteers with ample enrichment activities.
5. Content providers: A couple of the Recognized bodies seek the assistance of professional organizations, independent of the State and not recognized as part of the formal system, to provide the volunteers with extra enrichment and empowerment opportunities. Together with the Recognized bodies and depending on raising substantial additional funds, the content provider adds various educational, personal, professional and communal contents to the

volunteers (e.g., personal empowerment, encounters and dialogue, English language skills, assistance with preparation for the Psychometric exam). IsraCorps is probably the best known and largest content provider.⁷ The notion of providing enrichment and empowerment opportunities (which, as mentioned above, a couple of the Recognized bodies and beneficiaries provide on their own) is based on a deeper understanding of voluntarism in general and of civil service specifically as being an opportunity not only to give back to the community, but also, and at times especially, a year in which to empower, upgrade and enhance the abilities of youngsters coming from peripheral and marginalized communities. Bodies promoting this approach often criticize the way that civil service volunteers are used as cheap labor and stress the importance of both ensuring respectable jobs for them and utilizing this year of service as a jumping off board for future advancement and integration – as a way in which to help close existing gaps in Israeli society.

⁷ In fact, IsraCorps currently acts as a "subcontractor" to a couple of the Recognized bodies at least as far as Arab volunteers are concerned. Together with the recognized body IsraCorps competes for tenders, and once approved, the Recognized body transfers the relevant funds to IsraCorps, which in turn implements the entire process of recruitment, placement, monitoring, evaluation and content provision. According to IsraCorps, they currently oversee 250 such Arab volunteers and, in addition to the funds provided by the governmental slots, they raise external funds - estimated at 10,000 NIS (about \$2,650) annually for each volunteer - to allow additional content for the volunteers. One of the major funders of this additional content is the Gandy Family Fund.

C. **Diagram of current civil/national service system** (relates to both Jewish and Arab volunteers; arrows are examples only).

Responsible Body

Monitoring function for all 13,000 volunteers (of which 1,300 Arabs)

