



**CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON DISABILITIES
AND EMPLOYMENT OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS**

**Sustainability of the Eshet Chayil Program
at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services
Evaluation Study**

Suzan Hassan-Daher ♦ Judith King

The study was initiated and funded by JDC-TEVET



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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Eshet Chayil ("Woman of Valor") program was developed in the 1990s by JDC-Israel to help Ethiopian-Israeli women integrate into employment and retain their jobs. Following the success of the program and because its components are adaptable to a broad range of target populations, the JDC-TEVET employment initiative decided in 2006 to implement the model among women from other populations (immigrants from the Caucasus and Bukhara, non-immigrant weaker Jewish populations, and Arab women). Eshet Chayil strives to integrate into employment women from traditional social backgrounds who are far removed from the labor market. The implementation model of the program comprised several stages: preparation for starting work; job placement; personal and group support and supervision of working women; employment, personal and social advancement; and leveraging community-employment.

At the end of 2010, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services (MSAS) agreed to adopt the program and to ensure sustainability and broader implementation. The Ministry would continue to implement the program in collaboration with other ministries: the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druse and Circassian Sectors at the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Absorption, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Housing and Construction (Project Renewal Division), and local authorities.

To examine the implementation of the program some two years after its transfer to the MSAS, TEVET commissioned an evaluation study from the JDC-Myers-Brookdale Institute (MJB). This report describes the findings of the study. At the time of the study, the program embraced 40 groups with 1,300 participants. The program was implemented by the Israel Association of Community Centers with the professional support of JDC-TEVET.

2. Sustainability

The professional literature uses a variety of terms to describe sustainability: continuity, institutionalization and routinization. The multiple terms and resultant lack of clarity attest to the complexity of this concept. Nevertheless, two characteristics of sustainability seem to enjoy consensus:

(a) The *tension between institutionalization and flexibility*. The more routine an innovation becomes, the greater its sustainability. Yet, at the same time, it becomes more difficult for an organization to introduce additional innovations due to the desire to preserve the most recent change. In other words, there is built-in tension between an organization's incorporation of innovative ideas and its ability and flexibility to sustain additional changes in response to changing circumstances.

(b) Examining *sustainability* in terms of a *continuum*: It appears from the literature that sustainability cannot be measured dichotomously, by asking: "Has the program been sustained or

not?” Rather, sustainability should be measured along a continuum, by asking: “To what extent has the program been sustained?”

The literature shows that sustainability is multi-dimensional and to examine it, two dimensions are used: size as well as legal and budgetary implementation. The literature notes the complexity of investigating and measuring it since it is difficult to distinguish between the stage of implementation and the stage of sustainability, and consequently to determine the best time for measurement.

Nonetheless, Shediak-Rizkallah & Bone (1998) suggest that the sustainability of a program be examined by three criteria: (1) sustainment of the outcomes of a program in the organization incorporating it; (2) the extent of institutionalization of a program in the organization; and (3) the potential to improve a program in an organization. In addition, they identified three main groups of variables that may affect a program’s sustainability: factors related to the organization implementing the program, to the community, and to the policy of the funder on sustainability after the initial financing period.

3. Research Goals and Methods

1. To provide feedback to program leaders on the process of sustaining the program in Social Service Departments (SSDs) while attempting to examine the presence of program components which, according to the professional literature, affect the process of sustaining social programs.
2. To examine both the operational challenges encountered by the staff during the different stages of implementation, and the departures from the planned implementation model.
3. To examine the components of the comprehensive support system provided by TEVET.
4. To examine program outcomes at the stages of transfer and of sustainability – the rate of women integrating into and retaining employment among program participants from the end of 2010 to the end of 2012.

From June to December 2012, semi-structured, in-depth interviews – some face-to-face, some by telephone – were held with program implementers and the major implementation partners at the national and local levels. In addition, data were collected from a sample of community coordinators using self-administered questionnaires. And, for purposes of examining the program outcomes, TEVET’s computerized employment database was utilized.

