

## Research, Network and Support Facility (RNSF)

“Support to enhance livelihoods per people dependent on informal economy  
and improve social inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable persons”

### Good Practices and Lessons Learned

RESEARCH QUESTION	2 - Decent work and enterprise growth
SUB-TOPICS (Research matrix)	International labour standards and right to decent work for informal economy workers (2.1)
COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	Israel
RESUME OF LESSONS LEARNED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Narrow the scope of the action <b>focusing just on one single community and involving also local actors: e.g. employers and other private stakeholders</b></li> </ul>
PROJECT NAME	<i>Her Right to Decent Work: Arab and Ethiopian women in secondary schemes of employment in Israel</i>
YEAR	2013 - 2016
FUNDING AGENCY	European Commission
IMPLEMENTING AGENCY	Kav La Oved
KEY TARGET GROUPS	Women, Minorities: indigenous people, minority ethnic groups, minority religious group members. Arab, Ethiopian and Bedouin Communities in Israel, mainly in urban areas.
SUMMARY OF THE ACTION	<p>The project's objective was to improve the socio-economic situation of Arab and Ethiopian women workers in Israel and to promote their right to decent work. Working women from these communities are most often employed in secondary schemes of the labour market, mainly in subcontracted, temporary and hourly labour, resulting in low pay, poor working conditions, and vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. The outstanding experience of the four project partners, i.e. KavLaOved, Kayan Feminist Organisation, Itach-Maaki – Women Lawyers for Social Justice and the Law Rights Clinic of Tel Aviv University, provided the targeted group with the resources they needed to practice and materialise their potential to be much more aware of their rights, organize and improve their situations, for which neither the main Israeli trade union (Histadrut) nor the governments were providing meaningful services.</p>

<p><b>LESSONS LEARNED</b></p>	<p>The overall assessment of the project was undeniably positive. Its scope was comprehensive and the actions followed a well-defined and clear path, addressing one of the most deep-rooted and complicated problems of the Israeli society - namely the marginalisation of minority communities - with a strict focus on women. As argued by the Final Evaluation, the activities were relevant and based on actual needs, because civil rights awareness, conceptual understanding and knowledge about citizenship, legal aid means, and law procedures were totally lacking in the socio-economic context of such groups as those targeted by this project.</p> <p><b>The first drawback of the project was be related to its over-ambitiousness. The scope was too broad and too many issues were at stake (i.e. three different communities with different habits, social rules and concept of woman; the double role of women as private workers and as a part of society; the balance between the public and private approach towards the targeted workers, etc.).</b> In particular, it was clear that working rights violation was just one of the problems that women faced within the targeted communities. Sometimes these violations were accompanied by local communities' discrimination, prejudice and lack of collaboration. The Final Narrative Report illustrates the story of an Arab woman who resorted to KavLaOved to lawsuit the mayor of her village for sexual abuse. After she took this decision, she was deeply shamed by her community, which refused to accept her and her <b>"dishonour"</b>. In other situations, hierarchies of gender and power, especially in the case of women employed by family members or friends, further weakened women's abilities to demand their right to decent work. One of the conclusions was that it was advisable to narrow the scope of the action, <b>perhaps focusing just on one single community and involving also other actors (especially men and employers in the engaged communities)</b> who deeply contribute to women's economic and social independence.</p> <p>The second <b>weakness of the project was related to the inadequate involvement of the private sector. The project was focused only on the victims' perspectives, neglecting the other side of the problem, namely employers' exploitative approach and economic stakeholders' negligence.</b> Apart from some sessions addressed to local authorities and public officers, the project completely excluded these fundamental actors from its activities (as asserted by the Final Evaluation, probably the NGOs leading the project were not fully confident with them). Dedicated informative sessions or <b>tailor-made training with private sector actors might have given more sustainability</b> and plenitude to the project's purposes.</p>
<p><b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	

The project raises **two important concepts that are related to informal economy: ethnic enclave and secondary job market.**

Ethnic enclaves are geographic areas with high ethnic concentration, characteristic cultural identity and economic activity based on small ethnic firms providing numerous low-wage jobs to the enclaves' members. The barriers of entry into the enclaves and their singular economies are significantly lowered due to the ethno-centric nature of businesses and firms. Goods and services tend to be offered in the language of the enclave. Additionally, social and cultural norms specific to the host country are not required. Thus, the ethno-specific nature of enclave economies create an alternative job market, making it attractive to new **immigrants who lack the social and cultural skills necessary to integrate into the mainstream economy** (Portes& Jensen, 1992).

