

Equality Zones

Promoting Partnerships between
Jewish and Arab Municipal Authorities
Lessons and Insights



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USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



סיכוי سیکوي Sikkuy
תאגידת קידום שוויון אזרחי الجمعية لدعم المساواة المدنية
The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality

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Promoting Partnerships between Jewish and Arab Municipal Authorities
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Preface

This document is designed to serve as a tool for civil-society organizations that are interested in promoting municipal partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities. It is not meant to be a public-relations document. Rather, it describes the Equality Zones Project that Sikkuy ran from 2012 through 2014 as part of a decade of activity in this field. The goal is to raise awareness to the potential that such partnerships hold for all actors working to promote equality and partnership between Jews and Arabs in Israel, without trying to mask the inherent difficulties and challenges.

We believe that the insights and challenges raised here will be of great service to all those who wish to develop such partnerships and hope to solidify and preserve them. We are motivated in part by the hope and belief that 20/20 hindsight is foresight, when it comes to designing and facilitating future projects. We also invite you to contact us personally for more extensive consultation.

Please note:

- ▷ This model relates to partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities, although in some places, to facilitate smoother reading, we have written only “local authorities” or “authorities.”
- ▷ Sikkuy is committed to equality between men and women as well as between Jews and Arabs. The fact, however, is that very few women are currently serving in senior positions in local authorities. Sikkuy staff recognizes the true value of women as part of change processes and makes every effort to augment their involvement, even within the current realities.

Chapter 1

Introduction

From Sikkuy's Co-Executive Directors

In this document, Sikkuy summarizes the last three intense years, within a decade of efforts, of promoting municipal partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities in Israel. We do this with recognition that the process of promoting equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel must take place at the local, central and regional levels and it involves gradual and slow change.

This document presents the deep insights we have gained over the course of a fascinating three years, and decade of activity. Obviously we point the spotlight at our successes, of which we are proud; but this is not a public relations document that focuses only on the achievements and leaves the problems in the shadows. With estimable candor, the project's professional staff also discusses the challenges they encountered along the way.

We were delighted to discover that local authority heads in Israel, both Arabs and Jews, understand the importance of municipal cooperation and know that such partnerships can further the interests of all residents of their region. In regions where both Jews and Arabs live, mayors and council chairs of all political streams understand that reducing the tensions between Jews and Arabs is of supreme interest for all citizens, and this recognition motivated them to take part in the project. On the other hand, we also discovered that there are powerful obstacles to such cooperation. The greatest challenge is the different ways in which the two sides view the matter. When Arab local authorities pursue municipal cooperation they are also motivated (and justifiably so) by their desire for a more equitable distribution of regional resources and a reduction in the disparities between their communities and the Jewish local authorities. In

contrast, Jewish local authorities get involved chiefly in order to promote cooperation where they deem it practically essential, such as in the field of the environment, and not in order to achieve a fair distribution of resources. The tension between these motivations is one of the greatest challenges confronting the entire process.

We must confess: We have not found a solution that can leapfrog over this tension to achieve an intensive and equal partnership. All the same, we did discover and employ strategies and tactics that allowed us to encourage significant collaboration, even within the recent complex conditions of tension and conflict. We are very happy and proud of this and believe that we must continue moving ahead with such processes.

Implementation of the project was a complex process that required the Sikkuy staff to display teamwork, multidisciplinary knowledge, expertise, and persistence. First and foremost we would like to thank the project co-directors, Ronen Sabag and Khalil Mari, who devoted their days and nights to dealing with the vast challenges that the project presented and doggedly leading it to major successes. We would further like to thank Jenny Cohen, director of evaluation and oversight for the project, for her significant, professional, and empowering assistance all along the way; Yaala Mazor, the project coordinator, for her unwavering commitment to its success and for managing the production of this document. We would like to thank Jasmeen Janah for her administrative support, Basheer Abu Baker for financial administration, and Kifah Daghash for her involvement with translations and project evaluation. Special thanks also to members of the Sikkuy staff who were involved in the project in its infancy: Ali Haider, the former co-executive director of Sikkuy; Salaam Hamed, the first co-director of the project, and the first project coordinator, Anan Karaka-Dalal. Their important contributions have been evident from the very start of the project.

We would also like to thank the Arab and Jewish mayors and council heads, the professional staffs of the local authorities, and the citizens who took part in the various program activities. It was their belief in the importance and indispensable nature of this process that catalyzed its success. Thanks also to USAID for the generous grant and to the USAID staff, and especially to Nidal Abed El Gafer and Joubran Joubran, for their close and empowering professional assistance.

Sikkuy's efforts to promote municipal cooperation between Jewish and Arab local authorities have advanced achievements that influence relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel. Despite problems along the way, we sincerely believe that cooperation between Jewish and Arab local authorities is essential for the emergence of an equal and shared society in Israel. This document is being completed after a difficult summer for relations between Arabs and Jews in Israel. Nevertheless, we believe that there can be no positive future for the residents of this land, Jews and Arabs alike, without equality and partnership. Sikkuy is determined to continue to work in this direction.

We hope that this document will imbue you with our faith in the importance of municipal cooperation between Arab and Jewish local authorities and give you tools to promote such cooperation.

Jabir Asaqla and Ron Gerlitz
Co-Executive Directors, Sikkuy

From Equality Zones Co-Project Directors

The Experience of Joint Management

Running a complex and multidisciplinary project that involves local authority heads, working groups of professionals, and teams of volunteers is a complicated business, even when everything runs like clockwork. Joint management of such a project, with added interpersonal dynamics and the fact that one director is an Arab and the other a Jew, is undoubtedly a challenge. With the right partner, however, this can be an enriching and strengthening experience without parallel.

In addition to the practical advantages of co-direction, such as the possibility of sharing the workload and responsibility so that they are manageable, the fact that each of us has a back-up or substitute when required, not to mention the tired but true cliché that two minds are always better than one (on the condition that they can work together), the most important advantage we enjoyed was the joint Arab-Jewish management of the project.

A project that aspires to build sustainable partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities required us to walk the walk, and not just talk the talk. As co-directors, an Arab and a Jew, we served as a living example of the ideal that we strove to further with the local authorities. By means of equality, respect, and mutual concessions, and as representatives of Sikkuy, which is run in the same fashion, we offered tangible proof to all interested parties that this is not only possible, but also empowering and enriching.

Many disputes and disagreements broke out in the various forums over the project's three years, but the debates were always conducted

in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We believe that our commitment to the process and to the creation of a shared society in Israel are why we were accepted by a majority (though not by everyone) in the Jewish and Arab local authorities, in government ministries, and by local residents. The fact that the joint forums continued to meet, and with even increased frequency during the months of the fighting in Gaza last summer, is persuasive evidence that sitting together, getting acquainted, and working in tandem are the most positive and powerful engine of all.

In a stormy ocean of opinions, truths, conflicts, and battles, with the large majority of eight million people who want only to enjoy a sane existence standing in the middle, there is no standard, uniform, or unique recipe for creating the kind of partnerships for which the project aimed. But we have to begin the journey—there is no dispute about that. From our experience we have learned that honesty, tolerance, and determination are fundamental commodities. To our enormous good fortune we had them in abundance during the long days and nights of working to advance equality between all residents of the country.

Khalil Mari and Ronen Sebag
Co-Directors, Equality Zones Project

Background

Sikkuy has been promoting partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities for over a decade, beginning between 2004 -2008 with a project in the Wadi Ara and the Carmel Coast regional councils, which laid the foundations for building partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities in other areas of the country. Between 2012 and 2014, Sikkuy worked to promote partnerships in two other regions - the Jezreel Valley/Nazareth Hills and the Southern Sharon/Southern Triangle.

The present document describes Sikkuy's experiences in these four regions. Our cumulative experience allows us to identify and develop projects that can actually realize the ideal of municipal partnerships. The model we used to construct the partnerships over the years is unique, not only because of its *modus operandi*, but also and perhaps chiefly because of the conceptual and practical framework that underlies it: joint activity by citizens and decision-makers, both Jews and Arabs, in pursuit of an equal and common discourse of rights in Israel. The program to be described here in detail actually implements this concept.

Sikkuy is a civil-society organization founded in 1991 by Alouph Hareven and Professor Faisal Azaiza in order to promote civic equality between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. We built on their vision to conduct the Equality Zones Project and to do so at a regional level. Our main tool was the creation of partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities. To achieve this we established forums of local authority heads, who would work together on issues of common interest to all their communities, in two regions. One municipal partnership, in the Southern Sharon and Southern Triangle, encompassed the South Sharon Regional Council and the towns of Tira, Kokhav Yair, Kafr Bara, Jaljulya, Kafr Qassem, and Rosh Ha' Ayin. The second,

in the Jezreel Valley and Nazareth Hills, involved the Jezreel Valley Regional Council and the towns of Nazareth, Afula, Migdal Ha'Emeq, Iksal, Bustan al-Marj, Daburiyya, Kfar Tavor, and Yafi'. In addition to the forums of mayors and council chairs we set up professional forums and permanent joint groups (NPOs, associations of towns, and municipal clusters, to be explained further, below). All of these were intended to create a solid basis for creating partnerships in those two regions and, in turn, to promote equality on the regional level.

In 2009, Sikkuy published, **A Framework for Jewish-Arab Cooperation Between Municipal Authorities: The Case of Wadi Ara**. This piece includes a summary of Sikkuy's activity and the insights it gained about advancing municipal cooperation during its project in Wadi Ara and the Carmel Coast between 2004–2008.¹ The present document adds our learning and experience since then and expands the available knowledge about the field. It details the project's components: the domains in which it worked; the main players and the dynamic between them; the topics around which the mayors and council chairs wanted to work together; the establishment of specific forums for each topic selected and their conversion into permanent groups (some of them are still coalescing); the difficulties and complexities underlying the promotion of municipal cooperation; and, finally, the insights and challenges facing all those who wish to advance such cooperation. For a deeper look at the theories that guided us, please refer to the comprehensive related bibliography, which can be found on Sikkuy's website. We hope that the present document describes the fascinating and complex world of municipal partnerships in general and Jewish-Arab partnerships in particular and will help all those interested in promoting cooperation between Arab and Jewish local authorities in Israel.

1 B. Benveniste, *A Framework for Jewish-Arab Cooperation between Municipal Authorities: The Case of Wadi Ara* (Sikkuy, 2009) (Hebrew); available on the Sikkuy website.

Cooperation and Partnership

The Equality Zones Project, as noted, is a concrete effort to promote equality between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. Its practical manifestations are the construction of partnerships between Jewish and Arab municipal authorities in two different regions of the country. *From our experience, these partnerships can create and solidify joint regional understanding of complex systemic problems faced by all of the local authorities who are members of the partnership, and stimulate them to undertake joint effort to modify the situation.*

But what are those partnerships? What motivates them? What are the key issues upon which they are based and how are they linked to the attempt to get mayors and council chairs to develop a broad regional perspective? We will present a brief survey and attempt to answer these questions. First, though, we offer a glossary of basic terms to support our analysis. *Partnerships* are a model that aims to create mutual recognition of value, while preserving the role and uniqueness of each partner. An *organizational partnership* is a continuing and structured link between two or more independent organizations that choose to work together to achieve a common goal. Thus a partnership is based on mutual desire and on continued and regular activity, with the idea of leveraging the participants' influence while maintaining flexibility, and creating a joint space and common language that increase their acquaintance with each other. This differs from *cooperation*, which is generally a random, one-time, or limited episode. Partnership is based on recruitment and persuasion, on democratic mechanisms of decision-making and a voluntary distribution of labor. This is very different from *inclusion*, which occurs when one authority invites another entity's input while retaining the final say-so. In this model, participation is an individual or group's choice to exert influence, without the other party's making a commitment to accept or recognize their position.

Partnership raises three essential issues. The first is that of *equality*: partnership is a democratic organizational space in which all are equal (at least ostensibly). This is a necessary axiom, because we are talking about a system that requires allowing all members space, freedom, and expression. Below the surface, however, there is a lively dynamic of comparisons and counter-comparisons.² Although the initial conditions are not equal, all the partners aspire to achieve equality and an experience of fairness. Their joint success requires that they work against their natural inclinations and make concessions on behalf of a greater goal. This is a huge challenge that cannot always be met, as will be seen in the section on industrial zones.

The second issue is *responsibility*: Because of the demands, investment, and risk, on the one hand, and the uncertainty, on the other, some of the partners tend to behave like observers, standing on the sidelines and waiting for developments, while shunting off responsibility to an intervening agency. Because the tensions and challenges that come with the partnership require the constant involvement and combined inputs of all the partners, great importance is attached to their continuing mobilization and involvement and the emergence of a sense of ownership and commitment. We will deal with this chiefly in the chapter on the complex relations between the intervening agency and the partners.

