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פורום דו-קיום בנגב לשוויון אזרחי
منتدى التعايش السلمي في النقب من أجل المساواة المدنية

MAZON
A Jewish Response To Hunger
מזון - תגובה יהודית לרעב

"We are Bedouins; we can subsist on olive oil: We don't say we don't have food."

Food Insecurity in Bedouin Villages Deprived of Recognition in the Negev Region of Israel

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Translator's note: The term "unrecognized villages" refers to Bedouin villages that lack legal status in Israel. These villages do not receive any government or municipal services, are not connected to electricity or water systems, and lack sewage disposal systems, paved roads, garbage collection, and postal services. They exist but do not exist. It is important to note that most residents of these villages are Israeli citizens. While some former unrecognized villages have gained government recognition over the years, they often remain underserved.

The term "townships" refers to urban or semi-urban settlements established by the Israeli government in the 1960's to concentrate Bedouin populations. There are six such townships in the Negev and one city, Rahat. Unlike the unrecognized villages, the townships receive at least some services.

The phrase "village deprived of recognition" can replace "unrecognized village" to highlight Bedouin villages lacking rights and infrastructure without state acknowledgment. It positions the village concerning the exclusionary state authority. This less common term can be used occasionally to ensure it remains recognizable to the public. "Villages deprived of recognition" contributes to a theme in this paper: recalibrating concepts through the experiences of the Bedouin people.

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Abstract

The prevailing definition of food security asserts that all population members have, at all times, both physical and economic access to nutritious and satisfying food that meets the nutritional standards for healthy and active lifestyles. Consequently, those who do not meet all these conditions suffer from food insecurity. National and international research on Israel indicates that the populations of unrecognized villages are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Our data affirms this and further highlights the vulnerability of women in unrecognized villages, representing a case of dual marginality—the most marginalized group within a marginalized population.

After the coronavirus pandemic, food security in unrecognized villages worsened. Societal infrastructures had to reassess their capacity under large-scale emergency stress. In the unrecognized villages of the Negev, exploratory research conducted in the first year and published in September 2023 highlighted how the lack of infrastructure, particularly water and electricity, directly affects residents' food security. The war that began on October 7th, 2023, and the exploratory research findings prompted us to continue using qualitative methods for this study. The subsequent findings resulted from 21 semi-structured interviews conducted in seven villages deprived of recognition. Based on these findings, we recommend developing an emergency plan for situations when the movement of Bedouin people is restricted to their villages; otherwise, future emergencies could lead to starvation.

Chapter one examines the consequences of the October 2023 war on food security in unrecognized villages. First, a traditional food rationing system in these villages, used in times of crisis, tends to promote isolationism. Second, at the war's onset, tourism-related jobs and employment along the Gaza border ceased, which were the primary sources of income for women in the villages. Third, the war drove up the cost of living, reducing the variety of products available, mainly

fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat. The loss of income, rising cost of living, and increased socioeconomic isolation has severely impacted the regular food supply in households. These three effects of the ongoing war are expected to undermine food security and compound into worsening long-term health issues.

Chapter two addresses the measuring of food security in unrecognized villages. The interviewees noted that discussing food insecurity is considered shameful in Bedouin society. Shame complicates access to accurate quantitative measurements of Bedouin food insecurity. Additionally, the approach to identifying food insecurity differs from that of most people in Israel. Some interviewees described reliance on the land and living modestly as a healthy Bedouin tradition. For instance, in response to a standard food security questionnaire, "Did you skip a meal in the last two weeks?" the answers are likely to be negative, as olive oil in pita bread is regarded as a meal. Food security questionnaires must be tailored to local contexts, or else connotative discrepancies can lead to inaccurate results.

Chapter three examines the gendered division of labor concerning food security within the household. Traditionally, women leave their homes to move into a home within the men's community. It is important to note that the Bedouin household is traditionally organized as a network instead of a nuclear unit. Dependents frequently experience flexibility within their family structure. As a result, the husband's extended family dependents may live in the husband's household. Gender-based power dynamics within the home are typically dictated by conservative patriarchal norms that enforce gender roles in the context of food security. Women are expected to perform domestic and reproductive labor, while men are expected to be the breadwinners. Both gendered labors attribute to food security in the household.

The conclusion emphasizes the need for comprehensive research and locally focused policy. Regarding research, conducting studies that resonate with the culture and challenges of daily life in each village is recommended instead of relying on standard food security questionnaires. Furthermore, it is essential to adapt measurements and responses to reflect the perceptions of Bedouin villagers

and ensure that all questions are tailored with gender sensitivity. Regarding policy, protocols must be established to protect Bedouin villagers from starvation in emergencies and non-emergencies. A consistent and storable source of fresh food must be developed to promote self-sufficiency. During non-emergency periods, it is advisable to adopt a flexible definition of the household, ensuring it includes everyone who may share a meal. Lastly, we strongly advocate for integrating women into stable employment that aligns with their customs and raising awareness of food security in high schools as teenagers start taking active roles in their households.

Preface

This study addresses food insecurity among Bedouin people living in unrecognized villages in the Negev. Following exploratory research conducted in 2022-2023 and an update in the research design after the October 2023 war, interviews were conducted with 21 women from seven unrecognized villages. The study aims to explore the issue of food security in villages and provide policy recommendations on the subject.

The document opens with a brief background on food security in villages deprived of recognition, including a summary of key points from previous research, its objectives, and methodology. Much of the document elaborates on the main findings from the current study: investigating the impact of the October 2023 war on food security, proceeding with the necessary "calibration" for assessing food insecurity in the villages, and concluding with a chapter on the gendered division of labor within households. The document wraps up with conclusions and recommendations for further research and policy development regarding food security in villages deprived of recognition in the Negev.

This is the second year that the Adva Center and the Negev Coexistence Forum have researched food insecurity among unrecognized villages in the Negev, with funding from Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger. We thank the organization and its representative in Israel, Dr. Yishai Menuhin, for supporting this research. We hope it will translate into practical policies for alleviating food insecurity.

Background

The prevailing definition of food security is positive when all members of the population have physical and economic access to nutrition and satisfying food that meets the nutritional needs of healthy and active lifestyles.[1] Hence, those who do not meet all of these conditions live in varying degrees of food insecurity, whether temporarily or permanently. In Israel, the issue of food insecurity has received attention from various institutions.[2] Among them is the National Insurance Institute, which publishes special studies on the subject—the most recent one in January 2023.[3] In recent publications, **an understanding has emerged on food insecurity being directly correlated to households with a low-income level and those receiving income support benefits**.

In general, **studies show that the Arab populations in Israel are more vulnerable to food insecurity than the non-Arab general population**.[4] The Poverty Report of the National Insurance Institute for 2022 clarifies that: in 2022, the rate of food insecurity in Arab society stood at 62.7%, the highest of all the groups surveyed.[5] **However, official survey figures do not distinguish between the different groups within the Arab population**, of which some sectors are in an incomparably worse situation than others—**notably the people in unrecognized villages in the Negev, who are entirely excluded from official surveys**.[6]

1 Adler D., Tzachor A., & Tepper S. (February 2022). National Resilience, Food and Food Security in a Changing Climate, p. 272. In: Michael K. Tal, A., Lindenstrauss, G., Bookchin Peles, S., Hanin, D., Weiss, V. (editors). *Environment, Climate, and National Security: A New Frontier for Israel* (Institute for National Security Research). (In Hebrew).

