



ADVA CENTER Annual Report 2009



The Adva Center is a think tank that analyzes social and economic trends and measures public policy in Israel against the yardsticks of equality and social justice. Adva makes policy recommendations and engages in advocacy work and public education to increase the chances that its recommendations will be adopted. Adva also conducts projects designed to empower disadvantaged groups.

Adva's Strategies

- Publishing information on economic and social policy, and disseminating it to social change organizations, government officials and the general public.
- Articulating alternatives regarding the national budget, as well as education, health, welfare and housing policy.
- Encouraging gender-mainstreaming of the national and local budgets.
- Writing and initiating articles and op-eds on social issues in the written media, promoting coverage of social issues in the electronic media (through interviews), and providing opinion pieces for daily newspapers and for the organs of professional organizations.
- Carrying out direct advocacy with government ministers, executive officials, and legislators.
- Organizing conferences to stimulate public debate on issues like Israel's education system and government policy towards Bedouin citizens.
- Building and joining coalitions with relevant non-profit organizations to advocate for specific changes.
- Providing consultations for government departments and non-profit organizations.
- Disseminating ideas for social change through lectures, seminars, workshops and training courses for everyone from public officials to students and members of youth movements.
- Conducting courses in socio-economic literacy, how to understand and influence the national budget, and how to mainstream gender into local budgeting.
- Disseminating information via the Adva Center website in Hebrew, Arabic and English.
- Initiating projects to empower disadvantaged groups.

ADVA AND SOCIAL EQUALITY

POLICY ANALYSIS

Israel: A Social Report, by Dr. Shlomo Swirski, Ety Konor-Attias and Hala Abu-Khala. December 2009.

The report shows that 2008 was characterized by an increase in inequality in salaries, household income, and success rates in matriculation exams. High levels of inequality were also found in higher education, health and retirement savings. The report contends that economic growth alone will probably not decrease the level of inequality in Israeli society. Over the course of five years of economic growth - between 2004 and 2008 - no decrease in inequality occurred. One reason for this is that economic growth itself was uneven, with investments benefiting a small section of the economy and only some parts of the country.

MEDIA COVERAGE

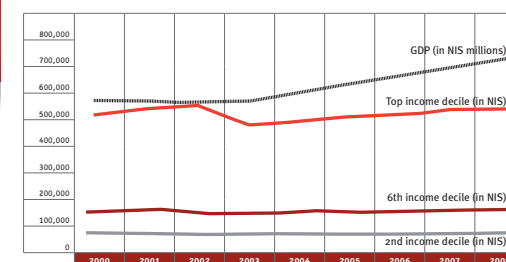
The above publication received widespread media coverage including: 8 television interviews, 13 radio interviews, 14 printed articles and 25 Internet articles.



Excerpt from the report:

If we examine the annual income of Israeli households, we find that the income of those in the top income bracket (decile) rose parallel to GDP growth. During the second Intifada – which had an adverse effect on the whole economy – the income of households at the top also declined. However, they regained their losses the moment the economy began to revive.

GDP and Annual Incomes of Israeli Households



The Economic Crisis Presents Israel with an Opportunity to Make Needed Changes, by Dr. Shlomo Swirski and Dr. Dani Filc. March 2009.

PUBLIC LECTURES

Lectures on subjects such as “Understanding the National Budget,” “How to Analyze the Local Budget from a Gender Perspective,” “The Structure of Israel’s Public Education System,” “The Right to Health,” “The Segmented Labor Market in Israel,” “What Everyone Should Know About Retirement Savings.”

"The Economic Crisis," was reviewed in 1 television interview, 3 radio interviews, 30 printed articles and 12 Internet articles.

In Israel, recession pressures boil over into looting

... The economy is expected to shrink 1.5% this year, according to the Bank of Israel, compared with growth rates of 4% or more in the previous five years. The global downturn is taking its toll; the bank forecasts an 11% decline in Israeli exports, which account for half of the value of everything the country produces.

But as the crisis moves from one workplace to another, Israelis are blaming other Israelis: the tycoons who gambled in overseas real estate and lost, bringing down Israel's financial markets; the bankers who tightened credit; the entrepreneurs who faltered under impossible debt burdens and started bouncing checks.

... “There isn’t much talk about saving people who do an honest day’s work, earn the minimum wage and don’t have much bargaining power,” said Barbara Swirski, executive director of the Adva Center, a think tank specializing in economic and social issues.