The third issue relates to the *process*: a partnership has two axes, that of the process and that of the mission. The *process axis* has to do with the relations within the partnership, the forums, the internal communications, and the teamwork; we will look at this in the chapters that describe the project's structure and components. The

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2 This is a perpetual tension that is especially prominent in Israeli society. We recommend our study by Nohad Ali and Shai Inbar, *Who's in Favor of Equality?* (Sikkuy: 2010), which is available on Sikkuy's website at www.sikkuy.org.il.

second part of the document will address the *mission axis*, which relates to advancing the organizational tasks that are associated with consolidating a vision, objectives, goals, drawing up a work plan, mobilizing resources, dividing up the tasks, and devising an outline for their implementation.³

The partnerships in the Equality Zones Project are intimately associated with the regional dimension. They were created in order to change how local authority heads look at the space in which they live and work; their purpose is to get them to examine the situation and take into account the fact that both Arabs and Jews live there. On the one hand, they must preserve their local perspective; but on the other hand they need to put on new spectacles through which they can see the entire region as shared by Arabs and Jews, and to act out of shared and mutual concern.

Regionalism means an invitation to look beyond municipal, political, and cultural borders, and to take account of common assets and needs that are determined by environmental, geographical, or social conditions. The regional perspective seeks to create partnerships and cooperative ventures that can bridge the differences between communities, so that the fruits of regional development will improve the quality of life of all inhabitants of the region. This regional connection frequently has a distinct advantage over local settings when it comes to dealing with concrete needs such as water, the environment, the road network, and more. It can rise above the local authorities' unending problems and enhance their ability to provide services in continuous, reliable, and appropriate fashion.⁴

3 Based on M. Talias, "Interorganizational Partnerships: Space for Consultancy," *Organizational Analysis* 15 (Jerusalem, Tzafanat, 2010) (Hebrew).

4 For more extensive information in Hebrew about the consolidation of a regional perspective and its potential achievements, see several documents produced by the Elka Institute and the Reut Institute and of course the Sikkuy website. For example, *Israel 15 Vision: Leapfrogging the Periphery* (Jewish

Why Regional Partnerships?

Sikkuy launched its project to create municipal partnerships because it understood that the campaign for equality must be conducted on the regional level for several reasons. First, a significant share of the country's resources - land, transportation infrastructure, jobs, commerce, tourism, and more - are found at the regional level. Second, the decisions about allocation of these resources are taken at the regional level by local authority heads themselves or in concert with central government decision-makers. Third, the geographical space in Israel has been shaped by the national conflict between Jews and Arabs; regional resources, land, and infrastructure have been allotted by the government with a clear bias in favor of Jewish localities. This situation, along with the Jews' strong ties to the decision-making centers, has produced stark inequality in the distribution of regional resources throughout the country. This inequality is manifested in differences in local authorities' budgets and tax base, the caliber of their professional staffs, the level of the services they provide their residents, and more.⁵

There are a number of good reasons why local authorities should join a municipal partnership:

- ▷ Achieving better neighborly relations and reducing ethnic-national tensions. The reduction of tensions will improve residents' quality of life and is in the best interests of local authorities that want to just live quietly and prosper.
- ▷ Two are better than one: Central-government institutions

Agency for Israel, the Reut Institute, and JDC-Elka, October 2010); online at www.reut-institute.org.

5 M. Belikoff and S. Ali Agbaria, *From Deficits and Dependence to Balanced Budgets and Independence – The Arab Local Authorities' Revenue Sources* (Sikkuy, 2014); available on Sikkuy's website, www.sikkuy.org.il.

encourage municipal partnerships.

- ▷ Preserving and developing environmental and natural resources. Dealing with these issues requires cooperation by adjacent localities.
- ▷ Spatial development can improve the quality of life of all residents of the region.
- ▷ At the start of the project we thought there was an additional advantage. The national planning agencies' declared support for the inclusion of Arab local authorities in industrial parks would increase the government resources available for such zones. But, as we will see in the chapter on industrial zones, the reality turned out to be somewhat different.

Some motives may be specific to either Arab or Jewish local authorities. **Jewish authorities may also be interested in the following:**

- ▷ Reducing gaps and modifying the image of peripheral regions as weak and riven by ethnic tensions. The development of nearby Arab localities and improvement of relations between communities can enhance their positive image as a developed region that is a good place to live.
- ▷ Promoting local tourism in Jewish localities, catalyzed by a link to the cultural assets found in Arab localities and the tourists they attract.

On the other side, **Arab local authorities may have the following additional motives:**

- ▷ A desire for a more equal and fairer distribution of regional resources, in order to cope with the unequal status of the Arab citizens
- ▷ A desire to achieve civic equality and get government ministries to promote equality
- ▷ Benefiting from Jewish local authorities' ready access to

government ministries and their ability to obtain government resources, in order to develop regional projects

- ▷ Enhancing the physical and organizational infrastructure inside Arab local authorities by connecting to the efficient and effective infrastructure already found in Jewish local authorities

As can be seen, some of these motives are strikingly different. In some cases there is a deep tension and perhaps even conflict between Arab authorities that lack resources and Jewish authorities that enjoy the full inventory of regional resources.

The concept of Arab-Jewish municipal cooperation developed by Sikkuy aspires to channel the forces and efforts invested in the struggle and competition into common activity, by means of permanent joint entities that can increase regional resources and distribute them in a more equal fashion. In this way, the aggregate regional interest could be expressed and overlaps created between the different interests. Such entities could help reduce the tension between Jews and Arabs, identify possibilities for joint economic development, eliminate environmental hazards, and promote a shared life based on mutual respect, and thus also increase and strengthen the emerging partnership. Nor should we ignore the relations between local government and the central government. The creation of a partnership of local authorities in a statutory association or cluster would significantly bolster the region's standing vis-à-vis the central government and to some extent also vis-à-vis its residents.⁶ This stronger position could be manifested in influence on government decisions, budgetary allocations, and access to power centers.

6 For more on the purpose of the cluster and how it is established, see Chapter Three.

Chapter 2

Getting Started

Goals and Objectives

As stated, the project envisions the creation of permanent frameworks for partnership between Jewish and Arab local authorities and their inhabitants, in order to promote a fairer and more equal division of regional resources between the Jewish and Arab sectors. The project's goals were defined in order to provide a clearer envelope for the underlying vision. We assumed that the permanent entities will affect the mentality of local leaders and that this change will be expressed in the development of regional and not just local thinking, leading to the formation of long-term partnerships.

Consequently the project's overarching goals were defined as follows:

1. The residents will see themselves as living in a region that is the common home of Arabs and Jews.
2. The region will be run as a shared district, with extensive plans for cooperative ventures involving local authorities.
3. New government resources will be channeled to the region.
4. There will be a more equitable distribution of regional resources and of new central-government resources.

The project's objectives were defined as follows:

1. Establishment of permanent joint entities that bring together local authorities, professional staffs, and residents to address diverse domains.
2. Development and implementation of joint work plans in the above areas

The Theory of Change

Before leaving the starting line we defined a set of assumptions that describe the potential benefits of an Arab-Jewish partnership on the regional level and its implications for the residents' lives.

If ...	Then ...
Local Jewish and Arab leaders identify common interests and barriers to equality	They will work together to build permanent entities that can promote partnership and equality between the communities and influence residents' daily lives.
Joint permanent entities are created that can produce solutions to relevant problems for both sides	These entities will catalyze the development and actual implementation of projects, including tourism, joint industrial zones, statutory bodies (municipal clusters), and public transportation.
There is mutual recognition of the economic, cultural, and social achievements of the partnership that has been constructed	Tensions will be lessened, as will the conflict between the two sectors on the regional level.

Post factum, and building on our insights about the scope of the obstacles to achieving something within the duration of time-limited (3 year) municipal partnerships, we would like to modify these assumptions as follows:

If ...	Then ...
Jewish and Arab local leaders identify common interests that do not threaten the status quo and decide to take steps in these areas	They will work together to build permanent structures that can promote partnership and equality between the communities and influence the residents' daily lives.
Joint permanent entities are created that can produce solutions of relevant problems for both sides	These entities will catalyze the development and actual implementation of projects, including tourism, joint industrial zones, statutory bodies (municipal clusters) and public transportation.
There is mutual recognition of partnership's ability to trigger joint processes and obtain outside budgets	It will be possible to continue the partnership and divide the additional new resources in a more equal fashion.

This revision of our assumptions is no trivial matter; it stems from significant insights we gained, as the project advanced, about the limited capacity of such a process to remake the world with regard to the distribution of regional resources (and certainly not within three years), and, above all, that it is very hard to promote partnerships that threaten the status quo in which the Jewish localities enjoy the lion's share of the existing resources in the region. On the other hand, it is possible to promote partnerships that lead to a more equitable division of new resources. It is certainly possible that a longer period of involvement could also produce a fairer distribution of existing resources.

The Traits an Intervening Organization Has to Have

Building a partnership is somewhat similar to starting to assemble a puzzle before knowing what it is supposed to look like. The task requires diverse abilities and skills. What traits are needed by a team that wants to establish a partnership?

On the emotional level, hope and optimism are essential tools for mobilizing and energizing men and women to act. They are the vital force that propels and sustains the entire process in every stage. This is why it is so critical to understand and be sensitive to the motives behind interpersonal relations and social processes.

On the practical level, the project requires constant study of diverse content worlds, including complex details of public policy (planning, infrastructures, transportation, and so on). This makes it imperative to be familiar with the basic terminology, to know how to analyze obstacles and challenges in depth, and to identify which agents must be included in the process. Setting up a team of outside advisors who have experience in the field and can help cope with the dilemmas that crop up along the way and develop new directions of thought, is an excellent idea that we strongly recommend.

Another key need is detailed planning—devising itemized work plans for every topic, accompanied by a timetable for their implementation. Group leadership skills can be of great use in facilitating a dialogue between local authority heads, assorted professionals, and residents. Every framework requires adjustments of a different type. Another requirement is the ability to multitask. For the project to achieve positive results there must be simultaneous long-term action in several channels. Finally, as for all community work, a capacity for persuasion and motivating is an essential asset for enlisting the various players.

Perseverance is a valuable trait in decision-makers, because it reflects their strong belief in the process. It is a critical element in maintaining the partnership and broadcasts persistence and patience.

As in all public activity, familiarity with and experience in working with the central government is a helpful commodity. In our case, it is a good idea to make sure that some members of the team have already worked with local government, know both societies in depth, and understand the link between the project and the Jewish-Arab conflict.

Another need is perceiving the human complexity, obstacles, and challenges, recognizing the opportunities offered by every topic, identifying favorable processes even in a complex and difficult situation and leveraging them, being flexible and looking for creative solutions, restraining oneself and keeping one's cool, avoiding becoming defensive, frustrated, suspicious, and angry, and knowing how to listen closely to what is being said as well as what is not being said.

Sikkuy employs several operating methods and strategies that serve this goal and support the members of the team:

A real and equal Jewish-Arab partnership. For us, Jewish-Arab partnership is an important and effective means for promoting equality. Sikkuy endeavors to implement this approach both in its programs and in its internal operations. Consequently, the model for the Equality Zones Project is based on joint Arab-Jewish management and direction, including attention to the gender aspect. All of this is manifested at the level of the project directors, the organization's directors, outside advisors, and more. Both Sikkuy itself and all its projects have co-directors. The co-management pattern demonstrates to Israeli society in general, and to Sikkuy's partners in particular, that genuine and equal Arab-Jewish partnership is possible. What is more, this model influences the organization's internal dynamic,

promotes a varied and challenging dialogue, and is important to outside stakeholders and to philanthropic organizations all over the world.

The intervention organization's position: Sikkuy has a clear agenda: the promotion of civic equality between Arabs and Jews in Israel. However, this agenda would not seem to be favored by some of the players, especially the Jewish local authorities. Every dialogue that deals with equality would deprive one player of a resource it already possesses, and not always in abundance, and redistribute it to the other player, which suffers from a shortfall. To some extent, this notion detracts from the Jewish local authorities' trust in us and from our ability to serve as an honest broker. Even if, at the end of the day, equality is better for all players, the stronger side may still prefer a balance of power in its favor, since in the present situation it has the upper hand. This tension is one of the greatest challenges we have to deal with.

