**A Local Collaborative Initiative in Kiryat Malachi[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**What is the Initiative?**

Kiryat Malachi is a city in Israel’s Southern District. As of 2016, the city had a population of 23,500: 55% under the age of 30 and over 20% new immigrants. The city was ranked in the economic-demographic cluster 4; approximately 40% of families in the city were under the care of the Welfare Division and the city suffered from negative migration (data from: Kiryat Malachi, Education City – Turning Challenges into Levers).

The Collaborative Initiative in Kiryat Malachi is a partnership of diverse players, including leaders, Kiryat Malachi local authority, the Joel Tauber Foundation, and the Gazit Globe group. The initiative was launched in mid-2016 with the goal of “sparking social and economic mobility and securing step progress in Kiryat Malachi” (Local Social Mobility and Step Progress Administration in Kiryat Malachi). In terms of the residents, “the goal of the Initiative is to provide every resident of Kiryat Malachi, from birth through employment, with an equal opportunity for success and self-realization, regardless of their background” (Annual Activity Report).

The Initiative worked to strengthen “local infrastructures in order to increase opportunities for the residents of the city from birth through employment” (Annual Activity Report).

The Initiative works in five stages:

1. “Establishing a Local Administration: A body including representatives of all the stakeholders – residents, the local authority, government ministries, civil society organizations, the business community, and public representatives. The Mayor serves as the chairperson of the Administration, but all the members have equal status. This is the body that leads the consolidation of the agenda and the definition of the joint objectives of the Initiative.”

2. Collection and collation of data about the city – by holding surveys, interviews, measurement, and reports from the city.

3. Defining joint objectives – through a process of public involvement, the Administration defined the key issues on which action should be taken in the city.

4. Building a work plan in each sphere.

5. Building joint measurement means – with the aspiration of creating a transparent process facilitating monitoring of progress (Annual Activity Report).

**What Led to the Thought about the Need for the Initiative?**

Over the years, various organizations have been active in Kiryat Malachi in the hope of creating positive change, particular in the spheres of education and welfare. A learning process held by the Rashi Foundation, the Joel Tauber Foundation, and Gazit Globe, in cooperation with government ministries, found that in the absence of strategic objectives or thinking, the impact of the individual activities – numerous though they were – is “dispersed and fails to create meaningful change” (Local Social Mobility and Step Progress Administration in Kiryat Malachi). The challenges facing Kiryat Malachi were numerous and diverse: changes of local government; a municipal system that had previously been unable to create change; poor achievements of school students in many parameters; young people leaving the city; and a poor local image. It also emerged that cooperation between the active players could secure greater impact than independent action by each organization on its own (Local Social Mobility and Step Progress Administration in Kiryat Malachi). The Mayor, who was involved in formulating these insights and was aware that his city was facing significant demographic change due to accelerated construction, joined the Initiative and led the local model, which focused mainly on activities in the sphere of education. The inspiration for the model was a similar experience in Yeruham.

As noted above, the first stage was the establishment of a local administrative with the goal of “**formulating educational, social, and community policy consistent with the city vision**.” The members of the Administration include representatives of all the sectors in Kiryat Malachi: the municipality and the government, social organizations, educators, activists, residents, and businesspeople (Proposed Outline for the Activity of the Kiryat Malachi Local Project). The Administration’s function was to provide:

A. “An overall view of the planning and thinking processes in the local education system.

B. An overall view of the possibilities for synergy between the sphere of education and other spheres in the city.

C. Defining principles for the work of the city coordinator.

D. Approving the work plan.

E. Supervision, measurement, and evaluation of the progress of the project.

F. Connections to bodies that can contribute to the success of the project.

G. Provision of resources and recruitment of additional resources for the project” (Proposed Outline for the Activity of the Kiryat Malachi Local Project).

The Administration Forum included approximately 30 people and met once every four to six weeks. The Administration established a Steering Committee including the Director-General of the Municipality, the Director of the Education Division, the Local Initiative Coordinator (who runs the Forum and the work teams), and representatives of the Rashi Foundation and Gazit Globe. The Steering Committee meets every two to three weeks. The representatives also maintain regular contact and provide regular reports on the activities.

