



State Comptroller of Israel | Local Government Audit
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Social Audit

Activities of Local Authorities for the Integration and Inclusion of Israelis of Ethiopian Origin into Society



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In the process of drafting the audit report on the integration of Israelis of Ethiopian Origin (Ethiopian Israelis), the late Staff Sergeant Assi Sama, of blessed memory, lost his life in the Swords of Iron War alongside other Ethiopian Israelis. Assi was a courageous fighter in the Nahal Brigade and fell in the hostilities in the northern Gaza Strip. Following Staff Sergeant Assi Sama's death, it was raised that he was Aschalwu Sama, the child who, in 2009, became the face of the struggle against the discrimination faced by Ethiopian Israelis children within the education system in his place of residence in Petah Tikvah, after a local school refused his admission to first grade due to him being of Ethiopian Origin, under the pretext of "cultural differences."

Fourteen years later, the grieving community reflects: "The late Assi was deemed worthy of fighting and sacrificing his life for our leadership and us, yet was not deemed worthy by the discriminatory Israeli education system, which discriminated against him and his friends for years." The late Assi's courageous struggle, alongside his family, for educational equality resulted in change, and he will forever be remembered for the significant sacrifices made by him and his family. Assi is also remembered for his impactful phrase, which he followed as a child and soldier: "You are stronger than your excuse."

May his memory be blessed.



Background

The integration and inclusion of diverse populations, particularly immigrant and minority sectors, within the complex framework of Israeli society has presented a significant challenge to Israeli governments for generations. The Ethiopian Israeli population is one of the sectors whose optimal integration into society has not yet been completed. Despite over 40 years have passed since the significant waves of Ethiopian Jewish immigration to Israel, notable disparities persist across all facets of life when comparing Ethiopian Israelis to the broader Jewish population in Israel. Towards the end of 2016, the New Way program was launched as the government initiative to enhance the integration of Ethiopian immigrants, following several governmental resolutions. This program objective, executed in collaboration with various government ministries and local authorities, is to effectively integrate Ethiopian Israelis into Israeli society in education, employment, housing, family, and community, along with promoting social and civic engagement among Ethiopian Israelis.

To successfully implement this program across all facets of life, government ministries and local authorities should substantially get involved in it, including comprehensively mapping, establishing and executing action plans, allocating and effectively utilizing budgets, and maintaining ongoing monitoring and supervision. All these are under the coordination and leadership of the Implementation Team for the Integration of Ethiopian Israelis Program, established within the Prime Minister's Office. From 2016 to 2022, five government ministries allocated NIS 203 million to local authorities participating in the New Way program. However, the actual transfers to them were only NIS 136 million.



Key Figures

1.75%

of the Israel population originates from Ethiopia. At the end of 2022, the Ethiopian Israelis numbered about 168,900 people. About 45% of them were born in Israel¹

over 80%

of Ethiopian Israelis live in 30 urban local authorities, and their average representation rate is about 3%. About 20% of them live in 57 other local authorities, with a representation rate of about 0.3%

0%

1. the Ethiopian Israelis students' rate who studied five mathematics units in Netivot and **Kiryat Malachi**².
2. the Ethiopian Israelis' outstanding students³ rate in the matriculation exams in **Netivot** and **Kiryat Malachi**

about 30%

the difference between the average gross income per household in the general population – NIS 19,916 and the one among Ethiopian Israelis – NIS 15,285

only 54%

of 12th-grade students of Ethiopian Israelis received in the September 2021 – August 2022 school year a matriculation certificate that meets the threshold requirements of the universities⁴ compared to 75.1% of all Hebrew education students

67%

the budget transferred, by five government ministries, in 2016–2022 to the local authorities that participate in the government program for the integration of Ethiopian Israelis (NIS 136 million out of the allocated budget of NIS 203 million)

in 17

out of the 30 local authorities that participate in the government program, the representation rate of Ethiopian Israelis employed by the local authority is lower than their rate in the local authority population

only 1%

of the Ethiopian Israelis employed in 30 local authorities in 2021 held senior positions and high ranks, a rate considerably lower than the rate of those holding these positions and ranks, 3.6% in 2021

1 The data of the Central Bureau of Statistics for 2022 published on September 11, 2023.

2 Data for 2021 in Netivot. Data for 2022 in Kiryat Malachi.

3 According to the data of the Ministry of Education, an outstanding graduate is someone whose average grade in the matriculation certificate is higher than 90, who took an examination in mathematics at the level of at least four units and in English at the level of at least five units, and carried out a social involvement project with "great success".

