

"Leaders from the Margins" Bedouin Women Living in Poverty Who Become Entrepreneurs

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Abstract:

The changes in the Bedouin sector in the Negev Desert since the establishment of the Israeli state have had far-reaching implications for Bedouin women, including the loss of traditional sources of employment and the lack of suitable alternative employment. Like many women in traditional, patriarchal societies, Bedouin women are trained to make do with little, and to be obedient, subservient, and passive. Thus, they are marginalized, excluded from public life and the labor market. This exacerbates the economic inequality between Arabs and Jews, institutionalized, *inter alia*, in the "Arab enclave", which lacks industrialization and is allocated fewer resources. by the Israeli state.

In this context, a qualitative study was conducted among twenty Bedouin women living in poverty who participated in a microfinance program. The aim of the study was to examine the process that the women undergo.

The results of the study show women have succeeded, albeit slowly, in creating employment for themselves and family members. Becoming earners raises their status within the family; they are respected for increasing the family's honor, and their opinions become important. However, there are still severe limitations to this evolution, pertaining to the program itself, Bedouin society, and the women's status as Bedouin-Moslem-Arab women living in Israel.

Key words: Bedouin Women, Poverty, entrepreneurs, microfinance program.