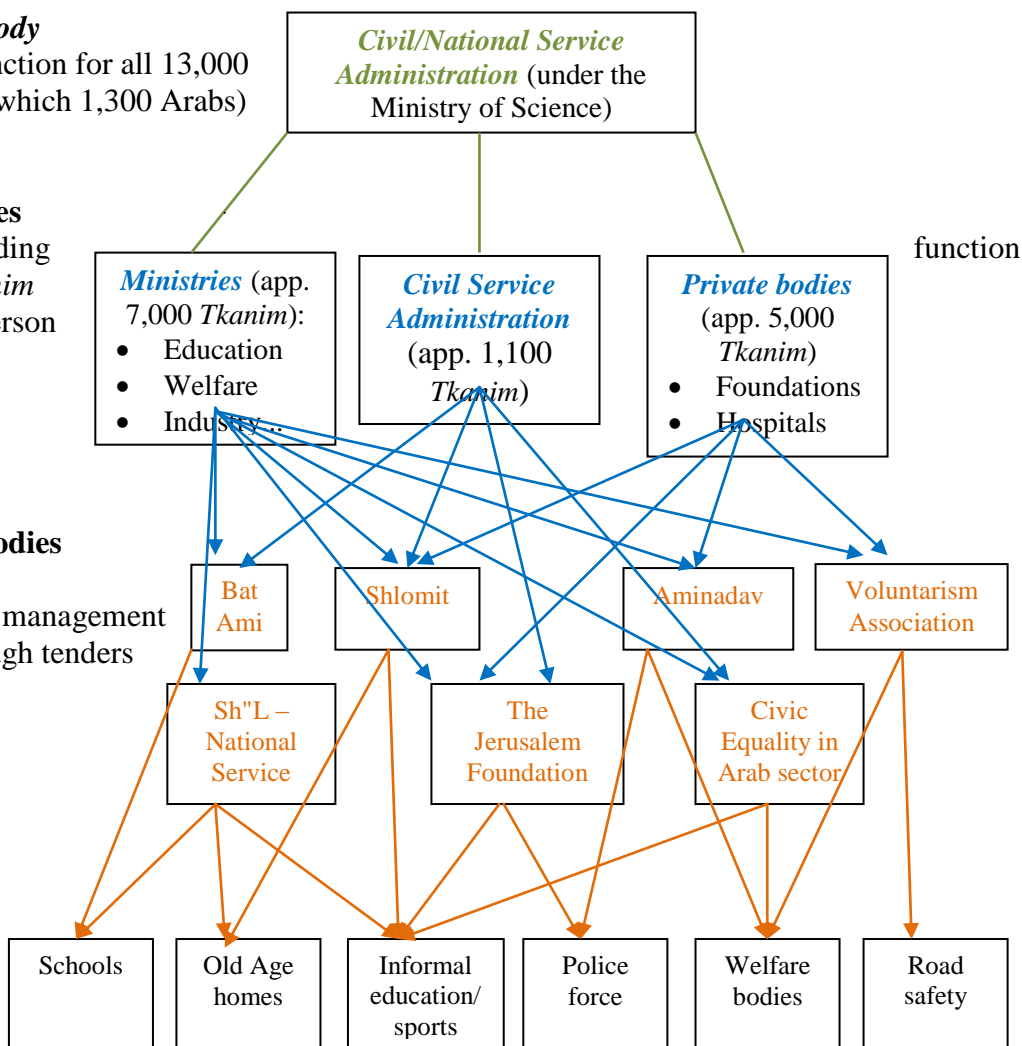
Funding Bodies

Operating/Funding (based on *Tkanim* 'slots' or per-person annual cost)

Recognized Bodies

7 NGOs, Placement and management functions through tenders

Beneficiaries
employing and overseeing the volunteers



Examples (two of many such projects currently happening):

Hapoel Tel Aviv Youth Education Program

Tkanim Funded by the Administration
Recognized body: Equality for All
Number of volunteers: 16 Arab girls and boys
Beneficiary: Hapoel program operating in Arab schools from Acre to Abu Basma.
Activity: Coaching soccer groups & informal education for children
Content: provided to the volunteers by Hapoel, including soccer coaching and education; funded by external assistance.

Education in the Bedouin community

Tkanim Funded by Ministry of Education
Recognized body: Bat Ami
Number of volunteers: 30 Bedouin girls from northern Bedouin villages
Beneficiary: elementary and high schools in these villages
Activity: assisting kids in the formal education system in their community
Content: provided to the volunteers by IsraCorps – identity issues, group empowerment and educational content; funded by external assistance.

Benefits:

As of 1994, when the Law for the Absorption of Released Soldiers was legislated, youngsters who complete civil/national service are entitled to the same basket of benefits as those completing the same period of time in army service (soldiers in combat positions receive extra benefits). This basket is provided by the Released Soldiers' Fund in the Ministry of Defense⁸ and comes with a wide variety of financial, professional and other benefits, including:

1. Financial bonus: Paid directly to the personal account of each volunteer, equaling approximately \$540 for those completing 12 months and \$1,080 for those completing two years.
2. Personal deposit: Equaling approximately \$1,600 for those completing 12 months and \$3,200 for those completing two years of service. For the first 5 years after service has been completed, this deposit can be used only for specific purposes inside the State of Israel (tuition fees, vocational training, opening a business, marriage, etc.) and is then available without conditions for another 2 years. If not used it is then closed.
3. Assistance in tuition: Provided to those of socio-economic needs and special assistance in tuition for technological spheres such as engineering.
4. Assistance in finding employment: through counseling offered by the Fund and Unit for Released Soldiers as well as through subsidized vocational training provided by the Ministry of Trade and Industry.
5. Income tax and mortgage subsidies

⁸ While the source is a fund located in the Ministry of Defense, the money itself is not Ministry of Defense funds. Rather, "[the Fund] is financed by the State Treasury [and] its budget is set in the Budget Law, under a separate clause, outside the security budget...The Fund also enjoys generous donations coming from private donors and philanthropic foundations". *The Approach towards the Rights and Obligations of Israel's Arab Citizens through the Prism of the Notion of Civil Service*, Reuven Gal, October 2007, p. 18.