2 Sharvit Z. O., and Brender D. (March 2022). Food Insecurity in Israel: Review of Characteristics, Interventions and Challenges. Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute. (In Hebrew).

3 Endeweld, M., and Karadi L. (January 2023). Food Security Survey 2021: The Course of the Survey and Main Finding. *Jerusalem: National Insurance Institute, Research and Planning Administration.* (In Hebrew).

4 Excluding the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish people. Kasir (Kliner) N., Pines R., and Flam N. (December 2023). Report on the Dimensions of Poverty and Income Inequality – 2022, pp. 15-16. *Jerusalem: National Insurance Institute, Research and Planning Administration.* (In Hebrew); For further reading, see: Rakah S. Barriers to Opportunities: Food Insecurity in Arab Society (August 2021). *Sikkuy Association.* (In Hebrew).

5 Kasir (Kliner) N. et al. Ibid, pp. 15-17.

6 Kaufman, R., & Slonim-Nevo, V. (March 2004). Food insecurity and hunger among disadvantaged populations in the Negev: Findings from an Exploratory Research Study. *Social Security*, 65: pp. 33-54. (In Hebrew).

In the Negev, residents of Bedouin unrecognized villages live in temporary structures due to the constant threat of eviction and demolition. They lack—to various degrees—electricity, running water, sewage disposal, internet, paved roads, or public transportation infrastructure.[7] There are very few permanent structures or public services in these villages. By definition, the government agencies do not document living conditions in the villages. The Central Bureau of Statistics does not conduct a census within the villages. This perpetuates a lacuna of data that makes planning for the villagers difficult.[8]

An indication of the perpetual food insecurity in the unrecognized villages emerged from a 2008 report published by the Ministry of Health. According to the report, 16.9% of Bedouin children in grades 1-2 were underweight. In villages deprived of recognition, the rate was 2.4 times greater than in permanent settlements and more prevalent among girls than boys.[9] Although the data was partial and outdated, **it indicates how acute food insecurity prevails in unrecognized villages. It is also clear from this data that it is impossible to infer the situation of residents of the unrecognized villages from that of the Bedouin population as a whole**.

International and national research in Israel affirm that the residents of villages deprived of recognition are particularly susceptible to food insecurity. This is due to the long-standing conflicted relations with state and municipal actors—like indigenous populations in first-world countries—that magnifies geographical, social, cultural, and institutional separation from the rest of the country. Studies of indigenous populations show that they are particularly vulnerable to food

7 For the causes of the situation of the unrecognized villages, and for a description of the history of their formation as such, see for example: Abu Saad A. (March 2023). The Arab-Bedouin Education System in the Negev from a Local Perspective: Reality and Needs, pp. 19-20. *Policy Paper 186, Jerusalem: The Israeli Institute for Democracy*. (In Hebrew).

8 Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality. (August 2021). Uncounted: Indigenous Bedouin citizens neglected by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. [Position Paper].

9 Ministry of Health. (2008). The Health Status of Bedouin Infants and Children up to the Age of 6 in Permanent Settlements and Unrecognized Villages in the Negev, pp. 41-42. (In Hebrew). See also: Huss, E., Kaufman, R., & Sibony, A. (March 2013). Children's drawings and Social Change: Food Insecurity and Hunger Among Israeli Bedouin children. *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(7), 1857-1878.

insecurity,[10] and that children, women, and the elderly are more susceptible than others.[11]

In addition, food insecurity is an extension of poverty and consequence of systemic exclusion.[12] According to National Insurance Institute data for 2018, the incidence of poverty among Bedouins in the Negev was significantly higher than that of the non-Bedouin general Arab population; and it is especially higher in relation to the secular Jewish population.[13] According to updated data of the National Insurance Institute for 2022, the poverty rate in Bedouin communities in the Negev is about 50% for families and 60% for children.[14] **Additionally, a significant percentage of the Bedouin population depended on income support.** In 2022, Bedouin families constituted 18% of income support recipients in Israel, even though they constituted only about 3% of the total Israeli population.[15] The structural inequalities driving food insecurity among Bedouins in the Negev c**orrelate with poverty and dependence on income support**.[16]

Food that is accessible, healthy, and varied has a significant impact on health and the prevention and treatment of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and celiac disease. **Therefore, studies on the health status of the Bedouin population in the Negev can indirectly indicate their food security**. For example, a recently published study states that the chances of a Bedouin person over the age of 75 developing diabetes is over 50 percent. This percentage is far above average compared to

10 McKay, F. H., Haines, B. C., & Dunn, M. (February 2019). Measuring and Understanding Food Insecurity in Australia: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(3), 476; Maillacheruvu, S.U. (October 2022). The Historical Determinants of Food Insecurity in Native Communities, p. 4. Washington, DC: *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*.

11 See for example: Temple, J. B., & Russell, J. (August 2018). Food insecurity among older Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(8), 1766.

12 Sharvit Z. O., (May 2024). Food Insecurity in Developed Countries in the World - Characteristics, Responses and Challenges - an International Review. *Jerusalem: Brookdale Institute.*

13 Endeweld, M., Gottlieb D., Heller, O. and Karady, L. (December 2019). Poverty and Social Gaps in 2018, Annual Report, pp. 73-77. T*he National Insurance Institute.* (Appendices only in Hebrew version of the report).

14 Broitman D., Hariv M., and Shevchenko Y. (March 2024). The Consequences of the War Between Israel and Hamas on Employment and Economic Security Among the Bedouin Society in the Negev, p. 2. *Bedouin Society and Research Hub, the Negev Coexistence Forum.* (In Hebrew).

15 Hellman, S. (June 2024). Are the 'Employment Circles' program suitable for women in unrecognized villages in the Negev? *Bedouin Society and Research Hub, the Negev Coexistence Forum.* (In Hebrew).

16 Endeweld, M., and Karady, L. ibid.

the general Israeli population and soars above the Arab population of Israel.[17] In a study conducted among residents of Rahat, it was found that the rate of diabetes among all residents and of obesity among women was double that of the Jewish population in the nearby city of Be'er Sheva.[18] Additional studies point to other health problems related to nutrition: Bedouin children with celiac disease tend to develop more severe symptoms than children from other population groups in the Negev, partly due to chronic malnutrition.[19] Over the years, high rates of malnutrition among pregnant women have also been documented.[20] **These and other data indicate that nutrition-related morbidity is higher in the Bedouin population than in others**.

