

May 2023

Integrating Arab Girls into Israeli Basketball

Policy Paper



PEACE PLAYERS

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This report was written by Inclusion — Road Map to Equality and Social Policy
for PeacePlayers Middle East.

Research and writing: Shirley Racah and Shay Golub

Graphic design: Oso Bayo

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About PeacePlayers Middle East



PeacePlayers International — Middle East is a nonprofit organization that uses basketball to bridge divides, change perceptions, and build leadership among Palestinian and Israeli youth in Israel. Since being established in Israel in 2006, the organization has worked with around 40,000 children and youth and trained over 100 coaches. PeacePlayers uses basketball as a tool to facilitate social interactions between Jewish and Arab children and young people aged 6-25 in pursuit of a common goal. Special emphasis is placed on the participation of women and girls in all the organization's activities, and currently around 75% of participants are female.

PeacePlayers Middle East operates a national network of basketball teams for children and youth as well as a program for developing youth leadership and an alumni engagement program. These programs empower children from disadvantaged communities, drive personal empowerment, build channels of communication and trust between Jewish and Arab children and youth, and promote the development of long-lasting friendships with impact that resonates in the community. PeacePlayers Middle East is part of a network of organizations active in Northern Ireland, South Africa, Cyprus and the United States working toward a common goal: promoting peace and mutual understanding through basketball.

About Inclusion



Inclusion is a joint initiative of experts from different fields, aimed at providing information, training and support for local governments, civil society organizations, and community organizations to advance social equality in Israel. The initiative promotes holistic social and egalitarian policies using a range of modular tools, including mapping the needs of specific localities or fields; conducting in-depth research; writing policy papers; and formulating concrete policy recommendations for both local and central government. We also work internally with local authorities via training programs and workshops and externally in conjunction with government ministries and institutions. The issues we work on include advancing municipal infrastructures, pooling resources, integrating different demographics, reducing violence, addressing food insecurity, sports and more.

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Executive Summary

Arab girls are currently underrepresented in basketball in Israel. This policy paper investigates the causes of this underrepresentation and how it can be addressed, using the “From Barriers to Opportunities” model developed by [Sikkuy-Aufoq](#), an organization that works to advance equality and partnership between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. The issue of underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball falls under the responsibility of bodies in various government ministries. This paper focuses on the work being done at Athena — the Center for Promoting Women’s Sports in Israel, and in regional councils that contain both Jewish and Arab localities. While working on it, insights also emerged about the work of the Ministry of Culture and Sport.¹ These require more in-depth study of their own.

The first stage of the “From Barriers to Opportunities” model is describing the phenomenon being faced. Arab girls who play basketball in Israel suffer from a systemic shortage of funding on many planes: underfunding of sports in general, underfunding of basketball, underfunding of women’s and girls’ sports, and a broad underfunding of the Arab population in Israel. This results in Arab girls experiencing discrimination on several levels in the context of belonging to more than one underserved group.

The second stage of the model is defining the problems that affect the undesirable phenomenon. At this stage, we identified four problems that lead to the underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball: 1. Inequal distribution of funding; 2. A shortage of suitable infrastructure; 3. A shortage of high-quality, Arabic-speaking female coaches; 4. A lack of cultural compatibility. This paper details the existing barriers within each of these points and provides policy recommendations for the relevant parties.



Problem 1: Inequal distribution of funding



Barrier A: A comprehensive systemic shortage of funding for sports in Israel



Policy recommendations: 1. Increasing the budget allocation 2. Pooling the resources of municipal sports and youth departments



Barrier B: Inequality in funding for basketball compared with other sports in Israel



Policy recommendations: 1. Increasing the budget allocation 2. A more equitable division of the budget


¹ Over the years, the Ministry of Sport has been passed around different government ministries. Today it is part of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. Since in the context of this report there is no significance to the umbrella ministry it is a part of, here we will refer to it as the Ministry of Sport.

Barrier C: Inequality in girls' sports

Barrier C1: Unequal distribution of localities' resources for girls and boys

 **Policy recommendations:** Equalizing resources for boys and girls within the locality

Barrier C2: Unequal distribution of Athena's resources


 **Policy recommendations:** 1. Allocating 30% of Athena's budget to Arab society 2. Eliminating or reducing the "matching" method of funding at Athena 3. Consistently collecting data on equality at Athena.

Barrier D: Inequality toward the Arab sector


Barrier D1: Unequal distribution of funding at the Ministry of Sport

 **Policy recommendations:** 1. Allocating 30% of sports funding in general and basketball funding in particular to Arab society 2. Reopening the Ministry of Sport's "Sports Cadets" program 3. Helping Arab local authorities staff positions in their sports and youth departments 4. Pooling the resources of municipal sports and youth departments and adding positions in the youth departments for Arab localities 5. Hiring a coordinator for promoting women's sports in Arab local authorities 6. Expanding Athena's "Equality in Sports" course (aimed at addressing the underrepresentation of female coaches and managers in sports) to include northern and southern Israel.

Barrier D2: Unequal distribution of funding for Jewish and Arab towns within the regional councils

 **Policy recommendations:** 1. Collecting and publishing information about equality in sports 2. Assisting Arab localities with the bureaucratic aspects of employing sports coaches 3. Establishing criteria for the fair distribution of funding in regional councils 4. Determining the socioeconomic ranking of Arab localities in regional councils by locality rather than by council.

Problem 2: Shortage of suitable infrastructure

 **Policy recommendations:** 1. Additional funding to renovate run-down sporting facilities and establish new facilities in Arab localities until the gap has been closed 2. Efficient and fair distribution of practice hours using the facilities 3. Additional funding to Arab localities for transportation to training sessions and games.

Problem 3: Shortage of high-quality, Arabic-speaking female coaches

 **Policy recommendations:** 1. Granting scholarships to female Arab students to accompany Arab girls to sports classes with Hebrew-speaking instructors 2. Opening official Ministry of Sport courses in Arabic to train female basketball instructors 3. Opening official courses in Arabic to train female basketball coaches 4. Running continuing education programs to improve the competencies of active coaches (male and female) 5. Expanding the Ministry of Sport's PELE program for helping Ethiopian Israelis integrate into Israeli sports to include Arab society as well.



Problem 4: Lack of cultural compatibility



Barrier A: Service providers in the regional councils and government ministries lack familiarity with Arab society



Policy recommendations for regional councils: 1. Developing and running training programs about Arab society 2. Pledging fair representation of Arab society.



Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport: 1. Pledging fair representation of the Arab population within the ministry headquarters 2. Adding a position for promoting women's sports among minority groups 3. Encouraging Jewish coaches to work in Arab society



Policy recommendations for Athena: 1. Pledging fair representation of the Arab population at Athena headquarters 2. Making the national training centers more accessible to female Arab trainees 3. Increasing representation of Arab society in the organization's programs 4. Establishing a specific committee to find solutions for the issue of basketball uniforms for female players from traditional societies.



Barrier B: Shortage of role models



Policy recommendations: Increasing representation of Arab society in Athena's programs.



Barrier C: Lack of accessibility due to language barriers



Policy recommendations: 1. Assistance with communication between Arabic-speaking players and Hebrew-speaking coaches — initially through interpreters and subsequently by improving the level of Arabic among Jews and Hebrew among Arabs 2. Making the Wingate Institute more accessible for Arab society 3. Improving second language instruction (Hebrew and Arabic) at schools in Israel.



Barrier D: Girls dropping out of sports between the ages of 14-18



Policy recommendations for working with the parents of female Arab basketball players: 1. Educating parents in order to overcome stereotypes 2. Administrative-community assistance in building a transportation network for parents 3. Assistance with collecting fees from parents.



Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport: 1. Strengthening the status of sports classes in the education system; 2. Encouraging Arab schools to participate in school leagues for girls' sports.

Implementing the policy recommendations detailed in this document has the potential to significantly change the present underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball. This change will take time — competitive athletes are not born in a day; cultivating female athletes requires significant investment over the years from the athletes themselves, their families and the state. Our goal is to remove the barriers currently faced by Arab girls and make their path to becoming basketball players the same as that of their Jewish peers. The most significant step in achieving equality is helping Arab girls understand that they, too, can aspire to excellence in basketball.



Introduction



Preface

Arab girls in Israel today are underrepresented in basketball. As an organization that works to promote peace and mutual understanding through basketball, and that recognizes the importance of competitive sports in empowering female leadership,² it was important for us to investigate the causes of this underrepresentation and how to overcome it. This paper offers a thorough analysis of the problems and barriers behind the underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball in Israel and suggests policy recommendations to address these barriers.

Many studies indicate that playing sports contributes to heightened self-confidence, positive body image, stronger interpersonal communication and improved skills such as leadership, responsibility and teamwork.³ Athena — the Center for Promoting Women's Sports in Israel, views sports as a social, ethical and educational tool. According to this understanding, the impact of sports extends to all social circles — from the individual to the community to society as a whole, which becomes more egalitarian as women become equal partners on the playing field.

Basketball is one of the most popular sports in Israel, and among women — both Arab and Jewish — it is the most popular. The sport has been played in Israel since the 1920s, and it is managed at the professional level by the Israel Basketball Association (IBBA). In addition to the IBBA, there are independent authorities in charge of the Super League, Liga Leumit (the “national league”), the Women's Super League, the youth leagues and a range of independent local leagues.⁴

Women's basketball in Israel also has multiple leagues. At the top of the pyramid is the Women's Basketball Super League — the Athena “Winner” League, which is Israel's top-tier women's basketball league. The Women's Super League was established in 1957 and is run by the Israel Basketball Women's Super League Directorate. The league contains 8-10 teams from Jewish localities only, and there is not even one sports club from an Arab locality.

The Women's Basketball Liga Leumit (national league), the second-tier league, was established in 1960. As of the 2022/3 game season, two clubs from Arab society play in the league.⁵

Under these is the Liga Artzit, which contains four districts (North, Center, Sharon and South) and Liga Alef, which also has four districts (North, Center, Sharon and South).

2 For background on the contribution of sports to developing female leadership and entrepreneurship, see: Why female athletes make winning entrepreneurs and: Ernst & Young Global Survey Reveals Critical Role Sports Play for Female Executives in Leadership Development and Teamwork in Business.

3 Valeria Seigelshifer, Changing the Rules of the Game: A Gender Perspective on Sports Allocations in Israel, Adva Center, 2012.

4 Elisha Shohat [The Book of Israeli Basketball, Israel Basketball Super League website \(Hebrew\)](#). More information can be found on the Israel Basketball Association website (Hebrew).

5 Hapoel Kaukab and Hapoel Majd al-Krum.

In addition to the women's leagues, Israel has several age-grade leagues:

Under 12 (U12) — grades 5-6 (ages 11-12)

Under 14 (U14)— grades 7-8 (ages 13-14)

Under 16 (U16) — grades 9-10 (ages 15-16)

Under 18 (U18) — grades 11-12 (ages 17-18)

Israel also has several leagues that operate within the education system, first and foremost the High School Super League, Israel's top-tier basketball league for high school boys' and girls' teams. This league is active four months out of the year and serves as an important platform and springboard for the senior leagues. The league follows a format of group stages followed by knock-out stages starting with a round of 16. The boys' and girls' final tournaments are held on the same day in the same gymnasium. This league has no representation from Arab high schools — neither girls nor boys.

Methodology

This report is based on a comprehensive study of sports funding in Israel and basketball funding in particular, as well as a literature review and case studies from Israel and abroad. In the second stage of the research, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders in sports, basketball, gender equality, national equality and others. The aim of these meetings was to deepen relevant knowledge and suggest courses of action.

To build our barriers model, we used the “From Barriers to Opportunities” model developed by Sikkuy-Aufoq.⁶ This model is based on three categories of analysis: identifying symptoms that indicate disparity and inequality — in our case, underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball; then mapping the main problems that cause the inequality and the barriers that create these problems. Based on our findings, in this report we suggest policy recommendations for changing the current situation and narrowing the gaps. We used the Xmind software to perform comprehensible mapping of the field.