4. Process of Transfer of Responsibility from TEVET to MSAS

The main changes in the program after transfer were:

- ◆ ***Replacement of the implementing body:*** the IACC replaced BeAtzmi and the women’s lobby; transitioning from targeting populations to targeting districts in keeping with the organizational structure of the MSAS, and a reduction in the number of middle-level coordinator jobs; reducing the number of groups for Ethiopian-Israelis and increasing the

number for Arab women; financing the program by adding funding partners such as the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druse and Circassian Sector at the Prime Minister's Office; cutting the program budget, changing the nature of the partnership with the local authorities – the local authority is responsible for supplying a physical venue to manage the work of the community coordinator and conduct group activity, and it is called upon to share in funding some program activities.

- ◆ ***The main difficulties of in? the transfer process:*** considerable staff changes; dissatisfaction of remaining coordinators with their wage reduction; the cessation of program activity for some groups mainly because of lack of cooperation from the local authority and the termination of the coordinator's work; the need to instill the work patterns of the new implementing agency (the IACC); problems of creating partnership between the program staff and SSD staff in some communities.
- ◆ ***Earliest activities following the transfer:*** establishing a national operational staff to deal with problems arising from the transfer process itself; holding “start-up” meetings with program leaders in the given communities to connect the implementation partners and foster program commitment; holding meetings with partner ministries and potential partners for purposes of pooling resources and fundraising; launching the program and imparting knowledge and concepts of employment to the SSD officers in charge of the program; launching an implementation manual; recruiting new manpower to replace staff that left.

5. Change and Continuity in the Implementation of the Preliminary Stages of the Program

- ◆ ***Choosing a community:*** The main criteria were socio-economic status, the potential to recruit women from the target population, and the ability and willingness of a local authority to take charge of the program.
- ◆ ***Entry into a community:*** The process of entering a community began with creating community partnerships and mapping the needs of the target population. In Arab communities, the mapping of population characteristics was assisted by the main program implementer in that sector – the Authority for the Economic Development of the Arab, Druse and Circassian Sector at the Prime Minister's Office.
- ◆ ***Accepting candidates to the program:*** The implementation staff adapted the acceptance criteria in several ways. Non-immigrant Jewish women were included as eligible participants, as were women from populations in cultural transition, including Arab women. Additional criteria were: mothers; women with less than 12 years of schooling; ages 22-55; unemployed and not-receiving income support benefit.

These criteria were relaxed according to the number of applicants, and staff also accepted candidates who did not meet all the criteria.

6. Change vs. Continuity in the Implementation of Program Stages

The early stages were implemented according to the planned model. Some stages were implemented only partially or changed due to either efforts of the implementers to match the

program to the participants' needs or to budgetary constraints. The following changes were made in the program stages: ***Preparation for entering the workforce:*** In some groups, courses were added: improving Hebrew and computer skills; preparatory employment workshops; and enrichment sessions on top of the preparatory workshops in Ethiopian-Israeli groups. The preparatory workshops were shortened (to a month-and-a-half instead of the planned 3 months) for budget reasons. The workshops were financed by the Vocational Training Division of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, and operated by franchises chosen by the Division.

- ◆ ***Integration into employment:*** According to the interviews with program coordinators, the process of integration into employment proceeded according to the planned model.
- ◆ ***Personal and group support:*** The Eshet Chayil Employment Club, stage I –Workshops were reduced mainly because the club component was omitted from the program budget. In response to the participants' request, this stage of implementation focused on improving Hebrew competency, computer skills and qualifications at the expense of advanced employment workshops.
- ◆ ***Employment, personal and social advancement:*** The Eshet Chayil Employment Club, stage II – Following the transfer to MSAS, the component of professionally advancing and upgrading participants was reduced for budgetary reasons.
- ◆ ***Leveraging community employment:*** This new stage of the program was developed in the wake of the partnership with the Community Work Service at MSAS, replacing the Employment Leadership stage as the final one of the model.