This data also indicates the heightened vulnerability of Bedouin women in unrecognized villages. Malnutrition among them align with broader findings that women are among the most at risk for food insecurity. This reflects a dual marginality—women being the most disadvantaged group within an already marginalized population.[21]

Research underscores the critical role of women's economic participation and household decision-making in improving family food security.[22] However, women in unrecognized Negev villages often rely on a "survival economy" rooted in local social and cultural networks. Their economic and educational limitations, lack of

17 Yanko A. (August 2024). Diabetes in Israel: More Patients in the North of the Country, the Poor Suffer More, Ynet. (In Hebrew). https://www.ynet.co.il/health/article/yokra14028062. For further reading on the issue of diabetes morbidity of women in unrecognized villages: Maor M., et al., (May 2023). Coping with Type 2 Diabetes among Bedouins in Israel: Issues of Social Justice, Health Policy and Relationships to Place and Community. *Israeli Sociology*, XXIV(1): 41-61. (In Hebrew); Nadi, F. A. A. (2013). Health inequalities and the right to healthcare of Negev Bedouin in Israel with diabetes: A case study of a marginalized Arab indigenous minority [Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick].

18 Abou-Rabiah, Y. & Weitzman, S. (September 2002). Diabetes among Bedouins in the Negev: The Transition from a Rare to a Highly Prevalent Condition. *The Israel Medical Association Journal*, 4 (9): 687-689.

19 Yerushalmi, B., et-al. (September 2020). Bedouin Children with Celiac Disease: Less Symptoms but More Severe Histological Features at Presentation. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, 8: 580240.

20 Treister-Goltzman, Y., and Peleg R. (2014). Health and Morbidity Among Bedouin Women in Southern Israel: A Descriptive Literature Review of the Past Two Decades. *Journal of Community Health*, 39 (4): 819-825.

21 See, among others: Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2008). *Excluded and Loved: The Stories of Educated Bedouin Women,* pp. 8-9. *Jerusalem: Magnes*, Eshkolot Library. (In Hebrew); Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2017). *The Emergence of a Class Identity: Naqab Palestinian Professional Women.* Jerusalem: Magnes. (In Hebrew).

22 Essilfie, G., Sebu J., Kobina Annim S., and Ekow Asmah E. (December 2020). Women's Empowerment and Household Food Security in Ghana. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 48 (2): 279-296; Ghosh S., Sen L. C., Mali S. K., Islam M., and Bakchi J. (July 2021). The role of rural women in household food security and nutrition management in Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 27 (3): 441-459.

security, and restricted mobility stem from their villages' deprivation of recognition and status. As a result, they turn to traditional family roles for economic productivity, which, for many, creates a double burden—balancing both labor market participation and household responsibilities.[23]

23 Abu-Rabia-Queder, S., Morris A., and Ryan H.. (February 2018). The Economy of Survival: Bedouin Women in Unrecognized Villages. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 149: 80-88.

Main findings from the first year of research [24]

The research highlighted significant perception gaps between officials and community residents regarding food security. These differences emerged on multiple levels. While some officials were familiar with the concept of food security, most community interviewees lacked knowledge of its meaning. However, contrary to officials' assumptions that residents of unrecognized villages were unaware of nutritional quality, some interviewees demonstrated expertise in the field. Officials broadly described food insecurity as severe across all villages, whereas interviewees presented a more nuanced view, noting differences between and within villages. Consequently, while officials emphasized changing residents' eating habits, community members stressed the need to improve infrastructure as a prerequisite for enhancing food security.

Alongside perceptual differences, **women who were interviewed reported a lack of assistance or intervention by state institutions regarding food security in villages deprived of recognition**. The interviews revealed that there is significant mutual aid among village residents, which helps prevent starvation. However, this aid is not sufficient to ensure complete food security for all, particularly for vulnerable groups—such as children, the elderly and those with special dietary needs.

The 2023 research findings revealed a worsening of food insecurity in unrecognized villages since the coronavirus pandemic. The crisis further restricted access to and from the villages, as well as movement within them. Traditional mutual aid practices were sometimes disrupted, while government assistance remained absent. As a result, one key research recommendation emphasized the severe impact of crises on food security. **The 2023 report called to develop an emergency response plan for situations in which village populations become isolated**, warning that such circumstances could lead to starvation—much like what likely occurred for some families during the pandemic, and what continued after October 7th, 2023.

24 Hassan Abu-Kaf S., and Bar-On Maman S. (September 2023). Food Insecurity in the Unrecognized Villages in the Negev. *The Negev Coexistence Forum and the Adva Center.* (In Hebrew). https://adva.org/he/foodinsecurity-negev/.

The research plan in the second year of research

Goals:

The overarching goal of the research project was to sharpen the picture emerging from the original exploratory study on food insecurity in unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev and formulate recommendations to improve the communities' situation. We chose to focus on the following topics:

- Expanding on the main issues that emerged from the exploratory research:
  - **The gendered division of labor in the context of food security**
    - Across the range of perceptions among members of the target population.
    - According to age, marital status, and other characteristics.
  - **The practices of mutual aid and agricultural cultivation for individual consumption.**
    - The different ways these practices are carried out, including their connection to gender.
- In wake of the October 7th crisis, we chose to examine its impact on food security in unrecognized villages by comparing it to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

The research population

According to data of the Population and Immigration Authority for **August 2024, 313,288 Bedouin were living in the Negev, most of them in recognized settlements**. The recognized settlements include the city of Rahat, six local councils, and two regional councils representing 11 villages. **In the same time, 87,349 residents were living in 35 unrecognized villages**.[25] The current study focuses on the latter. In July of 2023, the Negev Coexistence Forum mapped some of the unrecognized villages for this research. The villages were selected based on population size and geographical location. As can be seen from the following table, the population size ranges from 500 to 13,000 residents. Geographical locations range from villages near the regional capital, Be'er Sheva, to those in the deep south of the Negev. Conducting the interviews in various villages made it possible to understand their similarities and differences regarding food security.

Table no. 1: Mapping of Villages for the Study and Estimated Population of Each

Name of the Village	Location/Nearby Settlement	Population
ʿAbdih	South of Sde Boker	500
Rakhamah	Yeruham	1,500
Khašim Zannih	Shquib As-Salam/Segev Shalom	2,000
az-Zaʿarūrah	Kuseifa	2,600
ʿAwajān	Al-Lagia	3,600
az-Zarnūg	Shquib As-Salam/Segev Shalom	5,000
Wādi an-Naʿam	Route 40 south of Be'er Sheva	13,000

Source: The Negev Coexistence Forum

25 The data was taken from: Population and Immigration Authority, "Residents of Israel by locality and age group," August 12, 2024. (In Hebrew). However, it is worth noting that these are not complete data sets, since Bedouin in unrecognized villages are often registered in neighboring settlements for the purpose of participating in elections or eligibility for receiving services. Simultaneously, the Ministry of the Interior prevents new members (mainly women residents of urban settlements who marry a son of the village) from being registered as members of the village.

Methodology

The current research was carried out using a qualitative method. 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted from November 2023 to February of 2024 in seven unrecognized villages. Three women were interviewed in each village. During the interviews, questions were aimed at understanding the issues regarding the above goals from the interviewees' point of view.

In all but one instance, the interviewees were mothers from families with one to seven children. Most of the women worked at home, while a few had jobs in the tourism industry (not necessarily at the time of the interview). One remarkable woman operated a tourism business from home, and another was employed outside the home. Their quotes are provided alongside their village name, age, and marital status—except in cases where information is omitted due to the sensitivity of the content. The numbers in square brackets indicate that the interviewee is not the first wife.

