

MONITOR REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT DECISION 3790 FOR INVESTMENT IN EAST JERUSALEM

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WRITTEN BY:
NOA DAGONI & EREZ WEGNER

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I. Introduction

This report is the fifth installment of [Ir Amim's monitoring reports of Government Decision 3790 "for the Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem"](#) and the third report of the joint monitoring project of Ir Amim and the workers' organization WAAC-Maan.

This report will focus on the topic of education in East Jerusalem, separately addressing the formal education system and informal education programs. On the topic of formal education, the main points of [Ir Amim's Education Report from this past September](#) will be presented. On the topic of informal education, the findings of [the study on The Needs and Recommendations in the Field of Informal Education in East Jerusalem](#), which was prepared for Ir Amim by Dr. Samira Alayan and Shada Kashkoush, will be presented.

Government Decision 3790 For Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and for Economic Development in East Jerusalem, which was passed in May 2018, provides for socio-economic investment in East Jerusalem with a budget of approximately 2.1 billion NIS over a period of five years. The total investment in the area of education covered by the Government Decision is 445 million NIS. The main portion of the investment is distributed between the informal education programs, for which 206 million NIS has been allocated, and for the support and development of schools teaching the Israeli curriculum – for which educational support and unique programs, rental of structures, and material development of the buildings are provided. Approximately 193 million NIS is invested in institutions teaching the Israeli, constituting 43.4% of the total budget allocated for investment in education in the Government Decision. Noticeably missing from this Decision is any response to the severe shortage in classrooms in East Jerusalem, as discussed later in this report.

[Ir Amim's Education Report from last September](#) describes the wide-reaching influence of the COVID-19 crisis on the educational system in East Jerusalem. As of the completion of this report, the East Jerusalem school system is not operating, in accordance with a nationwide mandatory lockdown. However, the East Jerusalem schools closed more than a week before the general lockdown went into effect, as 15 East Jerusalem neighborhoods were defined as "red" neighborhoods. This means they experienced particularly high levels of contagion. According to Ir Amim's estimation, more than 80% of the students in the Arab education sector in Jerusalem have not attended class since the beginning of the school year on September 1. As serious as this is, it is unsurprising

in view of the over-crowding, severe shortage, sub-standard infrastructure, and the poor sanitary conditions of classrooms in East Jerusalem.

According to the appraisals of the East Jerusalem school principals, 40% to 60% of the students cannot engage in remote learning due to problems with the internet infrastructure in East Jerusalem neighborhoods, which is in addition to the dearth of computers available to students for the purposes of remote learning.

Against the background of this acute crisis and the accompanying uncertainty, this report presents a picture of the situation and the challenges in the education sector in East Jerusalem, while discussing both what is contained in Government Decision 3790 and what is missing from it.

The educational system is one of the principal victims of the COVID-19 crisis in Israel, during which there has been a partial or complete shutdown to the schooling routine for a yet unknown period of time. In East Jerusalem, the educational system has been dealt a particularly severe blow, in view of the ongoing, profound problems of neglect and discrimination that have been plaguing it throughout years. During this critical period of time, the various officials in the systems involved in the implementation of Government Decision 3790 must act with the students' best interests as their utmost priority – without decisions stemming from political considerations. All of the measures required to ensure a safe and beneficial return to the educational routine, to the extent possible in these times, must be carried out without discrimination and with full transparency with respect to all of the schools and students within the education system. Great effort must be invested in order to prevent a further increase, courtesy of the COVID-19 crisis, of the existing gaps between students in the various educational systems in Jerusalem. The education system is an island of stability in times of crisis – investment in it is an investment in the society as a whole and serves to strengthen the community's resilience.

2. Formal Education in East Jerusalem

Background

Government Decision 3790 invests a total of approximately 239 million NIS in the formal education system in East Jerusalem, more than 80% of which is allocated exclusively for investment in schools using the Israeli matriculation curriculum. Even in other budgetary components that are

not conditioned, the Government Decision grants preferential treatment to schools using this curriculum.¹ This is in spite of the fact that prior to the implementation of the Decision, fewer than seven percent of Palestinian students were studying in accordance with the Israeli curriculum.

