



עמותת סיגור קהילתי
Community Advocacy
المرافعة الجماهيرية



שגיל
Shatil



Building Community in Israel



What do the following have in common?

- Mandated dental care for all Israeli children
- Improved food security through community food cooperatives
- Tens of thousands of public housing tenants able to buy homes
- Equal access to benefits for Bedouin single mothers
- Early childhood education in Lod, building the framework for equality
- Increased access to government health and welfare benefits
- Equal access to employment services for Bedouin communities
- Access to medication for the elderly

All grew out of citizen action at the grassroots through the **McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building's (MMEP)** partner Rights-Based Community Practice Centres in low income communities in Israel. Hundreds of community and student volunteers lead our movement for social change.





Community Advocacy Israel works to **teach residents to advocate on their own behalf or on behalf of their neighbours in order to access their legal entitlements, find solutions to their common problems and participate in decision making bodies which affect their lives.** Its mandate is to serve all in need, regardless of background or status, including families, single mothers, the elderly, immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, holocaust survivors, and Arabs and Jews. All services are free of charge to each and every one of the over 10,000 individuals using services and participating in programs annually.

RBCP Centres

Professionally managed, academically linked and volunteer driven, MMEP's rights-based community practice (RBCP) centres bring together the best of university expertise and local residents to empower the disadvantaged. They show, by example, that it is possible to move beyond religious and political differences and work together to forge common purpose. A broad array of social and legal interventions such as housing and legal rights and rehabilitation, youth empowerment and education, programs for women victims of violence, care and access for the disabled, sick and elderly, referral services, outreach, public education, government policy research and more, ultimately lead to individual and community empowerment. The principles of accessibility, reciprocity, universality and inclusion provide the guiding ideology, and are advanced through all of the activities undertaken.

MMEP Capacity-building Fellowships

The MMEP International Master in Social Work Fellowship Program develops the centres' professional capacity. MMEP has trained **more than fifty graduate students in its two-year MSW at McGill**, including 19 Israelis. Alumni are at the forefront of social change. While studying in Montreal, the Fellows are immersed in the RBCP model. Alumni form much of the core staff of our RBCP centres.

MMEP in Israel

The Canadian model of Rights-based community practice was first launched in the Middle East with Community Advocacy in Israel, founding its **first centre in Beer Sheva in 1993**. It has been responsible for landmark policy changes that affect low-income and marginalized citizens of Israel, pioneering and growing the RBCP model in the Middle East, with **five centres** serving Beer Sheva (2), Lod and Jerusalem (2), as well as community food cooperatives across the country. Israeli **institutional partners**, including **Ben Gurion University** of the Negev, **Shatil** and the **Sapir Academic College** help guide the work of the centres. Sapir recently launched a new RBCP centre in Sderot. Community Advocacy's director, Barbara Epstein, is to be awarded the 2011 NIF UK Human Rights Award for promoting social and economic justice in Israel.

SUCCESSES INCLUDE:

Welfare: The Israeli government's Welfare-to-Work Program made it **difficult for people unable to work to access welfare benefits**. The legislation disproportionately penalized women, the disabled and religious individuals. Through a coalition spearheaded by our East and West Jerusalem centres, three years of advocacy and legal work finally paid off. **In 2010 the program was cancelled.**

Housing: Three **groundbreaking public housing laws** passed following persistent campaigns led by MMEP's Israeli centres, guaranteeing public housing tenants the right to purchase their homes, the right to adequate repairs and maintenance and the right of second generation tenants to take over contracts. **30,000 low-income families have since been able to purchase homes.**

Education: Access to **early childhood education** in Lod for hundreds of Ethiopian and Arab children; a **high school** in the unrecognized Bedouin village of Bir Hadaj, **increasing access to education for girls.**

Health: **Mandated dental care for all Israeli children**, through CA led coalition; **health clinics** with improved services in Bedouin unrecognized villages; **access to medication** through the health basket for senior citizens

Food Security: **Stopping the VAT** (value added tax) on basic goods such as fruits and vegetables; **community food cooperatives** in three communities in Israel, helping low income people save money and build better budgets for their families.