III - Existing Trends

A number of trends have been identified that, while at times unrelated, lead to the assessment that the issue of civil service for Arab citizens of Israel is extremely delicate and undoubtedly extremely relevant. These trends also show that this issue is at a juncture that can allow a process leading to meaningful and significant upgrading of the current reality. These trends include:

A. Growing controversy vs. growing demand: The establishment of the Civil Service Administration created dual and even paradoxical trends. On the one hand, it heightened the controversy around this issue inside the Arab community, while on the other created significantly greater interest and demand for this program amongst Arab youth. In terms of the controversy, similar to the argument regarding service in the IDF by some groups in the Arab community, the issue of Arab participation in national/civil service has been a sensitive one. The new prominence of this issue in recommendations made by State-nominated committees culminating in the establishment of the Administration, greatly enhanced this controversy, leading to the establishment of a special Anti Civil Service Committee under the Higher Follow Up Committee of the Arab Citizens of Israel, headed by Attorney Ayman Oudeh, Secretary General of the HADASH Party. Opposition to civil service is vocal, political, very active and includes the publication of ads and pamphlets as well as numerous presentations and lectures in Arab high-schools, all calling on the Arab community to oppose civil service, warning Arab youth and their parents from the "perils" and "manipulations" of this process and presenting opposition to civil service as the "steadfast" and "patriotic" act. Opposition to the idea and/or the current system of civil service is prevalent among the Arab leadership and political society. While attitudes to this issue inside the Arab community vary greatly, and even among those opposing civil service there is a variety of nuances and differences, it is possible to distill a number of key arguments:

- i. *The perception that civil service is related to security issues*: despite attempts made by the Administration to give this issue a more civic air, (e.g. by adding the word civil to its name and mission), there is a widespread perception among Arab leaders that civil service is only a disguise for the State of Israel's perceived continuing attempts to draw the Arab community towards Army service⁹. This perception is

⁹ These suspicions stand in stark contrast to the parallel discourse inside Israel's Jewish community, where it is often claimed that widening civil service is an illegitimate trend of creating a state-supported "civic" alternative to the obligatory military service. The internal Jewish discourse also addressed the idea of making national service an

based on historical experiences of the Arab community vis-à-vis the State, as well as on structural issues. For example, that the Ivri Committee was initiated by then-Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz¹⁰ and was headed by David Ivri who has a very high-level security background. To this day Ivri serves as the Chairman of the Administration's Public Board. In addition, this perception is based on the fact that in a number of the documents issued by the State-nominated committees civil service is mentioned in the same context as military service and with enhancing the participation of Arab citizens in service in the police force and other security bodies; that the Administration was established and run by Dr. Gal who previously worked on this issue in the National Security Council and who served as the IDF's Chief Psychologist; and maybe most prominently - the fact that volunteers receive their benefits from the Released Soldiers' Fund in the Ministry of Defense. A variation of this criticism is the fear that voluntary civil service will gradually become a compulsory substitute to military service. Biladna, one of the major Arab NGOs that lead the campaign against civil service summed up this argument by using the slogan "National Service – your way to the army."

- ii. *Objection to "giving before receiving full equality" or to conditioning equality on service* – in various papers, articles and arguments, claims of discrimination are countered by the argument that Arabs do not serve in the army and thus do not contribute equally to Israel and to Israeli society. In this context, the issue of civil service is presented as a necessary step towards furthering equality. Furthermore, until the mid-90s, receiving child allowances from the State was tied to army service, and parents who did not serve received lower allowances for their children. In the Arab community this argument is rejected on two accounts: first, voluntarism as a contribution to the State should come last rather than first: i.e. such voluntarism will only be legitimate after the State grants its Arab citizens their full rights and ensures equality. Second, this argument places voluntary service as a precondition for equal rights.

