

Established in 1998, **Sidreh** is the non-profit organization in the Negev, whose mission is to support the Arab Bedouin woman in her pursuit of her full realization of her rights, and those of her community and culture.



Sidreh is a key player in the development of the Bedouin community of the Negev, and we have become a key representative of the Bedouin woman's voice. Sidreh is the only organization with a special focus on reaching women in unrecognized villages across the Negev. We see the empowerment of women as a strategic goal for the sustainable development of local Bedouin communities in the Negev. To realise this Sidreh focuses its work on four main strategic objectives:

- **Access to knowledge:** Improving educational levels of Bedouin women.
- **Access to resources:** Increasing the skills and income of Bedouin women.
- **Gender equality & participation:** Improving women's social position and advancing women's rights.
- **Sustainable development:** professionalization and organizational development.

The importance of our work

More than 260,000 Arab-Bedouins live in extremely unstable and challenging conditions in the Negev. Approximately 40% of the population lives in "unrecognized villages", whose residents are prevented from building permanent structures; they have no infrastructure (i.e. running water and sanitation, electricity, or roads), and live under the constant threat of eviction or house demolition by the State. Bedouin villages struggle economically – six of the seven poorest localities in the country are Arab-Bedouin, and their unemployment rates reach up to 80% in many villages.

Bedouin residents are denied basic recognition and protection in times of emergency because their unrecognized status denies them protection from the State. Where citizens throughout the country are warned of incoming rockets by air-raid sirens, there are no early warning or shelter systems in any of the unrecognized or recognized villages. This leaves the people without any warning or protection from hostilities that periodically erupt between Israel and groups in Gaza, as happened in the spring of both 2021 and 2022.

In this challenging wider social context of externally imposed oppression and deprivation, Bedouin women are further restrained by internal patriarchal social norms. In combination, these barriers to development maintain a situation where only 11% of Bedouin girls have completed high school and there is a 61% high school dropout rate among Bedouin girls, indicating cultural and institutional obstacles to gaining an education. In addition, approximately 90% of Bedouin women are unemployed, while 40% live in polygamous marriages. While the lack of political representation and access to public decision-making bodies has affected the Bedouin community as a whole, it particularly affects the rights and entitlements of Bedouin women. Endemic barriers to equal participation in the public sphere have threatened the personal status and security of women and led to widespread economic stagnation.

Education Programme

We provide programmes through which women and adolescents can acquire skills and gain new knowledge and awareness that improves both their daily lives and that of their communities, while enlarging their scope of involvement in the community.

Sidreh has more than 17 years of field experience and has developed a curriculum and methodology recognized by the Ministry of Education. This enables women to receive an official high school equivalency certificate. In this we support those who were previously unable to complete their education, and so give



them a foundation for personal and professional development. Indeed, since Sidreh's inception, we have helped more than 2,700 adult women learn to read and write and more than 200 women have completed high school through our activities, with many continuing to higher education. Additionally, through our Youth Empowerment Programme, we have worked with 50 young Bedouin women and men promoting a sense of communal responsibility and commitment to social action and development.

Economic Development Programme

The programme's goal is to ensure Bedouin women in the Negev acquire skills to become entrepreneurs or are able to join the labour market and have access to a stable income. Our programmes have resulted in:

- 95 women gaining the tools to ensure the optimisation of spending, benefits and savings by boosting their financial literacy, allowing them to incorporate financial planning strategies in their households.
- 50 women have developed entrepreneurial skills and expanded or established a small business.
- 350 women, children, and men as well as 80 volunteers have benefitted from the innovative Desert Gardens' Project, launched in 2013. Through different types of gardens, we tested permaculture, aquaculture and hydroponic methods. Evaluation confirmed that these gardens can play a significant role in enhancing the physical and emotional well-being necessary to build healthy and socially sustainable communities. The programme entered its ninth successful year of expansion in 2021.
- The employment of hundreds of women over more than 24 years of the **Lakiya Weaving Initiative** in the production of high-quality traditional Bedouin carpets. This income-generating project, the first of its kind in the Negev, transforms women's traditional weaving skills into a successful indigenous craft enterprise that empowers women socially and economically.
- The hosting of thousands of guests each year (5,750 in 2019 alone) through our Visitor's Centre.
- Over 15 renowned designers have worked with us in the production of original designs.

Empowerment and Participation

The programme goal is to promote gender equality, strengthen the collective voice of women and their meaningful participation in all spheres of life, and the realisation of their rights. Since the establishment of this programme we have achieved the following:

- More than 2,000 women have participated in leadership and rights awareness programmes;
- We have built the first Women's Centre in an unrecognized village serving more than 90 women;
- We have developed the first women's newspaper in the Negev, publishing 6,000 – 10,000 copies per month, which are distributed to more than 50 villages, reaching more than 20,000 readers.
- The programme has represented Bedouin women in various platforms, including the Palestinian Women's Network, and CEDAW's regional meetings in Cyprus and New York.
- The programme has also built the skills of local women leaders and advocates.



International Recognition

In 2019, the US Embassy in Israel selected Khadra as one of two women aspiring women to present the cause of their community in a film for Women's History Month. The film is on the US Embassy Facebook page, and can be accessed by clicking [here](#). In the film, Khadra discusses how traditionally Bedouin women held strong positions in the community and were afforded great respect, not least due to their significant contributions to the self-subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry economy that underpinned Bedouin socio-economic life.

Sidreh is an Arab-Bedouin organization that counts with a diverse group of professionals committed to women's empowerment and the building of a shared society.

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