The issue of underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball falls under the responsibility of different bodies in various government ministries. We chose to focus on the work being done at Athena — the Center for Promoting Women's Sports in Israel, and in regional councils that contain Arab localities. The choice of Athena was informed by the fact that this is the body in Israel charged with promoting women's sports; and as such, promoting sports among Arab women and girls is its direct responsibility. The preliminary interviews we conducted early in the process indicated that Athena is unsuccessful in reaching this target audience to a satisfactory degree. Our continued research confirmed this initial impression. The choice of the regional councils was informed by the fact that PeacePlayers Middle East operates in this arena and wanted to deepen its understanding of what is going on in its areas of activity. However, in the course of our work we also gained numerous insights regarding the activity of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. Though we have included them in this report, these insights are incomplete and require further research into the work of the Ministry of Sport and its compatibility with the goal of advancing Arab girls' sports in Israel. The policy recommendations relate to different time frames, with the aim of immediately addressing the issue while also working on long-term solutions.

6 Maha Abu-Salih, Michal Belikoff, Ron Gerlitz, Ruth Weinschenk-Vennor [From Barriers to Opportunities — Mapping the barriers and policy recommendations for achieving equality between the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel](#), Sikkuy — the Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, 2010.

Part A Background — Systemic Shortage of Funding

Underfunding of Sports in Israel

It is difficult to compare data on public spending on sport in Israel with that of other OECD countries, since the data from European countries relates to public spending on sport and leisure combined. According to a 2017 report from the Knesset Research and Information Center, when compared with EU countries, Israel ranked 14th in the proportion of public spending of the GNP on sports and leisure.⁷ The report references an international comparative study commissioned by the Ministry of Culture and Sport to investigate the relationship between allocations for competitive sports and performance in international competitions.⁸ The report found that though the exact amount of Israel's spending on competitive sports is not clear, it can be determined to be quite low compared with countries where investment in competitive sports is well-established.⁹

According to Athena CEO Moran Messica Eidelman, the State of Israel allocates less than 1% of GNP to sports, while in other OECD countries it is common to allocate 2%-4% of GNP to promoting sports. Furthermore, students in Israel receive less exposure to different branches of sport than in other places. According to Eidelman, in Hungary, for example, the Ministry of Education exposes students to all branches of sport in schools, and sports classes are part of every school day; whereas in Israel, institutions that teach the core curriculum provide only two weekly hours of sports classes.¹⁰ This policy has led to Hungary being one of the countries that has earned the most medals in international competitions, with no significant distinction in gender.¹¹

Underfunding of Basketball in Israel

Between 2015 and 2018, the annual budget for government funding of basketball ranged between NIS 260 thousand and NIS 12 million. In 2019, under pressure from the High Court of Justice, the annual budget was increased significantly to over NIS 20 million. In 2021, following the intervention of the High Court of Justice, the Knesset Research and Information Center investigated the distribution of funding in 2019,¹² and found that according to the Ministry of Culture and Sport's criteria for support, basketball is entitled to the highest

7 Assaf Weininger and Tamir Agmon, **Information on achievements in Olympic Games and allocations for competitive sports — a comparative review**, The Knesset Research and Information Center, December 2017 (Hebrew).

8 Veerle De Bosscher et al. (SPLISS), **Elite Sport Policy Evaluation in Israel**, 2017.

9 Assaf Weininger and Tamir Agmon, *ibid*, p. 11.

10 Renana Gottreich, Examples of approaches to integrating physical activity into the school curriculum in different countries, The Knesset Research and Information Center, December 2017.

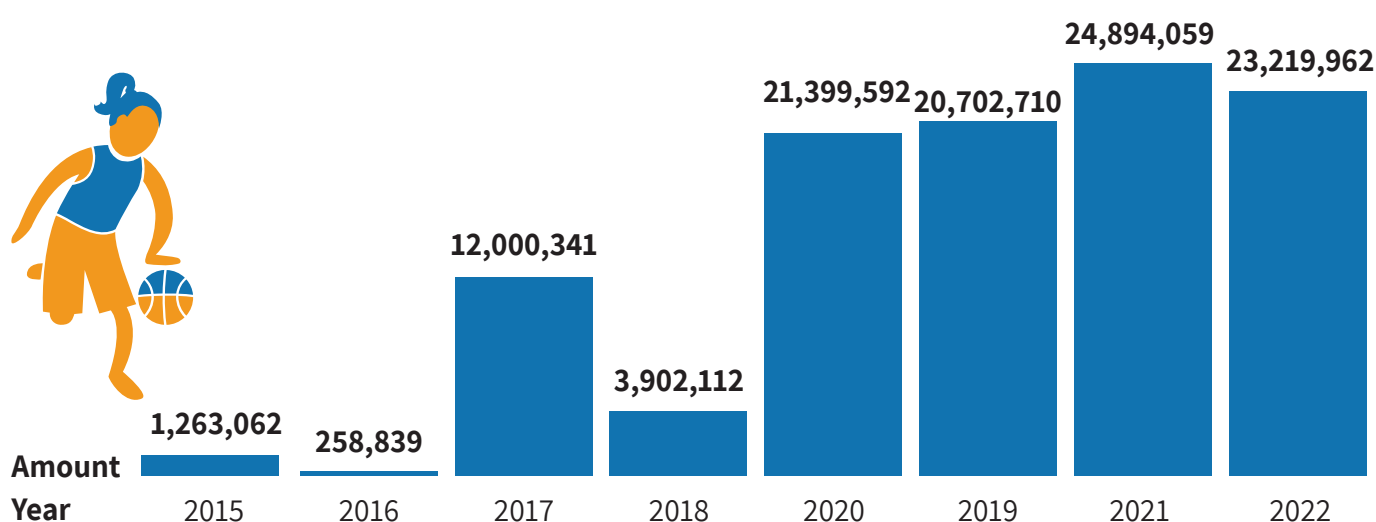
11 Interview with Athena CEO Moran Messica Eidelman, 02.10.2022.

12 Netta Moshe and Assaf Weininger, Data on the budget of the Sports Authority in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, Knesset Research and Information Center, November 2021 (Hebrew).

proportion of support, for both associations and clubs. It is important to note that this was the first year this support was implemented; previously, there was a wide gap in government funding between soccer and basketball. The report did not include data about the distribution of funding between the Jewish and Arab sectors in Israel.

This is an important and significant change, but it does not take into account the funding added by the local authorities and private entities. In practice, the bulk of the disparity stems from external support and commercial funding. Additionally, there is a large disparity between soccer and basketball funding in Israel, which favors soccer.

Table 1: Government Funding for the Israel Basketball Association by Year¹³



Underfunding of Women's and Girls' Sports in Israel

According to Athena, women's sports have historically been at a numerical, class and social disadvantage, both in Israel and around the world. In basketball specifically, there are around 30,000 male basketball players in Israel today, compared with around 5,000 female players. In 2018, the Ministry for Social Equality published a proposal for a gender analysis of the 2019 sports budget proposal. The analysis revealed that in 2018, men received around 80% of funding for sports clubs. It also showed that 87% of sports teams are men's teams and just 13% are women's teams. The analysis does not address funding from the Israel Sports Betting Board, which totals over half a million shekels a year.¹⁴

At the end of 2020, then-Minister of Culture and Sports Chili Tropper and chair and director of the Israeli Women's Basketball Super League Hila Knister Bar David announced that, for the first time, there would be a budget increase of NIS 2.5 million, which would be transferred to the current budget of the Women's Super

¹³ [Government Ministry Support for the Israel Basketball Association](#), Guidestar (Hebrew).

¹⁴ See the report prepared by the Ministry for Social Equality in 2018 containing recommendations for government ministries regarding how to correct and implement their gender analysis of the 2019 budget. From the Ministry of Justice's Freedom Of Information Unit, [Recommended program for gender analysis of 2019 budget proposal](#). Last entry: 25.03.2023 (Hebrew).

League teams in ball sports and also used to develop infrastructure in the women's sports associations.¹⁵

In August 2019, a petition was filed to the High Court of Justice against discriminatory budgeting for women's soccer.¹⁶ The petition was filed by nine teams and entities representing women's soccer clubs, joined by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and the Israel Women's Network (IWN) as amici curiae. The petition targeted budget cuts for teams playing in a league, following the revocation of recognition of a third women's soccer league. Following the petition, the Ministry of Culture and Sport annulled the discriminatory clause in the budgeting guidelines for soccer teams. On February 7, 2021, after deciding to award the petitioners an exceptional sum in attorneys' fees and expenses, the court ruled that having achieved its objective, the petition could now be cancelled.¹⁷

In February 2021, the Ministry of Culture and Sport approved a budget of around NIS 6 million for improving the status of female Israeli basketball players — around NIS 600 thousand per team per season. This is a step that should have been taken in the previous century. One of the criteria for receiving this funding is investing in a professional infrastructure for girls' teams in the club. This is a crucial budget, since without a strong base of young female players, it is impossible to develop good candidates for the senior teams.

Athena is the Ministry of Sport's executive arm for promoting women and girls in sports in Israel. According to Athena CEO Moran Messica Eidelman, the Ministry of Sport has instructed that the organization be assessed on the basis of achievements in competitive sports. In light of this, when Eidelman started her position in 2021, she decided to focus Athena's activities on competitive sports, and some of the programs the organization had operated in the past were closed or transferred to other organizations.¹⁸

The underfunding of women's sports in Israel is also clear in governmental supplementary and peripheral sports' budgets, only a small portion of which go to women's sports. These include marketing budgets, estimated by the IWN at NIS 30 million; reimbursements for security and ushers for a total of NIS 50 million;¹⁹ and a total of NIS 15 million of funding for a program promoting Israeli players, which is aimed at prioritizing Israeli players who graduate from the youth divisions to the senior teams.²⁰

There are those who claim that women are less interested in playing competitive sports than men. This claim is sometimes also made with regard to Arab society. But real-world experience proves that when funding is allocated to women's sports, participation rates significantly increase. The United States is among the most prominent examples of this.

15 Sports Channel website, [There is progress: agreement reached on budget increase for women](#), Sport 5 website, 18.11.2020. (Hebrew)
Last entry: 14.12.2022

16 High Court of Justice 19/2640, Funding v. the Israel Sports Betting Board.

17 [Discrimination Against Women in Budget Allocation for Soccer Teams](#), ACRI website. Last visit: 23.03.2023

18 Interview with Athena CEO Moran Messica Eidelman, 02.10.2022.

19 See [Analysis of unequal government investment in the women's soccer and basketball budget compared with men's soccer and basketball budget](#), IWN website. (Hebrew)

20 Roi Cohen and Omri Manhime, [Regev to invest NIS 15 million in advancing Israeli players](#), Sport 5 website, 13.6.2019. (Hebrew)

Underfunding of the Arab Sector in Israel ²¹

Poverty rates are higher and workforce participation rates are lower in Arab localities than in Jewish localities. Considering this, we might expect government funding to be directed towards these localities. In practice, however, even when the government does provide direct funding to the Arab population, it is insufficient to address the disparities, and Arab society in Israel suffers from underfunding in all areas of life.

In 2014, the Knesset Research and Information Center conducted an evaluation of the budgets designated for Arab society in various areas. The evaluation of the Ministry of Culture and Sport's budget revealed that the percentage of the total national culture and sports budget allocated to Arab society stands at around 4.1%, though the Arab population makes up almost 20% of the total population.²²

A 2021 report from the Knesset Research and Information Center²³ compared competitive youth athletes from Arab and non-Arab local authorities. Data from the report shows that the number of athletes (not including soccer players) ages 10-19 in sports associations in Arab local authorities per 10,000 people is lower than the corresponding number in non-Arab local authorities — 103 compared to 238. By contrast, in soccer the situation is reversed: The number of soccer players ages 10-19 in associations in Arab local authorities is 234 per 10,000 people, compared to 167 per 10,000 in clubs in non-Arab local authorities. The report presented the data about soccer separately due to the sport's huge popularity in Israel, and in Arab society in particular.