"[The] approach [in Israel] was the basis for the correlation between the principles of social voluntarism and serving the State and the homeland...The linkage between social voluntarism and the principle of serving the (Jewish) homeland and (Israeli) State places Israel's Palestinian citizens in a difficult

obligatory substitute to army service (and in fact, the original National Service Law of 1953 made national service obligatory for Jewish religious women who do not serve in the IDF – but this law was never implemented and national service has always been voluntary). This suggestion is absent from the new draft legislation (see below).

¹⁰ The initiative was later joined by then-Minister of Welfare Zevulun Orlev and then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

*dilemma. Those who wish to volunteer for the benefit of their society may prefer to forego volunteering if it is constructed as being connecting to "serving" the State in any form associated with the military. In addition, the link created by the State between the principle of compulsory Army service and the provision of equal rights for all citizens increases the sensitivity of the issue for the Palestinian citizens of Israel."*¹¹

- iii. *Fear of "Israelization" and the loss of identity:* As was mentioned above, one of the major advantages of youth voluntarism is its role in enhancing the integration of marginalized communities into the wider society. Arab leaders and political activists often express the fear that civil service is the State's attempt to tame or befog Arab youngsters so that they are easier to manage. A somewhat different version of this criticism states that civil service would serve to undermine or dilute the national self-identity of these youngsters as Arab-Palestinian-Israelis, and furthermore that maybe this is the exact intention of the Israeli authorities. On the same ground, more pragmatic voices condition their support of civil service on a transformation of the current system in a way that would allow the Arab community much greater control and oversight on the volunteers, their places of service, the educational contents they are provided with and so forth. Of all the objections voiced, this is maybe the deepest set and the most substantial.
- iv. *Control issues and inter-generational gaps* inside the Arab community between the political leadership, NGO leaders, community activists and the wider public, as well as between the various components of this society (Bedouins, Druze, political parties, etc.).

At the same time, ongoing research and opinion polls show substantial support in the Arab community for participation in voluntary civil service, with numbers ranging from 74% in Prof. Sammy Smooha's opinion poll (published in December 2007¹²) to 33% in a poll conducted by Biladna itself. Moreover, the fact that a few thousand young Arabs have already gone through this process and have seen its potential and enjoyed its benefits, has led to a groundswell of interest amongst young Arab citizens. In 2003, a formal Knesset document listed "ten Arab boys and a handful of Arab girls" as participating in civil service annually¹³. In 2007, there were 289 Arab participants¹⁴. Over the past two years (2008 and

¹¹ *"To Volunteer is a Right: Voluntarism in Palestinian Society in Israel"*, NISPED-AJEEC Publication, April 2008, p. 10.

¹² The results of his most recent opinion poll conducted during 2009, will be published in an upcoming conference in Haifa University on February 11th (see initial data on page 23).

¹³ *Background Document: National Service for Minority Members*, Knesset research Department, March 10, 2003, p. 4.

2009) that number has surpassed 1,000 participants per year and a new Arab NGO was recognized by the State as one of the aforementioned Recognized bodies. Moreover, relevant experts report that there are currently at least one thousand Arab youngsters on a waiting list to volunteer this year alone.

In localities where a number of groups have already participated in civil service programs, there is a growing trend of enhanced interest and desire to participate in this track. People working in the field report being approach by dozens of youth from the same village or town who wish to participate in civil service because they have seen their next door neighbor, their older sibling or their cousin volunteer. While political opposition to civil/national service overshadows grassroots interest, this groundswell in interest is creating increased pressure on the Arab leadership to come up with an alternative to the formal system, rather than just oppose it.

In parallel, as part of its special effort to enhance the participation of Arab youth, the Civil Service Administration has led a dialogue process with a number of Arab mayors, leading to 15 of them agreeing to participate in future civil service tenders as partners to the Recognized bodies. Under this new model, the mayors would have much greater say in the placement of the volunteers according to the needs of their communities. With the current hiatus on new tenders in the Administration, this effort has also been frozen. The new tender is expected to come out in February or March 2010.