According to the [Status Report Regarding the Implementation of the Government Decision of the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage from 2019](#), the budget that was transferred from the government and the municipality for the education sector in 2019 (two-thirds was allocated for the 2018-2019 school year and one-third for the 2019-2020 school year) was utilized in full. We are aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the realization of objectives set forth in the Government Decision for the 2019-2020 school year, but the Municipality has not yet responded to our request for statistics regarding this matter.

Biased Budgetary Investment and Ignoring the Severe Classroom Shortage

In the last two school years, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, nearly 50% of the entire budget for education pursuant to Government Decision 3790 was allocated for processes to encourage the adoption of the Israeli matriculation curriculum, and especially for remodeling and material development of schools using it. Among the schools that do not use the Israeli curriculum, no resources are allocated for their material development as part of the Government Decision. Moreover, no added classrooms resulted from the full implementation of this budget, despite the serious shortage of more than 3,000 classrooms in East Jerusalem.

On the organizational level, special resources are also invested in promoting the Israeli curriculum. A team designated by the framework of the Government Decision is authorized with constructing work plans according to neighborhood in order to meet the goal of increasing the number of first grade classes using the Israeli curriculum by 15 classes per year.² It also transpires from the transcript of the meeting of the “permanent committee,” the steering committee for Government Decision 3790, that states preference for these classrooms is accorded to

¹ Section 1(a)(2) of [Government Decision 3790 for the Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem](#).

² [Status of the Government Decision 2019 – The Permanent Committee, the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage](#), p. 6.

opening new primary schools that will use the Israeli curriculum exclusively, in order to avoid the influence of those within transitioning schools who oppose use of the Israeli curriculum.³ From the education report it appears that there may have been an increase in the number of classes using the Israeli curriculum, but this has done nothing to reduce the dire classroom shortage. In other words, in the wake of the implementation of Decision 3790, we have not seen a significant jump in absolute classroom construction in such manner as required. It is more reasonable, unfortunately, that the same number of classrooms are continuing to be built, albeit in a biased manner, in order to coerce the use of the Israeli curriculum.

And indeed, the biases exhibited by the Israeli authorities beginning to transition students to the Israeli curriculum has started to be noticeable this year. Whereas in the 2018-2019 school year the number of students studying according to the Israeli curriculum was only 7,376, in the 2019-2020 school year 18,953 students (13,739 in the official educational system and 5,214 in the recognized non-official system) were studying according to the Israeli curriculum – an increase of more than 150%. Even with such an increase, this number represents fewer than 20% of the students in the East Jerusalem schools, yet approximately half of the entire education budget provided for by the Government Decision was invested in these students.

Thus, while it is possible to see the recruitment effort with respect to the promotion of the Israeli curriculum – due to budgetary and systemic preferences – the severe, profound, and longstanding problems from which the educational system in East Jerusalem has suffered were left without any appropriate resolution.

[Ir Amim's Education Report from September 2020](#) deals extensively with these problems, including: continuation of the upward trend in number of students in recognized but unofficial schools, reflecting the authorities' failure to live up to their commitment to allow interested students to move from recognized but unofficial schools to the official educational system; the 31,485 'invisible children', representing almost one-quarter of compulsory school age children in East Jerusalem, whose educational status is not known at all to the Jerusalem Municipality; and the increase in the absolute shortage of classrooms in East Jerusalem to 3,794 classrooms.

³ [Summary of Hearing – The Permanent Committee – Implementation of Government Decision 3790 from Oct. 29, 2019](#), site of the Ministry of Jerusalem and Heritage.

The drop-out rate among 9th to 12th grade students in East Jerusalem between 2015-2018 was 26.5%⁴ – almost four times that of the Arab sector in Israel. Government Decision 3790 indeed relates to the drop-out rate within the topic of employment and welfare, and sees the solution as part of those for encouragement of employment, prevention of drop-outs and situations of risk among children and adolescents, and the breaking of the poverty cycle. For all of these programs together, however, the budgetary allocation is only 75 million NIS for five years – a small amount considering the entrenched nature of this problem and in view of the amounts of money invested in promoting the Israeli curriculum.