There is currently just one Arab player in the Basketball Super League, and not even one Arab player on the Israeli men's national team. In women's basketball the situation is slightly better: There has been an increase in the number of Arab teams, and in recent years Arab women made it to the women's national team. However, these numbers are still low. In February 2022, Israel Hayom published a news item about an IBBA program for promoting basketball in Arab society, the budget of which is expected to be NIS 2.5 million, of which the IBBA will fund NIS 1-1.5 million. The program will focus on constructing new facilities, increasing the number of athletes and teams, and training coaches.²⁴ The item noted that a study conducted in Europe showed that for every investment of just one euro in youth sports, the countries gained a return of 6.8 euros in education, welfare, healthcare, and preventing crime, drugs and violence. As more young men than young women are

The American Case

In 1972, American law was amended to stipulate equal distribution of resources for men's and women's sports in higher education institutions. The new law, Title IX, prohibited discrimination on the grounds of sex or gender in educational institutions that receive federal funding in the United States. The amendment led to a significant increase in budgets for women's sports in universities and colleges, and the percentage of women who play sports rose from 4% to 43%. The percentage of female coaches of women's teams rose to 55% and the number of female and male athletes in colleges in the United States is now nearly equal (with the exception of American football).²¹

21 Valeria Seigelshifer and Yael Hasson, [ibid](#). Last visit: 24.02.2021.

22 Tamir Agmon, [Budgets Designated for the Arab Sector](#), Knesset Research and Information Center, 2014. (Hebrew)

23 Assaf Weininger, [Gymnasiums and soccer fields — comparison between Arab local authorities and non-Arab local authorities](#), Knesset Research and Information Center, 2021. (Hebrew)

24 Yakov Meir, [Program for Promoting Basketball in the Arab Sector](#), Israel Hayom, 3.2.2022. (Hebrew)

involved in crime and violence in Arab society today, there is a concern that the designated budget will be directed primarily toward boys in an attempt to address violence and crime in Arab society.

Although Athena is the Ministry of Sport's executive arm for promoting women and girls in sports in Israel, the organization has no entity responsible for promoting Arab women and girls (or other minorities),²⁵ and the Arab population is inadequately represented among its employees. Athena has made attempts to recruit female Arab employees in the past, but these have been unsuccessful.

The Athena Ambassadors program (in which current and former elite athletes are chosen to serve as role models for young athletes),²⁶ has not included a single Arab ambassador, although the organization has made efforts in this direction. Lacking an Arab ambassador, Arab women and girls are missing out on the opportunity to adopt role models and may even be led to think there are no elite Arab athletes in Israel. Despite the harsh discrimination against Arab women in sports in Israel, there are Arab women who have managed to shatter the glass ceiling, and Athena must make every effort to ensure their voices and stories are heard.²⁷

According to Athena's CEO, the organization's professional staff members are highly socially conscientious, and this has helped them make progress. As part of Athena's work to promote Arab women and girls in sports, the organization has taken the following steps:

- In the organization's invitations to tender, priority is given to lower socioeconomic clusters and thus, in practice, to Arab local authorities in clusters 1-5.
- The staff at Athena is investigating whether invitations to tender have included applications from Arab society.
- Invitations to tender are published in Arabic.
- Marketing materials are published in Arabic.
- Athena distributes its projects via all platforms at its disposal: Ministry of Sport supervisors, sports centers and more.

In the wake of these steps, and even in isolation of them, results are starting to be seen on the ground. In the "Equality in Sports" program for encouraging girls in primary school to play sports (including basketball), for example, as of 2021 31% of the participating teams and 35% of the players are Arab. In our view, this is a good start to the process of closing the gaps. When we asked Athena for data about additional programs, we were told that the organization does not have the capacity to conduct data segmentation and referred us to the Ministry of Sport.^{28 29}

Yael Arad, chair of the Olympic Committee of Israel and a former Olympic silver medal-winning judoka (Barcelona 1992), told us that "we don't reach them [Arabs] with facilities, coaches and talent scouts. In general, there is no good infrastructure for sports in the Arab sector, except for soccer. We miss out on many good athletes with potential, who don't know that they can do it."²⁹

25 Athena does offer solutions for paralympic athletes.

26 From the Athena website: "Athena Ambassadors are elite athletes, as well as senior athletes (current and former), in various sports who act as representatives for the national Athena project as well as for women's sports in Israel. Our ambassadors make appearances before various audiences, advance social discourse on women's sports and sports achievements, shatter stereotypes, and promote women's leadership in the world of sports." Last visit: 20.03.2023

27 PeacePlayers Middle East was informed that after the issue was raised in our meeting with Athena's CEO, processes are underway to recruit an Arab ambassador who plays in the Israel women's national basketball team.

28 Interview with Athena CEO Moran Messica Eidelman, 02.10.2022.

29 Lior Ben-Ami, "Lady of the Rings: Interview with Yael Arad," Yedioth Ahronoth — Saturday supplement, 12.11.2021. (Hebrew)

Mapping performed by the Knesset Research and Information Center based on data from the end of 2020 reveals that the number of gymnasiums per 10,000 people in Arab society is lower than the corresponding number in non-Arab local authorities (1.3 compared with 2.2). Furthermore, Arab local authorities are ranked in socioeconomic clusters 1-5 and usually do not have the same budgetary capacity as the Jewish local authorities in higher clusters.

There is no clearly organized information about private funding transferred directly to teams via commercial sponsorships, but it is clear that most of the capital in the State of Israel can be found in Jewish society and not Arab society. This fact adds to the disparity mentioned previously in the context of gender; but the same disparity also exists between Jews and Arabs in the form of budget distributions and in large budgets being transferred to Arab local authorities and teams via reimbursements for security, programs for strengthening the status of Israeli players, and government marketing funds generated via Toto (the Israel Sports Betting Board).

The new five-year plan: **Government Resolution 550, an economic development plan to reduce disparities in Arab society by 2026**

Section 7 in Government Resolution 550 (2021) concerns culture and sports. The section stipulates that the Ministry of Finance allocate NIS 10 million for a unit for elite athletes (to identify, develop and support Arab athletes); that the Sports Authority allocate at least 25% of the total support budget in the “sports package” to Arab society; that the Ministry of Culture and Sport allocate at least NIS 10 million to the sports package; and that the Sports Authority allocate at least 25% of the total support budget to building and renovating sporting facilities in Arab society.³⁰ This represents a significant increase in the sports funding designated for Arab society, but does not guarantee that this funding will reach Arab girls and women, as well.

The data presented in this section testify to underfunding of sports in Israel generally. Within sports, basketball is especially underfunded; and within basketball, there is inequality between boys and girls and inequality between Jews and Arabs. This results in Arab girls being most critically affected by underfunding. The meaning of this is that Arab girls suffer from what is called multiple discrimination or intersectionality, a concept that describes discrimination on the grounds of belonging to more than one marginalized group. “Women who are subject to discrimination on the grounds of race, sexual identity, age, nationality, ethnic identity, faith or disability, are subject to intersecting discriminatory characteristics faced by each of the specific communities to which they belong. In most cases, multiple discrimination is associated with low socioeconomic status, and it is ongoing, consistent, and leaves those subject to it more vulnerable and exposed to discrimination in general.”³¹ In our case, while women everywhere from every population group encounter discrimination in sports, Arab women and girls suffer most of all.

³⁰ [Government Resolution 550: The Economic Plan to Reduce Gaps in Arab Society by 2026](#), 24.10.21. (Hebrew)

³¹ Yaara Mann, [Intersectionality in Israel — Recommendations for Policy Changes](#), Israel Women’s Network, December 2018. (Hebrew)

Establishing Sporting facilities in Israel — Affirmative Action in Arab Local Authorities

From a report by the Knesset Research and Information Center:

“There are thousands of public sporting facilities of various types located within the jurisdictions of local authorities in Israel, which are used for a variety of sporting activities. The general responsibility for establishing, maintaining and ensuring the safety sporting facilities owned by local authorities falls on the local authorities in whose jurisdiction these facilities are located. The construction of the sporting facilities is currently financed by the government and various bodies such as Mifal HaPais.

“Until 2018, the Israel Sports Betting Board (also known as “Toto”) was a major source of funding for the construction of sporting facilities in Israel. Toto did this using the ‘facilities fund’ to which a portion of its budget was allocated, and in line with the National Sporting Facilities Program. Following reform in the sports budget (in the 2019 arrangements law), on January 1, 2019, Toto’s authority over funding distribution through the facilities fund expired. The reform sought to sever the link between betting funds and sports in Israel, and it stipulated that Toto’s profits could no longer be used to fund sports and instead would be transferred to the national treasury. It also established that the distribution of sports funding be carried out by the state, and that the entire support budget for sports be administered by the Ministry of Culture and Sport budget as part of the annual government budget. Subsequently, the Sporting Facilities Division was established within the Ministry of Culture and Sport, which became the body responsible for establishing sporting facilities in Israel and granting financial support for this purpose, in keeping with the National Sporting Facilities Program.

“Moreover, Mifal HaPais allocates its profits to the local authorities in keeping with criteria that include the local authority’s population size, socioeconomic ranking, distance from central Israel, and percentage of residents who serve in the army (this criterion discriminates against Arab local authorities). A local authority seeking to implement the budget at its disposal is required to submit a request to Mifal HaPais for assistance in one of the areas laid out by Mifal HaPais. One of these areas is the establishment of sporting facilities (gymnasiums, stadiums, courts for indoor sports, and more). Since the late 1980s, Mifal HaPais has invested around NIS 2.6 million in the construction of sporting facilities. Some of the facilities established in recent years were funded jointly with the National Sporting Facilities Program.”³²

The National Sporting Facilities Program

In late 2010, the government began working in accordance with a sporting facilities program intended to address all the needs of local authorities regarding sporting facilities. In 2011, the National Sports Council was established and placed in charge of the National Sporting Facilities Program until 2018, when responsibility for the program was shifted to the Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Ministry of Finance. In 2016, the National Sporting Facilities Program 2027 was published, backed by a budget in excess of NIS 3 million. The program’s criteria favor local authorities in CBS socioeconomic clusters 1-6 (all the Arab local authorities are in clusters 1-5) and those in “National Priority Areas” (this category includes almost no Arab local authorities). Under certain conditions, the authorities do not need to provide “matching” funding in order to receive

32 Assaf Weininger, [Gymnasiums and soccer fields — comparison between Arab local authorities and non-Arab local authorities](#), Knesset Research and Information Center, 2021. (Hebrew)

funding — a condition that had posed a major barrier for many authorities and prevented the construction of sporting facilities in their jurisdictions. The National Sporting Facilities Program 2027 expired in 2020, and since no other program was drawn up in its place, the construction of new facilities has since been done through dedicated invitations to tender, on a similar scale and under similar conditions to those established by the program.³³

As shown by the Knesset Research and Information Center's mapping, as of 2020 the number of gymnasiums in Arab society was lower than the corresponding number in the non-Arab local authorities (1.3 compared with 2.2 for every 10,000 people, respectively). Between 2016 and 2020, around 26% of the gymnasiums built in Israel were located in Arab local authorities.³⁴ Considering that around 14% of the population lives in Arab local authorities, the scope of this construction reflects affirmative action. Until the gap between Jewish and Arab society in the number of gymnasiums per capita is closed, this affirmative action should be expanded to benefit the Arab local authorities.

Funding for Girls' Sports Around the World

Reference to private funding for girls' sports internationally — both in the professional literature and at a policy level — is quite sparse, since in most countries this area is included within the issue of gender allocations and women's sports. However, there is a preliminary trend of designated budgets for promoting girls' and women's sports.

