

**Sikkuy-Aufoq**

**2023**

**Annual Report**

סיכון-אופוק סיקווי-אף





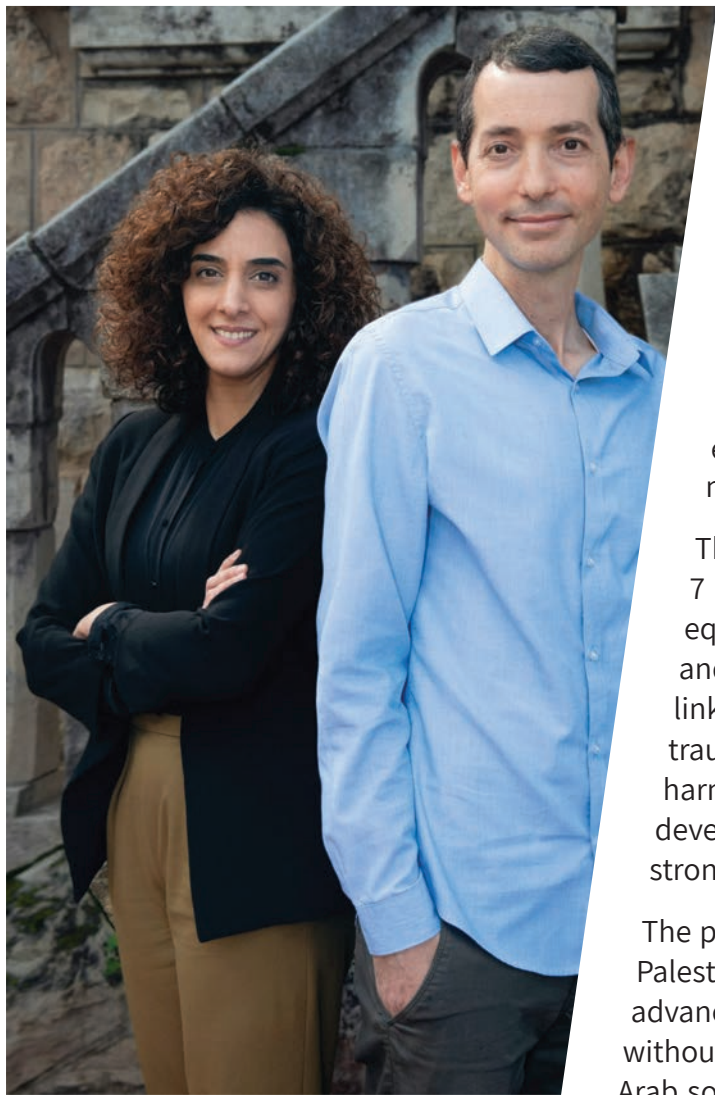
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Roots of hope in times of trouble

# 2023 was one of the most turbulent and painful years we have experienced



## Dear friends of Sikkuy-Aufoq,

2023 was one of the most turbulent and painful years we have experienced. The year began with the judicial coup that threatens to trample the fundamental values of democracy and equality, continued with an explosion in the epidemic of crime in Arab society, and concluded with the horrifying massacre and devastating war that are still making the ground shudder beneath our feet. This past year has been devastating to both peoples living here between the river and the sea and is threatening the lives of us all. As 2023 drew to a close it became obvious that the systems of government and society are in profound crisis. Democratic institutions, good governance in the civil service, our personal and collective security, the economy, the labor market and the education system – all these are at risk as is the continued existence of shared and mixed Arab-Jewish spaces.

The evolution of the relationship between Arabs and Jews inside Israel since October 7 underscores the fundamental connection between the advancement of material equality between Jews and Arabs in Israel, the need and obligation to recognize and respect the status of Arab society as a national minority in Israel, and the strong link between the Arab citizens of Israel, the Palestinian people, and the on-going trauma of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The hostile environment that is Israel today harms relationships between citizens, damages Arab society's social and economic development, will in the end severely impact the economy of the entire country, and strongly limits civil society's ability to continue to promote a shared society.

