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Contents

Factors shaping social workers' policy practice concerning urban renewal in Tel Aviv–Yafo
Idit Weiss-Gal and John Gal

The experiences of mothers evacuated from northern Israel during the Iron Swords war
Iris Manor Binyamini, Erga Kapulnik, Shir Amos, Mor Chen-Cohen and Shay Efraim-Avidar

"Everything's better when we're together. Together we are powerful, unbreakable, invincible": Ethiopian community functionaries' view of their community's resilience
Miri Goldratt and Simcha Getahune

Implications of a maritime blockade on energy poverty in Israel
Inbar Kirshenboim and Teddy Lazebnik

Toward a national food security policy: Background, principles, and recommendations – Opinion article
Roni Strier

From limitation to strategic asset: Cultivating value through disability – Opinion article
Yeshayahu Hutzler

Summaries of the main articles

Factors shaping social workers' policy practice concerning urban renewal in Tel Aviv–Yafo

Idit Weiss-Gal[1] and John Gal[2]

Despite broad consensus in the social work professional discourse regarding the centrality of social workers' involvement in shaping social policy, empirical knowledge about the factors that promote such involvement remains limited. This article seeks to narrow this gap by examining local policy practice in the field of urban renewal, focusing on a case study of social workers from the Social Services Department in the Tel Aviv–Yafo Municipality who worked to advance the integration of social considerations into municipal policy between 2010 and 2025. The study draws on a conceptual framework for explaining social workers' involvement in pathways to policy change, which distinguishes between environments, opportunity, facilitation, and motivational factors and examines the dynamic interplay among them. Data were collected through triangulation of 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with diverse stakeholders, analysis of 39 documents, and use of secondary sources. Interviews and documents were analyzed using both deductive and inductive content analysis. Findings indicate that social workers were actively involved in promoting two major policy changes: the establishment of a dedicated urban renewal unit within the Social Services Department (2021) and the adoption of a municipal procedure for public participation and social accompaniment in urban renewal processes (2025). The findings further show that the convergence of environmental factors (such as social distress or policy gaps), opportunity factors (such as local institutional norms enabling professional involvement in policy design), facilitation factors (such as managerial support

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and backing), and motivational factors (such as professional orientations and trust) created a dynamic and circular system that enhanced both sustained engagement in policy practice and the capacity to influence policy.

The experiences of mothers evacuated from northern Israel during the Iron Swords war

Iris Manor Binyamini[3], Erga Kapulnik[4], Shir Amos[3], Mor Chen-Cohen[3] and Shay Efraim-Avidar[3]

The Iron Swords (“*Haravot Barzel*”) war, which erupted on October 7, 2023, led to the largest and most prolonged civilian evacuation since the establishment of the State of Israel. This study aimed to examine the experiences of mothers, whose voices are rarely heard and whose contributions are often underrecognized, despite the central role associated with motherhood in situations where the sense of “home” is disrupted.

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, from a feminist perspective. Nineteen mothers from northern Israel who were evacuated from their homes together with their families were interviewed. Some were evacuated alongside their pre-existing communities, while others were relocated to hotels without prior acquaintance with other evacuees. The findings reveal three central themes corresponding to three levels of coping: (1) the individual level, focusing on the mother’s psychological well-being

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and personal coping; (2) the family level, addressing maternal and parental functioning; and (3) the community level, dealing with issues of belonging versus loneliness and alienation.

The findings highlight the struggle to maintain parental stability, family functioning, and a coherent parental role under emergency conditions. Testimonies indicate an increased risk of emotional difficulties, alongside a notable capacity for resilience. These findings may contribute to social policy in situations requiring civilian evacuation and support the development of appropriate interventions for displaced mothers. It is proposed to adopt Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a framework for addressing both the physical and emotional needs of evacuated mothers. A holistic response is recommended, integrating physical and emotional support systems, alongside the inclusion of mothers in decision-making processes.