Research limitations

In addition **to the limitations of the qualitative method and the generalizability of the research findings**, there were additional constraints.

Since we examined the gendered division of labor in households, we also wanted to interview male heads of families; however, **attempts to interview men from the communities were refused**. The repeated refusals may have been due to the worsening fears among the Bedouin population, considering the increased tensions following the October 7th crisis. As we can see in the findings below, the men's refusals possibly stemmed from gendered and social pressure when we conducted interviews.

We also faced language barriers and challenges in connecting with women and the conditions of our interviews. **It is reasonable to assume that some information was omitted or lost during the lengthy translation and editing of the interview texts**. All

interviews were conducted, transcribed, and translated by Arabic speakers. Hebrew speakers then analyzed them, followed by re-analysis and translation by English speakers. Nuance was undoubtedly lost along the way. The interviewer's proximity to the "research field," **being a resident of an unrecognized village herself, allowed her to access the villages and build trust with some of the women. However, she also experienced challenges,** such as difficulties in coordinating the interviews and cancellations by some women. **The setting of the interviews proved challenging as they took place in the women's homes**, where distractions from housework and children were common. This led to some interviews occurring at unusual hours and in the presence of others.

Main Findings

A. The October 7th crisis and its consequences on food security in unrecognized villages[26]

Our previous report ended with a sentence that predicted the subsequent findings of the Negev Coexistence Forum: over 70% of the women reported that their households suffered from worsening food insecurity compared to their situation before the war. They also reported a worsening of their quality of living compared to the rest of the recognized Bedouin population.[27] That is, the quality of life in the villages deteriorated significantly at the beginning of the crisis. At the start of the war, "command centers" were established to deal with food security in Rahat and Hurah[28] that also catered to a certain extent to the unrecognized villages. This study's interviews were conducted at the end of the November 2023 survey, after the initial shock of October 7th had lulled. Several themes emerged from the interviews that are worth considering.

Fear of leaving the village

The villages' situation worsened at the onset of the war as residents feared traveling on the main roads. In the early days of the October 2023 war, **fear intensified in the Negev due to several factors, such as the absence of adequate infrastructure and emergency services to protect against or respond to rocket attacks.** Some rockets and debris from interceptions struck the villages directly, resulting in the

26 Hariv M., Shevchenko Y., and Broitman D. (December 2023). Protection, Security and Feelings of Security Among the Bedouin Society in the Negev in the Shadow of the War Between Israel and Hamas. *Bedouin Society and Research Hub, the Negev Coexistence Forum.* (In Hebrew).

27 Broitman D., Hariv M., and Shevchenko Y. (February 2024). The Consequences of the War Between Israel and Hamas on Employment and Economic Security Among the Bedouin Society in the Negev, p. 9. *Bedouin Society and Research Hub, the Negev Coexistence Forum.*

28 Bagno Y. (November 2023). Initiative: Aid in Food, Medical Equipment and Protected Vehicles for the Bedouins in the Negev. Maariv. (In Hebrew); Suwaed, M. (December 2023). The State and the Bedouins - A New Opportunity in the Shadow of the War. *Zman Israel.*

deaths of seven residents and significant damage.[29] During the attack by Iran on military bases in the Negev on the night of April 13, 2024, unrecognized villages were affected directly by missiles and the debris from their interceptions.[30] Most interviewees expressed their fear of traveling:

> "We were afraid to go to buy food. We need to have enough food at home." **(az-Zar'arurah, 34, married+7)**

> "The war affected the variety of food and its availability. I didn't buy vegetables or canned food...everything changed. We couldn't go out and buy in just any store, only the nearby ones. People were terrified." **(Abdih, 27, married+3)**

> "The war really affected us. We didn't bring food [from outside]. At first it was difficult; we went to the supermarket and it was empty, … there was only one supermarket close to us and the others were very far away." **(Abdih, 28, single)**

The last two quotes are from a village that is far from the Bedouin urban centers, or neighboring cities such as Be'er Sheva and Dimona. **It can be assumed that, in remote villages, it is comparatively more difficult to stock up on food.**

The isolation mechanism in the village is likely the immediate response to these traumatic events:

> "I'll tell you something, in the war they were afraid. All the time fear. They didn't go out. Because a missile fell very close to us. Close to the road. It felt like it was at our home. There was a scream and this..." **(Wadi an-Na'am, 36, married + 6)**

29 Regarding the feeling of [lack of] security and protection in the villages, see: Shevchenko Y., Hariv M., and Broitman D. (March 2024). Damage to Employment, Security and the Feeling of Security Among Women in Bedouin Settlements in the Negev in the Shadow of the War Between Israel and Hamas, p. 9. Maariv (In Hebrew). https://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-1050332

30 Yagna Y. (April 2024). From the Women of the Villages in the Negev to the Commander of the Home Front Command: "We Demand Protective measures". *Walla News*. (In Hebrew). https://news.walla.co.il/item/3659734

Isolation led to the rationing of existing food and a fear of being left without food altogether:

> "We started to fear that there wouldn't be enough and we wouldn't be able to actually get more food. So we saved on flour, for example. We only went out to buy once. I don't know what to tell you, people are afraid to go out; sometimes they have to, but they try to save on food and not go out." **(Rakhamah, married + 7)**

> "The truth is, we haven't been buying groceries for a long time. The day after the war started, we went to get flour and sugar and ate bread and olive oil. I'm afraid. Sure, the war affected us and still affects us, we're afraid. They would buy flour, 10 sacks of flour, and if someone didn't have any, he bought from someone else and took one sack of flour. The war affected us not only economically, but also mentally." **(Abdih, 52, married [2]+adult children)**

It appears that villages can slow down their consumption and ration their food **in times of crisis, such as economic stagnation or closure. They stock supplies and sell them informally within the village. They also preserve food through traditional methods of drying and fermentation**:

> "At first people were in fear. They said they wanted to store food like pickles and dry things.... My aunt brought wheat at the beginning of the war. Usually, we buy one sack, a maximum of two sacks. This time she brought four sacks at once. She was afraid that the situation would deteriorate, and we wouldn't be able to leave. It was at the beginning but after that, we got used to it. I didn't feel there was a change. Our food is the same." **(Wadi an-Na'am, 33, married [2]+4)**

Food rationing and storage mechanisms likely prevent starvation **but directly affect the variety and quality of food consumed**. The impact of limited travel on residents in these villages similarly occurred during the coronavirus pandemic when travel was restricted. The war had other effects, such as loss of income, which will be discussed below.

Loss of income

Official data on the Israeli labor market in the last quarter of 2023—following the outbreak of the war—recorded the most severe impact on employment among Arab men.[31] While we lack an official breakdown of unemployment rates in the Bedouin villages of the Negev, survey data from the Negev Coexistence Forum indicates that the rise **in unemployment was particularly acute in the unrecognized villages.**[32] Comparing this data to the Background section, which states that the population in unrecognized villages faces poverty at significantly higher rates than those in recognized Bedouin cities in the Negev, reveals an economic situation that has become especially constrained during the first three months of the war.