7. Change and Continuity in the Work of Program Staff

- ◆ ***The organizational structure of the program:*** At the national level, the operational staff of the program comprised four directors – the MSAS program director, the TEVET program director, the national director of the program, and the director of employment at the IACC. At the district level, staff comprised district coordinators and MSAS district supervisors; at the local level, the staff consisted of community coordinators responsible for the program at local social service departments, and community-center directors. The main changes in organizational structure following the transfer were: changing the implementation staff; changing the organization of the program from targeting populations to targeting regions and districts; changing the national operational staff to include the four major partners responsible for national implementation.
- ◆ ***Program manpower:*** Most of the staff implementing the program under TEVET stayed on after the transfer to MSAS. On the whole, the jobs were not changed. The changes that were made affected the position of community coordinators and their qualifications by continuing their training through TEVET.

8. Partnerships

- ◆ ***At the national level:*** One change following the transfer was the strengthening of the partnership with government ministries. The main implementing partners on the national level alongside MSAS and TEVET were: the Authority for the Economic Development of the

Arab, Druse and Circassian Sector at the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, and the Ministry of Absorption. The study shows that this partnership contributed significantly to the program, especially in terms of adding components and enlarging the population addressed.

- ◆ ***At the local level:*** Upon the transfer to MSAS, a community's social service department (SSD) became the leading partner in the program. Together with the IACC and the local authority, they were asked to contribute to the funding of some program activities in the community.

The program directors and district coordinators noted that to address the shortage of resources, they tried to create partnerships with volunteer organizations and community employment centers. These organizations helped them primarily with marketing the program, recruiting participants and implementing the workshops.

9. Difficulties in Implementing the Program Stages

Difficulties arose in the implementation of the program stages, some of which preceded the transfer. The main ones were in the following three areas:

- a. ***Integration of participants into employment:*** The absence of relevant personal resources and negative perceptions of the importance of employment; a limited structure of opportunity; insufficient program publicity and marketing; and the lack of a liaison officer with employers.
- b. ***Budgetary constraints:*** A lack of funds to finance program workshops and activities (such as enrichment sessions in the work preparatory workshop, club workshops, and advancement activities); and no funds for recommended activities not included in the program (such as empowerment workshops, education-completion courses, workshops for family members).
- c. ***Operating preparatory and employment-club workshops:*** The inflexible structure of the employment preparatory workshops as regards the diss of the number of meetings and the duration of each; difficulty in matching courses to the participants' level of knowledge due to their uneven education and prior knowledge; the participants' inability to attend club workshops in the evening; the lack of necessary training of community coordinators to teach workshops at the Clubs; and too little involvement of the SSDs in the Club workshops.

10. Sustaining the Program at the MSAS

a. Organizational Sustainability of the Program at the MSAS National Level

The organizational institutionalization of the program at the MSAS is in its early stages. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that steps were taken designed to make the program an integral part of MSAS work: appointing an officer from the Service for the Individual and Families to be in charge of the program; changing the organizational structure of the staff of program coordinators, district/regional targets instead of target populations, to match the organizational structure of MSAS supervisors; organizing study days to expose SSD directors to the program,

and holding national and local meetings with SSD directors to encourage them to help implement the program.

Organizational sustainability at the SSDs

As above, the findings show that the process of assimilation of the program at the local level – the SSDs – is not yet complete. Four parameters were used to examine the extent of institutionalization at local SSDs:

- a. ***Appointing an officer to be in charge of the program in the department:*** In about half of the communities implementing the program, officers were appointed to support the community program coordinators and liaise between them and other SSD staff. In the opinion of the responsible officer at MSAS, all the SSDs should appoint a liaison officer.
- b. ***Regular contact between program coordinators and the SSDs:*** In most of the communities, program coordinators meet regularly with the SSD directors and/or the liaison officers. In the view of the coordinators, the meetings are too few: there should be both more meetings and more in-depth discussion of substance. In contrast, in some communities, the relationship between the two sides was cited as a full partnership with frequent meetings and the provision of support to coordinators during the functioning of a group in the community.
- c. ***Participation of community coordinators in SSD staff meetings:*** Despite the importance attributed to integrating community coordinators in SSD staff meetings, the questionnaires completed by coordinators revealed that less than a third (4 out of 14 who completed questionnaires) participated regularly in the staff meetings of SSD social workers. A smaller number noted that they take part in some of the staff meetings that deal with employment.
- d. ***Use of the program as a therapeutic tool of the SSDs:*** SSD representatives and program coordinators reported that some SSD staff had changed their attitude to the issue of employment. They began to consider employment part of the general therapeutic program for clients. This change was evident in the referral of more clients to the program, and in social workers referring clients to program coordinators when the need arose for an “employment response,” including clients not participating in the program.
 - ◆ ***Community Differences in the extent of program sustainability:*** The SSDs vary greatly in the extent of program institutionalization. The variation seems to stem from five main factors: the work performance of a coordinator in an SSD; the presence of a functioning local community center; the attitude of the SSD director to the program; the existence of “competing” programs; and the length of time that the program has functioned in a community
 - ◆ ***Degree of involvement of the SSDs in program implementation:*** Some SSDs helped implement the program, in various ways, such as: with publicity and marketing to the community, recruiting participants and solving technical problems that cropped up in group meetings. Some SSD representatives emphasized a desire to expand their involvement to additional areas, such as: program management; budget management; development of the program model and adapting it to the population. In contrast, some program directors stressed a need to tap the added therapeutic value of the SSDs by instructing coordinators on such topics as violence, parenting etc.

- ◆ ***Difficulties in the process of institutionalization:*** The lack of adequate involvement of district supervisors in the program; the ongoing SSD workloads; latent conflict between implementation partners in some Arab communities; associating program activities with the implementing agent rather than with the SSD, which undermined the SSD's sense of "proprietaryship" of the program.

b. Legalities of Institutionalization

The legalities of institutionalization were examined according to whether the program was anchored in the directives of the Regulations for Social Work. Though the process has not yet been completed, two steps have been taken toward writing the directive: (a) Building a community budget that includes the cost of the program; (b) Writing an implementation manual containing a detailed description of program components.

11. TEVET's Support System

TEVET'S support system for the transfer of the program contained the following components:

- ◆ ***Developing and training program manpower:*** Training coordinator staff; offering an orientation course to new program coordinators; assigning a liaison officer to be responsible for supporting and guiding district directors and coordinators.
- ◆ ***Developing an accreditation program for program coordinators:*** Developing an accreditation track of varied content to help coordinators in their work. The process is currently in stages of consolidation and is intended as a pilot for other TEVET programs.
- ◆ ***Compiling the knowledge accumulated during the implementation of the program:*** An operational program manual was written by the program executive at TEVET alongside training and knowledge-development staff.
- ◆ ***Imparting professional knowledge on employment to program implementers:*** Holding national meetings with SSD directors and local partners to launch the operational manual and provide focused program-related instruction.
- ◆ ***Developing the program component of advancement:*** Eshet Hayil is part of TEVET's advancement program – two coordinators have been chosen to participate in the training track for employment promoters.
- ◆ ***Participating in financing program manpower:*** Sharing in the cost of staff at the national head office of the program, including the national director and some district coordinators.
- ◆ ***Database:*** Maintaining and financing the database developed by TEVET on outputs and outcomes.

Apart from these components, TEVET's support included active involvement in implementing the program and continuing to develop the program model.

12. Dissemination and Scale of Program

The transfer to the MSAS saw three changes in the dissemination and scale of the program: (1) The number of groups was gradually reduced from 48 to 30; (2) the number of groups of Arab women was increased – by the end of 2012, 10 groups had opened; and (3) in the wake of the partnership with the Absorption Ministry, it was decided to open additional groups for Ethiopian-Israelis.

13. Number of Participants in the Program

- ◆ *The number of participants in the program since its transfer to MSAS is 1,366.* Of these, 40% were Arab women; more than 25% were Ethiopian-Israelis; and the rest were either non-immigrant Israelis or immigrants from the Caucasus or Bukhara.
- ◆ *Change in the number of program participants after the transfer:* The number of women joining the program after the transfer dropped (from 555 in 2009 to 276 in 2011); the number of Arab women joining the program after transfer rose (from 64 in 2010 to 194 in 2012), and the number of Ethiopian-Israelis joining after the transfer rose (from 37 in 2010 to 87 in 2011).