ADVA AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

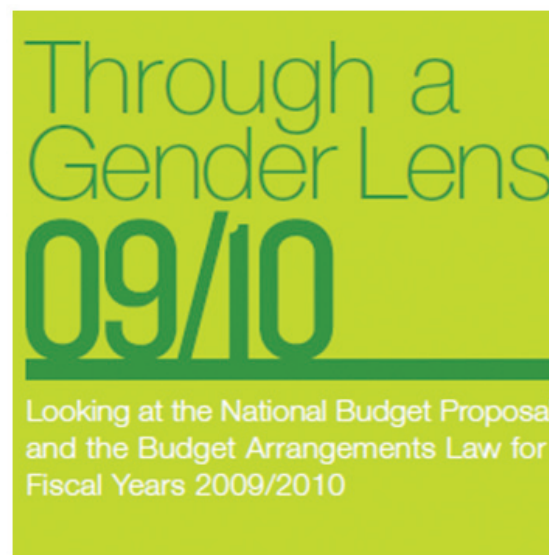
POLICY ANALYSIS

Through a Gender Lens: Looking at the National Budget Proposal and the Budget Arrangements Law for Fiscal Years 2009/2010, by Barbara Swirski. July 2009.

The “Gender Lens” publication is an annual report that analyzes the national budget according to its implications for gender equality. The paper touches upon both revenue and expenditure streams, that is, changes in the tax system and in selected budget lines in the Ministries of Health; Education; Industry, Trade and Employment; and Welfare and Social Services that are especially relevant to women. The paper also cites which proposed changes were approved or rejected by the Knesset.

Gender Mainstreaming in Sweden: Lessons for Israel, by Yael Hasson. October 2009.

Two representatives from the Women’s Budget Forum flew to Sweden and met with Swedish officials to learn how gender-responsive budgeting is practiced in Sweden (the Swedish model is considered to be the most progressive in the world). From this trip, we studied best practices in the gender analysis of the budget, and government policies/programs and investments towards advancing gender equality and gender mainstreaming at the local level. We drew lessons for Israel from the Swedish experience by isolating those practices that were transferable to the Israeli system.



Barbara Swirski
July 2009

Annual Wage Increases for a Salaried Female Employee with Two Children
according to the New Plan to Cut Income Taxes, 2011-2016
In NIS, in relation to the average wage in 2008

Monthly Wage	Annual Wage Increase
75 percent of average salary (6,056)	----
Average salary (men and women combined) (8,075)	----
Twice the average salary (16,150)	4,064
Four times the average salary (32,300)	14,444
Six times the average salary (48,450)	24,134



Excerpt from the report:

An analysis of Israel’s new tax reduction program demonstrated that the majority of working women do not benefit from it, as they earn less than the average wage, and therefore, in contrast to the claims being made, the tax cuts do not constitute an incentive for women to join the labor market or increase their hours of work.

In 2004, Adva Center created the Women’s Budget Forum, a coalition of 30 women’s and human rights groups working together to raise awareness of the relevance of budget decisions to the status of women in Israel. The Forum also engages in advocacy work to ensure that women receive a fair share of the national budget.

