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Civil Society Organizations in Arab Society

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Abstract

Background

Civil society organizations play an important role in promoting social, community, and public goals. Among other factors, their importance derives from their thorough familiarity with the needs of the local population, their ability to develop tailored responses to changing social challenges, their organizational flexibility, their capacity to respond to needs as they emerge on the ground, and their ability to complement public systems. Despite their importance and contribution, particularly for disadvantaged populations, the scope of activity of Arab civil society organizations in Israel remains limited.

Objective

The main objective of this study is to propose practical recommendations for strengthening and promoting Arab civil society, with a focus on two central areas: deepening the relationship between Arab civil society organizations and local authorities and identifying relevant government procurement practices.

Method

The study was based on a review of professional literature, policy documents, and Israeli government documents, as well as five semi-structured interviews with professionals and officials in government ministries and Arab local authorities.

Main Findings

The findings indicate that Arab civil society in Israel is still in a process of development and consolidation, and faces significant challenges related to funding, building organizational capacity, recruiting professional staff, and developing collaborations. In addition, the relationship between local authorities and civil society organizations is characterized by a limited degree of institutionalization, and public procurement mechanisms were found to be insufficiently adapted to the characteristics and capacities of many Arab civil society organizations.

Summary and Main Recommendations

The study emphasizes that strengthening Arab civil society is an important component in promoting the socioeconomic and community development of Arab society in Israel. The study therefore recommends the following:

1. Formulate a structured policy for strengthening Arab civil society, including establishing organizational infrastructure for managing the relationship between local authorities and organizations.
2. Develop professional and managerial capacities, expand access to public and philanthropic funding, and encourage interorganizational and multisectoral collaboration.
3. Use the existing flexibility in public procurement mechanisms to expand the participation of Arab civil society organizations in tenders and public contracts while maintaining professional standards and the quality of services provided to the public.