A significant part of the growth in funding for women's and girls' sports around the world stems from changes occurring in women's sports, especially the rise of women's soccer. A significant portion of the financial upswing stems from an increase in commercial advertising. These advertisers are investing more and more money, thanks to growing public interest and new emerging markets. These processes have led to the establishment of women's teams and the expansion of women's sporting activities in the top sports clubs in Europe.³⁵

There follow examples of funding for girls' sports in three countries: England, North Macedonia and Australia. The information relates to funding for girls' sports in general and not basketball specifically, since there was no up-to-date information on this topic. The overall funding for girls' sports allows us to draw conclusions about international trends from which we can derive findings about basketball.

England



Sport England, the British governmental body for developing popular sports, and its equivalent municipal body in London, Sport London, point to the growing cost of living in the UK as a factor that directly affects sporting activity among women and especially girls. A vast amount of data shows that a significant percentage of low-income families forego physical activity, and that women are more broadly affected than men, as a

³³ [Ibid.](#), Page 3.

³⁴ [Ibid.](#), Pages 4-5.

³⁵ See [Women's sports gets down to business: On track for rising monetization](#) on the Deloitte website; and [Implications for Women and Girls' Sport from the Cost-of-Living Crisis](#) on the Women in Sport website (more on the organization later in this section).

result of work patterns and social patterns that perceive sports as more important for boys than for girls. Sport England's recommendations for funding touch on subsidizing swimming for girls in public pools as a tool for changing this situation.

Moreover, in recent years Sport England has run a broad campaign, costing around GBP 10 million, to encourage women and girls to play sports in the public sphere. The campaign, called This Girl Can, led to an increase of tens of thousands of girls participating in sports over the years in which the campaign was active.³⁶ Sport England has also established two funds for promoting sports that also encourage girls to play sports — for example, a small grants fund of 5 million pounds, in collaboration with the UK National Lottery, that offers small grants of GBP 1,500-3,000 and focuses on areas ranked in low socioeconomic clusters.

Another project run by Sport England in collaboration with the UK National Lottery invested 2 million pounds in promoting girls' soccer, in a project launched by the local soccer federation.³⁷ The project was born in the wake of the success of the English women's national team, which won the European Football Championship in July 2022. The British civic initiative, Women in Sport, which has been working to promote women in sports since 1984, should also be noted here. In 2022, the initiative received a total of 3.4 million pounds of funding from Sport England.³⁸

North Macedonia



The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (also known as UN Women) in North Macedonia promotes gender equality in sports funding and produced a report reviewing the situation in the country on this issue. The report revealed that sports funding in the country is conducted through the sporting federations, and a scholarship program for teenage boys and girls presents double the funding for teenage boys as it does for teenage girls. It also found that the funding for promoting women's sports in the country ranged from between 10% and 30% of the country's overall sports budget.³⁹ This status report will help North Macedonia make the necessary changes.

Australia



In 2019, the state of Victoria in Australia published a program for encouraging women and girls to play sports and provided a budget of 6 million Australian dollars. Two years later the program was significantly expanded with an investment of 71 million Australian dollars for creating infrastructure and jobs in sports, particularly women's sports. The Australian Department of Health directed funding of 19.9 million Australian dollars over two years to women's sports, with a focus on major events.⁴⁰

36 More on the campaign can be found on [the campaign website](#); for more on the campaign's success in encouraging girls and women to play sports see [Case study: How 'This Girl Can' got 1.6 million women exercising](#) on the campaign website.

37 See the article ["Multi-million investment to engage girls with football"](#) on the Sport England website.

38 [Announcement](#) about receiving government support on the Women in Sport website.

39 [Gender Equality in Sport in North Macedonia](#), UN Women, 2022.

40 See the announcements: ["Funding boost for women and girls in sport"](#) from May 2019, and ["Backing grassroots sport and a level playing field"](#) from May 2021 on the Victoria government website; and the Australian Department of Health's fact sheet about the 2021-2022 budget, [Supporting women in sport](#).

Part

B The Undesirable Phenomenon — Underrepresentation of Arab Girls in Basketball

To present the underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball, we reviewed all the girls' leagues in the older age groups (Under 16— ages 15-16, grades 9-10; and Under 18 — ages 17-18, grades 11-12) and all the women's leagues as they appear on the IBBA website.⁴¹ For each age group, the leagues are displayed by district, where the number of Arab clubs is noted for each district out of the total number of teams in that district. For example, in the Girls B League of the Super-North District, there are two teams from Arab local authorities out of a total of ten.

There are 94 teams playing in the Girls B league, 33 of which are from Arab local authorities. Most of the Arab teams are concentrated in the leagues of the north, Haifa Bay area, and Haifa, and constitute about a third of the total number of teams.

Girls B									
League	Super-North	Super-South	North	Haifa Bay	Haifa	Sharon	Center	South	Negev
Arab teams / Total teams in the league	2 / ₁₀	0 / ₁₀	11 / ₁₂	10 / ₁₂	6 / ₉	4 / ₁₂	0 / ₁₃	0 / ₉	0 / ₇

A similar picture arises in the Girls A leagues, where 71 teams play, of which 26 are from Arab local authorities. The highest concentration of Arab teams is in the north, Haifa Bay and Haifa leagues. Here too, the ratio is approximately a third of the total number of teams.

Girls A								
League	Super — North	Super — South	North	Haifa Bay	Haifa	Sharon	Center	South
Arab teams / Total teams in the league	1 / ₉	0 / ₉	7 / ₉	8 / ₉	7 / ₉	2 / ₆	1 / ₁₀	0 / ₁₀

⁴¹ [Leagues page](#) on the IBBA website. Last visit: 23.1.2023 (Hebrew)

A total of 110 teams play in the adult women's basketball leagues (Super League, Liga Leumit, Liga Artzit, Liga Alef), 22 of which are from Arab local authorities. In the major leagues, there are only two teams from Arab local authorities: Hapoel Kaukab and Hapoel Majd al-Krum, both of which play in the second-tier, Liga Leumit.

Women										
League	Super League	Leumit	Artzit North	Artzit Sharon	Artzit Center	Artzit South	Alef North	Alef Sharon	Alef Center	Alef South
Arab teams / Total teams in the league	0 /10	2 /14	8 /12	4 /12	0 /12	0 /12	5 /8	4 /10	0 /10	0 /9

In a review of data from all the leagues, there is a clear illustration of the underrepresentation, which is reflected in the gaps between districts and also between age groups.

Age disparities — The top-tier leagues in the Girls A and B age groups (Super-North) have fair representation of teams from Arab local authorities. But this representation completely disappears in the transition to the women's age group, where there are no Arab teams in the top-tier league.⁴²

Geographical disparities — In the Girls A and B age groups in the north, Haifa Bay, Haifa and Sharon districts, there is no significant disparity in the ratio between the number of teams from Arab local authorities and the total number of teams in each district. However, there are no Arab teams whatsoever in the southern districts, with the distinction of the women's team from PeacePlayers, which plays in Artzit South for technical reasons despite being located in Jerusalem.

Quantitative disparities — The total number of teams in the women's leagues is larger than the total number of teams in the youth leagues. 94 teams play in the Girls B league, and this number drops to 71 in the Girls A league and rises again sharply to 110 teams in the women's leagues. We might have expected the number of clubs in Arab society to increase accordingly, but in practice the disparity grew significantly: While in the Girls A and B leagues, around a third of the teams are from Arab local authorities, in the women's leagues the number of clubs from the Arab local authorities drops dramatically to around a quarter of all women's clubs in Israel.

In an interview with Netta Abugov, an IBBA board member and a member of the gender and periphery committee and the women's professional committee, she mentioned that one of the two top-tier women's basketball teams from Arab society is Hapoel Kaukab. One of the advantages of this team is a combination of a focus on local players and the availability of a training facility for the women's teams. The team also benefits from the integration of youth divisions alongside a women's team in the major league, which generates "cross-pollination": the women's team acts as a showcase that attracts more and more girls, and the active girls' team serves as a reserve for the women's team. This situation works well when there is a women's team in the major league.⁴²

⁴² Interview with Netta Abugov on 5.4.2021

Part



Problem Definitions, Barriers and **Policy Recommendations**

This section of the report is intended to accompany and explain the diagram at the end of the document. In this section, we present the four problems we identified, define barriers that contribute to the creation of each of the problems, and suggest policy recommendations to reduce the level of inequality.

The following are the four problems we defined, using the “From Barriers to Opportunities” model,⁴³ that affect the underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball, in the order they appear in the diagram:



**1.
Unequal
distribution
of funding**

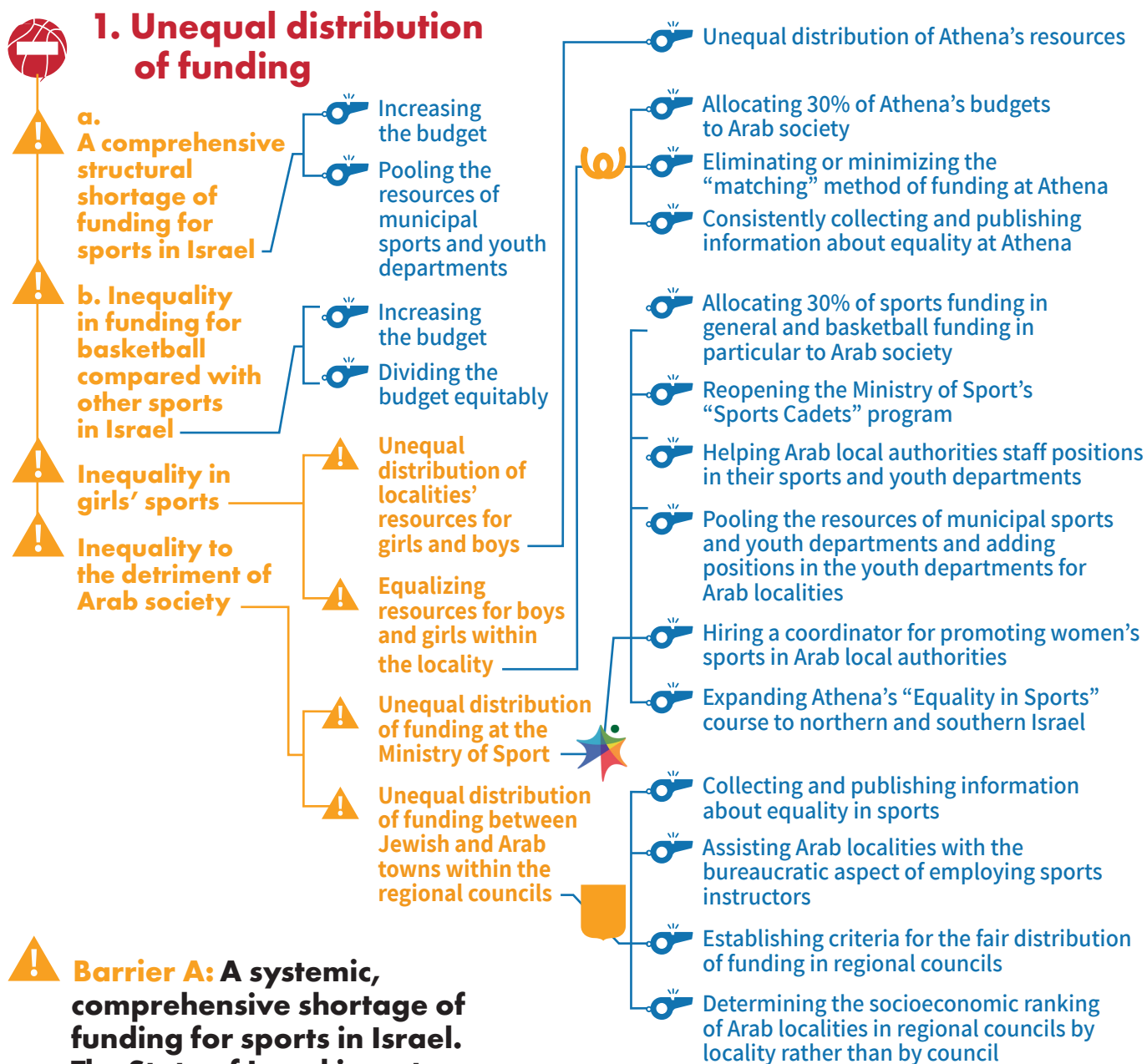
**2.
A shortage
of suitable
infrastructure.**

**3. A shortage of
high-quality, Arabic-
speaking coaches.**

**4.
Lack of cultural
compatibility.**

For each problem, we defined several barriers and formulated policy recommendations.