The operating mechanism follows the “collective impact” model[[2]](#footnote-2) (the mechanism was studied with representatives of collective impact in Israel), a model for tri-sector cooperation based on five basic principles:

• “Agreement on a vision and a joint task (common agenda)

• Defining objectives and criteria and undertaking joint measurement

• Creating a coordinated network of activity by the partners

• Ongoing communication between the partners

• Maintaining an integrating organization responsible for managing the process” (Founding Document). To this end, the partners chose a Local Initiative Coordinator, who is employed by an external body rather than by the municipality. The Coordinator manages the routine processes in the Initiative: meetings, collecting and processing data, budget management, etc.

Out of the various subjects that were defined as vital, it was decided to begin the activities in the sphere of education. Within this sphere, three key areas were selected: informal education, early childhood, and excellence (Annual Activity Report). Regev explains: “The real challenge is to change the mindset of local residents and to crate optimistic, positive, and constructive discourse that recognizes the potential and the levers without ignoring the challenges. There is a need for a city-wide move to restore the residents’ faith and hope that it is possible to make Kiryat Malachi a place that is good to live in. Changing the mindset can happen when meaningful action is implemented in the field, when public participation processes are facilitated, and when the local leaders and the managers of the public system consolidate a terminology of hope and action” (Kiryat Malachi – Education City).

**The Affinity between the Local Initiative and Collaborative Governance**

**Goal** – as noted, the Initiative’s goal is a public one – to secure a significant improvement (“step progress”) in Kiryat Malachi. The desire is to work with the local institutions and the relevant government ministries to strengthen local institutions, leaders, and mechanisms and to influence public awareness in order to advance a public value.

**Leadership** – all the partners joined the Initiative on the basis of the assumption that no single body can secure a significant improvement (step progress) on its own. In addition, all the partners agreed that the Initiative should be led by the Mayor and the municipal leadership (Director-General, directors of the Education and Welfare Divisions, and their senior staff), and that any attempt to set an agenda for the city must be made with the agreement and leadership of the local authority.

**Mechanisms and players** – the mechanism that was developed is a formal one based on a consensus-oriented process of discussion. As noted, the Initiative in the city is led by the Local Social Mobility and Step Progress Administration in Kiryat Malachi. The partnership is managed by the Steering Committee, which is responsible for managing the Initiative and monitoring its actions. The members of the Steering Committee are: The Director-General of the Municipality and representatives of the Rashi Foundation and Gazit Globe. The Director of the Education Division joined in most of the Steering Committee meetings.

The function responsible for coordinating the Initiative on the local level and for coordination between the different bodies is the Local Coordinator, who works alongside the Education Division. The aspiration is that this position will be integrated in the Strategic Planning Division, which is due to be established in accordance with the municipal vision.

**Deliberation** – over the two years of activities to date in Kiryat Malachi, the emphasis has been on two main directions: Creating a vision and building a municipal infrastructure to realize the vision. The aspiration is not to establish a permanent collaborative governance mechanism in the city, but rather to consolidate a sustainable professional infrastructure that will enable the philanthropic bodies to continue on to other initiatives elsewhere.

Building agreement among the players in the Administration is perceived as an important component that should be advanced and preserved. In practice, however, a formal process supporting agreement was not consolidated, and agreement was forged on the basis of dialogue and the desire to consolidate trust between the residents, the municipal representatives, and others involved in work in the city. This trust enabled the creation of profound discussions on a range of issues, including budgetary decisions (for example, it was agreed that several positions would be funded from the Administration’s budget for a limited period, and thereafter the Municipality would fund them from its budget, and this indeed happened in practice).

**Advantages and Disadvantages of the Work in the Initiative**

**Advantages** – the main advantage of the Initiative is the results it has secured: reconstructing infrastructures in the city, particularly human infrastructures (e.g. bringing in professionals into positions that were previously empty; building a system to collect and manage information; and formalizing working and reporting methods). Another advantage is building trust between the various players, and between the players and the residents. The local model is perceived as the main tool facilitating the desired step progress, and the assumption is that this goal could not be secured without the partners. For example, the Initiative sparked a thinking process that led to the creation of a municipal Strategic Planning Unit – not by coercion, but by fostering an understanding of the need for this type of information, gradually and through dialogue. Many of the decisions could have been taken by smaller forums or behind closed doors, but the fostering of discourse as a municipal infrastructure is intended to strengthen the city in the long term.