ADVA AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING

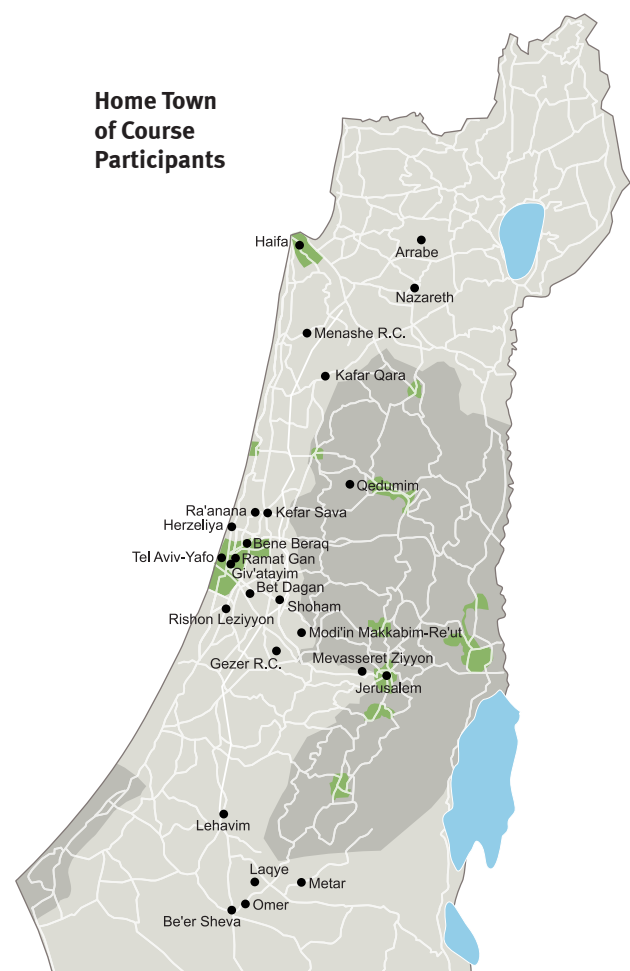
TRAINING COURSES FOR WOMEN

In 2009, the Women's Budget Forum conducted ten courses (each course consisting of 20-70 hours of training) in gender responsive budgeting for groups of local women from all around Israel (as shown on the map below). Two of the courses involved final projects, in which participants applied the principles and skills they obtained in the course to analyze their own local budgets.

ADVOCACY WORK

In 2009, the Women's Budget Forum engaged in advocacy work among government officials on the following issues:

- * Changing the criteria for receipt of public subsidies for day care so that more localities can take advantage of them, especially those with low budgets;
- * Promoting longer paid maternal birth leave;
- * Promoting the enforcement of an amendment to the Statistics Law, an amendment originally formulated and approved following advocacy work done by the Women's Budget Forum. The amendment requires all public agencies that collect statistics to disaggregate them by gender;
- * Taking an active part in Knesset committee meetings devoted to the employment opportunities of Arab women; to implementation of tax deductions for child care expenses; and to the availability of government loans for small businesses, which at present are not accessible to poor women.



Case Study

Nessia Strausburg, the Advisor to the Mayor on the Status of Women in Kfar Sava, participated in our training courses this year. Following the completion of the course, Ms Strausburg began to formulate a comprehensive program to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of the local budget, with a particular focus on increasing allocations for adult education. Towards this end, Nessia was able to secure the partnership of the manager of the adult education department, representatives of the city welfare department, a representative from the Ministry of Education and the director of the city's cultural center. The Women's Budget Forum will continue to work with Nessia as an advisory body for the project.

ADVA AND EDUCATION

POLICY ANALYSIS

Separation, Inequality and Faltering Leadership: Public Education in Israel, by Dr. Shlomo Swirski and Attorney Noga Dagan-Buzaglo. December 2009.

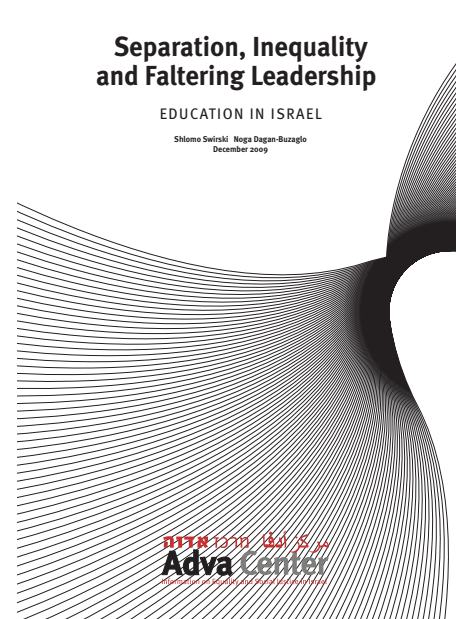
This publication argues that the most outstanding characteristic of education in Israel today is segregation or separation - on the basis of ethnicity, degree of religiosity, and class. This separation is not the product of a pluralistic, multi-cultural world view, but rather the result of long-standing political and economic arrangements, some of which were created by mutual agreement and others of which were imposed. The two most dynamic forces in the education system are, firstly, the stratum of affluent urban families, who know how to take advantage of the retrenchment of the state to create elitist schools for their own children. The second dynamic force in the contemporary Israeli educational system is the ultra-Orthodox political parties, whose education systems are growing, both due to high fertility rates and to the recruitment of poor, mainly Mizrahi families, who have witnessed the weakening of state schools, without being able to compete in an education market controlled by market forces.

CONFERENCE

The Adva Center organized a conference around the publication of this report at Tel Aviv University, under the title, "Separation and Inequality in the Israeli Education System: Separation by Force, Separation by Choice, and the Social Consequences of Both." Approximately 100 people attended the event.

MEDIA COVERAGE

This publication was the topic of 3 television interviews, 3 radio interviews, 10 Internet articles and 5 printed articles.