A partnership that cuts across sectors. We increasingly witness that sustainable solutions to complex social problems require partnerships that cut across sectors. In the initial stages of the Equality Zones Project, the norm was partnerships and cooperative ventures between the public sector and the non-governmental/non-profit sector ("third sector"). As the regional projects advanced, the economic development enterprises (tourism) that emerged from the field began to involve the private sector as well.

Action even without dialogue. As stated, one of the central issues in this kind of partnership relates to process: what fraction of the process is devoted to concrete action, such as planning joint industrial zones, and what to joint activities by the local authorities, relations within the group, and internal communication. Looking back, we believe that we did not invest enough in a process that would cause the local authorities to take the lead themselves and develop the

dialogue between them. Because of the desire to make real progress and produce solid fruits, our work focused largely extent on action and not dialogue. In retrospect, we should have sought more of a balance between these two, even at the cost of some progress in implementation of the joint enterprises.

Capacity development. In order to ensure the project's viability and continuity, one must invest in the partners and provide them with the relevant tools and knowledge. This means, for example, enhancing the ability of local authorities, especially Arab local authorities, to work effectively vis-à-vis government ministries. The problem here was greater than we foresaw, sometimes because of budgetary limitations, sometimes because of the disparities between the stronger and weaker local authorities, and sometimes because of lacunae that are beyond the scope of a project of this size. Nevertheless, we would like to emphasize that this is a vital component if the regional partnership is to set down strong roots; hence greater attention must be paid to it in the future.

The Partners

Heads of Local Authorities

The project involved a total of 16 local authorities—cities, local councils, regional councils, and small settlements. Each had a different size population, socioeconomic structure, and so on. The mayors and council chairs came from every part of the political spectrum—right, center, and left, as well as the parties that represent the Arab population. A majority of the local authorities selected—nine of the 16—are Arab, because we felt it necessary to balance the power relations within the forum by giving them a larger presence and guaranteeing that their needs would be taken into account when the new partnerships are created. When choosing the partners and selecting the region, one must also pay attention to the complex power relations among the Arab communities themselves, as well as among the Jewish communities. In the north, for example, Nazareth is stronger than both other Arab localities and many Jewish localities.

The local authority heads had several important roles to play. First of all, on the declarative level, it is obvious that their formal assent to the process was a *sine qua non* for getting it off the ground; what is more, the very fact that they attended the forum's meetings served as constant reaffirmation of their support for it. As a result of their continued presence, other authority heads joined the group. In addition, they played a role in decision-making and the mapping out of future activities. Their consent made it possible for the staff to recruit professional men and women from the various localities and residents, who then set additional initiatives in motion.

Local elections were held in October 2013, in the middle of the project, and led to the replacement of roughly half of the authority heads, both Jews and Arabs, who belonged to the forums. Almost all of those who were re-elected are veterans serving at least their second

term in office. The turnover of authority heads posed a substantial difficulty, because we had to rebuild the forums and recruit the newly elected officials who were not familiar with the project and what had been done the previous year.

There were substantial gaps among the members of the forum on a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from their command of the material and access to information, through their ability or inability to adopt a regional perspective, their active or passive nature during and after the project, and culminating in the extent of their seriousness about, investment in, and support for the project—and, no less important, their belief that it can succeed. Also noteworthy is the broad range of their concerns, which distinguish them from the other players in the project (residents, professional employees of local authorities, central government officials, and others). The elections often forced them to relate to their membership in the forum in different ways and affected just how much public exposure they wanted it to have. For example, after one Jewish mayor was defeated for re-election, his successor did not participate in the forum, whether out of apprehension that his voters would take a jaundiced view of his participation in a forum that aimed at equality for the Arab citizens, or because of his personal reservations about such steps.

Two of the authorities that participated in the forum were run by appointed councils. Their chairs hold office briefly and are replaced roughly once a year; in many cases they do not make a major contribution to the partnership. The Sikkuy staff discussed the question of whether they should be included in the forum; on this sensitive matter we too were of two minds about whether working with them would be effective and useful. After a debate we decided to study each case on its own merits: In some cases we worked with appointed local committees and their heads, while in others we chose not to do.

Key Points for Working with Local Authority Heads

Local authority heads vary significantly in their willingness to share the information at their disposal. Some of them are energetic and creative, full of ideas that spur them to act, while others are simply observers. Some evince a tendency to regional thinking; they are usually the leading figures in the forum and the region. But others never rise above the local level. In either case, local authority heads almost always knew who we had met with in their bureaucracies, and when.

It is important to stay in regular contact with the mayors and council chairs, to keep them abreast of developments, to meet with them face to face, to listen to their needs, and to learn the extent of their commitment to the process. But one must be cautious about expressing financial commitments to promote a particular project, except for those that are relevant to our work. It is important to involve them and to request their consent for any large-scale activity in their town (such as public meetings). It is also important to make sure they receive local media exposure in any coverage of the project and/or its activities. A warm and personal relationship always helps; sometimes this also means a phone call on the morning of a meeting to verify that they will be attending, while always remembering and respecting that they never stop having to deal with political issues. *The guideline for a decision is finding the royal road between a response to short-term goals and long-term goals.*

The Professionals Employed by Local Authorities

With the consent of the mayors and council chairs, city managers, engineers, department heads, and strategic consultants sat in the project forums. They shared the professional knowledge relevant to the local authority they represented, making it possible to obtain a true picture of the obstacles and needs related to each topic under consideration. The forum, by its very definition as a learning body,

supported discussion of various issues and the quest for solutions to them. Outside professional and experts representing Sikkuy, whose services were commissioned in order to round out the forum membership in terms of knowledge and to help devise a professional work program, also took part.

There are many advantages to working with professionals employed by the local authorities. Their active involvement in the forums allows them to push issues in their own fields of knowledge and responsibility. In practice, the partnership's success becomes their professional success, and this an important motive for them. So is their presence and contribution to the process and to the shaping of relations with the authority heads. All the same, in more than one case their cooperation was minimal, including irregular attendance at meetings and/or inadequate professional preparedness. One of the disadvantages of working with the professional employees of local authorities is the heavy job burden they bear, which may make it impossible for them to commit themselves to the process. Sometimes assignments are simply dropped on them from above, even though they lack a real capacity or even desire to implement them. In addition, the significant gap between the capacities of the professional staffs of Arab and Jewish local authorities poses a challenge to all joint activity. This is an issue that needs to be studied intensively by the intervention organization, which must decide whether it wishes or is able to help bolster personnel capabilities in Arab local authorities.

Residents

Residents participated chiefly in the forums on tourism and public transportation. While it is certainly easier to recruit volunteers from Jewish society, after they joined the group all of the volunteers displayed responsibility, professionalism, commitment, reliability, and dedication, embodying the model of partnership we had dreamt

about. They volunteered for the task, came in their free time, and paid their own transportation expenses. What was special about this group was the members' strong activity throughout the project and their willingness to promote the topic on their own, outside the scheduled meetings. Their individual commitment was also tested by the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in the summer of 2014.

There was significant tension between the participants in one group, but almost no signs of it in another. The members of a third group were not afraid to deal with controversial issues and foci of tension in Jewish-Arab relations in Israel and managed to reach unprecedented understandings. In one of the tourism groups, both of the contradictory national narratives were accepted as legitimate. But not all of the residents continued to take part until the forum wound up its work. Special note should be taken of the women in these groups, who handled many of the shared tasks.

Major Stages in the Sikkuy's Equality Zones Project, 2012–2014

During its three years, the project passed through a number of stages. Here are the most important of them.

Stage 1- September–December 2011: Crystallization and final definition of the idea; hiring of project directors

Stage 2- January–June 2012: Selection of two venues for the project (central and northern Israel) on the basis of eleven criteria

Stage 3- July 2012–July 2013: Establishment of the forums. We endeavored to recruit mayors and local council chairs, professional employees of local authorities, and residents for the main project entities—the forums (mayors and council chairs, tourism, environmental quality, industrial zones). We also set up a system for obtaining professional support and advice from the private sector and recruited additional partners from the public sector and civil society. Much of our time was devoted to creating information resources about the topics we addressed, to serve the forums and various government agencies.

Stage 4- August 2013–August 2014: Operation and coordination of the forums. We continued to act on the decisions by the local authority heads and professional teams and work to implement them, in tandem with the forums' regular activity and the establishment of a new regional forum for public transportation. We also developed the action model we describe below and began planning Sikkuy's exit from the project.

Stage 5- September 2014–January 2015: Getting ready for independence. The structures developed over the years are beginning to work on their own, as Sikkuy steps out. The shared NPOs, town

associations and municipal clusters will lead the partnerships and projects into the future. The model is documented and published and presented at a public conference.

Selection of the Regions for the Project

Planning the project is an essential stage, part of which is outlining the model for partners. An example of this is how much time and careful thought we devoted to selecting the regions. We began by looking at nine potential regions. To help us select the most appropriate we drew up a list of criteria to guide a deeper investigation. They served as the basis for a knowledgeable and clear decision about which regions we would intervene in. These criteria are enumerated below, in the order of their importance for the partnership's success.

1. The Local Authority Head

Does the local authority head have a personal motivation and genuine desire to lead a regional partnership? How does he (or she) react to the idea? Has he ever initiated a meeting or cooperative venture, or only joined one when invited? His national standing was also investigated.

In retrospect we know that this is a critical index for the viability of the entire process. We tried to determine the authority heads' willingness in order to understand which way the wind was blowing in the region. Back then we did not have enough time to hold meetings with all authority heads in all nine regions. Today, however, we understand how important it is to do so. Where we met with local authority heads and eventually decided not to work in that region, there were ramifications, even though we had not made any promises and the eventual negative decision was always conveyed in a personal conversation with the authority head and in a detailed letter. It was important to verify that in every region there were at least two dominant authority heads, one Jewish and one Arab, who would keep the process moving.

2. The Intensity of the Conflict (Past and Present)

One needs to identify places where there has been friction for many years and determine whether this discord is the result of contested jurisdictional boundaries. This can provide advance warning of conflicts between the local authorities. Such conflicts will loom in the background of any activity that may be decided upon, even if the decision was made with the full agreement of all parties. Complex disputes have immediate implications for the feasibility of the project and its prospects of success. On the other hand, the success of a Jewish-Arab municipal partnership in a region torn by a bitter conflict over jurisdictional boundaries would have significant positive public repercussions. This is a sensitive index where an intelligent and cautious decision is required.

3. Balance of Arab and Jewish Local Authorities

When we selected a region, we wanted to be able to give disproportionate representation to the Arab local authorities in order to offset the typical power relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel and thereby increase the prospects that the process would succeed. We assumed that authority heads would not run to join the forum and that increasing the circle of members would augment the prospects of a broad regional process.

4. Potential Domains for Joint Regional Activity

Our initial assumption was that it would be easier to advance the project in a region that offers more possibilities for cooperation. With this in mind, we investigated whether the local authorities are members of some municipal association (firefighting, environment, etc.) and whether the association functions smoothly. Existing cooperative ventures are evidence of a certain maturity for partnership.

5. Regional Traffic Patterns

An understanding of residents' traffic patterns (for commuting,

shopping, leisure time activities, and the like) makes it possible to work with the existing situation and not row against the current.

6. Time Frame

The limited time frame requires focusing the effort on regions that offer the best prospects of success. It is better to avoid intervening in regions where previous regional initiatives have not succeeded and/or where there are tensions between authorities that would be difficult to resolve in a short period of time. Future successes will make it possible to enter such regions from a different starting point and with a less constricted time frame.

7. Active Civil Society Organizations

We preferred to avoid intervening in regions where some other “third sector” organization is already active in regional activity, so as not to find ourselves in an unhealthy competition for the shared resources (local authorities and/or projects) and to avoid creating redundancy, confusion, misunderstandings, and covert battles between the players.

8. Positive Reverberations

The project’s success in one place can influence the entire region. Some regions are marked by the full spectrum of the complex relations between Arab and Jewish citizens; success there could set off waves and create a broad positive effect.

9. Sikkuy’s Experience in the Field

Sikkuy’s past experience and its contacts with people and projects in the region made it possible for us to assess the situation there with regard to the leadership of the key players, the local or regional mood, rivalries, hidden and open power struggles, and more. The success or failure of past local or regional activity by Sikkuy may help predict the potential for or problems facing a regional partnership.