**Disadvantages** – the main disadvantage in the process is the length of time needed to secure results. As noted, the processes would have been quicker without participation, but it would also have been difficult in this case (if not impossible) to inculcate the processes in the city. Another question concerns the sustainability of the process. Firstly, from the outset the Initiative was not intended to be long term. The goal was to create an infrastructure that could enable the city to maintain a process of participation and strategic thinking by itself. In this sense, the mechanisms that was built and the process it included were a pragmatic tool meeting a need that could not be addressed by other means, rather than a normative mechanisms that will remain in place after the foundations complete their role in the city. Secondly, the collective impact model that was adopted, as explained, does not mandate leadership by the local authority, but allows each player in the partnership to be a leader. In practice, the players who came together in the collaborative governance model in this instance determined that the Mayor would lead the process, but theoretically other players in the same framework, with different values, could have determined a different leader other than the Mayor.

**Contribution of the Initiative to Promoting Public Values**

The Initiative set long-term goals that will create social mobility and step progress. As it did so, the Initiative also advanced additional public values, such as:

**Trust:** One of the main objectives the members of the Initiative seek to secure is to consolidate trust between the different players, and above all between the residents and the municipal institutions. Most of the energy is devoted is devoted to promoting this value. According to Regev, “The main message (and practice) is that this isn’t just another round table of people who come from the outside, bring money, and tell us what do. We are the professionals in the city, and the residents are full partners in decision making.” Regev adds that today, as he sees it, this objective has been secured. One of the proofs of this is that despite personnel changes (the Director of the Education Division, the representative of Gazit Globe, and the Director of the Early Childhood sphere), the level of trust remains high and the working processes are continuing to function.

**Transparency:** Throughout the process, an effort was made to enhance the transparency of all the decisions taken and all the processes they involved. Transparency increases trust, but it also added to the legitimacy of the institutions and particularly the legitimacy of their decisions. Over the past two years, all the information and data have been circulated among the members of the Administration on a regular basis. In addition, a booklet was printed describing the Administration’s work processes, decisions, and budgets, and this was distributed to all the residents of the city. The key points were even publicized on billboards. This process of issuing publications that share knowledge is continuing today.

**Professionalism:** As part of the process of building infrastructures in the city, an attempt was made to integrate the first professionals in the most suitable positions. This creates a public service in the city that not only serves the residents better, but also enhances their trust in the institutions and representatives. By way of example, the Director of the Strategic Planning Unit, the Early Childhood Director, and more recently the Director of Information Systems all entered their positions through this process.

**Integrating Israelis of Ethiopian origin:** One of the key issues in municipal development in Kiryat Malachi is the integration of the Ethiopian-Israeli community. The Administration is active in this field in various spheres. The peak event to date was a trip to Ethiopia, initiated by Gazit Globe, for influential figures in the city (who are not political activists), half of whom were from the Ethiopian community and half from elsewhere. The participants included the Director-General of the Municipality, the Directors of the Education and Welfare Divisions, the Director of the Youth Unit, the Early Childhood Director, school principals, and social activists. The goal was to see the Ethiopian-Israeli community in the city as a catalyst for municipal change. Thanks to the trip changes can be seen in the attitude toward the community, both on the public level and in the municipal institutions, although this process is still at an early stage.

Achievements: To date, after six years supervision by Gazit Globe, including three years in the framework described here, diverse achievements have been reported: A significant improvement in the standard of achievements at the high schools; the doubling of the number of students participating in youth movements and organizations; a change in investment in early childhood, reflected in the allocation of municipal resources; the establishment of a Young People’s Center by the philanthropic organizations, which now operates as a municipal body, and so forth. In addition, the most recent municipal budget allocated significant sums for the Administration’s objectives.

**Conclusions from the Collaborative Governance Case**

The introduction of collaborative governance mechanisms can lead to changes in the role of philanthropic bodies in terms of the setting and implementation of policy. The model of a person who brings money and determines where it will be invested, which was usual in the past, has been replaced by inclusive dialogue addressing broader needs. For example, it has been claimed that cooperation with other players has led to communal and local thinking about the key public value that is to be advanced and the character of the community in general. In this sense, it has been argued that the use of collaborative governance mechanisms changed the role of philanthropy from an external body that arrives with its own agenda and makes decisions by itself to a body that has the status of an important partner in setting and implementing policy.