4 Threshold requirements of the universities include, in addition to eligibility for a matriculation certificate, a passing grade in three study units in mathematics and four study units in English.



Audit Actions

From May to December 2023, the State Comptroller's Office audited the local authorities' actions to enhance Ethiopian Israelis' societal integration and inclusion. The audit was conducted in the municipalities of **Yavne**, **Netivot**, **Kiryat Malachi**, and **Rehovot** (the examined authorities) and focused on their activities in education, budget utilization, and appropriate representation rates within the authorities. Completion examinations were conducted at the Prime Minister's Office and other government ministries budgeting local authorities participating in the New Way program.

Key Findings

There is this stigma that the Ethiopian will be in a small class and will need help or will not study at the same pace as others; he does not have the appropriate skills.

The outstanding students of the Ethiopian community study with the problematic ones from among the whites... unequivocally, there is tracking. I was in many projects, both in religious and secular schools. Everywhere I was, I was placed in Group B. My average is among the highest; they gave me a test to enter the group, and it's always like that.

Six months ago, the municipality brought in a project for behaviorally challenging children. They asked each school for a list of students who are more challenging in behavior and academics. 19 children were listed; all 18 were members of the Ethiopian community except one. When I saw the list, I said – how can that be?

The local government and authority see the Ethiopian community as a budgetary resource. The more immigrants there are, the more budget resources there are in housing, employment, etc. They don't care if you live in the city or if there is a gifted child; you get a double budget. Does it reach the population?



They view the community as a budget ATM. A donor will come; they will bring out a nice Ethiopian woman to speak so that they will receive resources and budgets.

It doesn't work; they will never completely accept you. You will automatically come to work, "Are you Ethiopian? Wow? You don't sound like it".

When it comes to employment – it's problematic. Two people can have wonderful abilities; in the end, your measure of employment will be determined by where you come from and your skin color – it starts at a young age and continues in adulthood.

A few years ago, there was a State Comptroller audit regarding employment in local government. Local authorities reported 100% of adequate representation. (What) is the interpretation of the proper representation law – when you take the cook, the street cleaner, is that adequate representation? This is a fundamentally big mistake. I mean, how many senior managers are there in local government, and how many department heads, the local government does not see it as a top value.



The Ministerial Committee on the Integration of Ethiopian Israelis – despite the mandate in the guidelines for integration, published by the Implementation Team in 2016, that the Ministerial Committee conduct regular activities and convene at least three meetings annually, the examined local authorities, **Yavne, Netivot, Kiryat Malachi,** and **Rehovot** Ministerial Committee responsible for executing the government program, as well as its sub-committees exhibit a lack of regular activity.

Monitoring the Progress of the Government Program for the Integration of Ethiopian Israelis, the New Way – though a critical responsibility of the Implementation Team is to supervise the government ministries and local authorities' actions, as of December 2023, the Government Program Implementation Team at the Prime Minister's Office has yet to publish monitoring findings on the execution of the program in 2021–2023.

The Program's Overall Budget – the audit raised that in 2016 – 2022, five government ministries – the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, and the Prime Minister's Office,



allocated a total of NIS 203 million to the local authorities participating in the New Way program. However, the funds transferred were only about NIS 136 million. Thus, the local authorities used only 67% of the allocated budget to implement the program, and significant portions of the budgets intended for local authorities remain unutilized due to a lack of initiative from the authorities and inherent barriers related to state budget approvals. Contributing factors may include low prioritization of the programs, allocation of renewable project budgets rather than designated budgets for ongoing needs, and delays in budget allocation and transfer from government ministries to the local authorities.

Wage Disparities – despite the program's objective to reduce disparities between Ethiopian Israelis and the general population's occupations and salary levels, significant disparities persist and the program's goals have yet to be achieved. A study published in January 2023 indicated that the average monthly salary of Ethiopian Israelis born between 1978 and 1983, in 2021, was NIS 4,595, which is about 33% lower than the average salary of Jewish residents born in the same years, amounting to NIS 6,916.

Disparities in Education – Outstanding Students – in the 2021 school year, the outstanding Ethiopian Israelis students⁵ among all 12th-grade students was 0% in **Netivot** and **Kiryat Malachi**. In **Yavne** and **Rehovot**, this figure was 2%. Overall, the rate in this school year constituted 2.32% of all 12th graders of Ethiopian Israelis, compared to about 10% of outstanding students among all 12th graders nationwide.