The main damage to employment occurred at the beginning of the war, when many workplaces were closed. The war especially impacted the tourism industry, which was an important source of employment for the women in the village. In contrast, **the cessation of work in western Negev near the border with Gaza mainly affected men:**

> "Fear affected us, especially the people who worked close to Gaza. My husband works in Ashdod and ceased working for a while, but, thank God, now he has returned to work. I don't remember exactly for how long he didn't work, maybe two months or even more." **(Awajan, 32, married+2)**

> "Most of the families who worked in places close to Gaza were unemployed during the war period and could not work at all. For about six months, they were unable to work. Especially when the father is the only worker in the house, he will not be able to buy food for his family." **(az-Zarnug, 26, married+1)**

The **damage to workers on Gaza's periphery was more severe, as these jobs provided them with a relatively stable livelihood. This effect lasted for** several

31 Harpaz G. Y. et al. (July 2024). The Labor Market in Israel – 2023, pp. 51-53. *Ministry of Labor, Senior Division of Strategy and Policy Planning.* (In Hebrew); Bank of Israel. (December 10, 2023). Press Release - Special Analysis of the Research Division: The impact of the "Swords of Iron" War on Labor Participation in Arab society. (In Hebrew).

32 Shevchenko et al., ibid, p. 5.

months until the end of the most intense phase of the war in Gaza. However, **the impact on tourism is likely to persist**. In some cases, employment had not resumed by the time of the interview.

> "Before the war it was better, but with the war they stopped working. People have nothing, they have no money. The boys—one is a schoolteacher and the other works in a hotel. [The latter] stopped working. Even if he has some money, let's say five or ten thousand [shekels], what do you do if he has seven children?" **(az-Zarʿarurah, 54, single+3 adult children)**

Official data attests that, **in the last quarter of 2023, the damage to the hospitality industry was severe compared to other industries.**[33] **Tourism work characterizes the villages near tourist areas in the Negev**, such as Abdih, which is close to the town of Mitzpe Ramon. **The damage to the tourism industry in the Negev had a negative effect on women who were making a living from the industry**, whether they were salaried or self-employed.

> "I worked in tourism, but because of the war there is no longer either internal or external tourism." **(Rakhamah, married+7)**

Some women provided a livelihood for their family, such as the following woman, a second wife to her husband:

> "We returned to work in January. The situation was difficult for me during the war because there was no work. I work, do you understand? In tourism... [being a second wife] burdens me financially, regarding my children. It was very difficult for me when there was no work. I felt that the situation was unbearable. At the beginning of the war, the children were at home, there was no work, there were more demands, the situation became more difficult." **(Rakhamah, 35, married [2]+3)**

It is evident from the quote that their acute difficulty was a result of income loss and the children's loss of routine. **The loss of income—which is meager**[34]**—**

33 Harpaz G. Y. et al., ibid, pp. 59-60.

34 The average monthly income in the hospitality and food services industry was NIS 6,488, and was the lowest on the board. Central Bureau of Statistics, Income of those Aged 15 and Over - Data from the Household Expenditure Survey 2021, Table 9 on p. 90. (In Hebrew).

immediately affects the supply of regular foodstuffs to the home, and leads to shortages:

> "I used to work. Now I've stopped. Since the war, I haven't been working. I worked and brought [in money] but now there is no more. The family suffers in the shortage." **(Khasim Zannih, 52, married+7 dependents)**

From the last two quotes, it can also be learned that **in families where the woman is the main breadwinner**—albeit uncommon, as will be discussed below—**the loss of income immediately affects the food security of her dependents**.

The situation of women worsened, among other things, due to the increase in prices.

Prices

> "Now, because of the war, prices are very high; so I make dishes that are less expensive." **(Wadi an-Na'am, 28, married+3)**

Food rationing and restricted budgeting due to the increase in the cost of living directly affected the variety of foodstuffs purchased:

> "I used to use the [oven] in the month of Ramadan, but since the beginning of the war I haven't used it. We only buy basics and essentials because our financial situation is difficult." **(Rakhamah, 40, married+7)**

> "The price of food has gone up. So, we are forced not to exaggerate. For example, tomatoes at about twenty shekels per kilo. One kilo will not be enough for my family for one day." **(az-Zarnug, 37, married+5)**

The interviewees discern that their main budget cuts following the war's cost of living increases are foodstuffs; they buy less fresh products, like fruits and vegetables and meat products. **This worsening food insecurity can negatively manifest in long-term health problems such as Type 2 diabetes.**[35] At the beginning

35 See references in notes 16 and 17 in the background above.

of the war, the main barrier for food security stemmed from the potential security threat of leaving the villages. Over the months, long-term loss of income and increasing prices became the main threat to food security.

B. Recalibration to the villagers' concepts regarding basic conditions and food security

At the start of this research, the issue of distributing standard questionnaires on food security to the residents of the unrecognized villages emerged, as official institutions had never conducted surveys there before.[36] In developing an assessment and measurement of food security, the research team soon realized that, without national surveys, resources would need to be reallocated in the villages. These findings are summarized in this chapter.

A discussion of food security in villages deprived of recognition requires a "recalibration" of the measurements and questions for the population. There are several reasons for this, some of which will be reviewed here:

> "Oh, our financial situation is not good. But we, the Bedouins, our honor is first and foremost for us and thank God we are still alive. But if you ask if everything is available, it's difficult. We don't buy things because of their [high] prices. We eat what we have and, thank God, we always make do with a little. We live in a desert area, nothing grows here. The land is not agricultural, it is salty and kills the plants. It is known that this area is not for agriculture. I tell you, we Bedouins are like that. For example, we don't have gas, but we bring flour and make bread. And if everything runs out, we have olive oil left. We are Bedouins. We can subsist on olive oil. We don't say we don't have food. We manage. We have honor. We don't say we're hungry. We're hungry, and we don't tell anyone." **(Abdih, 52, married [2]+adult children)**

36 For a review of the common measurement methods in the world, see: Sharvit Z.A. (May 2024). ibid. pp. 7-8. For the index used by the National Insurance Institute in the last poverty report, see: Kasir (Kliner) N., et al. Ibid, p. 15. Remember that the residents of the unrecognized villages are not surveyed.

The above interviewee highlights several aspects that we will delve into in the following pages.

Discrepancy between reported food security and actual food security

Firstly, the interview highlights a significant gap between discussing food insecurity—which is not viewed as a legitimate issue—and recognizing that, in reality, there is a shortage of food in their homes. This discrepancy—which the previous interviewee reiterated in various forms—relates to the challenges of quantitative self-reporting among the village residents. Despite the difficult description in the quote above and elsewhere in the interview, when asked to rate her food insecurity on a scale from one [low] to ten [high], she rated it a four. However, she later mentioned that her situation was poor compared to others in the village, and if she had been offered help, she would have accepted it.

No interviewees generally rated her situation as less than three, while one rated it as nine. This shows that in the case of a numerical report, the assessment would be relatively positive and close to the middle, even when the actual situation is quite onerous. The shame of admitting scarcity, even to extended family members, is expressed in the words of the following interviewee:[37]

> "You know, if I ask for money [from my family], I'm ashamed. Because, if I do, everyone will be aware of my situation. So I always tell them that everything is fine with me."