The pathway to a fully equal and shared society in Israel and resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are intertwined and interdependent. We know that the goal of advancing substantive equality between Arab and Jewish citizens cannot be reached without attaining the goal of respect for Arab society and acceptance of the status of Arab society as a national minority in Israel. We are also certain that neither of these goals can be fully realized without recognition of the strong link between the Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinian people and without a just, mutually agreed, and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israel conflict. That is, realization of our vision of equality and partnership will enable Arab society to become more involved and influential in the public arena in Israel, which is a necessary step towards resolution of the national conflict both as a society and as a country. In turn, as political actions for

conflict resolution gradually expand, relationships between Arabs and Jews in Israel will improve and many obstacles that now stand in the way of an equal and shared society in Israel will be eradicated. We are proud to share that we have decided to update our Vision to reflect our growing certainty. This document is currently in final review and will be released in coming weeks.

Finally, and despite the tremendous difficulty and complexity of the circumstances in this time of overwhelming darkness, there are several sources of light. The Sikkuy-Aufoq team, who experienced fear and loss just like everyone else, have moved from frozen shock to work and impact. We've been able to put the pain to one side and continue to work together in an equal and shared environment, working hard to promote our goals during this emergency and prepare for what comes after the war. Months into this war and despite the volatile relationships between Jews and Arabs in Israel and the persistent fear that the events of May 2021 will recur, Jews and Arabs continue to work and study together, upholding routines even during this time of emergency. As time goes by more and more cooperative efforts emerge between Jews and Arabs to aid civilians and support those hurt by the war – Arabs and Jews alike. Our supporters in Israel and the world, who continue to stand by our side and believe in the possibility – sikkuy – of advancing the vital goals of equality and partnership and are able to look to the horizon – aufoq – even and especially now.

These are rays of light, and they grant us the strength we need to persevere and support Arab society and advance a shared society for all during this time of emergency; preserve what already exists – accomplishments due to the tenacious struggle for equality we have waged over the past several years with our partners; work to rehabilitate the terrible damage caused during the war, cope wisely with the risks and opportunities that arise from it; and continue to advance equality and partnership more broadly and profoundly so that the day after, and all the days in the future, are truly better for all.

Raghad Jaraisy and Ofer Dagan | **Co-Executive Directors**



# 2023 in numbers

2023 before October 7 was a devastating year for the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel

## Murders in Arab society<sup>1</sup>

244  
2023

88%  
Due to guns

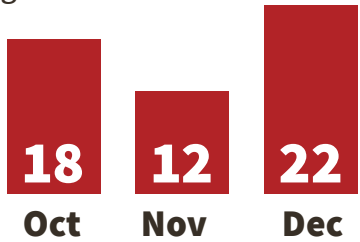
160  
2022

### Sources:

- 1. Abraham Initiatives
- 2. HaAretz
- 3. Bank of Israel
- 4. Achord Center research findings from a representative subject pool of Jewish Israelis: (63.7% right, 25.3% central, 11% left)
- 5. Negev Co-Existence Forum

## 2023 after October 7 was even worse

While immediately following Oct 7 there was a significant reduction in murders, the murder rate in December moved drastically higher.<sup>1</sup>



including thousands issued by Ben-Gvir's cronies and national service teenagers empowered by his National Security Ministry, with minimal training to authorize deadly weapon permits (Through March 2024).<sup>2</sup>

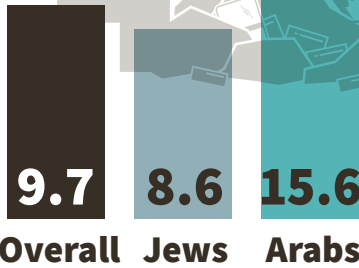


Differential impact of war on unemployment rate<sup>3</sup>

### % Sept



### % Oct



## Opinions of Jewish Israelis:<sup>4</sup>



61%  
"It's ok to remove Arab citizens from their places of work and education"



40%  
"Verbal violence against Arab citizens is ok"