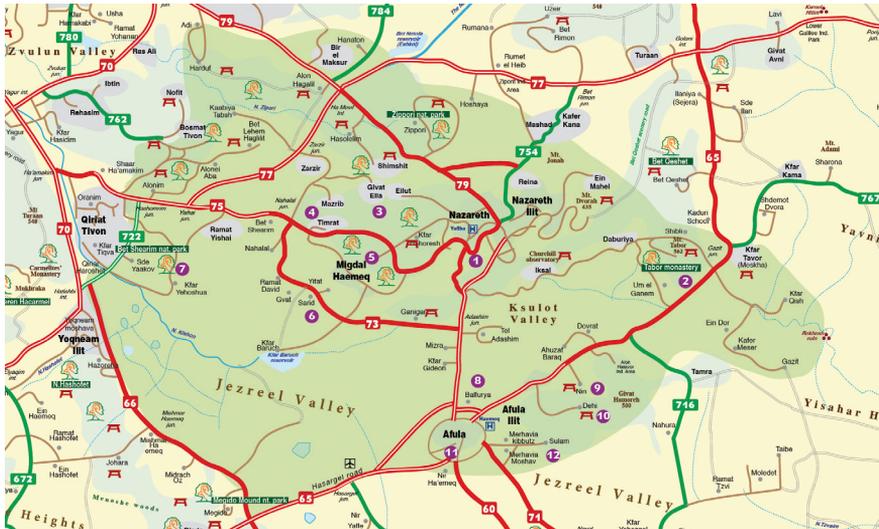
10. The Level of Planning and Infrastructure

We looked at the localities' outline plans as well as their plans for transportation, tourism, roads, sewage, and the like, so that we could learn about what exists and the authorities' professional competence. We originally believed that this is an important index, but discovered that it does not really predict success.

11. Physical Data

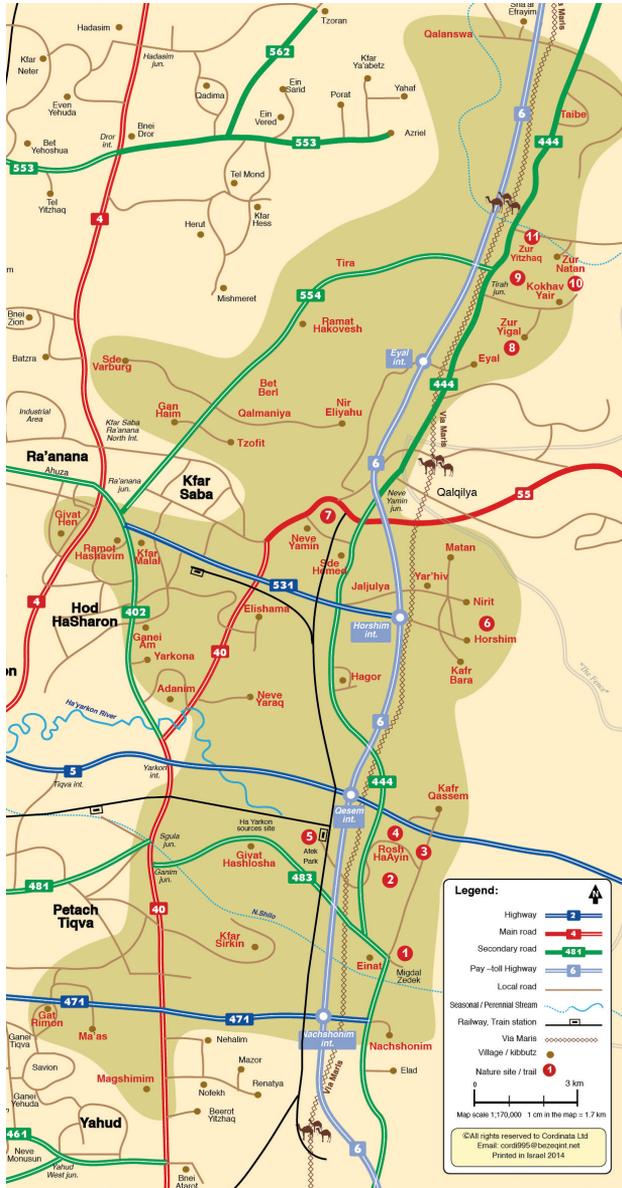
This criterion includes the number of local authorities in a region, the relative sizes of the Arab and Jewish populations, the authorities' socioeconomic standing, the size of their territories, budgetary data, and location. The goal was to assemble a forum of authority heads from localities that are balanced, to the extent possible, with regard to all these indexes, in order to augment the presence of the weak and moderate the strong.

Jezeel Valley and Nazareth Hills



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Southern Sharon and Southern Triangle



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Chapter 3

Areas and Methodology of Activities

The Forum of Municipal Authority Heads

Why did we choose to work specifically with the heads of municipal authorities? The answer is that they are the key players in local and regional development. Unlike the situation in the national arena, mayors and council chairs control or influence every domain, from garbage collection and sewage through education and transportation. Their support and backing are essential if the local professional echelons are to promote common issues. Our working assumption was that harnessing the local authority heads, and, in their wake, the senior professionals, would help promote change to benefit the residents, as reflected in the emergence of regional cooperative ventures in diverse fields.

It is important to remember that before Sikkuy established the forums, Jewish and Arab local authority heads in the two regions scarcely knew one another, even though some of them have been in office for many years and live only a few kilometers apart. Over a two-year period, the forum of authority heads met five times in the north and six in the south. Throughout this time, the project directors kept in personal contact with all of the local authority heads on an individual basis. Each meeting of the forums was held in a different town, Jewish or Arab.

The topics brought up for discussion at the forums were raised by the local authority heads and by Sikkuy. We proposed areas that we know are important for the local authorities as well as those that may sometimes be relegated to lower priority but which we deem to be very important. With the authority heads' consent, forums were established in additional domains, including tourism, environmental quality, and public transportation. These forums were composed of professionals (employees of the local authorities) as well as residents who volunteered to take part.

Each forum consisted of seven to nine local authority heads; for Sikkuy, the two project co-directors, the two co-executive directors of the organization, and the project coordinator; and, in some cases, representatives of the central government. The forums operated as learning entities: important information about region, the domain under consideration, and the relevant government ministries was shared at the gatherings.

One Program Triggered by a Decision by a Forum of Local Authority Heads

With the agreement of the local authority heads in the Jezreel Valley/ Nazareth Hills Equality Zone (Migdal Ha'Emeq, Yafi', Nazareth, Kfar Tavor, Daburiyya, Afula, Bustan al-Marj, Iksal, and the Jezreel Valley Regional Council), we spearheaded the establishment of a regional cluster (a statutory Ministry of Interior entity to build partnerships between local authorities in specific domains) that will work to promote the region's needs. This involved the following steps:

1. The Ministry of Interior received a signed application and a joint foundation document from the authority heads, stating the imperative nature of establishing a cluster in the Nazareth Hills/ Jezreel Valley district. Meetings and conversations were held with the head of the Local Government Administration in the Interior Ministry, who is responsible for this topic. The authority heads were made acquainted with the procedure for setting up the cluster and the Interior Ministry's requirements. The Interior Minister and Finance Minister, too, received similar requests for establishment of the cluster and were asked to support the initiative.
2. Cooperation with civil society: The cooperation of the JDC, which works with the municipal clusters in Israel, was obtained.

3. Collaboration with the private sector: We contacted Urbanics, a company that won the tender to draw up the plan for municipal clusters in Israel, and obtained its support for our project.

What Did We Learn?

1. Mayors and council chairs are elected officials and have to face the voters once every five years. Consequently one must choose the right time to begin working with them. We recommend that such a project begin at the start of their term, so that there will be sufficient time for joint activity. When possible, projects should continue even after a change in authority heads. The October 2013 municipal elections led to the replacement of half of the local authority heads with whom we had been working, and this turnover created significant problems.
2. Sensitive political considerations guide local authority heads when they select topics for cooperation and affect their willingness to be involved; this certainly applies to substantive questions related to a reallocation of resources, such as industrial zones. On the one hand, authority heads have an obligation to be concerned about resources for their constituents; on the other hand, this project seeks to effect a more equitable distribution of resources against the background of deep-seated inequality. The attempt to redistribute what currently exists is almost always blocked by the heads of Jewish authorities, both because of their official positions and because of their fear of public criticism for transferring resources to neighboring Arab communities. It is important to mention that the latent tensions produced by the national schism have a real impact on the decisions taken by both Arab and Jewish local authority heads. One must be aware of this and define expectations accordingly.
3. Local authority heads are responsible for what takes place in their own jurisdictions and consequently demonstrate little interest in

cooperative ventures on the regional level. Ways must be found to overcome this. It is a good idea to keep them involved to the maximum possible extent (through meetings, emailed updates, scheduling meetings of the forum in their town, etc.).

4. The interpersonal relations among local authority heads were complex in every region where we were active. One must always be aware of this and invest major effort in identifying where these tensions can be bridged and locating the common interests that can be used for this.
5. One must be sensitive to the interests of every authority head in every forum and be persistent in calling him in advance of every meeting to verify his attendance, so as to create a commitment on his part.
6. Some local leaders who were members of forums in the past but no longer hold any formal position remain committed to the idea. When we harnessed them to the project we discovered that they could be extremely valuable allies.

Ongoing Work

Because of the enormous burden on the shoulders of local authority heads, the intervention organization must touch base with all of them on a regular basis—at least once every few weeks. Such contacts are important or even essential for inspiring them with trust in the process and in the organization’s professionalism. They are imperative for preserving the authority heads’ commitment to and ongoing participation in the forum.

Support by the Local Authority Heads

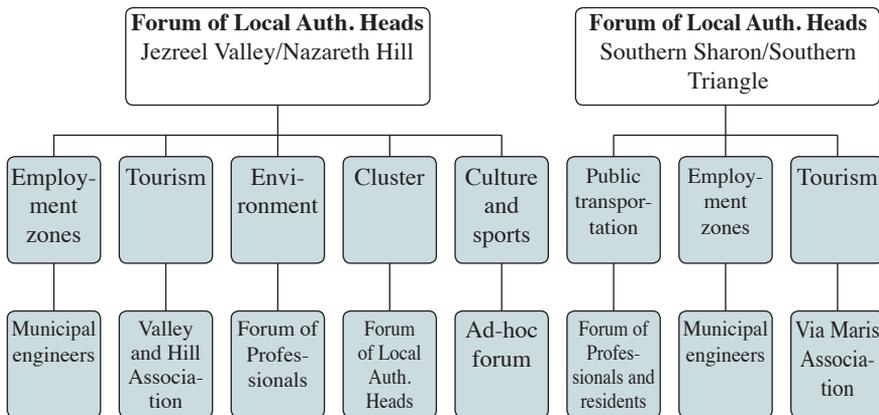
As mentioned above, the authority heads’ support is important on the declarative level, but also for recruiting professionals from the authority and/or residents to work on the topics selected by the forum. Their support made it possible for us to obtain internal data

and get to know the regional dimension of issues such as public transportation and environmental quality. Thanks to their support for joint representation, we were able to contact government ministries, set up meetings with ministers and senior civil servants, and interact with the central government in their name and on their behalf. In several instances, their support also helped create an appropriate local media buzz about the various processes and made it easier to recruit local players to join in the process.

Additional Working Groups: An Introduction

After the above survey of the project’s goals and objectives, the description of the process of identifying the partners, selecting the regions, and developing the project, and presentation of our motives for joint activity with the local authority heads, we now turn to the various entities that emerged during the course of the project: working groups on industrial zones, forums of professionals to deal with the environment, forums of residents to deal with tourism, and a mixed forum of professionals and residents to deal with public transportation. Some of these working groups were created following a decision by the authority heads in the joint forums; others realized Sikkuy’s own agenda (tourism and public transportation), with the backing of the local authority heads.

In the diagram below, you can see that the Southern Sharon/Southern Triangle forum includes seven local authority heads and worked in three domains. In each of them we worked with the appropriate group. Nine local authority heads are active In the Jezreel Valley/ Nazareth Hills zone and selected five domains for action.



“Soft” Domains and “Hard” Domains

“Hard domains” are issues that can be addressed only on the level of national or regional policy, and not in the community, as well as issues that relate directly to the core of the Jewish-Arab dispute, such as the competition for land. These hard domains require intervention on the macro level by formal decision-makers; without input by this level it is almost impossible to effect any change on the micro level. “Soft domains,” by contrast, are issues where it is possible to act and effect significant change through work on the ground, among the residents, even without any policy change on high, or those that do not relate directly to the core of the Arab-Jewish dispute. In our project, the development of joint employment and industrial parks is a hard domain, because it requires agreements about the loaded topic of land, a matter of dispute between Jewish and Arab localities, as well as the involvement of the central government and large budgets. Tourism is a soft domain, because here developments are possible with the assistance of interested parties on the local level, without any huge investment in infrastructure.