14. Characteristics of Participants at the Time of Joining the Program

- ◆ *Characteristics of participants since the transfer to the MSAS*
 - More than two-thirds (69%) were aged 39 and under.
 - Most of the participants were married (75%) and most of the married participants had children.
 - Single parents made up 19%.
 - Two-thirds had at least 12 years of schooling though there was variation among the different populations.
 - About half the participants had not worked in the two years prior to their joining the program.
- ◆ *Differences in the profile of those joining the program – before and after the transfer*
 - Those joining after the transfer were younger than those joining before.
 - The percentage of mothers among the participants was higher among the new joiners.
 - The percentage of participants with at least 12 years of schooling was higher among the new joiners (68% vs. 61%, and 58% among the two more veteran groups).

15. Employment Outcomes of the Program

- ◆ *Integration into employment* – In the half-year and year since joining the program: Half the participants found jobs in their first six months in the program. In their first year in the program, more than two-thirds (67%) of participants started working. The rate of employment integration was especially high among Ethiopian-Israeli and Arab women (73% and 69% respectively, in the year since joining).

- ◆ **Job retention:** Almost all the participants (93%) were employed six months after starting to work, though not necessarily at the same job. A similar rate were employed a year after starting their first job.
- ◆ **Job characteristics** of participants after joining the program: The percentage of participants working part-time was 54%. About half of the participants (45%) earned up to NIS 22/hr; about a third – NIS 23-25/hr; and the rest – NIS 23/hr or more.
- ◆ **Differences between new (joined after the transfer) and veteran participants (joined before the transfer) in rates of employment integration and retention:** Employment integration rates were somewhat higher among the new participants, in both the first half- year and the first year after starting the program. There were no substantial differences between new and veteran participants regarding job retention in the first half-year and the first year after starting the program.
- ◆ **Differences in employment characteristics of working participants before and after the transfer:** No substantial differences were found regarding the rate of part-time employment. There were differences between the different participant populations, reflected in a decrease in the rate of part-time workers among the Arab participants. The rate earning NIS 23/hr. or more was higher among participants who joined the program after the transfer – 62% vs. 51% (in 2009-2010) and 46% (in 2007-2008).

16. Steps Taken for Program Sustainability

The picture emerging from the study shows that a number of steps and processes were undertaken to sustain the program at the MSAS and ensure its continuity after TEVET's exit. According to the literature, these factors can influence the success of sustaining a program.

The main steps taken are: building a stable organizational structure; recruiting staff within the MSAS to be in charge of the program; developing and training program manpower; ensuring TEVET's continued contact with the program and program support following the transfer; including the program budget in the basic MSAS budget; appealing to various funding sources; building partnerships with other government agencies; building cooperation with community organizations and institutions; tracking the program's development with research and evaluation; and marketing the program to the community.

17. Issues of Continuing Sustainability

The study findings gave rise to a number of issues deserving attention in the continuing process of sustaining the program at the MSAS:

a. Sustaining the Program at the MSAS:

- ◆ Strengthening the position of MSAS, both nationally and locally, as the leader of the program relative to the implementing organization in the field and the JDC.
- ◆ Creating structured mechanisms for the program at the local SSDs, which potentially could be used by other communities where the program is implemented.

- ◆ Increasing the interest and involvement of SSD directors in implementing the program and supporting community coordinators.
- ◆ Consolidating the programmatic knowledge in the MSAS and SSDs to ensure continuity and avoid interruptions due to change in the implementing organization.

b. TEVET Support - clarifying the professional support of JDC-TEVET and its involvement in further model development:

- ◆ The duration of TEVET's support of the program
- ◆ The components of the support system provided by TEVET - in program implementation and in further development of the program model
- ◆ The process of TEVET's phase-out from the program and planning a gradual exit strategy.

c. Program Partnerships – clarifying the partnership structure

- ◆ The link between partnerships formed at the national level and their implementation at the local level
- ◆ Assessing the bureaucratic implications of the numerous funding and implementation partners at the national and local levels.

The findings have been presented to the MSAS and all the relevant partners and are being used to strengthen the process. The study has broader implications because it represents one of the few studies that has examined processes of transfer and sustainability of JDC-Israel programs to government ministries.

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