⁴³ More about this model can be found in the methodology section of the introduction.



Barrier A: A systemic, comprehensive shortage of funding for sports in Israel. The State of Israel invests less than 1% of GNP in sports, compared with 2%-4% in other OECD countries.

Policy recommendations:

- Increasing the budget** — Investing more in sports in Israel as a whole.
- Pooling the resources of municipal sports and youth departments in order to increase the budget of the sports department** — The sports departments of local authorities in low socioeconomic clusters suffer from very limited budgets. Pooling resources with the youth departments can significantly increase the budgetary capacity of these local authorities.



These two policy recommendations may be combined.

Legend:

- Problem
- Barrier
- Policy recommendation
- Short term
- Middle term
- Long term
- Athena
- Ministry of Sport
- Regional councils

Barrier B: Inequality in funding for basketball as compared with other sports in Israel.

Policy recommendations:

-  **Increasing the budget** — Increasing funding for basketball.
-  **Dividing the budget equally** — Distributing the sports budget in Israel more equitably, taking sports other than soccer into account.

These two policy recommendations may be combined.

Barrier C: Inequality in girls' sports in Israel.

Barrier C1: Unequal distribution of localities' resources for girls and boys.

The interviews we conducted revealed that according to most, the resources of localities are not distributed equally between boys and girls. When funding is limited, often the locality will have only a boys' basketball team. Even when there is a girls' basketball team, it often receives the court for practice at less convenient times. One example of this can be found in Fureidis: A conversation we had with the director of the Fureidis sports department revealed that the sports budget is distributed very unequally. While boys' soccer is budgeted at close to half a million shekels, girls' basketball was not budgeted at all, and the girls' basketball coach was driving the players to their games on a volunteer basis. This is despite the fact that the girls' basketball team is the only competitive team in the locality.⁴⁴

Policy recommendations:

-  **Equalizing resources for boys and girls within the locality** — Examining and equalizing the funding and conditions received by girls' and boys' teams.

Barrier C2: Unequal distribution of Athena's resources.

Athena — the Center for Promoting Women's Sports in Israel is the professional arm of the Public Committee for Promoting Women's Sports in Israel and operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. In the past, Athena operated in popular sports and competitive sports events. After the new CEO took over in 2021, the organization has undergone "streamlining" and now invests its resources in competitive sports only. One of the goals of the Public Committee for Promoting Women's Sports is "establishing a quantitative and qualitative infrastructure of female athletes nationwide, while creating opportunities for every woman and girl to play sports, at any age, anywhere and at every competitive level and focusing on a broad range of population groups."⁴⁵ Despite its efforts, Athena has so far been unsuccessful in leveraging its work to achieve results in Arab society, and is therefore failing in its primary goal.

Policy recommendations:

-   **Allocating 30% of Athena's budgets to Arab society** — Athena is the main entity through which the government transfers funding for women's sports. It is very important

⁴⁴ Interview with Manasak al-Marana, 10.11.2022.

⁴⁵ [Vision and Objectives](#) on the Athena website. Last visit: 25.04.2022

that at least 30% of this funding reach the Arab population. Though Arab society accounts for around 20% of the general population, closing the gap requires allocating disproportionately larger budgets. According to Athena's CEO, 20% of the organization's budget is reserved for the geographic periphery and low socioeconomic clusters. According to her, this distribution is intended to address Arab society, as all the Arab localities are located in low socioeconomic clusters. However, the budget is designated for all population groups, and this results in the Arab sector not receiving even the portion it is entitled to by its proportion of the general population.

Allocating additional resources to Arab society can be carried out by diverting funding from within Athena's existing budget. However, as Athena's budget is low from the outset, we recommend doing this with a supplemental budget, taken from Government Resolution 550, for example.



Eliminating or minimizing the “matching” method of funding at Athena

— Athena usually provides 60% of the required funding for projects and requires the remaining 40% to be matched by the recipient. According to Athena's CEO, underserved local authorities, including Arab local authorities, should be required to provide a lower percentage of matching, around 10%. The Arab local authorities are in socioeconomic clusters 1-5, and therefore have almost no budget flexibility and a very low ability to match funding for projects. Even now, these local authorities struggle to match funding for their large education and welfare budgets, which directly affects funding for the city beautification departments and thus the appearance of the Arab local authorities. The requirement to match sports funding is a barrier for underserved local authorities, and in practice, prevents the most disadvantaged populations in the country from receiving the funding they are entitled to.



Collecting consistent information about the equality of budget distribution at Athena by population group, analyzing and publicizing this information

— The first stage of addressing this issue is collecting data. However, in a conversation with Athena's CEO, we learned that she has neither the data nor the resources to perform the required data segmentation. Athena should be given access to this data and begin collecting additional data where necessary, and also provided the necessary workforce to publish the organization's budget distribution by population group once a year.



Barrier D: Inequality toward the Arab sector in Israel.

Policy recommendations:



Allocating 30% of sports funding in general and basketball funding in particular to Arab society

— This funding can be used to pay for coaches, transportation, insurance and more. 2018 saw a positive step in this direction, when the special committee for passing reform for distributing Toto funds ruled that Arab teams would receive affirmative action funding of 20%.⁴⁶



Barrier D1: Unequal distribution of funding at the Ministry of Sport.


As we saw in the “background” section of this report, there is inequality in the funding that Jewish and Arab local authorities receive from the Ministry of Sport. Since the research for this report did not

⁴⁶ Hezki Baruch, [Arab Teams to Receive More Funding](#), Channel 7, 25.12.18. (Hebrew) Last visit: 24.02.2021


include an in-depth analysis of the Ministry of Sport's work, the policy recommendations proposed here are incomplete. This section will require a more in-depth analysis of the ministry's work.

Policy recommendations:

 **Allocating 30% of sports funding in general and basketball funding in particular to Arab society** — The director of the Women's Sports Division in the Ministry of Sport proposed using the funding that the ministry provides to local authorities as an incentive for directing it to women's sports. Today, the ministry's criteria for support include a requirement for representation of 30% women, but according to Athena's CEO the criteria do not take into account the Arab population, and there is no requirement for detailing minority groups. We recommend adding a requirement for fair representation of Arab population groups to the criteria for support. Such a requirement would help the Arab population living in mixed Jewish-Arab cities and regional councils.

 **Reopening the Ministry of Sport's Sports Cadets program** — On December 8, 2013, the Israeli government passed Resolution 1016 for increasing the activities of children and youth sports clubs and teams, with the aim of increasing the number of Israeli athletes playing soccer, basketball and ten other sports.⁴⁷ As part of this resolution, it launched the Sports Cadets program, aimed at increasing the number of children and youth who play competitive sports. The program was launched in 2015 and operated for around three years, until the Ministry of Culture and Sport decided to freeze and reevaluate the program in 2018.⁴⁸ At the time of writing, the program had not yet been reopened, even though in most of the interviews we conducted for this report, it was mentioned as a factor that greatly contributed to reducing inequality and changing the situation on the ground. According to the director of the women's sports and popular sports department in the Ministry of Culture and Sport, Nurit Sharvit, it has been decided to soon propose a new program for the Arab local authorities called "Sports Buds," which will take its budget from both the culture package and the sports package.⁴⁹

Programs of this kind are extremely important for promoting sports in underserved local authorities, and they have proven successful in Arab local authorities in the past. However, even if the program is reestablished, freezing it has already created a gap that will be difficult to bridge: Children who joined a sports team, formed a relationship with the coach and then were forced to quit when the program was shut down will find it hard to give their trust again and return to training in a sporting framework; significant community work will be required to bring them back to the program. It is important to create continuity in Ministry of Sport-funded programs in underserved local authorities, as these authorities do not have the capacity to operate the programs with their own budgets during periods of transition between governments.

 **Helping Arab local authorities staff positions in their sports and youth departments** — Often, Arab local authorities have trouble staffing positions, and department directors are in need of assistance and support to perform their jobs to the best

⁴⁷ [Sports Cadets — program for cultivating, promoting and establishing human resources infrastructure in sports](#), on the Ministry of Culture and Sport website. (Hebrew)

⁴⁸ Asi Maman, [The Sports Cadets program failed, and reform is on the way](#), ONE.co.il, 13.11.2018. (Hebrew)

⁴⁹ Interview with Nurit Sharvit, 28.09.2022.

of their abilities. The Ministry of Sport must provide professional assistance for department directors so they can maximize the benefits to residents. Many government ministries have taken it upon themselves to assist the staff of Arab local authorities in order to raise the level of professionalism and thus also the level of service received by the residents. It is important that the Ministry of Sport do the same.



Pooling the resources of the municipal sports and youth departments and adding youth department positions in Arab localities —

The Ministry of Education's budget is significantly larger than that of the Ministry of Sport. Pooling the resources of the sports and youth departments in local authorities can significantly increase the services that the local government is able to provide to its residents.



Adding a coordinator for promoting women's sports in Arab local authorities —

The Ministry of Sport has recently started encouraging Arab local authorities to hire a coordinator for promoting women's sports. Experience in Arab local authorities such as Fureidis has shown that appointing a woman as sports coordinator generated significant change for women's sports in the locality. As a start, we propose that the Ministry of Sport budget a part-time position for promoting women's sports in every Arab local authority.



Expanding Athena's "Equality in Sports" course to northern and southern Israel —

Athena's Equality in Sports course aims to address the underrepresentation of female coaches and managers in sports clubs and associations and the absence of women in positions of leadership.⁵⁰ Today the course is offered only in areas of the county with a Jewish majority. The Ministry of Sport has considered running the course in northern and southern Israel in order to reach the Arab local authorities and the localities of the periphery in general, and also in order to reach female Arab coaches.⁵¹ We recommend making this a reality and ensuring the course is held in a different area of the country each time.



Barrier D2: Unequal distribution of funding for Jewish and Arab towns within the regional councils.

The organizational and political structure of regional councils in Israel is unique. Our conversations revealed that the distribution of funding within regional councils is disproportionately dependent on the strength of the local authorities: The stronger the local authority, the more it tends to exercise its strength and receive more funding. The Arab local authorities in regional councils are relatively large in terms of number of residents but also the poorest in terms of funding per resident. A locality's size does not give it an advantage within the regional council, as each local authority receives just one vote in the council. Thus, the combination of being economically disadvantaged and culturally diverse result in them having relatively little power in the council for the most part and failing to obtain sufficient funding from it.



Policy recommendations:





Collecting and publishing information about equality in sports — The directors of sports departments in the regional councils should collect, analyze and publish


⁵⁰ The [Women's Leadership](#) page of the Athena website. Last visit: 20.03.2023.