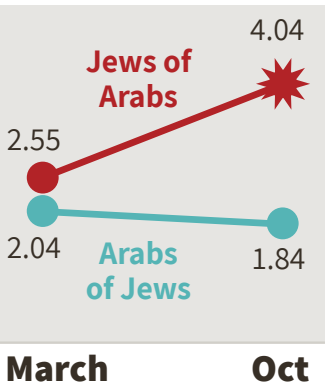
80%  
"It's ok to do so, if the Arab citizens express empathy for the residents of Gaza"



22%  
"Physical violence is ok"

Changes in emotion measured in March and in October after the start of the war, on a scale of 1-6:<sup>4</sup>

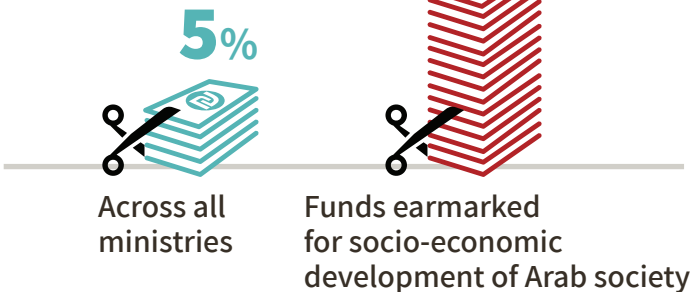
### Hatred of the 'other'



### Lack of trust

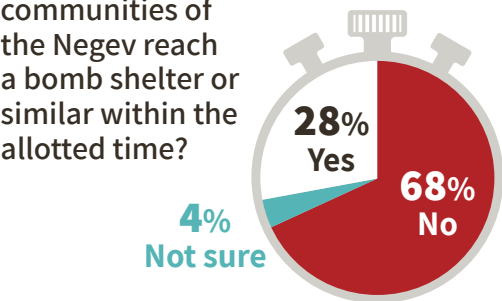


Government cuts to the national budgets to pay for the war effort:



## Bedouin Arab citizens:<sup>5</sup>

Could the Bedouin communities of the Negev reach a bomb shelter or similar within the allotted time?



In the unrecognized villages, more than



100,000 citizens with no shelters<sup>5</sup>



80% Were very concerned about their homes being hit by missiles

19 KILLED

10 MISSING

several were among those kidnapped to Gaza.

# Achievements before October 7

Strengthening Arab local authorities is critical to the reduction of violence and crime in Arab society. Posts by Sikkuy-Aufoq

## Advancing material equality

### 1 Advanced increased income for Arab local authorities

In the past years, Sikkuy-Aufoq worked in cooperation with the National Committee for Arab Mayors (NCAM) and Injaz Center for Professional Arab Local Governance to advance changes in the funds distribution mechanisms of the Funds for Reducing Gaps Between Local Authorities (which is a government mechanism through which local authorities receive a relative portion of the property tax paid by government facilities, and is designed to strengthen weak local authorities). We are thrilled to share that our joint efforts succeeded; the new guidelines for the funds' distribution mechanism published by the Interior Ministry included some of our policy recommendations, leading to an increased income for Arab local authorities who will receive 33% out of a total of NIS 367 M instead of 21%. We are aware that the new funds' distribution mechanism is far from being optimal as it still includes some discriminatory criteria against Arab local authorities, and we will continue working vis-a-vis the relevant government ministries to address these inequalities.



### 2 Streamlined the detailed planning processes in Arab towns, leading to the removal of broad policy barriers in the area of detailed planning and land re-parcelization

Following intensive advocacy, the Planning Administration adopted our policy recommendation together with the Arab Center for Alternative Planning and the National Committee for Arab Mayors to streamline the detailed planning processes in Arab towns, which is the determining factor for the issuance of housing permits. As a result of our advocacy, the Planning Administration has agreed to adjust the process of approving detailed plan that includes land re-parcelization, significantly shortening the timeframe for the plan approval from approximately 8 years to 3.5 years. This will expedite the issuance of housing permits for unauthorized residential buildings in Arab towns thereby enabling their safe connection to electricity infrastructure. We are proud of our role as being the first organization to identify and research this issue and to communicate it to the relevant government ministries.