At the end of the interview, when asked to give a numerical score of her situation, she said this:

> "Not ten. You know, no one cares about me and they tell me be patient and hold on, [my husband] is a relative...and everyone lives with their own difficulties. I don't always have everything because... there is a lack, so not ten. I'll tell you, there are many things I want to bring home, not just food."

37 Shame creates difficulties in discussing and measuring food insecurity and other welfare components. It stems from specific cultural and historical contexts that are difficult to compare. See, for example: Mitchell, E., & Vincent, E. (2021). The Shame of Welfare?: Lived Experiences of Welfare and Culturally Inflected Experiences of Shame. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 41, 100847.

Ultimately, the interviewee only agrees to state that the situation is not a "ten." A numerical response would signify an acknowledgment of a condition she seeks to avoid, even though her quote hints at it.

The point of reference

Among the target population, shortages are viewed from a different perspective than that of most people in Israel, including Bedouins from other communities in the Negev. The houses in the villages are overcrowded, water is scarce, and electricity is lacking. The surrounding environment is desert. This is how, for example, someone living in relative prosperity describes it:

> "I have a small kitchen that is enough for us. Our house is divided into two parts, one for my mother-in-law and one for me. We have a small room where we meet **(like a living room), my husband and I have a separate room, and our five children are all in the same room.** We try to accept the situation and deal with it and manage with it." (az-Zarnug, 37, married+5)

The above living conditions are described as "relative prosperity" because, in many of the residents' homes, the living room is also the children's bedroom:

> "I have two rooms in the house. I have a bedroom, a room where we sit and watch TV, in which there is a floor mattress, I have a bathroom and the kitchen, its entire area comes out like this area... [about 6 square meters], that's it. This is my kitchen. I have a stove in the kitchen, I have a small cupboard in the kitchen, I have a refrigerator, that's it. That's what's there." **(Wadi an-Na'am, 33, married [2] +4)**

As can be seen from the above, the interviewee has a partially equipped kitchen, without the usual appliances that consume a lot of electricity, such as a microwave, toaster, oven and dishwasher. In most of the interviews, interruptions in the supply of solar-panel-powered electricity were reported, a topic that we also discussed in the previous report.[38]

38 Hassan Abu-Kaf S., and Bar-On Maman S., ibid.

> "I use a gas stove, not electricity. The electricity is very weak. We have solar panels, but it's not enough to operate a stove. Even a kettle doesn't work." **(Awajan, 34, married+5)**

Living with rationing is familiar to almost all the interviewees:

> "In winter we encounter problems with electricity, so we use dry things like rice, pasta and lentils. Yes, we have a refrigerator, but in the summer we use it more." **(Rakhamah, 40, married+7)**

Rationing in an emergency situation, in which the availability of basic necessities are threatened, is particularly prominent in relation to water—which is available in moderation in some of the villages:

> "Water is a very, very difficult problem. Some time ago, we were left without water for three months. We drew it from al-Lagia and there was a problem with the pipeline. There was a period of time when we bought drinking water. I transferred water from my [extended] family to my home. My [extended] family always has water. The problem is that I am a little too far away, it [the pipeline] doesn't reach me. There was weakness in the water [pressure]. I would go to get water because my containers ran out..." **(Awajan, 34, married+5)**

> "The water here is cut off a lot. We put a water tank above the house, but there isn't always water. The pressure is weak, maybe because we are on a hill." **(Awajan, 32, married+2)**

The last quotes show that the quality of the water connection varies even within the same village, and depends, among other things, on the location of the house.

Living modestly and relying on necessities available from nature are described in some interviews as a Bedouin way of life and considered healthy. For example, the following description regarding the food of the Mallow plant, which was repeated in some of the interviews:

> "When we go out for a walk, if we find a Mallow on the way, we take some of it. It is a healthy food. [I miss] not only food, but also life and the days

> that were better than today. Unhealthy foods, diabetes and other diseases—that's what makes us miss how we used to live. Even though the food was simple, it was healthy, and there were fewer diseases because of the healthy food." **(Rakhamah, 40, married+7)**

The living conditions in a village deprived of recognition are, by definition, below the standard of living in a developed or developing country. The houses—if you can call them that—are small and poorly equipped. They have no infrastructure for electricity and water. There is a daily struggle to obtain necessities, and many homes experience chronic shortages. **As stated in the opening quote: in response to the question customary in food security questionnaires, "have you skipped a meal in the last two weeks?" the answer will probably be negative simply because olive oil on pita bread is considered a meal**. From this perspective, **food security is a construction that requires recalibration to local definitions.**[39]

C. Diversity within the home: the division of labor for food security

One of the current research goals was to examine the gender roles in the household concerning food security.[40] Although we could not investigate this from men's perspectives, this section presents insights that emerged from the interviews with women.

Defining the household

Women traditionally leave their homes after marriage to integrate into men's family networks, where extended families often live nearby. The husband's extended family dependents may live in the husband's household. Women navigate overlapping

39 See, for example, a study that uses a qualitative method as an alternative to statistical measures to examine the Bedouin population's coping with diabetes: Maor, M., Ataika, M., Shvartzman, P., & Ajayi, M. L. (2021). "I Had to Rediscover Our Healthy Food": An Indigenous Perspective on Coping with Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19 (1): 159-174.

40 Tantoh, H. B., McKay, T. T., Donkor, F. E., & Simatele, M. D. (2021). Gender Roles, Implications for Water, Land, and Food Security in a Changing Climate: A Systematic Review. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 5, 707835.

responsibilities and influence within these extended family structures. Difficulty setting boundaries for children in matters of healthy food choices and nutrition was illustrated in the following case:

> "The problem is that both me and the grandmother are at home... if I don't provide [food], their grandmother does. My children are there most of the time. For example, if my son asks me to make him french-fries and I say 'no,' he goes to his grandmother, who makes them for him. She never says no to him. Some time ago, we made maklouba. My daughter said she wanted fatteh with lentils. After I finished cooking, I found her grandmother making lentils. Most of the time I do the cooking, and my mother-in-law makes bread—that's our plan in Ramadan. I ask them and they tell me what to cook. I ask my father-in-law, and I ask my husband and the children. I try to make one dish [for everyone]." **(Awajan, 34, married+5)**

Symbolically, the difficulty of setting nutritional boundaries for children when the grandmother is in the immediate vicinity reveals the flexible boundary of the household. The following quote also indicates that adult women in the household divide the work among themselves:

> "Sometimes my mother-in-law, when she prepares something for her husband because he fasts every Monday and Thursday, she sends me chicken breast with soup, and I also prepare what I want for myself. And sometimes I also prepare food for my uncle, and we eat together. You could say that we are one household." **(Awajan, 30, married+3)**

When we examine the issue of food security in unrecognized villages, it is apparent from the interviews the households extend beyond the nuclear family. The examples are varied. The dependents of the husband's family often live with the nuclear family, such as elderly relatives, and disabled family members:

> "I am a second wife; my mother-in-law also lives with me. I also have an aunt who lives with me—my husband's sister whose mind is a little..." **(az-Zarnug, 33, married [2]+4)**

This flexible definition of the household has a profound impact on the amount of effort related to food and the role divisions. We will now turn to the latter.