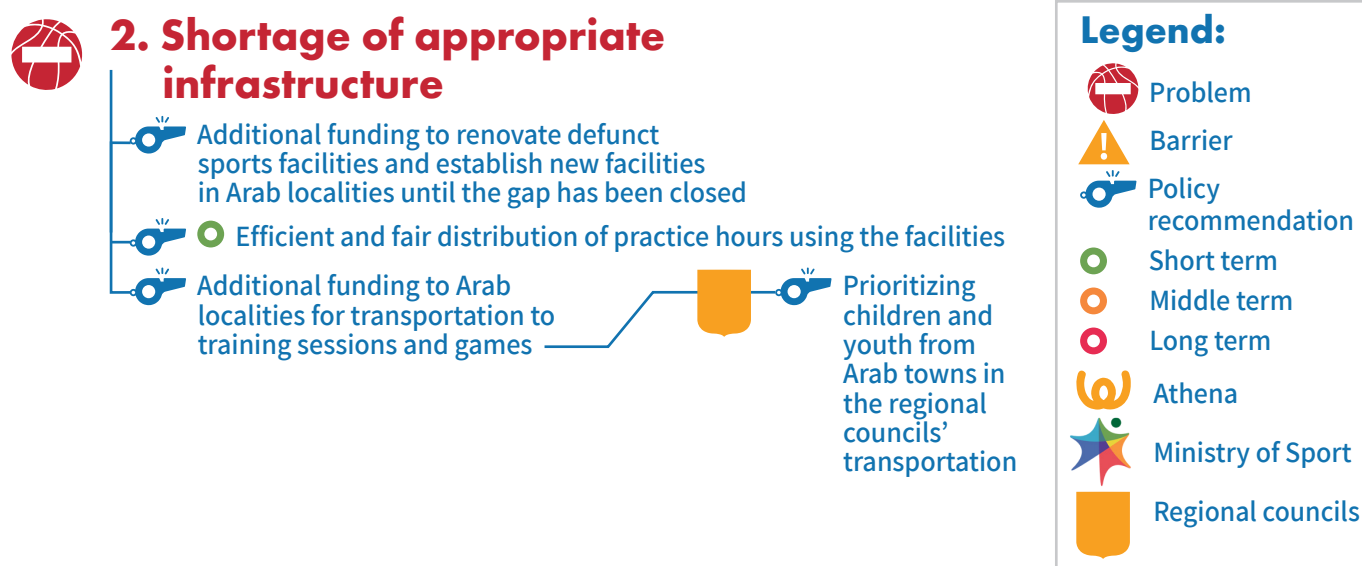
⁵¹ Interview with Nurit Sharvit, 28.09.2022.

data on the level of equality in their council. Currently there is no metric according to which they can work. The Ministry of Sport should develop a gender equality metric that sets parameters regarding funding, number of female athletes, and more.

 **Assisting Arab localities with the bureaucratic aspect of employing sports instructors** — The directors of sports departments in the regional councils should assist Arab localities with the bureaucratic aspect of hiring sports instructors. The sports department director has knowledge that does not exist in the secretariats of the localities, such as answers to questions like whether the instructor is certified, what certifications are required for working with children, etc.

 **Establishing criteria for the fair distribution of funding in the regional councils** — Currently there is no structured system for distributing funding within the regional councils. Setting such criteria will help equalize and counterbalance the power of the stronger localities.

 **Determining the socioeconomic ranking of Arab localities in regional councils by locality rather than by council** — Generally speaking, the Arab localities in Israel have a lower socioeconomic status than that of Jewish localities. Since the Arab localities that belong to regional councils are ranked according to the council as a whole, including the stronger localities within it, these localities do not receive the funding and assistance that the government grants to Arab localities that are not part of regional councils. It appears that the government expects the regional councils, which are usually stronger than the Arab localities, to help with funding the disadvantaged localities in their jurisdiction, but this does not happen in practice.



In November 2021, as part of the process of writing the new sporting facilities program, the Ministry of Culture and Sport mapped the existing sporting facilities in Israel.⁵² The mapping revealed 8,700 facilities in Israel.

A significant part of the shortage of sporting facilities is in school gymnasiums. As of 2020, there are 1,371 gymnasiums that serve schools in the Israeli education system: 164 large gyms (handball, basketball and

52 Ministry of Culture and Sport, [National Sports Facilities Program 2022-2031](#), February 2022. (Hebrew)

volleyball), 485 medium-sized gyms (basketball and volleyball), 245 small gyms (volleyball) and another 477 gyms that are used for extracurriculars and martial arts. Given the number of schools in the education system and the number of gyms at their disposal, the mapping revealed a shortfall in Israel of approximately 2,500 gyms.

As part of this mapping, the ministry also checked the number of facilities per 10,000 residents. There was a significant gap between Jewish local authorities and Arab local authorities in the number of different types of facilities they had. For many types of facilities, including gymnasiums, stadiums, swimming pools and tennis courts, Jewish local authorities were found to have two to three times as many facilities as Arab local authorities.


Around 1.3 million residents live in 127 Arab localities and 7 mixed Arab-Jewish localities. There are no gymnasiums whatsoever in 52 of these localities, no medium or large gymnasiums in 106 of them, and no basketball courts in 93 of them.⁵³

Arab society in Israel is generally a more traditional society. Many parents do not want their daughters to train on an open field where any passer-by can see them.⁵⁴ Therefore, even where Arab localities have open basketball courts, these usually do not serve the girls; only closed courts should therefore be considered when determining the existence of physical infrastructure for girls' basketball.

Nearly NIS 3 million was allocated to funding the new sporting facilities program published in 2022.⁵⁵ Additional funding was allocated to the Arab local authorities in the framework of government resolutions relating to Arab society. However, although the new plan prioritizes Arab local authorities, as reflected both in higher budgets than in the past and in a large investment in facilities (both constructing and renovating), it requires matching from the local authorities, which harms their ability to respond to invitations to tender. Even a requirement for a low percentage of matching, 10%-20%, is a big demand for a local authority that has no non-residential income and no flexible budget. It should be noted that based on the data included in the sporting facilities program, it is hard to tell how many of the new and renovated facilities will be used for basketball.

Policy recommendations:

 **Additional funding to renovate defunct sporting facilities and establish new facilities in Arab localities until the gap has been closed** — The large disparity in sporting facilities between Jewish and Arab localities can be closed in two ways: A. Additional funding for renovating defunct facilities in the Arab localities. Our conversations revealed that renovating an abandoned facility is expected to cost at least NIS 100 thousand. This is less than the cost of constructing a new facility and can have an immediate impact. B. Additional funding for constructing new facilities in Arab localities. The minimum cost of building a sports gymnasium is around NIS 3 million.⁵⁶

 **Effective and fair distribution of practice hours at the facilities** — In our conversations it emerged that in many cases boys are given more practice hours on the court and at more convenient times.⁵⁷ Sometimes, even when there is a court, it cannot be used continuously throughout the day. In a special discussion convened by the Knesset Education, Culture and Sports

⁵³ Yakov Meir, [Program for promoting basketball in the Arab sector](#), Israel Hayom, 3.2.2022. (Hebrew)

⁵⁴ Interview with Manasak al-Marana, 10.11.2022.

⁵⁵ [Sports Facilities Program](#) from the Ministry of Culture and Sport website. (Hebrew)

⁵⁶ Interview with Adi Stadler, 22.04.2021.

⁵⁷ Interview with Adi Stadler, 22.04.2021.

Committee on February 8, 2022, then-Minister of Culture and Sports Chili Tropper stated that he would require the local authorities to allocate practice hours for women and girls to use sporting facilities.⁵⁸ This promise has not yet been fulfilled, but the declaration of intent is an important first step.



Additional funding to Arab localities for transportation to training sessions and games; prioritizing children and youth from Arab towns in transportation of the regional councils —

The transportation provided in regional councils is determined by demand and funded by the localities and the parents. In Jewish localities, it is standard to have organized transportation for children, and usually both the localities and the local parents have the required funding for transportation; this results in high demand. In Arab localities, it is less common to have organized transportation and the localities and local families struggle to pay the costs of transportation, resulting in low demand. Budgets should be found within the regional councils to fund transportation for the children in the Arab localities, and shorter routes should be developed that are attractive to Arab youth.⁵⁹



3. A shortage of high-quality, Arabic-speaking female coaches

-  Granting scholarships to female Arab students for accompanying Arab girls to sports classes with Hebrew-speaking instructors
-   Opening official Ministry of Sport courses in Arabic to train female basketball instructors
-   Opening official courses in Arabic to train female basketball coaches
-  Running continuing education programs to improve the abilities of active coaches (male and female), preferably abroad
-  Expanding the Ministry of Sport's PELE program for helping Ethiopian Israelis integrate into Israel sports to include Arab society as well

Legend:

-  Problem
-  Barrier
-  Policy recommendation
-  Short term
-  Middle term
-  Long term
-  Athena
-  Ministry of Sport
-  Regional councils

It is extremely important for female athletes to have role models. For Arab girls, there is nothing better than a female Arab coach to empower them and show them what is possible. Our conversations revealed that there is a general shortage of high-quality basketball coaches in Israel.⁶⁰ It is especially hard to find Arabic-speaking coaches and female coaches. There are many reasons for this — among other things, it is important to remember that for the most part, coaches in Israel have no continuity of employment or insurance. Additionally, many women in Israel are still the main providers of childcare (primary caregivers), and thus the coaching conditions — which include working afternoon and evening hours — pose a barrier for them. Basketball practice for the younger ages takes place after school hours, which is when involved parents are

with their children. In addition, there is currently no solution to the issue of parental leave for coaches. The more egalitarian our society becomes, the more the barriers faced by coaches become barriers that affect all parents rather than only women.

⁵⁸ Knesset Education, Culture and Sports Committee — Subcommittee on Sports Funding, [Meeting on allocations for sports federation programs in schools, 8.2.2022; filmed report on the IWN Facebook page](#). (Hebrew)


⁵⁹ Interview in the village of Meiser, 10.08.2021.

⁶⁰ This issue came up in almost all the interviews.


Policy recommendations:

The figure of the coach has great importance in promoting Arab girls in basketball. It is important that the coach (male or female) is able to speak the girls' native language, Arabic; and no less important that they serve as a positive role model — therefore, there is an advantage to the girls having a female rather than a male coach. In light of the shortage of high-quality Arabic-speaking coaches and female coaches, we recommend the following steps to gradually encourage the promotion of high-quality female Arab coaches. In the first stage, training should be given in both languages, Hebrew and Arabic, in preparation for a transition to training in the Arabic language only. This involves a supplemental budget for hiring Arab assistant coaches for the teams. This budget is temporary, since in time, female Arab coaches will enter the system and there will be no need for joint training with both a Jewish and Arab coach.

 **Granting scholarships to female Arab students for accompanying Arab girls to sports classes with Hebrew-speaking instructors** — This policy recommendation is for the immediate short term.

 **Opening official Ministry of Sport courses in Arabic to train female basketball instructors** — These basketball instructors can serve as assistant coaches alongside the Jewish coaches. This policy recommendation is for the short term.

 **Opening official courses in Arabic to train female basketball coaches** — This policy recommendation is for the intermediate term.

 **Running continuing education programs to improve the abilities of active coaches (male and female), preferably abroad⁶¹** — Our conversation revealed that the general level of professionalism among basketball coaches in Israel is not high. If we want to improve the quality of coaches in Israel, we must send them to programs in countries with a higher level of training to help them make the required professional leap.

 **Expanding the Ministry of Sport's PELE program for helping Ethiopian Israelis integrate into Israel sports to include Arab society as well** — In December 2014, the Israeli government passed Resolution 1300 to establish a plan for promoting the optimal integration of Ethiopian Israelis into Israeli society. Further to this resolution, the Ministry of Culture and Sport created a program to help Ethiopian Israelis integrate into Israeli sports. This program was launched in September 2019 by a federation of schools that won the tender for implementing it. The program's main goal is to increase the representation of Ethiopian Israelis in sports and help them integrate as athletes, program directors, coaches, instructors and managerial staff by helping them get accepted into existing sports associations; developing excellence by integrating Ethiopian Israeli athletes into the competitive sports system; developing leadership by training and increasing the number of Ethiopian Israeli instructors, coaches and directors; and increasing the level of engagement and awareness in the immediate environment (parents, friends, coaches, etc.) of the athletes' needs and abilities.⁶² This same program should equally be implemented in Arab society by fully subsidizing courses for coaches and instructors, with a focus on women's and girls' sports, and by providing additional subsidies for sports classes for women and girls.