Given the deeply rooted nature of these problems that are only expected to continue and worsen throughout the years of the five-year plan, the massive, biased investment that places the promotion of the Israeli curriculum at the top of the list of priorities in the Government Decision is particularly galling. It can only be concluded that when the furthering of Israeli sovereignty in East Jerusalem is the government's goal, it can demonstrate its ability to act in order to advance its desired goals by way of inappropriate political considerations having nothing to do with issues of education nor the best interest of the students.

3. Informal Education in East Jerusalem

Background

The amount allocated for informal education in Government Decision 3790 is 206 million NIS over the course of five years (beginning in May, 2018), and it constitutes almost one-half of the entire amount designated for investment in the area of education in the Decision.

Informal education is comprised of a broad array of programs intended for children and adolescents beginning with elementary school students. It includes enrichment and free-time activities for after school hours, youth organizations, learning centers, extracurricular classes, and more. In special cases, it also includes enrichment programs during school hours.

In July 2020, the [Study of Needs and Recommendations in the Area of Informal Education in East Jerusalem](#) was issued. The research was carried out for Ir Amim as part of a joint monitoring project of Ir Amim and the

⁴ [The Government Ombudsman, Special Audit Report, Development and Strengthening of the Status of Jerusalem – Part 2](#), Jerusalem, June, 2019, p. 341.

workers' organization WAAC-Maan by Dr. Samira Alayan and Shada Kashkoush, researchers at the School of Education of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The study examined the informal education needs in East Jerusalem in comparison with how these needs are addressed by the implementation of Government Decision 3790. The study is based upon in-depth structured interviews with various people involved in informal education in East Jerusalem – school principals, heads of parents committees, and senior officials from the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality.

During the 2019-2020 school year, 24,375 students from first through twelfth grades participated in informal education programs in East Jerusalem. Most of the activities were held in official schools and a small number were held in recognized but unofficial schools – In such cases only in those which use the Israeli curriculum.⁵ Channeling most of the informal education programs exclusively to this segment of the school system is outrageous in light of the responsibility of the authorities themselves for the lack of classrooms in the official schools, meaning that many Palestinian children are studying within the recognized but unofficial system due to the absence of an alternative.

The Main Findings of the Study of Informal Education in East Jerusalem – Needs and Recommendations

The study examines the needs in East Jerusalem in the area of informal education as opposed to how such needs are addressed in the implementation of the Government Decision. The study includes in-depth interviews with the various relevant figures: school principals, directors of community centers, senior officials of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality and the heads of parents' committees.

The principals represent diverse schools throughout East Jerusalem-including from neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier. They head official schools; recognized but unofficial schools; elementary, secondary and special education schools; and schools separated by gender and mixed-gender schools. Most of these schools use the Palestinian curriculum while others either use the Israeli curriculum exclusively or as a supplement to the Palestinian curriculum.

⁵ Maliha Zugair and Elisheva Milikowsky, [Informal Education as a Tool for Reducing Gaps in East Jerusalem](#) (The Jerusalem Institute for Policy Research, 2020).

As transpires from the study, there is a wide variety of available activities for informal education in East Jerusalem. Over the past two years there has been an increase in such activities and greater commitment of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality for the operation and funding of the endeavor.

As stated in the study, the broad scope of informal education activities developed in the last two years is noticeable, particularly in light of the existing lack of formal education infrastructure and the lack of physical infrastructure for carrying out the programs. In view of this absence, the principals and the heads of the parents' committees both emphasized the need for informal education programs that prevent drop-outs and programs that 'prepare their children for an advancing world and the job market.'

In the wake of the findings, the report makes a variety of policy recommendations:

1. It is appropriate to increase the involvement of the school principals and the parents in decision-making with respect to the content of the informal education programs.
2. The involvement of the parents in the content of the programs and the necessary cultural and social accommodation must be significantly increased.
3. The involvement and cooperation between the principals, the parents' committees and the responsible officials from the Ministry of Education and the Education Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality must be increased.
4. It is worthwhile to consider operating programs according to the specific needs of each school and to enable the school to construct programs specifically geared to its needs.
5. There must be a detailed and thorough presentation of the programs to the school principals prior to them having to choose programs for their schools.
6. There must be transparency regarding the considerations of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality in choosing the programs and distributing them to the schools.