Unfortunately, this increased interest is met with a severe shortage of *Tkanim*, so that the momentum created cannot continue further, leaving the Arab public arena open to the campaign against civil service. Paradoxically, activists (Arab as well as Jewish) promoting this process are frustrated as they find themselves in a four-way struggle between severe criticism by Arab leaders, heightened demand to participate by Arab youth, a State that continuously calls on Arabs to participate in civil service and the severe lack of available governmental funding.

- B. Alternative models of youth voluntarism: Inside the Arab community a few serious and professional voices have emerged that are viewing voluntarism as an important and necessary phenomenon for the Arab community and are creating alternative models to that of the State. While they strongly oppose the existing government system, they support youth voluntarism and criticize the Arab political leadership's shortsightedness with regard to this issue. Their rationale is therefore to first convince their own (Arab) leadership to support

¹⁴ See comment 8, p. 23.

such an alternative model and then to lobby together for this alternative vis-à-vis the government. Four of these organizations have come together over recent years to create a Voluntarism Coalition (called Khiraquna which means 'our mobilization' in Arabic). This coalition includes NISPED-AJEEC in the Negev, Al-Tufula Center in Nazareth, Al-Amar in Sakhnin and Citizens Building a Community in Lod. The coalition currently runs four groups of 20 volunteers each and is now in the phase of bringing in additional organizations working in the sphere of voluntarism, as well as presenting its model to the elected Arab leadership and the Forum of Arab Mayors.

In addition to Arab organizations that have developed alternative models of voluntarism, a few Jewish organizations are supporting and promoting so-called independent voluntarism tracks to peripheral communities and Arab youth specifically. Bodies such as IsraCorps, Alon and others raise external funds so as to allow Arabs who do not wish to participate in the formal system to go through a year of voluntarism that is not state-recognized and thus does not entitle them to the related benefits, but does provide the volunteers with similar work and enrichment experiences to the Civil Service track. Alon, for example, had a program two years ago, in which it put together four groups of Arab youngsters (boys and girls) from Jisser A-Zarqa, Daliat El Karmel, Lod and Jaffa during their senior year. Following graduation these groups volunteered for a year, each in his/her own community, and in addition were provided with enrichment activities including a psychometric course. At the end of the year they participated in an intensive two-week program of academic preparation towards university studies (*Mechina*) that included Hebrew and English language and academic reading and writing skills. The volunteers also received financial assistance and ongoing guidance throughout the duration of their university studies, and in return continued to volunteer during that time (this program stopped last year for lack of funding). Such programs are informal in the sense that they are not recognized by the state or by any formal body.

- C. Internal reflection process: Importantly, over the past couple of months, and notwithstanding ongoing vocal and at times vociferous opposition to civil service, some of the Arab leadership has begun an internal thinking process to re-examine this issue. This nascent internal shift is apparently the result of the growing interests among Arab youth to sign up for civil service on the one hand and pressure by the Arab activists promoting alternative models on the other. Thus, some of the Arab leaders have come to realize that they need to come up with an alternative model of their own, rather than only opposing the existing formal system and refusing any discussion with the government.

- D. In the US, the issue of voluntarism and contribution of youngsters to their own community has become extremely high on the agenda and there are a number of foundations involved with the Inter-Agency Task Force that see great importance in supporting this issue in Israel.

IV. Suggested Next Steps:

A. Philanthropic Assistance to Lay the Groundwork for a Strategic Shift

Why? It is clear that the formal system is not strategically addressing voluntarism in general or civil/national service specifically and is especially problematic in the way it deals with the integration of Arab youth into civil service. Simultaneously, the issue of including the Arab youth in civil service and community voluntarism is of obvious importance and interest. Ideally, structural changes within the formal system (suggestions laid out below) would be combined with external assistance and work with Arab leadership and civil society organizations to narrow existing gaps, both institutional and psychological, and ultimately to create a new and inclusive model of civil service (or community voluntarism). Currently, new legislation is being prepared that would streamline all national/civil service and is expected to be presented to the government shortly by the Minister of Science. The legislation aims to establish a National Authority for Civil/National Service under the Prime Minister's Office. The draft defines "people who will be allowed to participate in National/Civil Service" as those who are exempt from regular army service or were not called to serve; people who are part of the Haredi community arrangement; additional people as decided by the Prime Minister in consultation with the Minister of Defense. These people will "have the right to participate in voluntary service." According to the proposed Law, the new Authority will take charge over all national/civil service volunteers.