Students with a Graduation Certificate – the female students' rate (23.2%) and male students' rate (12.2%) of Ethiopian Israelis with a graduation certificate in higher education institutions – universities and colleges – is the lowest relative to other sectors of Jewish students (which ranges from about 28% among men of orient origin to 64% among women of Europe origin).

Disparities in Education – Five Units of Study in Mathematics – the Ethiopian Israeli students' rate who studied five units of mathematics is significantly lower than that of the general population: in 2021, 21% of students in the general population studied five units of mathematics, whereas the nationwide Ethiopian Israeli students' rate in this category was 4.8%.

Budget Utilization – the Ministry of Education – the Psychological-Educational Service (PES) Programs – seven of the sixteen local authorities included in the program did not use about half of the allocated budget, about NIS 1.95 million out of

5 According to the data of the Ministry of Education, an outstanding graduate is someone whose average grade in the matriculation certificate is higher than 90, who took an examination in mathematics at the level of at least four units and in English at the level of at least five units, and carried out a social involvement project with "great success".



about NIS 3.95 million each year. The PES program's budget is intended to mitigate biases in diagnostic activities, instill cultural sensitivity in psychological treatment, and train school psychologists and educational teams.

Budget Utilization – the Ministry of Welfare – in nine of the thirty municipalities participating in the program (**Ashkelon, Holon, Haifa, Yavneh, Lod, Netivot, Petah Tikvah, Ramle, and Tel Aviv-Yafo**), the budget utilization in 2016–2022 was limited to 50%, representing about NIS 9.58 million from about NIS 23.38 million allocated to these local authorities.

Budgeting of Local Authorities Not Included in the New Way Program – from 2018 to 2022, the Ministry of National Security allocated NIS 2.6 million to thirty-two local authorities that did not participate in the New Way program, transferring NIS 1.6 million to twenty-six of these authorities. Additionally, during the 2018 to 2023 school years, the Social and Youth Administration at the Ministry of Education allocated NIS 545,842 to six local authorities that did not participate in the New Way program, while the actual transfers were only NIS 61,619 to two authorities. The Ministry of Sports allocated and transferred NIS 1.75 million to twelve local authorities that did not participate in the New Way program.

Promotion of Adequate Representation of Ethiopian Israelis Among Municipal Staff – despite the Municipal Ordinance in 2011 mandating adequate representation of Ethiopian Israelis among municipal staff, the Ministry of Interior has yet to make any decision nor ensured that local authorities issue an orderly document outlining the definition of "adequate representation" regarding the employment of Ethiopian Israelis in local authorities. Consequently, neither the Ministry of Interior nor the local authorities have established measurable objectives for adequate representation of Ethiopian Israelis.

Distribution of Employment of Ethiopian Israelis in Local Authorities and the Absence of Control of the Ranks of Their Employment in the Local Authority – in 30 local authorities predominantly serving the Ethiopian Israeli population, about 77% of employees of Ethiopian Israelis hold positions classified at very low levels (up to rank 7). The representation rate of these employees in senior positions is limited to 1%, significantly below the overall representation of 3.6% for the general population in senior positions. The Ministry of Interior does not monitor the rank of employment or the positions held by these employees, nor does it mandate local authorities to meet the representation goals across all levels.

Dedicated Tenders for Ethiopian Israelis – an analysis of the 2021 data submitted by local authorities to the Ministry of Interior indicates that only five out of 253 authorities reported having published dedicated tenders for Ethiopian Israelis (**Bat Yam, Givat Shmuel, Netanya, Kiryat Malachi, and Ra'anana**). The authorities are not required to specify in the said report which designated positions were advertised.

Adequate Representation in Municipal Corporations – the Ministry of Interior has not determined the proper representation of Ethiopian Israelis within municipal



corporations, either among employees or board members, according to the rationale behind the law for promoting adequate representation and has not established any relevant guidelines.



The Senior Division for Human Capital Development at the Ministry of Interior

– this division does not monitor the recruitment of Ethiopian Israelis hired to an official position following the completion of cadet training. Dedicated efforts to recruit diverse populations in line with the principle of adequate representation are primarily focused on the Arab and ultra-orthodox sectors, neglecting Ethiopian Israelis. The division has not prioritized their proper representation, despite the significance of this issue, given that they are predominantly employed in lower-ranking positions within local authorities.