THE JERUSALEM POST

Report: Israeli schools divided by race, religion and class

December 17, 2009
By Ben Hartman

Israel's education system does not provide equal opportunities for all students regardless of race, religion or social standing, a report released on Wednesday claims. The report, compiled by the Adva Center for equality and social justice and entitled, "Segregation, Inequality and Weakened Leadership," bases its findings on statistics including class size and budget allocations, as well as academic achievement among the separate branches of Israeli schools. The report found glaring differences between poor and rich Israelis, Jewish and Arab students and Orthodox and secular students.

ADVA AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

POLICY ANALYSIS

The Cost of the Occupation to Israeli Society, Polity and Economy, by Dr. Shlomo Swirski. December 2008.

“The Cost of the Occupation to Israeli Society, Polity and Economy” is the update of our annual publication about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Its purpose is to show the economic burden to Israel of the continuing conflict with the Palestinians. The Palestinians, of course, are paying a much heavier social and economic price. However, this fact in no way diminishes the exorbitant cost to Israel – the focus of this report.

The paper is divided into two parts. Part One deals with the period from 1967 to 1987, the first two decades of the occupation, during which the cost to Israel was relatively low and was balanced, to some degree, by the benefits that accrued to Israel from the occupation. Part Two begins with the 1987 Palestinian uprising. Since then, and particularly during the second Intifada (2000), the cost of occupation has risen dramatically, while the benefits have been diminishing.

MEDIA COVERAGE

The findings of this publication were written about in 2 printed articles and 11 Internet articles.

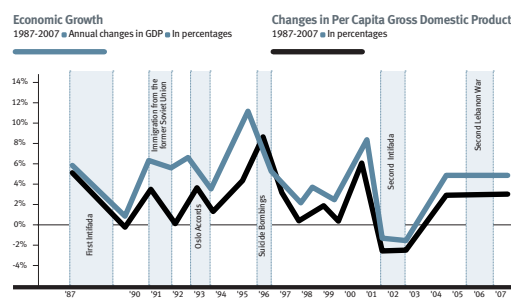
The Cost of Occupation



Excerpts from the report:

Since 1967, the Israeli economy has experienced significant growth. However, without the conflict, it is quite possible that the economy might have undergone much higher growth.

In 1987, the year at whose end the first Intifada broke out, economic growth was 6.1% – a very respectable figure. However, the next year, the first full year of the uprising, economic growth declined to 3.6%, and in 1989 – to 1.4%. It was the good fortune of the Israeli economy that 1989 marked the beginning of the immigration wave from the former Soviet Union, which had the effect of stimulating economic activity.



ADVA AND HEALTH CARE

POLICY ANALYSIS

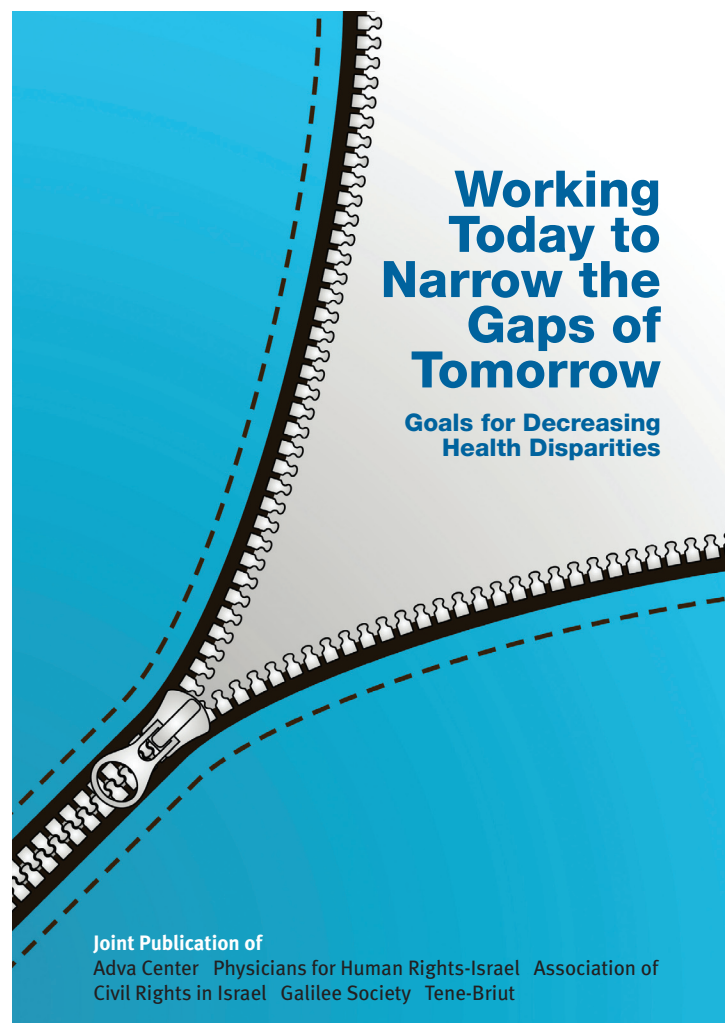
“Working Today to Narrow the Gaps of Tomorrow: Goals for Decreasing the Gaps in Health,” edited by Barbara Swirski.