### 3 Advanced the completion of paving access roads to all Essential Service Centers in the unrecognized villages in the Negev

In the past 7 years, Sikkuy-Aufoq worked intensively to advance the provision of government services (health and education) for the unrecognized villages through advancing the establishment of Essential Service Centers. Through our work on this issue, we also advocated for the operation of public transportation services in the unrecognized villages. We are thrilled to share that today for all 16 Essential Service Centers in the unrecognized villages there is a paved access road (except for two, for which an access road is currently being paved). This is a remarkable milestone in our work in the Negev, as it will enable the operation of improved public transportation services for the unrecognized villages. This demonstrates the effectiveness of Sikkuy-Aufoq's approach to policy change, and is an example of how combining feasible and professionally-developed policy recommendations with systematic and unwavering advocacy efforts can lead to dramatic changes on the ground in the long term. It is also an outstanding example of the (sometimes frustratingly) slow but ultimately successful nature of our advocacy work.





# Achievements before October 7

Especially now, the Tel Aviv Museum speaks Arabic

## Advancing a truly shared society

### 4 Advanced full Arabic language presence in Tel Aviv Museum.

In the past years, Sikkuy-Aufoq has led a broad process of transforming Israeli museums into truly shared public spaces with equal onsite and online presence of Arabic and Hebrew languages. This included comprehensive mapping of the presence of Arabic language services and information in Israel's leading museums, intensive advocacy efforts to advance the adoption of our policy recommendations. We were pleased to learn that following our collaboration, Tel Aviv Museum completed a broad process of translating the museum's content to Arabic, developed new content tailored to Arab society, established a designated department charged with working with Arab society which includes 11 staff members, a content coordinator, and a strategic consultant, and established a community of artists and significantly expanded their engagement in initiatives advancing shared society. This is a remarkably significant achievement as it ensures that the Tel Aviv Museum is fully and equally accessible to Arab and Jewish citizens alike, but more importantly, it sends a powerful message to Arab citizens that their language and culture are respected.



### 5 Advanced Arabic language in the health system.

In 2023, Sikkuy-Aufoq published mapping research on the presence of Arabic language in the health system. The public campaign for disseminating the findings gained wide exposure and interest among the public and different key stakeholder groups, with more than 5,000 people having signed a petition demanding the Ministry of Health to ensure increased Arabic language presence in the health system. In parallel, Sikkuy-Aufoq advanced a discussion in the Knesset health committee around the findings of the research. This complemented our bottom-up pressure through public advocacy that created increased public demand for advancing our advocacy goals. Among the positive outcomes is that the Knesset health committee agreed with our policy recommendations and included them in the official summary of the meeting. Following the discussion, Sikkuy-Aufoq was approached by the management of 6 hospitals who asked for our help to improve the Arabic language presence in their facilities. This demonstrates the effectiveness of Sikkuy-Aufoq's approach to policy change, using a combination of research-based advocacy, public pressure, and parliamentary tools, and we hope this will be a first step toward ensuring that the Israeli health system is fully and truly shared by Arab and Jewish citizens.



# Challenges before October 7



## 1 An extreme right-wing government coalition

The most significant challenge faced until October 7 continued to be the extreme right-wing coalition government and its goal of remaking Israeli society by limiting the capacity of the democracy's gatekeepers, such as NGOs, to influence government policies, thus enabling further institutionalization of discrimination against Arab society and significantly damaging the prospect and viability of advancing greater equality. During 2023, the government coalition has blatantly attempted to advance a host of new policies that would be detrimental to the advancement of equality and shared society for Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel. To address this challenge, Sikkuy-Aufoq conducted a comprehensive Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan based on our analysis of the coalition agreements. Primary risks identified, as well as our mitigation strategy and action can be found in the previous Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan. This risk assessment and mitigation plan served to ensure continued progress toward our goals and objectives throughout 2023 despite the challenges brought by the new government.