The Implementation Team in the Prime Minister's Office Activity – the Implementation team in the Prime Minister's Office has sought to promote and create tools, accumulating knowledge, and facilitating collaboration between government ministries and local authorities to optimize the integration of Ethiopian Israelis in the local authorities, based on data mapping within each authority. The Team guides local authorities in establishing clear frameworks for integrating Ethiopian Israelis, including developing inclusion programs.

Promoting Employment of Ethiopian Israelis – Netivot is actively initiating and promoting strategies for the placement, self-advancement, and increased employment rates of young Ethiopian Israelis in significant roles, both within the authority and externally. This includes fostering excellence and leadership through training courses, locating suitable candidates from the community, and encouraging applications for available positions.

Key Recommendations



The examined local authorities and the Implementation Team in the Prime Minister's Office should ensure that the authority committees, led by the authority Director General, engage in regular activities as stipulated within the framework of the government program. Additionally, the sub-committees are expected to convene and fulfill their respective responsibilities.

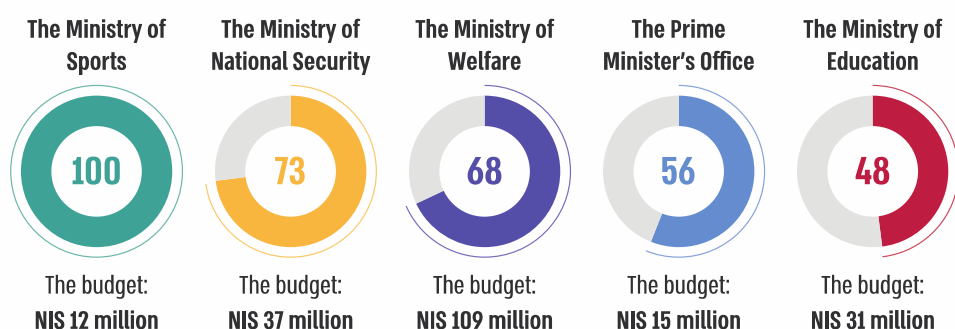


The Implementation Team at the Prime Minister's Office, in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, **Netivot** and **Kiryat Malachi**, is recommended to map educational gaps continuously. Moreover, they should prepare intensive and measurable action plans addressing the pressing issues in this sector.



- Local authorities operating under the New Way program should fully utilize the government ministries' budget allocations to achieve their program goals. The Government ministries should eliminate unnecessary barriers and incentivize local authorities to maximize the use of these budgets while also enhancing the supervising over the budget utilization.
- The Ministry of National Security and the Ministries of Welfare, Education, and Sports should allocate budgets exclusively to the local authorities identified by the Prime Minister's Office as participants in the New Way program. Budget allocations to non-participating ones may adversely impact the funding designated for those engaged in this initiative.
- The Ministry of Interior should thoroughly examine the representation of Ethiopian Israelis within local authority employment, including a qualitative assessment of the job types they fill and the necessity for allocating dedicated positions. Active measures should be taken to ensure adequate representation. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Prime Minister's Office comprehensively supervise this matter and encourage the integrators to participate in initiatives identifying suitable candidates within the authority.

The Budget and the Actual Transfer Rate of the Five Government Ministries to the Local Authorities (in percentages), 2016–2022



According to the data of the government ministries examined, processed by the Office of the State Comptroller.



Summary

This report's findings indicate that the government program for integrating Ethiopian Israelis is beginning to yield results and achievements at the local authority level. However, significant steps are still necessary to further promote the program, while the program principles, foundations, and values must still be assimilated among the authorities. The program's components need to be better integrated to include close support for the authorities, assisting them in defining and designing policies to integrate Ethiopian Israelis, thereby enabling them to meet both short-term and long-term planning requirements. Furthermore, the program's goals should be measurable, and it will be possible to monitor the implementation of the plan and the relationship between the ministries and the authorities. The report raised a lack of connection between the Implementation Team and the Ministry of Interior, with the Ministry playing a minimal role in supervising the program's execution – ensuring adequate representation and monitoring and controlling the implementation of the government program in local authorities.

Moreover, the report indicates that, as government ministries and local authorities fail to supervise the budget, only a meager proportion of the program's budgets are utilized, raising concerns about the quality and scope of the activities.

The Implementation Team should clearly define the program's goals, ensuring they are measurable and achievable, ensuring budget utilization, and enhancing the involvement of the Ministry of Interior in engaging authorities to execute the program effectively. The Implementation Team should also focus on disseminating the program among local authority heads and committees, not solely among the integrators, to achieve optimal integration and inclusion into Israeli society.