

Adva Center (Israel)

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The Adva Center is a non-partisan, action-oriented Israeli policy analysis centre. It was founded in 1991 by activists from three social movements: the movement for equality for Mizrahi Jews, the feminist movement, and the movement for equal rights for Arab citizens. It focuses on equality and social justice issues in Israeli society. The Adva Center examines how social policy affects rich and poor, women and men, Arabs and Jews, Jews of different ethnic origins, newcomers and old-timers, and young and old. It formulates policy recommendations and engages in empowerment, coalition-building and advocacy activities to promote more equitable social policies.

The heart of Adva's work is advocacy for policy changes that favour disadvantaged groups in Israel. It does this by: offering consultations to advocacy organisations, Cabinet members and legislators, by organising coalitions for social change, by testifying at public forums and giving media interviews, and through an extensive popular education programme that brings progressive social ideas to a wide variety of audiences, from cleaning workers to senior executives. It also operates a hotline for health rights, targeted at low-income persons, in conjunction with Israeli Physicians for Human Rights.

Much of Adva's policy analysis work is done in the framework of the *National Budget Analysis Program*, under which the draft budget of the government of Israel is analysed annually for its implications for disadvantaged social groups in particular and Israeli society in general. An annual workshop is conducted for legislators at the Knesset and budget workshops are organised for civil society organisations throughout Israel. Another dimension of this work is reflected in the policy analyses published in various issues of *The Israel Equality Monitor* along with annual updates on educational achievements, wages and tax policy.

This part of the Adva program provides the underpinnings not only for the advocacy and popular education work of the Adva Center, but also for the advocacy work of a wide variety of other social justice organisations in Israel. Its annual national budget analysis work gives a wide range of Israeli civil society valuable tools that they can put to good effect in their advocacy with the government regarding resource allocation for disadvantaged communities.

This case study was written as a contribution to the development of *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*, Oxfam International 2008. It is published in order to share widely the results of commissioned research and programme experience. The views it expresses are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Oxfam International or its affiliate organisations.

Adva's work on the 2006 budget began in June when the Center published a budget policy proposal advocating the establishment of a social investment package centred on improvements in three main areas: the public school system, higher education, and the social security system. In September, before the official release of the 2006 budget, the Center published a position paper regarding the proposed Earned Income Tax Credit. This paper received extensive publicity in the Israeli media and resulted in five consultations with Cabinet and Parliament members. The national budget proposal was released and distributed on 31 October to the Parliament. On 7 November, Adva published its first official reaction to the 2006 budget, regarding the Budget Arrangements Law, which was sent to both the press and members of the Cabinet. The next morning, *Ha'aretz*, a highly regarded Israeli newspaper, published an article in its financial section about Adva's reaction to the law, particularly in regard to the proposed reduction of entitlements for demobilised soldiers.

Adva's publication 'Israel: A Social Report, 2005', which analyses economic trends over the long-term and provides up-to-date figures on inequalities in different economic sectors and among various social groups, was released in December, 2005. This was the eighth year that this report has been published. Immediately following its publication, the report was headlined on all of the TV and most of the radio news programmes, and in all of the daily newspapers. Staff and Board Members were interviewed about the report in Hebrew, Arabic, English and French. High-level Israeli political figures commented on the report's findings.

Adva has also been active in the field of gender budgeting, issuing reports analysing the implications of Israeli government budgets for women. It organised a national conference in Israel on gender budgets and shares information and experiences with other groups working internationally on this issue. In August 2004, it launched the Women's Budget Forum (WBF), dedicated to highlighting both the need for mainstreaming gender in the Israeli national budget-making process and advocating increases in the budget that would help to improve the lives of women and girls in Israel. The WBF believes that only through an equitable distribution of resources that recognises the distinctive needs of women and girls on all levels, will vast improvements be made in equality between men and women in Israeli society. The group comprises some 20 feminist organisations. In November 2005, Adva held a women's economic empowerment course entitled 'Women in the Economy,' designed to provide participants with a better understanding of the economy and its effects on society in general and women in particular. The intention was also to give them the tools they need in order to pass on this knowledge to people within their own networks. Some of the topics for discussion included economic development and growth, the labour market and how salaries are constructed, women and the national budget, globalisation, and women and poverty.

The academic director of Adva was awarded the Naftaly Prize in Economics and Social Science for 2005 by the municipality of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa. It recognised that Adva staff members have been bringing 'systematic and well-analysed socio-economic findings to the attention of the public. They have been asking Israeli society to look at itself from a critical socio-economic perspective that is 'outside the mainstream'. In their activities, one finds a sincere aspiration not only to study and to understand, but also to promote social justice and equality in Israeli society.

Adva has a website that hosts an average of 1,000 visits a day, where Adva Center reports and other important information can be viewed or downloaded free of charge. With financial support from Oxfam GB, Adva published in February 2005 a report entitled 'The Price of Occupation: The Cost of the Occupation to Israeli Society'. It examines the political, economic and social price that the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories has been exacting from Israel. It also includes figures published for the first time on the social cost of the occupation.

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