⁶¹ Interview with Adi Stadler, 22.04.2021.

⁶² [PELE — Project to Integrate Ethiopian Israelis into Israeli Sports](#), from the website of the Israel School Sports Federation. (Hebrew)



4. Lack of cultural compatibility



a. Service providers in the regional councils and government ministries are insufficiently familiar with Arab society



Policy recommendations for regional councils



Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport



Policy recommendations for Athena



Developing and running training programs about Arab society



Committing to fair representation of Arab society in regional councils



Committing to fair representation of the Arab population at ministry headquarters



Adding a position for promoting women's sports among minority groups



Encouraging Jewish coaches to work in Arab society



Ensuring fair representation of the Arab population at Athena headquarters



Making the national training centers more accessible to female Arab athletes



Increasing representation of Arab society in the organization's programs



Establishing a specific committee to find solutions for the issue of basketball uniforms for female players from traditional societies

Legend:



Problem



Barrier



Policy recommendation



Short term



Middle term



Long term



Athena



Ministry of Sport



Regional councils



Providing transportation from Arab localities to national training centers in Ashkelon, Netanya and Karmiel



Adding two national training centers in areas near Arab localities



Bringing Arab athletes from different sports into the organization's programs such as Athena Ambassadors



Conducting a thorough investigation of why female Arab basketball players don't take part in the organization's programs



Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Jewish coaches



Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Arab coaches



Improving second-language teaching (Hebrew and Arabic) at schools in Israel



Collecting a symbolic fee



Collecting a subsidized fee



Proactively helping parents fill out application forms for scholarships



a. Shortage of role models



a. Lack of accessibility due to language barriers



Assistance with communication between Arabic-speaking players and Hebrew-speaking coaches



Making the Wingate Institute more accessible to Arab society



In the first stage, with interpreters



At the second stage by improving the level of Arabic spoken among Jews and Hebrew among Arabs



Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Jewish coaches



Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Arab coaches



a. Girls dropping out of sports between the ages of 14-18



Policy recommendations for working with the parents of female Arab basketball players



Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport



Educating parents in order to overcome stereotypes



Administrative-community assistance in setting up a parental carpool system



Assistance with collecting fees from parents



Strengthening the status of sports classes in the education system



Encouraging Arab schools to participate in the school leagues for girls' sports



Improving second-language teaching (Hebrew and Arabic) at schools in Israel



Collecting a symbolic fee



Collecting a subsidized fee



Proactively helping parents fill out application forms for scholarships

The disconnect between Jewish and Arab society in Israel and the lack of familiarity with one another is reflected in a lack of cultural compatibility in many areas. Thus, for example, a study from the National Insurance Institute of Israel (NII) found that a lack of cultural accessibility can present a barrier to insured Arab citizens accessing their social benefits. The lack of cultural accessibility is expressed, among other things, in a lack of linguistic accessibility and an insufficient understanding of the norms, customs and preferences of the population receiving the service.⁶³ Our interviews revealed that this lack of cultural compatibility also exists in sports.⁶⁴

Barrier A: Service providers in the regional councils and government ministries are insufficiently familiar with Arab society.


In our interview with Ohad Bloch, sports department director of the Menashe Regional Council, we heard from him that the council is unable to recruit Arab participants for basketball instructor courses, even when fully subsidized.⁶⁵ This situation is not unique to Menashe and indicates a lack of understanding and familiarity with the group they are trying to reach.

Policy recommendations for regional councils:

-  **Developing and running training programs about Arab society for sports department directors in regional councils** — The training programs should be developed with the help of Arab professionals, and at least 50% of the instructors should be from within Arab society.
-  **Pledging fair representation of Arab society in regional councils, especially in senior positions** — The higher the proportion of Arab senior officials, the more familiar the council will be with Arab society and the more it will be able to adapt its services accordingly.

Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport:

As previously stated, the research for this report did not include an in-depth analysis of the Ministry of Culture and Sport's activity. Nevertheless, in the course of our work several policy recommendations came up that we feel are important to share. This section requires more in-depth research in order to encompass the ministry's activity.

-  **Pledging fair representation of the Arab population at ministry headquarters** — The government target for fair representation of the Arab population is 10%. According to data from the Citizens' Empowerment Center in Israel (CECI), in 2016-2017 8.1% of the employees of the Ministry of Science, Technology, Culture and Sport were Arab.⁶⁶ According to a report from Sikkuy-Aufoq, between 2018-2020 there was a decline in the proportion of Arab employees in government ministries and support units (not including the healthcare system), and they accounted for 7.7%. In the senior ranks they accounted for


63 John Gal, Mimi Ajzenstadt, Avishai Benish and Roni Holler, [Active Access of Social Benefits](#), National Insurance Institute, 2019. (Hebrew)


64 Interview in Meiser, 10.08.2021.

65 Interview with Ohad Bloch, 10.08.2021.


66 [Arab, Druze and Circassian representation in the civil service, 2016-2017](#), CECI. (Hebrew)


just 3.3%.⁶⁷ Although we do not have precise data on this issue regarding the Ministry of Sport, our interviews revealed that the ministry has just one Arab supervisor, who is not in charge of promoting access to programs in Arab society. Although we view the fact that Arab employees have areas of responsibility that are not necessarily related to Arab society in a positive light, from the perspective of promoting Arab society it is very important that those engaged in the task are members of the society we are trying to advance. Increasing the proportion of Arabs in the Ministry of Sport overall, with a focus on the ministry headquarters and supervisors, will bring considerations relevant to the Arab population into the ministry's decision-making centers. Employing Arab women will also contribute a crucial perspective.


 **Adding a permanent position for promoting women's sports among minority groups** — The Women's Sports Division in the Ministry of Sport currently contains just one female employee. In order for the division to also provide service to women who belong to minority groups, a position should be created with the purpose of providing solutions for women who belong to minority groups, including women from Arab society.

 **Encouraging Jewish coaches to work in Arab communities until a generation of female Arab coaches is established** — In an interview with the sports department director of Fureidis⁶⁸, we heard that she struggles to bring in female Jewish coaches to work in the town. Intervention is required from the Ministry of Sport in order to overcome the cultural barriers and fear of the Other among Jewish coaches (male and female).

Policy recommendations for Athena:

 **Pledging fair representation of the Arab population in Athena headquarters** — Our interviews with Athena employees revealed that the organization has no Arab employees. The organization is currently trying to recruit an Arab employee, but so far with no success.⁶⁹ Bringing a female Arab employee into Athena headquarters will greatly boost the organization's efforts to promote Arab women in sports. Considering Athena's low budgets, we recommend that the budget for adding a position for an Arab employee (male or female) be provided from a supplemental budget. In this context, we recommend exploring the possibility of finding this budget in Government Resolution 550.

 **Making the national training centers more accessible to female Arab trainees** — There are currently three national training centers, located in Ashkelon, Netanya and Karmiel.⁷⁰ The Arab localities are mostly found in the northern and southern parts of the country, and those in central Israel are located in the northern and southern triangle. To reach female Arab trainees, the national training centers must be made more accessible in the following ways:






 **Providing transportation from Arab localities to the national training centers in Ashkelon (Beit Elazari), Netanya (Wingate) and Karmiel (Gvat).** This is a short-term policy recommendation.

67 Waseem Hosary, [Fair representation of Arab citizens in the civil service — barriers and policy recommendations](#), Sikkuy, 2021. (Hebrew)

68 Interview with Manasak al-Marana, 10.11.2022.

69 Interview with Moran Messica Eidelman, 02.10.2022.

70 Interview with Adi Stadler, 22.04.2021.

-  **Adding two national training centers in areas near Arab localities.** We recommend adding national training centers in the areas of Wadi Ara and Rahat, so that girls in the periphery will also have the possibility of accessing training centers within a reasonable distance. This is a policy recommendation for the medium term.
-  **Increasing Arab representation in the organization's programs**
-  **Bringing Arab athletes from different sports into programs such as the Athena Ambassadors program and the Equality in Sports course, including recruiting for sports associations —** This is a short-term policy recommendation. In an interview with the director of the women's sports and popular sports department at the Ministry of Culture and Sport, it emerged that the Athena Ambassadors program intends to modify the entry requirements for Arab athletes so that they too will be able to participate in the programming.⁷¹ However, a conversation with the director of the program's sports department indicated that there is no need for this, as there is a sufficient number of Arab athletes who meet the program's entry requirements. These athletes are not well-known in Jewish society, and she thinks this is the reason Athena has not been able to reach them. Some are players who did not manage to integrate into a team in Israel and moved abroad to play elsewhere.⁷²
-  **Conducting a thorough investigation of why female Arab basketball players don't take part in the organization's programs —** This is a policy recommendation for the medium term.
-  **Establishing a specific committee to find solutions for the issue of basketball uniforms for female players from traditional societies —** For traditional Arab girls and women and their families, wearing basketball uniforms that include shorts and tank tops poses a difficulty. In the lower leagues, it is permitted to wear leggings and a tight shirt underneath the uniform — which is a sufficient solution for some of the traditional players, but not those from a very traditional background. Moreover, as players advance to the higher leagues, wearing long clothing underneath the uniform is prohibited. This issue is also a problem for traditional groups in Jewish society, especially the ultra-Orthodox. We recommend establishing a joint committee with the IBBA and representatives of traditional communities in Israel to look for solutions that will allow traditional women to also take part in this sport.

Barrier B: Shortage of role models

Positive role models are vital for promoting sports. There is a shortage of role models for girls in general, and Arab girls in particular; Israel has few [professional] female basketball players and almost no female Arab basketball players.⁷³

Policy recommendations:

-  **Increasing representation of Arab society in the organization's programs —** For more details see Problem 4, Barrier A, Policy recommendation 3.

⁷¹ Interview with Nurit Sharvit, 28.09.2022.

⁷² Interview with Manasak al-Marana, 10.11.2022.

⁷³ Interview with Ofri Yakir, 25.05.2021.



Barrier C: Lack of accessibility due to language barriers

The Israeli education system is divided into several different groups. Jewish and Arab children study separately, and each group studies the language of the other. However, the level of Hebrew spoken among Arab students is very poor,⁷⁴ as is the level of Arabic spoken among Jewish students — especially in the lower grades. Moreover, the Arabic taught in the Jewish education system is literary Arabic rather than the spoken Arabic that is used for everyday communication.

As a result, when Jewish coaches come to coach Arab girls due to the shortage of Arab coaches, they do not speak Arabic and the Arab athletes do not speak Hebrew at a level that enables communication.

Policy recommendations:

The aim of these policy recommendations is to help with communication between Arabic-speaking players and Hebrew-speaking coaches. In the short term, this can be accomplished with interpreters; and the long-term aspiration is to improve the levels of Hebrew and Arabic in the education system, which is possible and common in countries with two official languages, including Canada, Belgium and others.



Appointing Arab assistant coaches to work with Jewish coaches — This is a short-term policy recommendation.



Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Jewish coaches — This is a policy recommendation for the medium term.

Both of these recommendations require a supplemental budget.



Making the Wingate Institute more accessible to Arab society —

The Wingate Institute is Israel's leading institute for sports education. In recent years, several significant steps have been taken to make Israel's universities more accessible to Arab society; unfortunately, as of yet, the Wingate Institute has failed to engage with this issue. We recommend that the Wingate Institute employ someone whose job is to make the institute more accessible to Arab society. As a first step, the institute can learn from what has been done in Israel's leading universities and colleges. Another source for learning about this issue is Hebrew University's aChord Center, which has conducted several studies on the topic and published several guides. Other institutions that run official courses for coaches and instructors should take similar steps.