7. The number of students participating in the informal education programs must be increased. There should be a goal of increasing the number of students participating in such programs by at least 50% of the number of students in the school system in East Jerusalem in the next two years.
8. Transparent criteria for choosing the students for participation in the programs is necessary, in order to: increase the provision of equal opportunities, to enable weaker students to participate, and to ensure that students are chosen according to their needs and not to enhance the school's image.
9. It is appropriate to consider holding extra-curricular activities not just according to the required percentage of attendance, and to enable a variety of appropriate activities according to quality-based criteria as well.
10. It is appropriate to allocate funds for the programs not just according to the percentage of students participating, but rather mainly according to additional quality-based criteria such as their long-term contribution and the extent to which they result in leadership development.
11. The distribution of successful programs must not be contingent upon adoption of the Israeli curriculum. The vast majority of students study according to the Palestinian curriculum and it is suitable to the culture of the East Jerusalem community. Making the availability of the more successful programs contingent upon adoption of the Israeli curriculum hurts the schools and the image of informal education.
12. It is worthwhile to expand the scope of the programs that have enjoyed broad success, such as surfing, outdoor adventure and swimming that take place outside of the daily school setting, in spite of their costs. This is also important in view of the lack of leisure time activities and public facilities outside of the informal education system, therefore these programs should be operated on a long-term basis.
13. Swimming classes should be expanded at least for the next two years to half of the existing schools. The swimming classes also require sensitive and up-close cultural accommodation in coordination with the parents, in order to enable the girls to participate in the lessons.

14. Hebrew language study is more appropriate for the formal education system and the scope of such classes should be significantly increased. As part of the informal education program, Hebrew language studies could be promoted in an experiential format, but not at the expense of the allocation of hours for study as part of the formal education program.
15. It is important to increase high-quality leadership and guidance programs, such as the debate program. In spite of the political problem, informal education must also offer leadership programs for the empowerment of young people in East Jerusalem- both boys and girls- in the spirit of independence, criticism, freedom, openness and creativity in order to develop personal, social and political identity.
16. There is a need to expand informal education to programs of technological training, hi-tech courses, programming etc.
17. The appointment of informal education coordinators (“Rakazei Ogen”) from the school staff should be considered, but without impairment of necessary diversity and freshening the ranks.
18. The schools should be compensated for expenses laid out for activities taking place on school premises for purposes such as supervision, security, cleaning, photocopying and utilities.
19. The supervision of counselors from outside providers should be increased and training and continuing education courses should be provided for these counselors as well.
20. It is worthwhile to further examine the possibility of also providing programs through the many high-quality civil associations that exist in East Jerusalem, and to the extent necessary to examine creative solutions to difficulties arising out of activity together with the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality.
21. Informal education programs must include transportation for the students.
22. Informal education programs must include a budget for nourishing meals.
23. There is a need for programs accommodating the needs of students with disabilities and appropriate, specific training for

counselors for work with these students. These programs should also be funded in a manner consistent with special needs.

24. The continued existence of informal education and its expansion depends upon the necessary improvement of infrastructure in East Jerusalem. It is imperative to continue to devote a great deal of resources to addressing the massive shortage of sports fields, halls for indoor activities, swimming pools and places for children to gather together in their free time.



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Ir Amim is an Israeli nonpartisan organization that deals with the complexity of life in Jerusalem in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The organization acts to promote stability, equality and a consensual political future in Jerusalem.

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The workers' organization WAAC-Maan is a general workers organization which unites workers in Israel. In addition, the organization unites Palestinian workers who work for Israeli employers in industrial areas in the areas of the settlements. For twenty years the organization has operated a branch in East Jerusalem which assists the residents there to realize their social rights and acts to promote fair employment for women.