While internal discussions are happening in Arab society and leadership, and until an alternative model supported by the Arab leadership is conceptualized and presented, no second degree change would be possible without further alienating the Arab leadership. However, there are opportunities to strengthen alternative models and enhance the existing model so as to lead to the tipping point where the swell of interest among youth will tell the story. Based on this analysis of current trends and developments, following are suggestions for the use of external assistance.

- I. Scale up bottom up efforts inside the Arab community** by supporting the work of *Khiraquna* (the Voluntarism Coalition) and of additional NGOs (full list can be provided) promoting alternative tracks of Arab voluntarism. The Coalition is currently in the process of amalgamating the experience it has gained and the model it has developed into a strategic paper that will be presented to Ramez Jeraysi, Mayor of Nazareth and Head of the Council of

Arab Mayors in the coming month. Bottom-up activities that the members of this coalition have implemented in the past few years have created for the first time a professional infrastructure of youth voluntarism in the Arab sector. This is opening the discussion on an alternative civilian service model inside the Arab community (involving political activists, mayors, etc.). The alternative voluntarism tracks are more expensive as they offer a much richer and fuller voluntarism experience – with special emphasis on the empowerment and advancement of each volunteer during this year – and since they do not rely on any government funding. However, this component is a crucial one so as to build bottom-up capacities, as well as growing pressure on the Arab leadership to move in its internal process. Supporting and enhancing these efforts will enable the internal Arab discussion to move in a positive and constructive direction, further closing the existing legitimacy gap towards the presentation of an alternative voluntarism model that would be legitimate in the eyes of the Arab leadership and could tap into governmental resources.

- II. Upgrade the existing system by increasing the number of Israeli Arab volunteers and the quality of their program.** Increase funding to assist civil society organizations working with the formal system to enhance the effectiveness of voluntarism by supporting the programs they provide that empower and enrich the volunteers. This work will also help create the infrastructure, knowhow and experience for the future. Here the focus is on providing funding to Recognized bodies, content providers and content-oriented beneficiaries (e.g. Equality for All, IsraCorps, Hapoel Tel-Aviv Youth Education Program, Hashomer Hatzair and Hano'ar Ha'oved Youth Movements, Tapuah, etc). As mentioned above, the work of these bodies inside the existing formal system, while controversial among the Arab political leadership, is gradually creating a sea change on the grassroots level, by involving increasing numbers of Arab youth in meaningful civil service voluntarism. The work of these bodies is dependent on two elements: *Tkanim* (voluntarism slots) provided by the government, and the assistance of external funders in order to enrich the voluntarism experience and deepen the impact of this year on each volunteer.

B. Political Issues Not Necessarily Related to Philanthropy - Obstacles and Opportunities

There are a number of suggested shifts in the government, which are likely to both increase the number *Tkanim* for Arab volunteers under the current system, and initiate the first steps needed to decrease the level of antagonism by Arab leadership. We have the opportunity to share the information gathered with relevant formal actors and to suggest a few initial structural steps that would help make the formal system both more culturally sensitive and fair.

Obstacle 1 - Severe shortage of *Tkanim* (voluntarism slots) offered by the state to Arab youth wishing to volunteer (this is also true regarding Jewish national/civil service volunteers). This shortage constitutes a technical obstacle that does not match the growing interest to volunteer expressed by Arab youngsters, and does not allow the existing momentum inside the Arab community to continue.

Opportunity - The various ministries have great flexibility in determining the number, sphere and target audience for civil service volunteers they fund. One idea is to suggest that each ministry funding civil service volunteers would ensure a quota of 20% for Arab volunteers¹⁵. (Note: this is currently the case in the Ministry of Justice).