Improving the system of teaching Hebrew in Arab schools — This is a long-term policy recommendation.



Improving the system of teaching Arabic in Jewish schools — This is a long-term policy recommendation.

⁷⁴ Interview with Adi Stadler, 22.04.2021.




Barrier D: Girls dropping out of sports between the ages of 14-18


Teenage girls drop out of sports for many reasons. Among these are false stereotypes some parents have regarding athletic girls.⁷⁵


In addition, there is the issue of transportation for girls who must travel to training facilities outside their locality. In Jewish society, it is common for parents to drive their children to extracurricular activities in the afternoons. This is not common in Arab society, and efforts should be made to implement this custom in Arab communities in order to address the transportation problem.

Finally, the parents of the Arab girls are often of especially low socioeconomic status, receive less assistance for extracurriculars than Jewish parents of similar socioeconomic status, and there is often a stigma against applying for scholarships to fund their daughters' activities.

Policy recommendations for working with parents:

 **Educating parents to overcome stereotypes** — The “Migrash Mishela” website recommends training programs to explain the importance and value of girls playing sports and help parents overcome their concerns.⁷⁶

 **Administrative-community assistance in building a parental carpool system** — The transportation system in the regional councils is such that buses take a long time and are relatively expensive within the context of the family budget. One way to minimize costs and use time more effectively is by establishing a parental carpool system from their locality to the sporting activities. Since there is currently no culture of doing this in the Arab localities, there is a need for administrative assistance and community support in order to build these systems and maintain them over the years.

 **Assistance with collecting fees from parents** — In the short term, we recommend charging a symbolic fee; in the medium term we recommend charging a subsidized fee. At the same time, we recommend actively helping parents fill out application forms for scholarships. Currently it is hard to collect fees for activities from parents in the Arab localities of regional councils.⁷⁷ This is primarily due to the families having low budgets. In most cases, families with a similar socioeconomic background in Jewish localities receive significant subsidies for extracurriculars, which are not given in the regional councils. Many Arab parents do not apply for the scholarships offered by the council — sometimes due to language difficulties and sometimes because they feel uncomfortable asking for help. Therefore, it is necessary to provide assistance in filling out scholarship application forms. To this end, the council should allocate a community social worker whose job is to proactively help parents fill out scholarship application forms and make this service more accessible.

⁷⁵ Interview with Ofri Yakir, 25.05.2021.

⁷⁶ [Tip 4: Talk to the Parents](#), from the Migrash Mishela website. (Hebrew) Last visit: 14.12.2022

⁷⁷ Interview in Meiser on 10.08.21.

Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport in collaboration with the Ministry of Education:

-  **Strengthening the status of sports classes in the state education system in general and the Arab education system in particular.**
-  **Encouraging Arab schools to participate in the school leagues for girls' sports.**

Many recommendations for coaches about working with girls can be found in the literature, and thus we chose not to expand on the topic in this report.

Summary

This report examines the underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball in Israel. There are several major reasons for this underrepresentation: 1. Unequal distribution of funding; 2. A shortage of suitable infrastructure; 3. A shortage of high-quality, Arabic-speaking female coaches; 4. A lack of cultural compatibility.

The discrimination in allocations for Arab girls in basketball is multidimensional, because Arab girls belong to several groups that are marginalized in Israel. First, in Israel sports as a whole suffer from low funding in comparison to other OECD countries; and within this, basketball in particular suffers from lower funding than soccer, which enjoys a majority of the sports resources in Israel. Added to this, Arab girls suffer from both discrimination against women and discrimination against Arabs in Israel in funding in general and sports funding in particular.

Significant funding is necessary to close the existing gaps. Part of this will need to be provided with a supplemental sports budget, but there is also room for redistributing the existing sports budgets in Israel today.

Money is not the only thing needed for promoting Arab girls in basketball in Israel. The issue of underrepresentation of Arab girls in basketball falls under the responsibility of different bodies in various government ministries. This report focuses on what is being done at Athena — the Center for Promoting Women's Sports in Israel, and in the regional councils. While working on the report, insights into the work of the Ministry of Culture and Sport also emerged, which require more in-depth study separately.

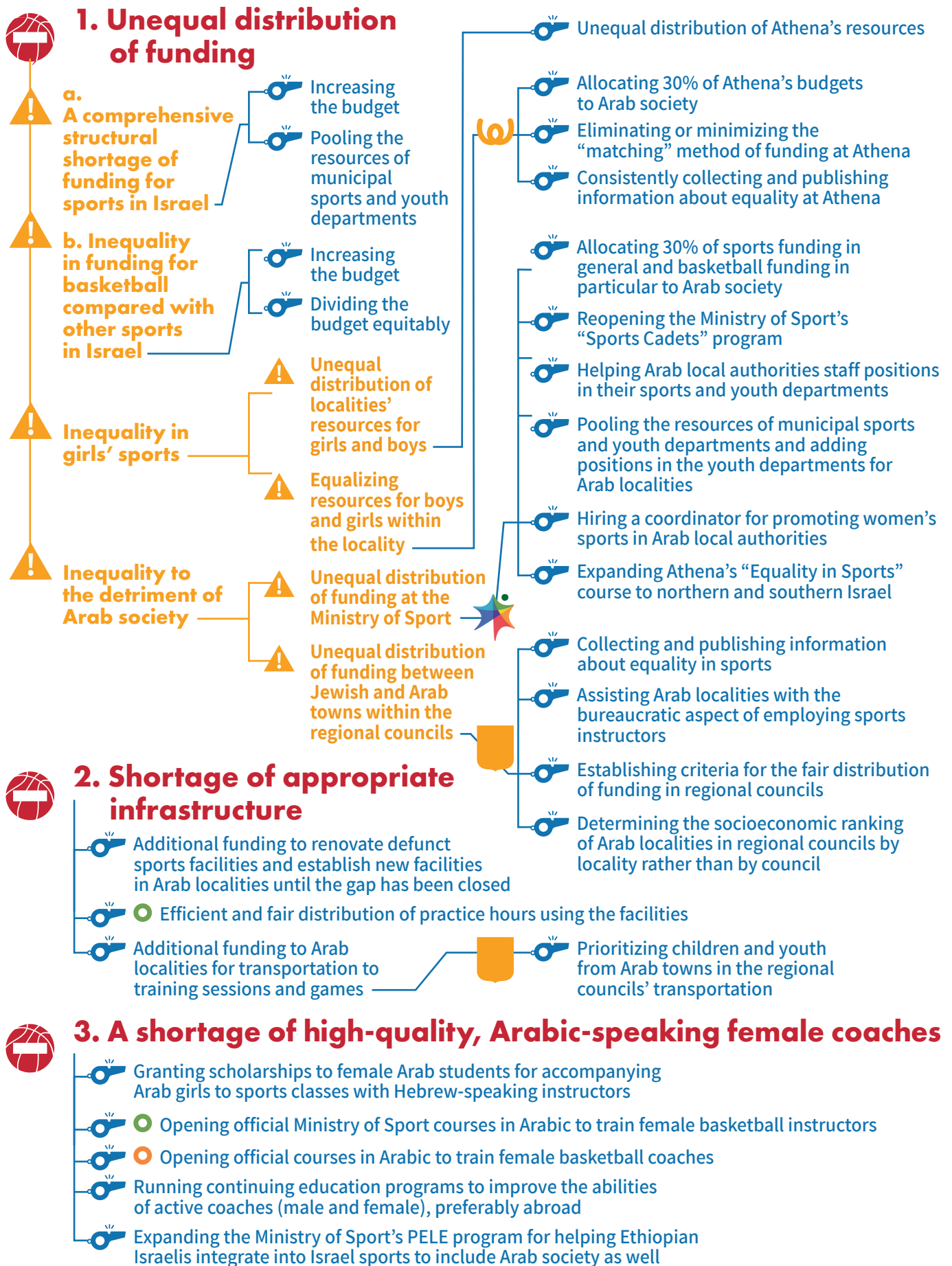
These bodies must undergo changes that include pledging fair representation to the Arab population and increasing their institutional familiarity with the characteristics of Arab society in Israel and the Arab local authorities, in order to tailor policy accordingly. A significant example of this is the need to eliminate or reduce the requirement for matching sports funding, which places the Arab local authorities at a significant disadvantage.

The change itself is long-term. Professional athletes require years of cultivation before they become competitive on a national and international level. Cultivating athletes requires establishing infrastructure and organizations for even the youngest ages. To this end, it is necessary to create permanent positions in the local authorities and national organizations, and also to find a way to reach girls in their native language.

A large portion of the policy recommendations in this report are simply a matter of decisions and willpower and should be implemented sooner rather than later. But even the recommendations that require funding — whether by adding supplemental budgets or by distributing existing budgets more fairly — must be implemented. Equality does not happen on its own — not in Israel and not in the rest of the world. As we have seen in Western countries, achieving equality requires a commitment to far-reaching changes, especially in the distribution of funding.

Integrating Arab Girls into Israeli Basketball

Mapping the Problem Definitions, Barriers and Policy Recommendations





4. Lack of cultural compatibility



a. Service providers in the regional councils and government ministries are insufficiently familiar with Arab society



Policy recommendations for regional councils

Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport

Policy recommendations for Athena

Developing and running training programs about Arab society

Committing to fair representation of Arab society in regional councils

Committing to fair representation of the Arab population at ministry headquarters

Adding a position for promoting women's sports among minority groups

Encouraging Jewish coaches to work in Arab society

Ensuring fair representation of the Arab population at Athena headquarters

Making the national training centers more accessible to female Arab athletes

Increasing representation of Arab society in the organization's programs

Establishing a specific committee to find solutions for the issue of basketball uniforms for female players from traditional societies

In the first stage, with interpreters

At the second stage by improving the level of Arabic spoken among Jews and Hebrew among Arabs

Educating parents in order to overcome stereotypes

Administrative-community assistance in setting up a parental carpool system

Assistance with collecting fees from parents

Strengthening the status of sports classes in the education system

Encouraging Arab schools to participate in the school leagues for girls' sports

Legend:



Problem



Barrier



Policy recommendation



Short term



Middle term



Long term



Athena



Ministry of Sport



Regional councils

Providing transportation from Arab localities to national training centers in Ashkelon, Netanya and Karmiel

Adding two national training centers in areas near Arab localities

Bringing Arab athletes from different sports into the organization's programs such as Athena Ambassadors

Conducting a thorough investigation of why female Arab basketball players don't take part in the organization's programs

Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Jewish coaches

Appointing Arab coaches to work alongside Arab coaches

Improving second-language teaching (Hebrew and Arabic) at schools in Israel

Collecting a symbolic fee

Collecting a subsidized fee

Proactively helping parents fill out application forms for scholarships



a. Shortage of role models



a. Lack of accessibility due to language barriers



Assistance with communication between Arabic-speaking players and Hebrew-speaking coaches



Making the Wingate Institute more accessible to Arab society



a. Girls dropping out of sports between the ages of 14-18



Policy recommendations for working with the parents of female Arab basketball players



Policy recommendations for the Ministry of Sport

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Ms. Moran Messica Eidelman, CEO, Athena — 02.10.2022.

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Mr. Samih Amrani, Meiser secretary — 10.08.2021.

Mr. Ohad Bloch, Director of the Menashe Regional Council Sports Department — 10.08.2021

Ms. Ofri Yakir, Ball Sports and Women's Leadership Coordinator at Athena — 25.05.2021

Ms. Adi Stadler, Basketball Coordinator at Athena — 22.04.2021

Mr. Naif Arada, in charge of the Education Portfolio at Meiser — 10.08.2021

Ms. Nurit Sharvit, Sports Authority Supervisor and Director of the Women's Sports and Popular Sports Division at the Ministry of Culture and Sport — 28.09.2022

Ms. Netta Abugov, member of the Committee on the Periphery and the Committee on Women in the Israel Basketball Association — 05.04.2021