## 2 Unprecedented violence and crime rates in Arab society

Violence and crime continued to be one of the most tragic and painful issues facing Arab society in 2023. In 2022, the government has approved Decision 549; a new plan aiming to address the issue of violence and crime in the long and short terms, and although the number of murders remained high, we began to see a certain decrease in the number of murders and violence incidents. However, the current government has canceled crucial components in this plan, and violence and crime have thus reached shocking and unprecedented heights with 244 Arab citizens having been killed in 2023, more than double than 2022. To best utilize our expertise in addressing this issue, the reduction of violence and crime has become a cross-project issue at Sikkuy-Aufoq; where relevant, projects defined activities related to the root causes of violence and crime and worked to address them. For example, we are currently finalizing research on the availability of mortgages for Arab citizens, and exploring its impact on the growth of the gray market, whose growth is among the main factors for the widespread violence and crime in Arab society.

Sikkuy-Aufoq is also working to optimize the government's efforts for reducing violence in Arab society. We are currently finalizing a policy paper that presents in detail the primary barriers impeding the effective implementation of specific components within GD-549, and are developing concrete policy recommendations to address these barriers. Sikkuy-Aufoq will continue advocating for the implementation of GD-549 to ensure a more effective government intervention in addressing the issue of violence and crime in Arab society. We hope that our efforts in this area will contribute to at least curbing this tragic phenomenon, and that 2024 will be a year with less killing and murder in Arab society.





# Our response to Oct 7 and its aftermath

## in Gaza, the northern border, and throughout Israel

**The initial shock, heartbreak, and paralysis of that horrific Saturday gradually gave way to a more rational assessment of how Sikkuy-Aufoq could most effectively address both the immediate emergency needs of Arab society as well as the longer term needs of Arab-Jewish partnership and shared society.**



We supported emergency efforts in areas such as the prevention of incitement against Arab citizens and violence between Arabs and Jews particularly in mixed cities, and advocated for government emergency policies that took into account the needs of Arab society. At the same time we continued our most critical programs wherever possible to protect achievements in advancing equality and shared society already gained and to maintain forward momentum.

In the arena of emergency actions we specifically channeled our areas of expertise in several critical areas with long-term impact:

- Reducing or preventing incitement against Arab citizens and violence between Arabs and Jews** by providing guidance and content recommendations to municipalities and public institutions (e.g. health services and universities) with mixed populations as well as the mainstream media so that their actions and words can help to prevent the escalation of violence and protect the increasingly fragile fabric of society in Israel. Working together with our partners wherever relevant, we advanced this effort on multiple dimensions including
- Public communications, using our professional networks and advocacy tools to drive the retraction and deletion of inciting materials in traditional media channels and social networks, and strengthen messages of shared society, via personal communications, letter writing, public statements, and directed campaigns;
  - Communication with stakeholders globally in order to impact government actions that are particularly harmful to Arab society, for example the arming of citizens and the intent to reduce government budgets for Arab society such as Government Decision 550

- Mixed cities, collaborating with others in civil society in demanding that leadership of mixed cities advance public messages of the need for restraint, tolerance, and the continued advancement of shared society
- Academia, working with several civil society organizations to encourage the leadership of universities and other educational institutions to provide explicit guidance to their faculty and students regarding the value of shared society and the need for tolerance and restraint;
- In the early days of the war we provided capacity building for activists in Arab society, including the advancement of an effective set of tools, creating with other organizations a group of Arab activists who advanced exposure and awareness of the impact of the emergency on Arab society.

**Providing support and aid to Arab society for managing the emergency, including:**

- Advancing the provision of protection and bomb shelters for the Bedouin Arab citizens living in recognized and unrecognized villages and townships in the Negev, both via advocacy vis-à-vis the relevant government planning committees and via raising public awareness of their suffering and lack of protection on October 7 and subsequently.
- Collaboration in government-sponsored multi-sector processes and forums on various critical topics such as how to protect against negative impact on the employment of Arab citizens and to advance fair representation of Arabs in emergency planning committees;
- Advocating to ensure that government benefits and services being provided to citizens are equally available and appropriate to Arab citizens, for instance ensuring that financial support for small and medium businesses aligns also with the needs of small and medium Arab-owned businesses.