Obstacle 2 - The fact that the word 'service' is used and various aforementioned historical and structural factors have created a de-legitimization of the existing structure amongst much of the Arab leadership.

Opportunity - Split the Administration (or subcontract its responsibility over the Arab volunteers), and a separate body, under a new name (e.g. Community Voluntarism), would be created under the Ministry of Welfare or the Prime Minister's Office¹⁶ to oversee Arab volunteers. (Note: while creating a separate Administration for the Arab volunteers is not ideal, the sense is that due to the historic baggage and the heightened sensitivities, such a move is the only option).

Another element that could help increase the legitimacy and cultural sensitivity of the current system is the inclusion of a new Recognized body, one that is legitimate and accepted in the Arab society. For example, one idea is to nominate the Association of Community Centers (*Matnassim*) – numbering 180 centers throughout the country with approximately 40 centers in Arab localities – as a Recognized body.

Obstacle 3 - The Released Soldiers' Fund is the so-called bottleneck at the end of the process. Transferring all benefits through this fund was done in order to allow civil service volunteers (Arabs and Jews alike) to enjoy the same benefits that religiously observant girls doing National Service get. However, having Arab volunteers receive the final bonus and additional benefits from a

¹⁵ While 20% represents the percentage of Arab citizens in Israeli society, the potential for youth voluntarism in the Arab community is much greater since the vast majority of Arab youth is never called to serve in the army.

¹⁶ It will be important to follow the progress of the suggested Law on Civil/National Service, and if a politically-neutral National Authority will in fact be established (similar to the existing National Authority for Road Safety), this could offer a viable solution. However, even if the law will say that the National Authority established will be under the Prime Minister's Office, it is likely that this Authority will remain a political card and will move between ministries according to coalition agreements, just like the Broadcasting Authority has been moved to Yuli Adelstein's Ministry lately. Moreover, at present, as the Administration is still located under the Ministry of Science, as the situation has become very sensitive and politically charged, and as legislation often takes a very long time to be realized and implemented, it seems that one way to advance is to move responsibility of the Arab civil service volunteers to the Ministry of Welfare, which is seen as civic and professional.

body sitting in the Ministry of Defense is acknowledged by many to have been a great mistake to begin with, and greatly heightens opposition to civil service as a whole.

Opportunity - Transfer the Benefits Fund for civil service volunteers from the Released Soldiers Fund in the Ministry of Defense to the National Insurance Fund (*Bituach Leumi*), which is also under the Ministry of Welfare. (Note: talk of this was already in progress when Dr. Reuven Gal headed the Civil Service Administration).

Obstacle 4 - So far there has been very little discussion between the State and the Arab leadership (MKs, mayors and the Higher Follow Up Committee¹⁷) on this issue, which is one factor that Arab activists often mention as offensive to them.

Opportunity - Involve Arab leaders in contemplating any future changes which would create more involvement on the part of the Arab leadership and central activists.

V. Recent Developments as of the beginning of February, 2010:

- A tender for a new Director for the National/Civil Service Administration has been issued and the selection process is on the way.
- Initial data from the recent poll¹⁸ conducted by Prof. Sami Smoocha of Haifa University on civil service in the Arab community in Israel: support for civil service in the general Arab population stands at 68.3% (a drop of about 10% from two years ago, but still over two thirds of the population). Among youngsters between the ages of 18-22, 53% responded positively to a general question about support of civil service (a sharp drop from 77% in 2007), and the same percentage answered that they would be personally interested in participating and receiving all related benefits. 75.5% of the volunteers serve an exclusively Arab population, 72.4% serve inside the locality where they live and 19% serve in adjacent localities. 91.8% of all volunteers say that in hindsight they would volunteer again. The rate of students among civil service graduates is 66.9% as compared to 46% in the non volunteering population. 80.6% of the volunteer feel there has been no change in their identity, while 8.6% said they have become more Israeli.