Gender roles

Gender relations within the home in villages deprived of recognition are generally based on a conservative patriarchal order.[41] However, even in the isolated villages, modernization is evident in some of the changes in gender relations. We will start with the norm.

In principle, the patriarchal order assigns both sexes to clear and distinct roles. The man is responsible for providing a livelihood and the woman is entrusted with household management, maintaining the home and caring for family members—including their food. As one interviewee decisively states:

> "I do everything. The man doesn't help." **(az-Zar'arurah, 34, married+7)**

Others explain:

> "The Bedouin man did not grow up and was not educated to help at home. He feels that this is an insult to his masculinity." **(Rakhamah, 40, married+7)**

These unequivocal statements about the social order indicate an absolute role in which the woman is the pillar of the household:

> "I cook most of the time. [Does your husband help you?] No. No way. [Laughter]. I am the central pillar of the family." **(Rakhamah, 35, married [2]+3)**

In contrast to the women's obvious role, from their point of view, the man's role is also unequivocal. It should be noted that it is no less structured than the women's due to the difficulties of making a living. However, since we did not interview men, we present matters from the women's point of view. The following is about a man

41 For example: Abu-Rabia-Queder, S. (2006). Contenders from the Margins: Three Generations of Bedouin Women in the Negev, pp. 86-108. In: H. Dahan-Kalb, N. Yanai and N. Barkovitz (Eds.), *Women in the South: Space, Periphery, Gender.* Sde Boker: Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel, Zionism and Ben-Gurion's Heritage. (In Hebrew)

who does not fulfill his role as required:

> "Enough! Let's say I'm tired of life. I have six children. And sometimes, due to work at home, I don't have enough time to sit with the children to do homework with them. Look at this **(one of the children), I don't sit with him at all regarding school.** Look, I just turned on a washing machine and wrung out a lot of clothes by hand and now there are more. And sometimes my back hurts from the work at home. Everything is on me, all the responsibility, the children, everything. If there was a responsible father, he would participate, he would feel... but nothing. Their father once in a while provides something like pocket money to the children. I'm the one who gives them things. Sometimes he doesn't come home. For example, he left this morning; he won't come back before 2-3 AM, sometimes later, like at 5 AM. Sometimes, I feel that I alone am responsible. [For instance] it's hard to go anywhere by bus. Yesterday, I took [my child] to the [medical] clinic. How did we get to the clinic? (Turns to her child) Interviewee's child: By bus. Interviewee: And how did we get back? Interviewee's child: By bus. [Interviewee continues]: I took a bus there and back. I went to the central station [in Be'er Sheva]. I got off there at the post office. I took a bus to Segev Shalom and from there the same thing back: from there, a bus from Segev, to the central station... Two buses there and two buses back. Four buses to take the child to the clinic in Segev Shalom. So, it's my responsibility, there is no responsible father. What can I do? And you know, here, women are not allowed to drive. Only two women in the village have a driving license. Forbidden!"

The above quote includes aspects of the roles expected of a man in the village: to provide for the family and to take care of their transportation.[42] The fact that the mother must carry out these roles in addition to her tasks creates a heavy burden for her. This is not a standard case, but, as an exception, it proves the rule. In the context of food security, the gender-role of the man is to earn a living, buy food, and transport the food and/or the family when needed. Alongside the many structural conditions that obscure the ability of Bedouin women to integrate into

42 Because there is no public transport within the villages. The bus routes on the main roads may be long and services infrequent, so families rely on the men who drive for transportation.

the labor market,[43] most women do not work due to the traditional conservative framework.

> "I stay at home. Most women don't work...it's hard for us to work, or the man doesn't let us work...things like that. I cook; I keep the kitchen. [To a question about her husband]—No. Will my husband help me? He eats what there is and says 'thank God.' He always tells us to say 'thank God.'" **(33, married [2]+4)**

The interviews show that in many families, there is a shortage due to the man's livelihood difficulties, whether because he does not fulfill his role in the family as in the previous quote or due to a disability:

> "My husband, poor thing, provides a livelihood, but is not always able to. He is disabled and our situation is difficult. We spend everything on the house from his allowance. Thank God." **(Abdih, 52, married [2]+adult children)**

The difference between households is summed up by an interviewee whose husband provides for the family as expected:

> "As long as the man works... [he] provides you everything." **(Awajan, 30, married+3)**

Because of the expectation of the man of the household, in the case of a shortage—and there are many such cases—the blame is considered to be on him:

> "My husband has three wives; he is not someone I can rely on at all. Sometimes he is here, sometimes not."

From the man's perspective, admitting to food insecurity due to financial difficulties is improbable because it is seen as an acknowledgment of dysfunction—this should be taken into account for further research:

> "That's my thinking, I think I live in distress. The man won't think like me. He looks at the positive side. I want to tell the truth. I want to say what's in my heart...I want to talk about my suffering. I really feel that I live in suffering. Not only me; most women live in suffering."

43 Kulik, L. (2019). Stressors at the work-family interface and satisfaction with the quality of the couple relationship: a comparative analysis of men and women. *Social Security*: 120.162-131. (In Hebrew).

It seems that the woman is the first victim of food insecurity, and a considerable number of the interviewees said that they saved food from their own mouths so that there would be something for the rest of the household, especially their children.

> "When people bring something, I leave the food for them and don't eat. A plate of zucchini or something cooked." **(Khasim Zannih, 44, married [2]+4 adults)**

> "The truth is, for example, when I buy something healthy for my children, I used to buy four things, now I buy three. I don't buy it for myself. Yesterday I bought it for my children and didn't buy it for myself. I tell you, the financial situation is very difficult." **(Rakhamah, 35, married [2]+3)**

> "When I make them homemade pizza, I don't eat a lot. Because you know, children love to eat pizza, so I forgo eating so they can eat." **(Wadi an-Na'am, 28, married+3)**

In contrast to these cases, which are characterized by adherence to the patriarchal norm, there are families in which a more active role of the father of the family was reported, such as responsibility for shopping:

> "I trust him, he brings everything. I also feel that he is better than me at this. I sometimes buy things that are not needed, and sometimes things are missing, but he only brings what is necessary, such as vegetables, fruits, and meat. Sometimes I bring things like candy." **(Awajan, 34, married+5)**

Or taking responsibility for agricultural cultivation for food purposes, which the women usually do:

> "My husband is better than me at gardening; he understands these things. For example, he grows potatoes, grapes, figs, olives. [We eat] the olives, grapes and figs. This is the first year that we planted them." **(Awajan, 30, married+3)**

In one case, out of all the interviews, the partner is described as helping in a variety of areas, "even" in the kitchen:

> "The truth is, my husband is the one who does the shopping for the household, not me. He goes and buys everything. Sometimes I go with him, but not always. And I cook alone, but when I'm tired, my husband helps me. He prepares simple things like chips or eggs when I can't." **(Awajan, 32, married+2)**

The following quote clarifies that, in addition to the traditional patriarchal gender roles that are taken for granted in the villages, in some families, the women fulfill their expected domestic role and partake in paid work or academic studies. Paid work is perceived as secondary to her traditional role:

> "In the past, the man used to work and provide the food, and the woman only prepared it. Not today. And it depends on their work. For example, I both shop and cook. My role as a woman is different from the role of women in the past." **(az-Zarnug, 26, married+1, employed outside the home)**

The prominent gender-related differences in household roles are passed on in intergenerational guidance, which we will now turn to.