Environmental quality and public transportation fall somewhere in the middle. They do involve clear common interests and do not relate directly to the core of the Jewish-Arab conflict. At the same time, there are slight differences between these two domains with regard to mobilizing residents to work in them.

Public transportation is policy-dependent, but it is relatively easy to get residents involved and to exert pressure to effect changes. There is a visible difference between public transportation and other hard domains: the lack of mobility and of inexpensive and rapid access to jobs, shopping, and recreation has an immediate and daily impact on residents’ lives. By contrast, it is more difficult to mobilize residents to look for solutions about environmental issues. Exposure to health hazards does not have immediate short-term effects; in addition,

much prior knowledge is required. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that environmental nuisances such as solid waste, air pollution, and mosquitoes create a daily hazard that does not distinguish between Jews and Arabs, and that the only way to deal with them is on the regional level. Hence this is another domain where it is relatively easy to promote partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities.

Multidimensional Activity

The keystone of our model is that effecting sustainable change requires the simultaneous partnership of several systems, including government officials and professionals, and the coalescing of the community civic system. Our experience demonstrated that working in all three channels at the same time makes them mutually reinforcing. In addition, working in multiple channels in “soft” projects, as against “hard” change, is more effective than focusing on a single track.

Soft projects are important because their impact is visible sooner and can provide encouragement for action in other arenas, such as industrial zones, where progress is slower and almost Sisyphean. The soft areas help preserve enthusiasm and optimism and persuade regional leaders to be involved. When the leaders see that their voters are benefiting from a joint project, such as when Arabs visit Jewish localities and Jews visit Arab localities, they understand the project’s positive impact, recognize its economic value, and claim credit for reducing the mutual distrust between Jews and Arabs in the region. It is important for leaders to be able to show what they have done, since in fields such as industrial zones even huge progress (such as the construction of a building for public services) will produce results in the field only years later, long after the project’s formal conclusion.

In addition, soft projects are more community-oriented and attract more volunteers, both citizens with a sense of personal commitment

as well as entrepreneurs with economic and business interests. Most of those who take part in hard projects are municipal officials and personnel, who are there in their professional hat and as part of their jobs. All the same, it is important to remember that hard areas such as water, health care, and transportation have a much more substantial effect on residents' daily lives.

Women

As we have already hinted, very few women currently serve as mayors and council chairs or in senior positions. As a result, there can be significantly greater representation for women on soft topics, which require diverse capabilities and a broad range of professionals, than on hard topics.

Shared Industrial (Employment) Zones and Industrial Parks⁷

A Government resolution of 2003⁸ calls for encouraging the establishment of joint industrial zones for Jewish and Arab local authorities. In this model, the land set aside is usually within the jurisdiction of the Jewish local authority (generally a regional council), where a new employment zone will be set up or an existing one enlarged. The Arab local authorities share in the administration and in the property tax revenues (“arnona”) of the new employment zone, even though it is located in the territory of the Jewish authority. This model incorporates joint control and builds on the substantial property tax revenues these zones produce, which can have a major impact on the local authorities’ budgets. The Government resolution tried to place limits on the establishment of industrial zones that do not include adjacent Arab localities; unfortunately, its implementation has been spotty. Still, the fact that the government encourages the establishment of joint industrial zones and in some cases has made the inclusion of Arab localities a precondition for the expansion of existing zones is a factor that should prod the consolidation of municipal partnerships to work in this domain.

Under the auspices of the Development Zones Administration in the Ministry of the Economy, a total of 136 industrial zones have been established since 1992, with a total gross area of 135,000 dunams (1 dunam = ¼ acre), at a cost of 3.2 billion shekels. These

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- 7 Industrial parks are a special type of employment zone. The latter term includes all sectors that provide employment to residents of the region: industry, trade, services, and so on.
 - 8 Government Resolution 737, August 2003, charges the Ministry of the Economy with submitting a proposal to include Arab local authorities in the joint administrations of the industrial parks adjacent to them.

include 26 industrial zones specifically for the Arab sector, with an investment of 340 million sheqels; these, however, have a relatively small net area allocated to industry (an average of 100 dunams) and are typically focused on traditional local occupations. As of this writing there are five joint industrial zones: *Tzahar*, which includes the towns of Tuba Zangariyya, Safed, and Rosh Pina; *Kidmat Galil*, which includes Tur'an, Tiberias, and the Lower Galilee Regional Council; *Dalton*, for Gush Halav, Hurfeish, Fassuta, the Merom ha-Galil Regional Council, and Safed; and *Lehavim*, which includes Rahat, the Bene Shimon Regional Council, and Lehavim. The Mevo Carmel Employment Zone, which brings together Daliyat al-Karmel, Isfiya, Megiddo, and Yoqne'am, is in the planning stage, as are several others. Some of them have brought the Arab local authorities significant budgetary supplements, thanks to their share of the revenues from existing employment area and not only from those being built.

Allocation of resources: Municipal land reserves available for development are an important resource for every local authority and have a strong influence on its revenues. When they are exploited for industrial zones that yield property taxes and jobs, the local authority's tax base is enlarged, as is the level of services it can provide its residents. Today, 98% of the industrial zones in Israel are in the jurisdictions of Jewish local authorities, and only 2% in Arab authorities. If we want to reduce inequality we must find a way to increase the revenues of the Arab local authorities and give them their own independent economic basis. This can be done in two ways: by establishing industrial zones within the jurisdictions of Arab localities (and, where necessary, making large and earmarked land grants for this purpose) or by setting up or expanding large industrial zones shared with neighboring Jewish authorities. We believe that the latter solution is preferable and easier to implement. It includes the creation of a shared employment space, a joint administration,

mutual sensitivity to various needs, rapprochement instead of estrangement, partnership instead of alienation, and more. Creating an independent economic base for the Arab local authorities is a constructive measure that could restore local pride and help them realize the potential for local entrepreneurship and for jobs that do not depend on outside players. In the current project, however, we focused on joint industrial zones.

In addition to its material value, land also has a symbolic value. What is more, the conflict over land is at the basis of the dispute between Jews and Arabs in this country. Consequently, partnership in and a more equal division of the land resource could serve as a symbol of progress in Jewish-Arab relations and on the issue of substantive equality in Israel. Such a partnership requires the consent of the stronger side, which currently has an exclusive or almost-exclusive lock hold on these resources, to share them with their partner-neighbors.

As part of the project, we worked to promote the establishment and/or joint planning of shared industrial zones in the two regions: expansion of the industrial park in Iksal, in cooperation with the Jezreel Valley Regional Council; and joint planning of a shared employment zone for Kafr Bara and the Southern Sharon Regional Council.

What Did We Do?

1. We created and facilitated a dialogue among all the interested parties: mayors and council chairs, municipal engineers, planners, and employment zone managers. After long years of attempts to promote such initiatives (ten and five years, respectively), we encountered chiefly despair. We tried to determine just how interested the sides were in the project, what obstacles stand in the way of its realization, and what they see as the best way to make progress. We learned that obtaining agreements signed

by Jewish and Arabs mayors and council chairs, which promise (among other clauses) a mechanism for joint administration and equal division of property tax revenues, is by no means a trivial achievement or to be taken for granted in the present fragile situation. If the national authorities do not encourage and support partnerships that are proposed in the field, they could well disappear. The bottom line is that we studied and analyzed the current situation and drew up a road map for joint activity.

2. We held working sessions with the head of the Planning Administration in the Interior Ministry and its district directors, and with other key officials in the Interior Ministry, the Prime Minister's Office, the Authority for Economic Development of the Arab, Druze and Circassian Sectors in the Prime Minister Office, and the Ministry of the Economy.
3. We tried to spur a joint process to set up a central employment zone that would be shared by most of the local authorities in the forum, in both our northern and southern zones. The local authority heads rejected the initiatives on various pretexts. For example, Arab mayors and council chairs were apprehensive that the establishment of a very large joint complex would leave them unable to establish small industrial parks in their own jurisdictions, an idea over which they have been locking horns with the Planning Administration for many years. Jewish mayors and council chairs, who already have large industrial zones in their jurisdictions, were afraid of new competition. Despite their immense latent potential, the initiatives that aimed at formalizing the partnership and helping bring significant resources to the region collapsed because of interests that could not be satisfied.
4. For the first time, we drew up a planning document with details of all of the possible joint initiatives for developing

joint industrial zones in our two target areas. For example, we examined the possibility of expanding the Alon Tavor Employment Zone as part of a future agreement with the Bustan al-Marj Regional Council and/or expanding Sagi 2000 by adding Nazareth to the existing partnership (the Jezreel Valley Regional Council and Migdal Ha'Emeq). In addition to the planning aspects, the document included the text of existing agreements among different authorities. Copies were submitted to the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of the Economy, the Finance Ministry, and the Interior Ministry (the Planning Administration). This is the most comprehensive and up-to-date document that has been written (in Hebrew) in recent years about possible initiatives in northern and central Israel and can be accessed on the Sikkuy website.⁹

5. For the past eighteen months we have been working to expand the employment zone shared by Iksal and the Jezreel Valley Regional Council. We have been fighting the Planning Administration's decision rejecting this idea for the past decade. In addition, we are investigating the feasibility of joint planning of a new employment zone to be shared by Kafr Bara and the South Sharon Regional Council.
6. We continue to focus on the communications aspect, seeking to hold a dialogue with decision-makers, and are attentive to various voices in the Planning Administration concerning the feasibility of joint industrial zones. We would like to have an influence so that the voice that favors the emerging partnerships will carry the day.
7. We are currently working to draft agreements for the establishment of two new joint industrial zones, one between

9 Sikkuy and Viaplan, "Promoting Joint Jewish-Arab Industrial (Employment) Zones" (Haifa, July 2013) (Hebrew).

Kafr Manda and the Jezreel Valley Regional Council and the other involving Zarzir, Ka'abiya-Tubas-Hajajra, and the Jezreel Valley Regional Council.

What Did We Learn?

1. Some of the Jewish mayors and council chairs say that they support the establishment of joint industrial zones and even make some efforts towards realizing them. Nevertheless, their guiding principle is to avoid redistribution of what already exists and reallocate only the new revenue produced by the expansion of existing industrial zones. To some extent one can understand their reservations about giving away part of an asset they own after they took the initiative, pushed, and launched a complex, protracted, expensive, and exhausting professional process. It is obvious that voters in Jewish localities are opposed to handing over property-tax revenues to neighboring Arab communities. But it is also important to remember and remind people that the State has promoted, encouraged, and funded the establishment of industrial zones mainly in Jewish localities and left Arab localities with almost none.

Consequently, given that there is no equality in this matter and that the situation of the Arab local authorities could hardly be worse, it is appropriate that these considerations, too, pass a bold public test. What is more, most of the industrial zones envisioned have already been planned and set up; relatively few are still on the books for the future realization and years will pass before they are built. In this situation, the aversion to sharing serves as a powerful obstacle to the establishment of joint industrial zones.

These power relations between the Jewish towns and local authorities that have large industrial zones in their jurisdictions and the Arab authorities with a weak employment base work against progress in a countrywide dialogue, make the Planning

Administration suspicious of such initiatives, and set the unequal power relations between local authorities in stone, instead of balancing them in a fair manner. We do not believe that there is more than a limited ability to develop a regional perspective on this issue.

2. In many cases, the land on which the industrial zones are slated to be built originally belonged to Arabs or were in the jurisdictions of Arab localities before 1948. In these cases, an agreement to establish a joint employment zone in the jurisdiction of a regional council—even if it produces property tax revenues for an Arab locality—is perceived as a renunciation by the Arab local authority of its demand for return of its title and thereby as writing finis to the historic dispute about the land. Many Arabs are opposed to such a compromise. The head of an Arab local authority who puts his name to the establishment of a joint employment zone on land that his constituents consider to be their own and that should be restored to them is liable to encounter fierce political criticism and alienate his voters. This is another powerful barrier that is hard to circumvent.

The Central Government's Position

1. Despite the government resolution that encourages the establishment of joint industrial zones, and the fact that senior echelons of the Planning Administration do seem to support them, to some extent, there are also senior officials who do not favor the idea and block the realization of the joint process. To our distress, we believe that this reflects their personal opinions, which are translated into policy that perpetuates the continued inequality in land allocations between Jews and Arabs.
2. The Ministry of the Economy, which defined the strategy for expanding joint industrial zones, has done very little in this area. Another substantial obstacle is that even should the Planning

Administration agree to a particular project, the Ministry of the Economy is not set up to promote and finance planning on privately owned land. We know that a large proportion of the land available for industrial zones within the jurisdictions of Arab localities is in private hands. Although it is true that this obstacle is not insurmountable and that industrial parks have been established on private property in the past, government policy is oriented towards their establishment on land controlled by the Israel Lands Authority.