¹⁷ The Higher Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel is an extra-parliamentary umbrella organization that represents Arab citizens of Israel at the national level. It is "the top representative body deliberating matters of general concern to the entire Arab community and making binding decisions." It includes all Arab Members of Knesset, the heads of the Arab parties and political movements and representatives of the Council of Arab Mayors (a separate body that represents all Arab mayors).

¹⁸ The poll included 401 Arab adults over 23 years of age; 200 Arab youngsters that do not participate in civil service; 152 youngsters currently volunteering in civil service, 153 youngsters who have completed their civil service in the past year or two. No Druze were included in the poll.

- NISPED-AJEEC conducted the first of four round-tables on voluntarism in the Arab community on December 23. They invited heads of all the Arab-Bedouin local authorities, the Welfare offices, Education offices and community centers in each village and political and social activists. The discussion focused on how they can make volunteerism sustainable (turn it from spontaneous initiatives to organized, institutional volunteering). The input from this very positive discussion, as well as from three additional round tables that are planned in other communities in Israel, will be included in a position paper on the conditions in which to cooperate with the government. A second round table is scheduled for end of February in Nazareth. The continuation of this discussion will be in the framework of the Forum of Heads of Arab Municipalities headed by Ramez Jeraysi.
- Dr. Reuven Gal, Former Director of the National/Civil Service Administration, who resigned last August when the Administration was moved from the Prime Minister's Office, started a project on this issue under the Van Leer Institute. The project is titled "Voluntary Service in the Community" and includes seven round tables with activists, experts and academics. It aims to discuss various questions and dilemmas related to civil/national service.
- The Prime Minister's Office is conducting a round table discussion on voluntarism as part of the ongoing 'tri-sector' round table that brings together representatives of government, businesses and third sector organizations to debate and suggest governmental policies on a variety of issues. This discussion is much broader than the issue of civil service and discusses what should the governmental policies be in order to encourage voluntarism in Israeli society at large.
- A new very large tender is being issued by the Ministry of Internal Security (Police) for Arab volunteers. This is a reform of a tender that was issued by this Ministry a few months ago that aimed to recruit Arab volunteers to the police force. This turned out to be problematic and the tender had been changed so as to promote the inclusion of Arab volunteers under the national program for the reduction of youth violence called "City Without Violence." In the framework of this program the volunteers will work with schools, community centers, afternoon informal education initiatives etc., would be financed by the Ministry of Internal Security and would be overseen by three national organizations involved in this plan, including the Anti Drug Authority. This program will now allow 200 additional Arabs to participate in national service, through two of the Recognized bodies that won the tender (Shlomit and Voluntarism Association – the latter to pass its volunteers via IsraCorps), making the total number of Arab volunteers close to 1,500. The Ministry

already has plans to issue a second tender under the same program for the next formal year (that begins September 2010).

- The Administration itself is due to issue its annual tender, which was delayed by a few months, in February-March 2010. This tender will almost surely include, for the first time, a project that will involve Arab mayors, so that any Recognized body wishing to apply will need to partner with an Arab mayor and together define the needs that volunteers would respond to in that community. At the same time, according to recent news reports, the number of *Tkanim* issued by the Administration for Arab volunteers will be cut.

In sum: Over the past few months discussion of the future of civil/national service has reached a high level of intensity and prominence. Currently the discussion is taking place in at least five parallel forums:

- (I) The Administration and the Ministry of Science – in relation to the next tender and the upcoming draft legislation;
- (II) Khiraquna (the Voluntarism Coalition) – in relation to developing an alternative model to that of the state, in the framework of round tables they are conducting together with activists, mayors and the Arab leadership;
- (III) Van Leer Institute – in the round tables organized by Dr. Reuven Gal;
- (IV) The Prime Minister's Office – in the 'tri-sector' round tables on voluntarism
- (V) A new forum that includes some of the major Recognized bodies and related players (IsraCorps, Gandyr Fund, Tapuah) has recently met and wants to establish itself as a lobbying forum vis-à-vis the government in order to advance the issue of civil service.