# What will the day after look like and how can we build a better society?

## Where to start with the repairs?

### 1. Budgets and resources

### 2. Building equality-based Arab-Jewish partnership

### 3. Crime and Violence Arab society

For people who believe in their hearts as we at Sikkuy-Aufoq do that a society based on equality for Arab citizens and a truly shared society for all is the only way we can all safely live full, rewarding, and moral lives, one of the greatest challenges will be to repair the fabric of Arab-Jewish relations which were significantly damaged in this latest horrendous conflict. Albeit in sad circumstances, we at Sikkuy-Aufoq believe that the rebuilding effort presents an opportunity to build a society in Israel that is based on true equality, mutual respect and recognition, and one that reflects the belief that the only way to move forward as a society is by strengthening Arab-Jewish partnership. However, there is a risk that the rebuilding could be used by the government to deepen institutionalized inequality, further exclude Arab citizens, and strengthen Jewish supremacy. We believe that the civil society in Israel has a critically important role in ensuring that the rebuilding and reparation process supports rather than undermines the advancement of equality and shared society. A few areas that we identified as critical within this framework are:

1. Budgets and resources. Within this area, we have identified three critical issues:
  - a) The government's five-year plans for Arab society that are threatened with disproportionate damage, including the 5-year plan for the socioeconomic development for the Bedouin community in the Negev who is among the most marginalized populations in Israel, thereby impeding the slow yet gradual gaps-reduction process between Arab and Jewish citizens; a process that civil society organizations together with our partners in the philanthropy helped advance;
  - b) Emergency and rehabilitation funds. To ensure that Arab society needs are considered and addressed in the repair and rehabilitation process through comprehensive needs mapping and participation in defining the rehabilitation policies; and
  - c) Strengthening Arab local authorities as key players in defining and implementing the rehabilitation

plans. In recent years, local authorities have played a crucial role in developing and implementing government policies; in light of the challenges posed by the current government and the mayoral turnover in the recent municipal elections, there is a need to ensure that Arab local authorities have the professional and technical capacities to fulfill this role effectively.

2. Violent crime in Arab towns. In recent years, Arab citizens have lost any sense of safety. Civil society in Israel has to ensure that the government prioritizes the provision of a comprehensive solution to one of the most painful and tragic issues facing Arab society, and that the repair and rebuilding takes this need into account rather than being at the expense of these efforts, otherwise Arab society will continue to bleed;

3. Rebalancing Arab-Jewish partnership. The unthinkable massacre of October 7 and the disastrous war on Gaza, rampant anti-Arab incitement, openly racist posts in social media, ever increasing exclusion and persecution of Arab citizens, and the increased fear-based arming of civilians are all taking a heavy toll on the possibility of building mutual trust. Israeli civil society must provide a saner alternative, one that calls for true Arab-Jewish partnership, for mutual respect and recognition rather than feed the growing distrust and fear, and one that calls for full inclusion rather than further fragmenting what is already a deeply divided society.





# Will a new government be a challenge or an opportunity?

The stunned shock of October 7 and the start of the war evolved into a more quotidian emergency state with a sad and angry population mostly trying to maintain normalcy however possible. In parallel the government has continued to follow an increasingly extremist and incendiary path, offering the public daily doses of hatred, incitement, empty bravado, and the nightmare of an endless war.

And yet. We cannot be blind to the possibility that some time this year the government may fall in one way or another and that a new and less extreme government will be the one responsible for rebuilding a society crippled by war, death, economic pain and a large displaced population from north and south, psychological trauma, and the existential question of what Israel wants to be. It is of course too soon to know what will happen, but we do need to be ready to step up and advance a rebuilding that leads towards a better tomorrow.

We at Sikkuy-Aufoq believe that while this period will be extraordinarily challenging for the government and all its citizens regardless of religion or race, we also believe that it may offer an unprecedented and unique opportunity for all of civil society - NGOs and philanthropic partners - to more forcefully advance our values of equality and shared society. Israel cannot go back to being what it was on October 6, and more and more of the population recognizes that broad issues such as the regional Israel-Palestinian conflict and the relations between Jewish and Arab citizens can no longer be ignored. Too, a new and overwhelmed government may be open to help from civil society experts for addressing the multitude of difficult challenges. We believe that with well-defined projects that target the specific risks and needs of 20% of Israel's population we may together have an unprecedented opportunity to help create a new and better society in Israel.