Intergenerational gender-making

In many cases, it was reported that, as the children grow up, they take on the gendered roles of their parents. For example, the sons of the following interviewee, whose husband passed away, are responsible for purchasing her food in the absence of an allowance:

> "My [adult] children are the ones who buy my food. For a year or more they have stopped the income maintenance allowance I used to get, due to a debt." **(az-Zarʿarurah, 54, single+3 adults)**

Daughters are described clearly as those who gradually help with the household:

> "My daughters and I prepare the food at home. They help me. For example, I cut [food] and tell them what to do or how to arrange it. This is a big change. When they were little, I always prepared the food; now they are grown up." **(az-Zarnug, no age, married+adult daughters)**

> "I cook at home most of the time. Sometimes the girls help, but when they have exams or need to study, I don't like to disturb them. But during vacations, yes, they help me." **(Rakhamah, 40, married+7)**

The daughter's role, until she grows up, is partly defined as an assistant to her mother, the primary support of the household. A crucial aspect of the mother's role is to teach the girls about their responsibilities as future householders:

> "I am the one with the central role, if my husband or my daughters want something done, I do it. The girls help when I make cakes. At least they tidy their room and their bed. Sometimes, if I'm stressed, I ask them to tidy my room for me, and they lightly tidy up so they can get used to cleaning." **(Awajan, 30, married+3)**

The guidance ends with the girls growing up, so that they take on the role of the mother until marriage, when they leave their parents' home:

> "I go out with my father and buy things, but he pays. My parents are old and don't know what we need. I tell them what's missing. Like they say, the big sister. There is one older than me, but she is married. We are four siblings but there are also people who come to family gatherings at home, cousins who don't leave anything. I bake every day or two, they like fresh bread. Yesterday I cooked and my sister baked. Mom helps, not always, she doesn't always help, but sometimes, if we are not at home, she prepares food, but mostly we do. I have a sister older than me. Before she got married, she used to cook and knows how to cook. I learned to cook after she got married." **(Abdih, 28, single)**

In conclusion, the interviews reveal that the boundaries of the household are flexible and that food security affects individuals beyond the nuclear family. On one hand, this increases the workload necessary to manage a household; on the other hand, it sometimes allows for a division of labor among multiple adult women. In any case, the mother oversees all stages of food preparation, while the man is solely expected to earn a living and provide food for the family. The women who work or study—a small minority among the interviewees—do so in addition to their traditional responsibilities. The next generation is raised according to expected gender roles; the mother's role includes teaching the girls how to manage a household and care for nutrition.

Main conclusions and recommendations for public policy and further research

This research phase took place from 2022 to 2024. It began at the end of the coronavirus pandemic and was considerably affected by the outbreak of the October 2023 war. At first glance, not much can be inferred from these crisis periods compared to normal times and food security policies for the approximately 90,000 residents of the unrecognized villages in the Negev. However, evidence indicates that these villages remain in a constant state of crisis, and that a state of emergency exacerbates a situation that is already problematic.

Below are recommendations that build on those made in the previous report. We emphasize that food security in villages that remain unrecognized is closely tied to their status. As a result, any specific actions taken to improve food security will not entirely resolve this fundamental issue.

Recommendations for further research

1. Research on food insecurity in villages is challenging in terms of access, making it difficult to obtain a valid population sample. The current study shows that the difficulty in statistical sampling is only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, it is recommended to devise a measure compatible with the culture and harsh daily life in the villages. It is worth calibrating measurements to the conceptions of the villagers to understand their differences both within and among them.

   Questions should be gender-sensitive and avoid being perceived as offensive, especially concerning the traditional expectation of men as breadwinners. Women appear to be more reliable informants about the quantity and diversity of food consumed. Meanwhile, men provide dependable information regarding the overall livelihood of the household, including financial resources, food sources, and the challenges associated with obtaining them.

2. It is recommended to continue documenting traditional practices like gathering food from nature and other innovative strategies, such as solar-generated electricity.

Main recommendations regarding food security

During a crisis

1. Following the travel ban and food rationing during the coronavirus pandemic and the war, it is advised to enhance the centralized procurement of food from external sources. To maintain the variety of local food, fresh produce should be delivered to unrecognized villages, focusing on vegetables, fruits, and animal products. Local energy should be provided through generators or other alternatives. Based on our findings from last year, the external supply must be stable, sufficiently comprehensive, and well-organized in its distribution. Furthermore, a centralized and self-sufficient food basket should be established for emergencies for all citizens.
2. Poverty intensified during the war because of income loss and rising prices. Therefore, it is advisable that the welfare system ensure that financial assistance is available to the villages during emergencies. As noted, the villages are already at heightened risk of severe food insecurity.

During regular times

3. The support given to households should be calibrated by their dependents. It is advisable to map the people who are fed in each household and financially compensate them accordingly.
4. Efforts should focus on improving women's access to supplies and medical care, as discussed in the previous report. For example, we need to enhance

outbound transportation and expand mobile responses provided by the health funds in the villages. A mobile supermarket operated at the beginning of the war demonstrated one viable alternative; however, to our knowledge, it did not reach the unrecognized villages.[44]

5. It is recommended that efforts be increased to integrate women in the villages into stable employment that respects their customs. Working outside the home is an essential opportunity for lifting families out of poverty, ensuring a proper standard of living, and enhancing the well-being of women. This would promote their status and independence without requiring them to leave the village. In the past, women-centered employment models have been tried in Bedouin towns. There is room to expand such models to unrecognized villages, thereby increasing food security.[45]

6. Last year, we recommended working with children throughout their schooling years. Considering our recent recalibration of gender roles, we now suggest focusing on post-primary schools, when preteens and teenagers take on an active role in the household. Curricula could integrate practical awareness for disease prevention, such as food sciences and knowledge of nutritional quality, quantity, and variety. Schools might also promote economic independence via traditional and contemporary agricultural cultivation. We also recommend training teenagers to work in relatively stable environments rather than in tourism, which becomes vulnerable during crises.

7. Finally, there is no immediate mechanism for collaborating with the villages deprived of a recognized local authority during crises. Once again, we strongly recommend establishing a sustainable solution to protect the villagers from starvation during crises. For instance, a model could be developed for emergency warehouses, like bunkers, that could also function as wartime shelters or a model that connects the villages with nearby army camps in

44 Balar, D. (2023, Oct. 10). The Negev at war: "Super on wheels" will reach the settlements of the fighting sector. *Be'er Sheva and Negev News*. https://br7news.co.il/he/news/news-1698311107 (In Hebrew)

45 The launch of the Bezeq emergency center in Hora under the mosque, the Ryan Hora center. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAQNGLcqLH0. (In Hebrew).

times of crisis.

In conclusion, the state of Israel cannot ignore the plight of the 90,000 men and women in the community, who are probably the most vulnerable to food insecurity among the citizens of Israel. The state must support them in normal times and, even more so, in times of emergency.

Adva Center