On the basis of the cooperation in Kiryat Malachi, six key variables can be identified that determine the success of the collaborative governance mechanism:

Firstly – it is not possible to secure the goal without the head of the local authority and local officials. From their perspective, the local authority should lead the process. The role of the local representatives of the local authority is more central than that of the other partners, and the other partners should accept this principle. Moreover, the head of the authority must also cooperate, and must be willing to be flexible and to accept the vital role of the other partners.

Secondly – the process needs a manager. One of the most important conclusions that emerged is that in order to maintain collaborative governance arrangements over an extended period, there must be a coordinator/director who works to advance the process on a daily and substantial level (a backbone organization or director). Without a leading figure capable of recruiting participation and understanding cooperative ventures, it is difficult to maintain the mechanism. This was clear both in Yeruham and in Kiryat Malachi – the role of the local initiative coordinator is very important.

Thirdly – the human factor was found to be extremely significant during the cooperative venture. It became clear that in addition to the formal mechanisms, many informal actions also occurred that supported the mechanism. In other words, partners must be willing to adhere to the value of cooperation, be willing to make do without personal credit, see the action as a product of joint work, and be open to what the process brings.

Fourthly – the action must be accompanied by knowledge (in this instance – the knowledge base provided by Dr. Varda Schiffer, who supervised the process that began in Yeruham). This knowledge relates both to the working model and to the content of the activities. The knowledge helps to legitimize the process, thereby strengthening the bond between the players. It was noted that “the constant collection and analysis of data are extremely important as a basis for decision making by the Administration, which is not necessarily comprised of professionals with prior knowledge.”

Fifthly – the process demands ongoing investment in building and maintain trust. The process of building trust is connected to the partners’ behavior. Key factors include: transparent behavior; strengthening personal connections, including on the informal level; meaningful listening to the residents and to those who do the work; truly bringing yourself to the process; and knowing how to let go. Regev claimed that “this may be the most significant point in the process.” In Yeruham and in Kiryat Gat, the partners sometimes got involved in professional arguments when the local authority wanted to allocate resources to less urgent issues that were not necessarily consistent with the joint objectives that had been defined. During these arguments, typical comments by the municipal leaders included: “At the end of the day, the responsibility rests with us, so when there is disagreement we will make a decision without a profound base of trust.” In Yeruham, the crisis was solved by means of a two-day meeting, including an overnight stay together. Without an agreed solution and without trust, they could not have continued the cooperation.

Lastly – in order to realize any kind of change, there is a need to establish sustainable infrastructures. All these variables combine to create legitimacy for policy and enable the partners to work together. In terms of personnel, for example, it was decided to establish the Strategic Planning Unit in Kiryat Malachi Municipality. In the first and second years, the unit was funded in full by Gazit Globe; over a three-year period, funding was gradually transferred fully to the municipality.

Alongside these insights, several questions remain unresolved:

Firstly – to what extent are the infrastructures really sustainable? In other words, will the local authority really undertake to run the activities and will the partners be able to move on to their next task? (Particularly given local elections and the possibility that a new head of the local authority will be elected).

Secondly – to what extent does the success of the mechanism depend on the personal profile of those who establish it? For example, was the fact that one of the main partners once lived in the city himself a critical variable that will be needed when establishing similar mechanisms?

Thirdly – how is it possible to reconcile the tension between the need to show meaningful change (impact) to the funding bodies by creating short-term successes with the realization that these are long-term processes that require investment in infrastructures?

The final question is more general and relates to the basic essence of collaborative governance: Is it desirable that a philanthropic foundation should influence processes for the shaping and implementation of policy?

Sources

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Regev, Z. *Kiryat Malachi – Education City: Turning Challenges into Levers*. 12 April 2015.

Interview with Mr. Zion Regev, November 2017.

1. This article is based on an interview with Mr. Zion Regev, who served at the relevant time as a supervisor; on the corporate responsibility of Gazit Globe and their representative in the partnership in the city; and on documents forwarded to us in the interview. See the reading list. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “‘Collective impact’ is a model developed in the US as a methodology for promoting the solution of complex social problems. It is based on the assumption that in order to create meaningful social change, a large and diverse number of forces must be recruited from all three sectors to action around a joint definition of the task” (Local Social Mobility and Step Progress Administration in Kiryat Malachi). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)