# Strategic Review 2024

In recent years the Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel have moved from crisis to crisis - from Covid-19 to the creation and activities of Netanyahu's extreme right wing government to October 7 and the subsequent war. For each of these crises Sikkuy-Aufoq has conducted an in-depth analysis of risks and opportunities for which our skills and expertise are relevant, developed mitigation strategies and built action plans that will minimize or eliminate risks and leverage opportunities wherever possible. Our 2024 Strategic Review has defined the risks and opportunities of the current horrific situation that are relevant to Sikkuy-Aufoq and work plans have been aligned to ensure that our work is maximally effective in mitigating the risks and realizing the opportunities.

The risks identified can be grouped into three categories:

Relationships between Arabs and Jews, the Status of Arab Society within Israeli Society, and Socio-Economic Development of Arab Society; details of the risks, opportunities, and actions are in our **2024 Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan**.

# Changes at Sikkuy-Aufoq

## Management

There have been a number of significant institutional changes in 2023, with **Dr. Abed Kanaaneh** replacing **Maisam Jaljuli** as the Arab co-chair of the board, and **Raghad Jaraisy** replacing **Amjad Shbita** as the Arab co-executive director. **Shirin Batshon** replaced Raghad as the Arab co-director of the Equality Policy Department, and **Ella Gil**, who had previously been the coordinator of the Negev projects within the Equality Policy Department was promoted to be the Jewish co-director of the Equality Policy Department. Brief biographies of these new leaders, as well as descriptions of Sikkuy’s current leadership and staff can be found on our website.



Dr. Abed Kanaaneh  
Arab co-chair  
of the board



Raghad Jaraisy  
Arab co-executive  
director



Shirin Batshon  
Arab co-director of  
the Equality Policy  
Department



Ella Gil  
Jewish co-director of  
the Equality Policy  
Department

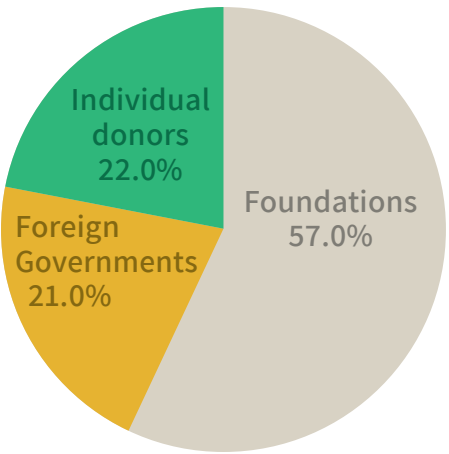
## Sikkuy-Aufoq Endowment Fund

In 2019 Sikkuy-Aufoq laid out its financial strategy of attracting support for an Endowment Fund that would help to ensure the organization’s long-term viability. We are thrilled to report that the Sikkuy-Aufoq Endowment Fund has become a reality with a wonderfully generous initial donation from our long-term partner the Robert and Ardis James Foundation and a matching donation from another of our closest friends who wish to remain anonymous. We thank these donors for their deep and forward-looking commitment to our work and the values we share. Giving to our Endowment Fund is another way to help us advance an equal and shared society for Jews and Arabs in Israel. Please let us know if you’d like to be part of growing this fund for our future.

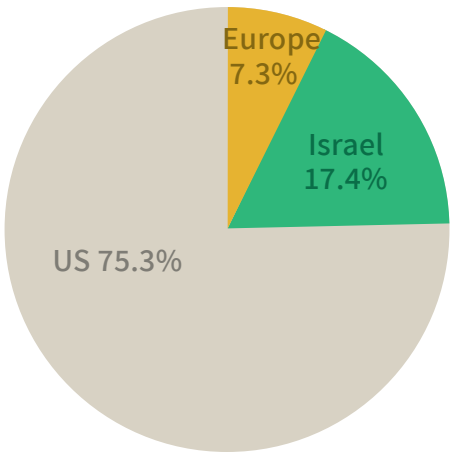
## Financial info - We believe in transparency!