3. The Planning Administration, which is responsible for promoting Government policy on this issue (along with other ministries), is not making adequate efforts to do so. It has not conducted an independent study of current initiatives in the field and does not encourage them; even when they are placed on its desk it does not do enough on their behalf. Because the obstacles to the establishment of joint industrial zones are many and complex (long timeframes, high costs, bureaucracy, disputes about jurisdictional boundaries, and more), only energetic activity by the planning agencies can make it possible. These processes are not moving forward; despite all the statements about a different policy, Arab localities remain outside the circle of resources and the regional and national inequality remains unchanged.

Issues and Conclusions for Future Action

1. It takes several years to make progress on the establishment of new joint industrial zones. First of all, agreements must be reached between the local authorities and costly initial planning processes set in motion. Second, one has to obtain the required approvals and essential funding from all the bureaucratic stations (the Planning Administration, the Ministry of the Economy, and the Finance Ministry). Finally, the land has to be marketed to entrepreneurs. Our three-year timeframe is not long enough

for a broad process that can produce results. We believe that the appropriate timeframe is closer to ten years. It is important to remember that it is possible to get local authorities to sign agreements, but that this is only the first stage of many on the road to the establishment of joint industrial zones.

2. A civil-society organization that wants to initiate such a process requires skilled professional personnel who spend their time on this assignment and have a background in an appropriate discipline: urban planners, engineers with a strong social orientation, and so on.
3. Before doing anything else, one has to determine whether the district and national outline plans permit the establishment of a joint employment zone. The Planning Administration is making efforts to regulate planning on the national level and is motivated by a broad spectrum of considerations. An initiative by mayors and council chairs, however excellent, will not receive the blessing of the Planning Administration if it conflicts with existing plans and/or those envisioned for the future. Hence the Administration must be brought into the picture in the very early stages of the project, when the feasibility of the initiative and/or possible alternatives is being examined.
4. Planning costs a lot of money. The lack of funding for it reinforces the inequality between local authorities. It intensifies the friction between them, given the one-sided funding (generally by the Jewish local authorities) and in practice makes it all but impossible to launch a process that would interest other players, including government ministries and private entrepreneurs. The intervention organization should make sure that it has an initial budget to get the project off the ground (preliminary planning, for example), and also to advance the processes and approvals needed to obtain essential budgets from the central government.

5. One must give serious thought to and focus on a comprehensive public effort to modify the status quo and enlist government officials as allies in the cause. Joint industrial zones are feasible only where the State supports the process and backs it with rapid procedural decisions and budgets; in their absence, decades can pass without the construction of a single joint employment zone. Here one must exert pressure on decision-makers and explain the logic of the idea and its inherent advantages for everyone. A philanthropist or large investor could provide major impetus; but without a breakthrough in the mindset of government decision-makers, so that they view it as essential and work on the matter, the prospects for a regional or countrywide process are poor.
6. Finally, the establishment of joint employment and industrial parks is the most important objective of a project that aims at promoting municipal partnership between Jewish and Arab local authorities and a more equitable division of spatial resources. In principle, this idea has the blessing of a Government resolution and statements by government ministries; in practice, however, we encountered very strong obstacles, both in government ministries and in the local authorities, that frustrate its realization. A civil-society organization that wants to promote joint industrial zones must be well-endowed with human resources, budgets, and time.

The Environment

As in many other domains, with regard to the environment, too, the State has neglected Arab localities and failed to invest in the development of the infrastructure required to deal with residents' needs. Arab localities suffer from severe problems of waste disposal and sewage and a deficit of community awareness about sanitation nuisances.¹⁰ But unlike other domains, the environment is less affected by the political baggage that stems directly from the conflict. As a result, there is broad maneuvering room, and neighboring communities have a stronger incentive to cooperate here than in any other domain. In this domain, local authorities and their residents are looking for cooperative ventures because they realize that they are indispensable.

Regional environmental hazards require regional solutions. Most local authorities have internalized the idea that this is a domain in which cooperation between authorities is essential, because many environmental and pollution-related problems cannot be solved by a single local authority and require a regional solution. Jewish mayors and council chairs understand that neglect of the environment because of a scarcity of resources or low awareness hurts not only the residents of Arab authorities but also those of the neighboring Jewish localities. The lack of end-of-pipe solutions or transfer stations to handle waste in Arab and impoverished Jewish authorities creates a problem on the regional level, because trash heaps and their incineration, pirate landfills and the smoke that rises from them, and raw sewage flowing in streams and the flies they

10 For a serious study of the matter, see the study we wrote and referred to below: M. Chaim and R. Piso, "A Report on Environmental Hazards in the Nazareth Hills/Jezreel Valley Region" (Sikkuy, 2013) (Hebrew), online at www.Sikkuy.org.il.

breed do not recognize territorial jurisdictions or local boundaries. In a region where Arabs and Jews live next to each other, solutions to these problems require that they join hands and work together.

What Did We Do?

At the recommendation of the project co-directors and with the consent of the authority heads in the north, we set up an environmental quality forum whose members are professionals employees of the local authorities (sanitation engineers, municipal engineers, city managers, the heads of environmental units, and environmental quality coordinators). We convened a learning forum that dealt with topics such as solutions to local waste, waste incineration, sorting facilities, and regional end-of-pipe facilities, as well as a broad spectrum of topics on which there is a potential for collaboration between authorities. We also invited university lecturers and outside consultants who shared their professional knowledge with members of the group in fields such as organic-waste treatment and contracting with outside waste-disposal agencies, and especially the companies that operate the recycling plants and the sorting and end-of-pipe facilities in the region.

But working with the authorities does not go far enough. Their partnership requires support by the central government, especially with regard to infrastructure, because the budgets required are far beyond their capacity, even for the wealthiest localities. This is why Sikkuy worked in three stages. In the first stage, it set up a professional forum whose members represented the local authorities. In the second stage, after we discovered the lacunae in current knowledge about the environmental hazards that all of the local authorities have to deal with, we drafted a comprehensive report on regional environmental quality. For the first time in the region's history, the authorities now have at their disposal a comprehensive database that lists the problems and describes them in professional terms. In

the third stage, and in parallel to the first two activities, the project cooperated with the Northern District of the Environment Ministry in order to promote a Government resolution¹¹ in favor of larger budget allocations (NIS 101 million) to eliminate environmental hazards and build infrastructure in Arab localities and to set up an environmental association of municipalities comprising the Jewish and Arab localities in the region. What this means is the establishment of a statutory regional association, supported and budgeted by the State, to deal with environmental issues in the entire region. The association will respond to the needs of all the local authorities and issue permits to factories. It will be authorized to assess fines for exceeding the legal pollution limits, to receive earmarked budgets for educational and information campaigns in the local authorities, and to raise funds from entities both inside and outside of Israel.

Establishment of the association was imperative, in light of the findings of Sikkuy's report on the environment, which noted two trends that require immediate attention:

- ▷ Approximately one-third of all morbidity in the Northern District has environmental causes. The incidence of ailments such as high blood pressure, cancer, and breathing difficulties is greater in the north than the national average.
- ▷ The north does not have adequate infrastructure for monitoring pollution. In general it suffers from a shortage of monitoring and oversight mechanisms—a deficit that the authorities were not aware of in part because of the very absence of those oversight and monitoring mechanisms.

Sikkuy and the forum submitted the report to representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection. To our great delight it was endorsed in full, both by the district directors and by the minister. We

11 Government Resolution 1496, Regulation of the Waste Disposal Economy in Arab, Druze, and Bedouin Localities, March 23, 2014. Online at www.pmo.gov.il.

allow ourselves to assume that the report influenced the government resolution (mentioned above) to invest more than 100 million shekels in addressing the issue and that it was our efforts that led to the injection of increased government resources to Arab localities all over the country (and not just in the regions where we were active). We constructed the first-ever regional database that provides figures on the quantities of waste, by type, produced by each local authority. This database now makes it possible to draw a picture of just how much money the local authorities will need to deal with the phenomenon. Building on this, the council chairs and mayors came up with a new idea—the establishment of a regional waste-disposal facility under their joint ownership. This topic will be addressed by the municipal cluster when it is established.

As a result of the government resolution, an official association of cities will be established, including all of the Arab and Jewish local authorities in the region where we ran the northern Equality Zone Project. [This is an impressive attainment for our efforts to construct a partnership between Jewish and Arab local authorities, because it is a permanent framework that will continue to link the authorities even after the project's conclusion.](#)

What Did We Learn?

The situation on the ground matched the project's basic assumptions about the environment. Pollution does not respect local boundaries, so council chairs and mayors and their professional staffs are willing to engage in cooperation aimed at finding regional solutions. What is more, there is a broad consensus that the future of the localities and their residents depends on such a partnership and that the alternative is for the entire region to sink in the mire of disease and witness the collapse of the infrastructure for life—soil, water, and air. Of all of the topics with the potential to stimulate cooperation between Jewish and Arab local authorities, this seems to be the one where Jewish

authority heads are most interested in making progress. Because the matter is critical for the wellbeing and health of all residents of the region, an investment in forging municipal cooperation is strongly advised.

Challenges

The Arab local authorities' ability to deal with this topic hardly approaches that of their Jewish counterparts. Most of the former have no personnel assigned to the topic; the official responsible for environmental issues is usually also the city engineer or city manager. One must not take for granted that a person wearing so many hats can professionalize, study the field, and invest the effort required. In addition, the Arab local authorities are not equipped to maneuver vis-à-vis government ministries and request equal budgetary allocations, a deficiency that stems in part from a lack of access to essential knowledge, to decision makers, and to budgets. Most Arab localities do not have municipal bylaws they can enforce to punish those who create hazards or nuisances. The whole issue of supervision and enforcement is an extremely difficult matter in Arab local authorities, even more so than in Jewish authorities. Like many other domains, here too one has to know how to knock on the right doors and make demands; but these doors are much more accessible to Jews.

Beyond this, there may be an objective difficulty that is not within the authorities' control. During the course of the project, the local authorities reported that when they try to forge regional collaborative ventures they run up against legal obstacles that limit their ability to cooperate in many fields—publication of joint tenders, consolidation as a single party to hire an outside contractor, in the interest of greater efficiency, or joint ownership of a transfer station or recycling collection center. An organization that wants to build a partnership between local authorities must conduct a thorough

study of the statutory limitations in order to understand what types of partnerships can be promoted in the environmental field.

In practice, one of the reasons we worked to encourage implementation of the Government resolution to establish municipal environmental associations was to set up a statutory link among the local authorities and make it possible for them to act in a broad array of channels to improve the environment in their region, through partnership, efficiency, and a regional perspective.

Joint Tourism

Sikkuy has demonstrated beyond all doubt that the many skeptical voices are wrong and it is indeed possible to get Jewish tourists to visit Arab localities. Between 2004 and 2014 we ran projects that promoted tourism in Arab localities in five different regions of the country and were able to generate a substantial local tourist traffic there. What is more, when times are quiet tourism is an asset: local tourists show curiosity and interest, and tours of the right kind bring more and more visitors in their wake. Tourism also has far-reaching economic, educational, and cultural effects on the residents, their neighbors, and of course on the tourists.¹²

Tourism is one of the best developed fields for people to make living. It produces income and usually also motivates extensive improvements in infrastructure. But setting up a tourist-oriented business need not require enormous resources or infrastructure such as hotels and paved roads. Tourism supports small businesses, in the periphery as well, and consequently can be an important way to enhance local incomes, especially for women and especially in Arab communities. Sikkuy has established forums and launched touristic products (such as planned excursions and maps) that do not require close and formal cooperation between local authorities (such as a statutory association). Activity in this domain, which requires a minimal investment in resources, can help develop the partnership between authorities, especially in the first stages.

In a different dimension, tourism permits cooperation that is open and visible. **This is one of the few domains in Israel where it is possible to overturn the usual power relations** between Arabs

12 As stated, this product focused on internal tourism, although it is clear that in the long term its success will also attract foreign tourists. In this context, see the case of the Juha Guest House in Jisr al-Zarqa, www.zarqabay.com.

and Jews. Tourism empowers the Arabs and gives them a voice. It highlights the unique assets of Arab society in Israel—the landscapes, the culture, the history, the stories, and the food—and has the potential for a reciprocal and equal contribution. Events that express multiculturalism and equality, such as planned tour routes in Arab and Jewish localities, could emerge. Success in this domain is particularly important because it can give hope to residents of the region who are employed in the field and profit from tourism, while creating a ripple effect of local pride and regional belonging.