This position paper, prepared in 2009 in cooperation with four other NGOs (Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, The Galilee Society and Tene-Briut) documents health gaps between Jews and Arabs, between the general population and low-income persons, and between Ethiopian and other Israelis. It calls on the Israeli government to prioritize inequality in health and set tangible goals to narrow the gaps.

ADVOCACY WORK

Adva has been active in advocating for protecting the access of health care coverage for all citizens of Israel, especially vulnerable populations such as low-income persons, women, Arabs and new immigrants.

Adva also authored a press release titled: “Suggestions for the Health Minister on Alternatives for the Financing of Dental Care for Children,” December 23, 2009.



ADVA AND RETIREMENT FUNDS

POLICY ANALYSIS

The New Retirement Funds: Increased Revenues from Management Fees and Bigger Profits – at the Expense of the Insured, by Safa Agbaria, Barbara Swirski and Shlomo Swirski. December 2009.

Government regulators are currently considering the recommendations of the Hodek Commission calling for increased regulation of retirement fund investments. While this is a needed step, the same regulators ignore the fact that the biggest loss suffered by members of the new retirement funds occurs even before their money reaches the capital market – due to the fact that the government permits the insurance companies that own the funds to charge exorbitant management fees. Our publication reveals that in 2008, revenues from management fees were almost double those revenues in 2005. In other words, an average of approximately 25 agurot on every shekel went right into the pockets of the retirement fund managers. The paper concludes that regulation of retirement fund investments is important; however, just as important is the need to reduce management fees.

MEDIA COVERAGE

The findings of the publication were publicized in 1 television interview, 2 radio interviews, 4 printed articles and 7 internet articles.

מרכז אדוה
Adva Center
Information on Equality and Social Justice in Israel

The New Retirement Funds: Increased Revenues from Management Fees and Bigger Profits – at the Expense of the Insured

Safa Agbaria
Barbara Swirski
Shlomo Swirski

December 2009

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TheMarker

Adva Center: Nearly 20% of Retirement Savings are Lost in Management Fees

December 13, 2009

By Haim Beor

The revenues of insurance companies from management fees of retirement accounts grew by 80% in three years and continued to rise in 2008, the year of the economic crisis. . . . On the eve of the sale of the pension funds to insurance companies, the government raised the management fees. According to the Adva Center, "This increase gave the companies a fast return on their investments."



ADVA'S PARTNERS

without whom it could not carry on its work

The following foundations, organizations and individuals made generous contributions to the work of the Adva Center in 2009:

Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation
Heinrich Boell Stiftung
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Nathan Cummings Foundation
European Commission
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
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Daphna Izraeli Fund
Jewish Women's Giving Foundation of Baltimore
Kahanoff Foundation
Kathryn Ames Foundation
Levi Lassen Foundation
MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
Middle East Dialogue/Richard Goodman
National Council of Jewish Women
New Israel Fund

The Adva Center works on a small budget and transforms small investments into the largest possible impact on people's lives. **Much more work remains to be done and with greater support we can:**

Strive for increased social equality and justice. We can submit more op-eds on social issues to the written and electronic media, provide more opinion pieces and offer more lectures on social equality issues to government officials, aspiring politicians and members of youth groups.

Work to strengthen the Israeli economy. We can analyze in greater depth the structure and implications of current national economic policy and present our recommendations for more effective policies to government officials.

Train more women and men to make national and local budgets more gender-responsive. We can provide more training courses in gender-responsive budgeting to women and men all over Israel and actively work with national and local governments to implement gender-responsive budgeting.

Advocate for improved national health care. We can conduct more research on the access of health care to all segments of the population, analyze where gaps or shortfalls in service exist and recommend changes.

CONTACT US

We would be happy to answer any questions you might have and discuss how you can become more involved.

To learn more, please contact Barbara Swirski, Executive Director, at 972-(0)3-5608871.
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Email: advainfo@bezeqint.net



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Adva has a stable Board of Directors whose members are highly committed and who make significant contributions to the work of Adva by giving freely of their time and expertise.

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