Total revenue: 2,290,000\$

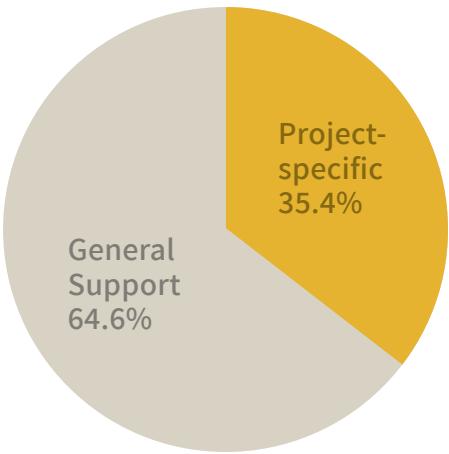
Sources of revenue



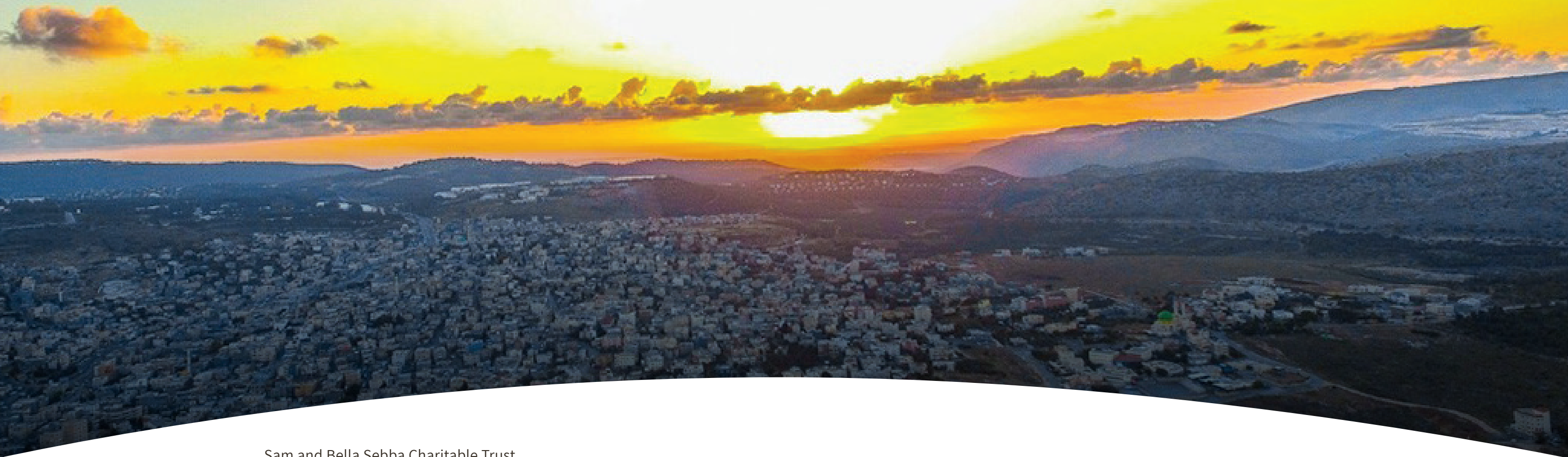
Financial resources by geographical area



Restricted and non-restricted grants







An incomplete  
list of our  
donors

- Sam and Bella Sebba Charitable Trust
- Robert and Ardis James Foundation
- Mori and Doris Arkin
- Sara Avni Foundation
- Individual donors - Israel
- Individual donors - abroad
- The Klarman Family Foundation
- Kathryn Ames Foundation
- Bob and Doris Gordon
- The Gimprich Family Foundation
- Sir Mick Davis
- Delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel
- U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy,  
Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)
- The Yahav Family
- Anonymous





# Together, we can create our shared future!

## To donate to Sikkuy-Aufoq & join our newsletter

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office@sikkuy-aufoq.org.il

### Jerusalem office:

17 Rachel Hameshoreret,  
Jerusalem 9634821

Tel: 02-6541225

Fax: 02-6541108

jerusalem@sikkuy-aufoq.org.il

### Haifa office:

77 Allenby Road,  
Haifa 3566434

טל': 04-8523188

פקס: 04-8523065

haifa@sikkuy-aufoq.org.il



We never stop believing that blue skies are ahead