As part of the Equality Zones Project we established joint tourism forums in our two regions: the Nazareth Hills/Jezreel Valley and the Southern Triangle/Southern Sharon. Neither forum was directly affiliated with the local authorities. Instead, they were composed of interested volunteers—community center directors, artists, local activists, tour guides, and private entrepreneurs who run tourist businesses. With their assistance, joint touristic products were devised and intensive efforts were made vis-à-vis the government.

What Did We Do?

1. We identified Arab and Jewish activists in the region who are interested in doing something in this field but require both organizational and economic assistance.
2. With their help we mapped potential tourist sites in the region: places with historical, cultural, religious and/or political, or scenic significance.
3. We secured the agreement of the council chairs and mayors to agree to take up the matter.
4. We sent out feelers to government officials. Along with other partners, the project placed the issue of internal Arab tourism on the formal agenda of an important government agency—the Authority for Economic Development of the Arab, Druze and

Circassian Sectors in the Prime Minister Office. Government involvement and support is very important. The many years of neglect of tourism, especially in Arab localities, now requires the government to invest major resources in developing touristic infrastructure. As part of Sikkuy's efforts, we initiated the establishment of a roundtable that brought together the Tourism Ministry, the Economic Development Authority in the Prime Minister's Office, and the Galilee Development Authority. This project was the first ever to highlight the needs of the Arab local authorities, their discriminatory underdevelopment, and the region's latent tourist potential. Subsequently, a written agreement was obtained, which states that "the development of tourism in Arab local authorities and in Arab society" is one of the Tourism Ministry's seven priority objectives for the coming years. An important and unprecedented achievement was obtaining government funding to advertise Ramadan tours of Arab localities in the summer of 2014.

5. After the infrastructure was in place we scheduled regular meetings of the forum, once every two or three weeks. It is interesting to note that unlike the situation in the political arena, in civil society the groups are more balanced from a gender perspective as well. More than half of forum members were women, although there were more Jewish than Arab women.
6. We hired the services of a paid professional advisor—a tour guide who sponsors combined tours of Arab and Jewish localities and is one of the founders of the Green Carpet NPO (the Wadi Ara Arab-Jewish tourism association)—to help the two forums operate independently in the near future.
7. The groups mapped common tourist routes that traverse both Arab and Jewish localities and include meetings with local entrepreneurs, generally on a particular topic, such as art or

agricultural produce. They produced touristic events in Arab localities on the nights of Ramadan, which generally included a tour of the village and sharing the Iftar (fast-breaking) meal with a local family. Hundreds of tourists turned out for these programs.

The first bilingual tourist maps of these regions were produced in 2013, with sites linked to the national narratives of both peoples marked on them. The tourism groups established websites where one can obtain information about sites and activities in the region, make reservations for guided tours, and more.¹³ The groups also took part in international tourism exhibitions. It is important to note that producing these items was not an expensive proposition: publishing a high-quality tourist map costs only in the low five figures. These are tasks that can be completed quickly, cheaply, and relatively simply—certainly as compared to other domains discussed here. In addition, such projects serve as another means to help the groups bond and see real fruits of their labor, and this is conducive to marketing and to group pride.

8. We are currently working to institutionalize this initiative by setting up joint tourism associations: Via Maris in the Southern Sharon/Southern Triangle and Mountain and Valley in the Jezreel Valley/Nazareth Hills. The plan is for these groups to function independently and not depend on any outside agency. Their members will guide the process and develop the association at every level. From a financial perspective, the hope is that each group will be able to support itself financially by marketing its projects and by fundraising. With regard to content, contacts have been made with schools; some of the activists are working strenuously to develop new tourism routes. Because the local

13 The tourism maps can be found on the NPO websites (www.viamaris.org.il, www.mt-valley.org.il) as well as Sikkuy's website at www.sikkuy.org.il.

authorities are familiar with it, an established and known nonprofit group can promote activity on both the local and national levels and pave the way for future cooperative ventures.

We are happy to say that in this domain we learned a great deal from the experience of the Green Carpet Association, established in 2008 with support from an earlier Sikkuy project. It has grown and now stands on its own two feet, thanks to its members' volunteer activities.¹⁴

What Did We Learn?

1. Working with citizens and volunteers who live in the region is a method with great latent potential. Men and women who are employed in fields that are related to tourism in the broad sense feel a bond with their home region, rediscover it, and effect social and economic change in their home communities. Because these are local residents, they have the patience and staying power required for long-term processes. They are committed to these processes and choose to be involved in them because they are interested in the good of the place where they live.

Nevertheless, this advantage is also a challenge. The participants must be interested in the project and have free time to promote it. It is not always easy to find men and women with the knowledge, desire, and willingness to make the investment. The inequality between the Jewish and Arab communities influences their respective volunteering cultures, capacity for entrepreneurship, and more. This situation is unfortunately reflected also in the structure of the volunteer groups, both in the numerical ratio of their members and in the division of labor.

2. Tourism is one of the few domains where the latent potential of Arab localities is on a par with that of Jewish localities, if

14 For additional information, see its website, www.wadiara.org.il.

not even greater. When it comes to tourism, the Arabs have a significant asset that it is in great demand—a deeply rooted local culture that is still largely unknown. And this offers an enormous opportunity. Even Arab residents do not always identify their community’s vast potential. Merely by preserving their Arab identity the residents add a new resource to the region, without taking anything away from their Jewish neighbors or vice versa. This is of great importance, both with regard to the residents’ or tour guides’ self-awareness and pride as well as the impact on the condescending attitude of Jewish neighbors or tourists. What is more, the Jews who belong to the group feel that they too are benefiting. This is a factor that could have decisive ramifications for the future of the partnership.

3. Creating tourism from scratch, in places never visited by tourists in the past, is a great challenge. Arab localities are well endowed with sites that have historic significance but are neglected, without signs or observation points. Much effort and ingenuity are needed to make them accessible to tourists. Beyond that, we have to raise awareness of the importance of tourism, in general, and of the untapped possibilities that exist and of sites that are not yet on the map, in particular.
4. It is very hard to enlist the support of mayors and council chairs. When we began, most of them were not convinced that there is any need for an initiative of this sort, which struck them as marginal. Even if they understood what tourism could mean for their region, we could not mobilize their support for the group’s activities, whether by getting them to come to a meeting, attend a tourism fair, help pay for advertisements about the group’s tours, or provide budgets to upgrade potential sites in their communities or invest in the group or association’s future.
5. We need to expand awareness and create cooperative ventures

involving all of the tourism associations that Sikkuy helped establish. Such encounters could make them aware of common ideas and challenges and that they are part of a larger concept. On a practical level, joint forums would help such initiatives continue to grow, so that they can train people, serve as a tool for marketing joint tourism sites throughout the region, and more. As noted, unified action by several associations that enjoy public recognition could also promote more fruitful cooperation with the authorities, both local and national.

6. Unlike the other topics we dealt with it, tourism is photogenic and draws media coverage. We will address this in greater detail below.
7. Building on the ideas and insights presented here, Sikkuy developed a new comprehensive project, Shared Regional Tourism, which focuses on promoting tourism in two selected regions: Wadi Ara and the Galilee.

Regional Public Transportation

The overwhelming majority of Arab towns do not have adequate public transportation; the disparity compared to Jewish localities is enormous. In the best of cases, there is a bus line that runs on a highway near the town, or, less frequently, travels down its main street. Internal routes are even more infrequent. A study conducted by Sikkuy, *From Barriers to Opportunities: Public transportation in Arab localities*,¹⁵ found that the State has only recently begun to invest in public transportation in Arab localities, with the goal of reducing the current disparities and making public transportation available to Arab citizens. Efficient public transportation has a significant impact on access to jobs, higher education, health services, cultural activities, and education, as well as on consumption patterns, economic mobility, shared public spaces, and more. In addition, it can make a major contribution to preventing traffic accidents and reducing illnesses caused by air pollution. We believe that public transportation between towns can promote genuine contacts (economic, social, and cultural) between the Jewish and Arab sectors. In the region where we worked, the Southern Sharon/Southern Triangle, it would allow both Jewish and Arab workers to travel to the main centers of employment (Afeq and Lev Ha'aretz) or to train stations, from which they could reach any point in central Israel. Public transportation would reduce the heavy traffic on the highways (especially roads 5 and 443) and improve traffic flow and safety in Jewish localities, too, with their higher per capita motorization rate.

What Did We Do?

We endeavored to get mayors and council chairs in the central region to endorse our efforts to promote improved public transportation on

15 H. Naali-josef and T. Cohen, "From Barriers to Hopes: Public Transportation in Arab Localities."

both the local and regional levels. A preliminary inquiry discovered that public transportation in Arab localities has many deficiencies, including the number of direct lines and frequency of buses, coverage of the locality, the number of internal bus lines, hours of service, and publication of routes and schedules in Arabic. The situation was much better in some of the Jewish towns, but not all of them. In effect, accessible public transportation that links the communities that are members of the forum hardly exists. Even what interurban public transportation exists is limited and consists mainly of lines that travel to the big cities.

When we obtained the authority heads' consent for this project and nominated appropriate representative, we were able to establish a unique and unprecedented form of regional cooperation. The members of the forum included professionals representing the local authorities (municipal engineers) alongside residents who approach the topic from the viewpoint of their own town and want to improve the situation there. This is the place to note, once again, what is special about public transportation: although it is a "hard" domain¹⁶ that requires long-term efforts and policy change, it can have an immediate impact on the lives of many residents, who suffer greatly from the lack of public transportation, and is free of the sensitivities of the Arab-Jewish conflict. Some of these volunteers worked energetically to interest in the mayor or council chair in the matter; others come from an appropriate background in planning and make a more limited contribution. The latter were recruited after we contacted the authority heads and at their recommendation; others showed up because they were aware of our previous efforts in this domain.

We coordinated the forum's activity and convened it several times, under the direction of an expert in public transportation and with

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16 For the meaning of this term, see above, under "Additional Working Groups."

the participation of senior officials from the Transport Ministry. The regional forum, like the other forums, was defined as a learning group, in which Sikkuy shared valuable information about the region with the members and the government representatives. The forum made it possible for us to acquire a deep familiarity with the obstacles posed by the local authorities, the challenges, and especially the real needs of the various localities and of the entire region.

One of the forum's goals is to prepare a regional survey of what exists versus what is needed and of the obstacles and challenges that face public transportation in the region. The survey results will be submitted to the Transport Ministry to help it find an appropriate solution when it invites bids for a public transportation operator, as it is expected to do in the coming months. The goal is that the Transport Ministry, after studying the document, will make the required changes in the bid invitation and produce a substantial improvement in public transportation services in the region.

What Did We Learn?

Refining the needs. When we began the process (in 2012), the mayor and council chairs were not willing to take part in a joint effort to improve public transportation and preferred to focus on the broader issue of the regional road grid. They had various reasons for this opposition. First of all, they (especially the Jews) preferred to deal with private vehicles rather than public transportation—a preference that, we are sorry to say, corresponds with the priorities of many decision-makers, who prioritize investments in roads over public transportation. Second, the large number of small localities in the region makes it difficult to design an appropriate public transportation infrastructure. Third, we were unable to achieve a satisfactory agreement among the mayors and council chairs before the forum met for the first time. This last reason is one of the important lessons we learned; about a year later, when it became clear that the prospects

for raising the topic were once again very good, we tried to correct the earlier mistake. This time, thanks to advance preparation with the mayors and council chairs and a suitable presentation of the current situation and clarification of the actual needs of each locality, and especially the Arab localities, we were able to obtain their agreement to the forum and to get to work.

The prospect for effecting change. There are some domains in which we have only a limited ability to set things in motion. But when it comes to public transportation there are extensive opportunities to improve the situation. The forum on this topic was different than the others. Because these localities do not have an official in charge of public transportation, those sitting around the table were the municipal engineers who have some contact with the matter and local residents who have already been working on the topic for a number of years. The interaction was excellent; it demonstrated that knowledge can be common property and that what is most important is people's individual motivation.

Joint responsibility. During the course of the forum's activity we made use of the instrument of public participation and held open meetings where we could acquire a better picture of the needs of the locality and the region. The conclusions reached from the forum's meetings, the public participation, and the knowledge accumulated by the Transport Ministry made it possible for us to draft a document that summarizes the needs in detail and was used to revise the tender for a public transportation operator. We believe that this will lead to a significant change in access to public transportation in the region. We learned that when the residents take responsibility and supervise the writing of a document, even one that falls within the purview of the relevant ministry, it helps stimulate the government agency to work to implement it, to inject the required resources, and, in particular, to create a different reality for the residents of the region.