"Everything's better when we're together. Together we are powerful, unbreakable, invincible": Ethiopian community functionaries' view of their community's resilience

Miri Goldratt[5] and Simcha Getahune[6]

Immigration from Ethiopia to Israel began in 1984, yet, as a group, Israelis of Ethiopian origin are still undergoing social absorption and integration. To date, most researchers focused on distress and risk factors, while the resilience factors characteristic of this group received little research attention. The literature describes personal, familial, and communal attributes and resources (e.g., a sense of personal and community coherence), which enhance coping with the challenges and crises of immigration. Based on the salutogenic approach, this study examines how functionaries from within the community perceive the community and the resources it offers to its members. Participants in the qualitative study were 20 functionaries of Ethiopian origin who work within their community. Data were collected through interviews and online questionnaires and revealed that the participants view the community as the source of meaningfulness and comprehensibility, leading to a sense of coherence. The manageability component was manifested in four practices that serve the participants in their work: (1) involving the community, (2) leadership from within the community, (3) aiming for key positions, (4) cohesion as strength. Data analysis revealed the functionaries' personal turning points, together with their ability to generate change in the narrative of immigrant

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communities. The findings conceptualize the coping strategies of participatory leadership in communities of Ethiopian origin, strategies characterized by dualism between the Change and Conservation. This participatory approach is suggested for developing future programs to train managers in the Ethiopian community.

Implications of a maritime blockade on energy poverty in Israel

Inbar Kirshenboim[7] and Teddy Lazebnik[8]

In recent decades, the global energy ecosystem has become more vulnerable to disruptions following geopolitical events, with increasing dependence on maritime shipping lanes or energy infrastructure located at sea increasing the risk of blockades and associated economic crises. A maritime blockade could disrupt the supply of primary energy sources, cause sharp increases in energy prices, and exacerbate social disparities through the expansion of energy poverty. This study examined the economic impact of a maritime blockade on the Israeli energy sector, focusing on the electricity sector. The analysis is based on historical consumption and price data from the Israel Electric Corporation, combined with simulations of blockade scenarios in the supply of Israeli natural gas and distillates coming from the sea. Our findings indicate that a complete blockade of the natural gas supply causes an increase of about 28% in electricity prices and almost a tripling of the proportion of households exceeding the energy poverty line in the event that gas rigs are not available. This damage would require a massive investment from the state

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treasury to keep all households in the country above the energy poverty line. These findings indicate a direct link between energy vulnerability due to a naval blockade and socio-economic stability, and emphasize the importance of advanced energy policy and public welfare infrastructure as complementary infrastructure for national security in an era of global energy risks

Toward a national food security policy: Background, principles, and recommendations – Opinion article

Roni Strier[9]

The right to food is a fundamental condition for living in dignity. Yet Israel is among the economically developed countries with some of the highest rates of food insecurity. Despite the severity of the situation, social policy in this field remains inadequate. This article critically examines key definitions, theories, and central issues in the field of food insecurity. In addition, it presents principles and recommendations for advancing a comprehensive national policy in this area, based on the principles and recommendations formulated in the policy document "*The National Framework for Food Security*" (National Council for Food Security, 2025). The development of the policy framework was based on the application of the principle of epistemic justice through a participatory knowledge development process. The process involved government representatives, academic researchers, and representatives of third-sector organizations working in this field between 2023 and 2025. Alongside the formulation of core recommendations in the fields of welfare,

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health, education, agriculture, environment, and local governance, participants in the process identified five central principles for the development of a comprehensive national policy on food security: recognition of the right to food as a social right; acknowledgment of the structural dimensions of food insecurity; adoption of an interdisciplinary, interministerial, and intersectoral approach; implementation of a democratic-participatory framework; and strengthening the involvement of local government.

From limitation to strategic asset: Cultivating value through disability – Opinion article

Yeshayahu Hutzler[10]

This paper analyzes the modern paradigmatic shift in the conceptualization of disability, moving from the traditional medical model—which views disability as a "personal tragedy" requiring correction—to social and affirmative frameworks. Rather than presenting disability merely through the lens of human rights and barrier removal, the author introduces a strategic approach rooted in Social Role Valorization (SRV), which conceptualizes individuals with disabilities as crucial assets generating surplus value for the entire collective.

The paper demonstrates this phenomenon through the "curb-cut effect," illustrating how technological, pedagogical, and legislative adaptations originally designed for enabling performance among persons with disabilities, including in Paralympic sports, inadvertently optimize quality of life and performance standards for the broader public. Grounded in Newell's constraints-led

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model, disability is reframed not as a functional deficit, but as a unique set of individual constraints that compel system self-organization, fostering creative solutions and systemic innovation. This structural narrative aligns closely with contemporary global corporate practices of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), where neurodiversity and alternative functional perspectives serve as documented drivers of operational efficiency, market adaptability, and financial growth. Ultimately, the paper provides a critical framework for policymakers, demonstrating how integrating affirmative asset-based methodologies can transform systemic perceived liabilities into substantial socio-economic value.