From the Final Report and the Final Evaluation of "Her Right to Decent Work", we can determine that part of the actions specifically targeted villages or neighbourhoods with high Arab, Ethiopian and Bedouin concentration, and that some of the engaged women were employed in community-related activities. Thus, we can objectively state that, across its various goals, the project targeted ethnic enclaves and enclave economies. Basically, enclaves economies are not a bad concept: they represent a useful incubator for the newly arrived immigrants, and can provide for an alternative welfare based on traditional safety nets and community self-help. The main drawbacks arise when enclave economies aim at covering bad practices, such as informality. Indeed, enclave economies are often characterised by informal activities, as the entrepreneurial services making the core of the enclave's founding are historically informal ventures. Informality is favourable for immigrant entrepreneurship, allowing them to bypass costly regulations, and to women, who are informally employed by their husbands, other relatives or friends living in the same community.

The informality of the enclave economy is however a reason for risk and fraud. Informal activities are constantly under the risk of detection by the formal sector, which has a negative effect on job security. Furthermore, due to the absence of legal framework, enclave members often remain silent about various forms of exploitation (Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, 2002). This issue has been clearly acknowledged by the Final Report, but no activities were specifically directed to it. For this reason, the above mentioned recommendation should be strengthened and extended: cooperation projects dealing with enclave economies need to be targeted not only to victims, but also on employers and other economic actors with a key role in the treated enclaves. The real change can be achieved only if the community as a whole is conducted towards a better approach and a mindful behaviour in respect to the workers and the National labour rules.

The second concept is about secondary job market, even quoted by the title (i.e. secondary schemes of employment). This concept stems from the "dual theory" of the job market, created by the American economists Doeringer and Piore in 1971, who envisaged a split labour market in two segregated spheres: primary and secondary job market. In the primary job market, the workforce as a whole is motivated to serve their employer because of wages, health benefit, and pension and job security. The primary sector generally contains higher-grade, higher-status and better-paid jobs, with employers who offer the best terms and conditions. Salaries are relatively high, as well as status and responsibilities, career mobility and good working conditions ([understandingsocialscience.com](http://understandingsocialscience.com)). On the other hand, the secondary labour market is characterised by high-turnover, low-pay, and usually part-time or temporary work. These jobs give low emphasis on job morale and their workers lack motivation. The secondary jobs are mostly low-skilled, require relatively little training, and can be learned relatively quickly on the job. There are few barriers to job mobility within the secondary sector. Because the jobs are unattractive, there is little incentive to stay, and there are high levels of

<p>labour turnover, with workers moving on to other jobs or employers. Wages are low, the terms and conditions of the job are poor, and there is few unionisation (World Bank, 2006). Historically, secondary labour market has been dominated by women and minorities, while the primary labour market has been dominated by white males.</p> <p>Secondary job market and informal economy are not exactly alike. While informal workers completely miss any kind of protection (in terms of wage, working time, lay-offs and social benefits), secondary job market workers are covered by formal job contracts. Yet, the two concepts have similar traits. In fact, given the high turnout from the demand side and the possibility to be easily replaced, secondary workers cannot afford to perform badly or to get maternity and sick leave. At the same time employers have no interest in improving workers' conditions, since one of their main goal is saving money, and they can do it by assigning low-quality tasks to low-skilled workers. Thus, to what extent formalisation can be considered a good practice, if that means moving informal workers towards secondary schemes of employment? Even the analysed project shows how basic labour rights, in spite of a formal contract, can be constantly undermined. Another recommendation is therefore to combine awareness raising and self-empowerment programmes with TVET or entrepreneurship trainings (either simultaneously or after project's deadline). In this way, participants will be empowered with new technical and professional knowledge, gaining better chances not only to be more aware of their rights, but also to skip easily from primary to secondary job market.</p>	
<b>FURTHER TAGS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness raising, behaviour change communications methods, dissemination of information methods- including on social inclusion in the IE (3.1, 4.3)</li> <li>▪ Strengthening the role of women in the informal economy (4.6)</li> <li>▪ Promotion of women in informal economy trade associations and cooperatives (4.6)</li> <li>▪ Minority groups and the informal economy (providing support and inclusion of) (4.11)</li> <li>▪ Leadership, life skills, empowerment training (3.4)</li> </ul>
<b>SOURCE(s)</b>	<b>RNSF Research Volume 4.3:</b> <a href="https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/documents/rnsf-research-volume-43-gp-ll-15-ec-funded-projects">https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/documents/rnsf-research-volume-43-gp-ll-15-ec-funded-projects</a>
<b>REFERENCE(s)</b>	<b>EuropeAid project page:</b> <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/81341_es">https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/81341_es</a>