Issues and Conclusions for the Future

1. It is important to involve government officials in the early stages of drafting the initiative. First of all, their participation in the forum makes it stronger, makes government agencies aware of its existence, and generates a desire for mutual assistance. Second, their presence enriches the discussions and provides valuable information and insights about what can be accomplished in the future.
2. It is important to identify common and regional issues, and not just local problems. For example, we found that many residents of Arab localities had no way to reach the train station in Rosh Ha' Ayin or the centers of employment in the region, and even found it difficult to transport children to school. The composition of an appropriate document and its submission to the appropriate official in the Transport Ministry could trigger real change.
3. The Transport Ministry held a workshop for the officials of Arab localities who are responsible for public transportation. We hope that the members of the forum and/or representatives of the Arab local authorities in central and northern Israel will participate in it as well.
4. In the region where the forum is operating, the quality of public transportation is abysmal. This means that just about any change will have great visibility and a positive impact on the residents' lives.
5. The addition of new bus routes does not take a long time or require costly investments in infrastructure. We are not talking about building industrial zones or a sewage treatment plant, where the planning and construction process is long and expensive, but something much shorter. No more than a year

should pass from recognition of the need, through publication of the tender, and until the first bus plies the route. Hence this is a domain that it is well worth promoting as part of the municipal partnership between Jewish and Arab local authorities.

Working With the Media

The media is an essential tool for advancing the idea of partnership, for two main reasons.

1. A public buzz. Most of the work on the project involves daily slogging in the grey corridors of government offices and deals with budgets, long-term processes that have no publicly visible fruit, and a professional bureaucracy that is not accustomed to having contact with the public whose lives it affects. The media are the main tool for making these activities visible. They can make residents aware of the existence of the process of municipal partnership, after which some of them will support it, rally to help it succeed, and even offer their own creative ideas for action and help the working group stay the course.
2. Elected officials are subject to all sorts of pressures and interests. This makes media involvement all the more important, because the publicity is what makes their constituents aware of what they are doing. The media can make it possible to mobilize significant support for efforts by the Planning Administration in the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of the Economy, and the Finance Ministry.

What Did We Learn?

It is difficult to interest the national media in activity of this sort. What they need is a personal story, a face, and not a planning map and roundtable. We did manage to insert a number of articles about the project in the press,¹⁷ and the tourism project received prominent

17 Here are several of the articles that were published: A. Lavie, "The Arab Localities: All the Dirt Comes Out," *NRG*, Nov. 17, 2013; Kh. Mari and R. Sabag, "The Chance for Economic Stabilization of the Arab Local Authorities:

coverage in the national media.¹⁸ Nevertheless, when activity is chiefly on the municipal level, and considering that those who vote for the mayor or council chair are local residents, it is a good idea and in fact imperative to work with the local media. Given our shortage of resources and personnel, and failure to understand the importance of this in time, we did not do enough in this channel; very few articles were published in the local media, and some of them at the instigation of the head of the authority. We did invest more effort in several local websites, where we received better coverage. It is hard to visualize what might have been, but we are certain that more intensive media involvement, especially on the local level, is vital to the success of a project in this domain and for getting local leaders to commit to it.

The media's power is evident especially when it comes to tourism. Tours, food, and local culture break through the barrier more easily because they are photogenic and do not require extensive background. The coverage of these achievements, even if they are short term, preserves the momentum of the entire program, keeping the mayor or council chair involved, enhancing the visibility of the Jewish-Arab partnership in the region, and mobilizing the resources to keep the project running. At the same time, we know that sustainable change requires deep processes that are never rapid.

Joint Industrial (Employment) Zones," *TheMarker*, June 24, 2013; Kh. Mari and R. Sabag, "There's No Loyalty without Equality," *Walla!*, Jan. 28, 2014 (also on the Sikkuy website, www.sikkuy.org.il).

- 18 For example: R. Vered, "What the Eye Sees by Day the Heart Desires at Night," *Ha'aretz*, Aug. 7, 2013; N. Barnea, "Health Tourism," *Yedioth Ahro-noth*, July 4, 2014.

Chapter 4

Challenges and Conclusions

As described, the project worked, alongside many other partners, in a competitive and oft-hostile environment, one lacking resources and tainted by rampant inequality, which required us to display maximum sensitivity to and flexibility with relations among the players, to the climate, and to the many points of friction that existed long before we appeared on the scene. Above all, we had to be extremely patient and remember that this work is a marathon, not a sprint. We trained, always ready for the next challenge to suddenly appear over the next hill. We share some of these challenges below.

The Intricate Relations between the Intervention Organization and the Partners

One of the main challenges of any project whose goal requires the advancing of partnerships, and especially with local authorities, is how to manage the complex and sometimes problematic relationships. The need to coordinate our expectations as an outside intervening agency with sensitivity to complex and complicated local and regional dynamics was a challenge throughout the entire project. Local authorities have many needs. When an outside organization shows up and promises to do something in specific areas, coordinating expectations is crucial. The intervention organization must make it very clear at the outset what it plans to do and what it cannot do, how it defines success and what constraints exist.

This is especially important when it comes to money. In the face of the eternal truth that local authorities are always short of funds, an encounter with a civil-society organization that has *seemingly* deep pockets always sets off hopes that are high and even dangerous. The intervening agency must make it clear from day one that the project is not meant to lavish budgets on the local authorities or to provide economic support for their activities. Most mayors and council chairs find it hard to understand why most of the budget is “wasted” on project staff salaries as opposed to subsidizing the acute local needs.

Apart from the real need to pay salaries to project staff, civil society should also – by definition - not be expected to finance local *public* authorities. Sikkuy and the project's goal was and remains to be creating greater equality between Jews and Arabs, by means of joint action on concrete projects that have both feet on the ground, for example: the establishment of a joint regional environmental union, composed of both Arab and Jewish local authorities; the establishment of joint industrial zones; the creation of a joint regional tourism associations; and more.

Even when local authority heads believe in the principles of the project, they are still first-off elected officials, subject to political demands and considerations that are not always compatible with the goals of the project. Their attitude can waiver between, on the one hand, some limited buy-in grounded in the understanding that if the project succeeds, we will all benefit and on the other hand, demonstrating a sort of nonchalance or even skepticism, low expectations and sense that they don't really have anything to lose. While this is not an intolerable situation, it is challenging as it impacts the (sometimes limited) level of leadership commitment to the project and its goal.

The staff echelons of local authorities constitute another interested party. Many of these are appointed committed professionals who attend forums as part of their job assignment, having been dispatched by the mayor or council chair. Not surprisingly, if the meeting took place outside of normal workday hours, it is doubtful if they would attend. These participants are different from resident volunteers, who attend from their own personal motivations.

In facilitating such a project, it is important to understand each party's motives and commitment, and their expectations from the intervening agency, namely that she will do most of the work and hold the project together. This is a serious problem, when the goal of the enterprise is self-direction and sustainability. Finding the balance between

enabling meetings and activities to happen, while also encouraging ownership by participants is the art and science required in complex projects like these. On the one hand, it is clear that no partnership between local authorities would take shape without the intervening organization, and yet it is essential to find a way to motivate the council chairs and mayors, along with their professional staffs, to also do some share of the actual work. We did this in individual meetings, by trying to persuade them that the idea is feasible, by listening to their needs, by creating optimum frameworks, and by injecting budgets (even if not large) in order to trigger processes, for example: planning regional public transportation; creating regional tourism maps; and more. We highlighted the financial investments that did occur within the project (even if they didn't come directly into the municipal coffers), and always created a serious and celebratory mood at points in time when joint documents were signed by partners.

This is the place to acknowledge that we did not always succeed as much as we had hoped and planned, in spurring local authorities into action. More than once in fact we found ourselves doing just the opposite: writing reports for government agencies that they should have done themselves (the environment report, the employment zone document, the survey of regional public transportation); forging and pursuing contacts with central government officials; and organizing actual activities on the ground. We did this because, at the end of the day, we have to make things move rather than let the forums stagnate and wither and because we wanted to demonstrate the feasibility of permanent entities (tourism associations, municipal clusters, and municipal associations). But there is a price to be paid for this.

We expected the local authorities to make a greater investment of time and resources, to show and take active initiative, not just in words. Often, for reasons associated with their many responsibilities, the time and budgets at their disposal, and the mayors' and council

chairs' lack of confidence that a regional process would promote their own local interests, they did less than what we expected and hoped. Ultimately, the authority head's individual commitment and ability to perceive the inherent advantages of a regional partnership did grow over the course of the last years. Where we encountered activism, where authority heads proposed new ideas and wanted to pursue them (a municipal cluster, a joint waste disposal facility, a regional sports complex), the regional dimension was appreciated. Looking back, organizational wisdom means determining the difference between what is realistic and achievable, and what are only distant dreams, although the latter can be very powerful and inspiring and should never be discarded or ignored.

Some Final Thoughts

As the project approaches its end we realize that serious forethought is the secret of a successful conclusion. The model we devised at the start proved to be successful and, we had very little reason to deviate from the steps it entailed except when circumstances on the ground demanded special attention. Such times as municipal elections or escalating incitement and violence clearly call for a special response that cannot be planned in advance. The opportunities we identified proved their value frequently, as in tourism and environmental justice, where we registered significant achievements, especially getting the central government to recognize the importance of joint activities and consequently to invest significant resources. Some processes took place for the first time, mainly the first ever meetings between mayors of Arab and Jewish mayors and local authority heads, while others related to the creation of real and sustainable structures to benefit the entire region (such as the information report, permanent forums to deal with burning issues, and tourism products).

Nevertheless, the process ran up against a number of powerful obstacles of various types. Most of them were described above, so that other civil-society organizations will be able to conduct similar projects in the future with even greater success. Some of the obstacles are to be expected in all Third Sector activity (resources, personnel, and the like); others were specific to our project (70% of the local authority heads who took part in the program were replaced during the course of the project as a result of the municipal elections). **But the most substantial barriers we had to cope with were structural** and related to the roots of the Jewish-Arab conflict, the greater power of Jewish local authorities and their unwillingness to give up their current advantage in resources, as well as the weakness of the Arab

local authorities, and the central government's failure to do anything to promote equal allocation of regional resources.

In this document we have attempted to share with you the channels we explored to overcome the obstacles faced during the project, which enabled us to register achievements that have the power to help bridge the gap between Arabs and Jews in Israel, improve general living conditions for residents in entire regions and do so through Arab-Jewish partnership. Despite the problems, which have been discussed here candidly, we urge you to consider adopting this model and using as a guide to promote municipal partnerships between Jewish and Arab localities. You are invited to join us in this essential and most complex task, with all its ups and downs, but one that can inspire hopes of building a true Jewish-Arab partnership in Israel.

Media Coverage

The Equality Zones project received extensive coverage in the traditional media (print and electronic) as well in the new media (Facebook, On-Line news services, blogs, etc.) in English, Arabic and Hebrew. Here are a few examples, to complement the ones already referenced above, in English:

Kh. Mari and R. Sabag, “Arab-Jewish Industrial Parks: The Last Chance for Economic Equality?,” July 23, 2013. May be found in the on-line blog 972 .

The article, written by the Equality Zones Project Directors describes the need for establishing shared Jewish/Arab Industrial Zones, as a tool for deepening regional cooperation and advancing equality between all citizens of Israel.

Television interview with Khalil Mari, Project Co-Director, January 4, 2014.

Discussing the project and inequalities between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. May be found on the the I24 News Website.

Equality Zones

The present document describes the Equality Zones project, funded by USAID, which Sikkuy ran from 2012 through 2014 as part of its decade of activities promoting municipal partnerships between Jewish and Arab local authorities. The potential of such projects for all those working to promote equality and partnership between Jews and Arabs in Israel cannot be understated but at the same time, there is no hiding from the major challenges and difficulties inherent in such an initiative. We believe that the insights and challenges surfaced here can be of great service to all those who wish to develop and sustain such partnerships and projects. We are motivated in part by the hope and belief that 20/20 hindsight is also foresight, when it comes to starting up any new initiative.

Sikkuy -The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel

Sikkuy is a civil society organization shared by Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. Founded in 1991, Sikkuy's mission is to promote full equality in all fields and on all levels between Arab-Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel. Sikkuy has a shared board of directors with Jewish and Arab co-chairs and Arab and Jewish co-executive directors. The Association's agenda and actions are the outcome of an in-depth and honest dialogue between the Arab and Jewish staff and board members who represent the main streams of their societies.



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