Learning Together

a meaningful and unique experience building relationships with the Bedouin community in the Negev

Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv / Ramat Aviv
Israel



LEARNING TOGETHER

Project by Noë Klein and Yael Gazit
International Conflict Resolution and Mediation Masters students
with faculty support from Dr. Nir Boms
in partnership with Desert Stars

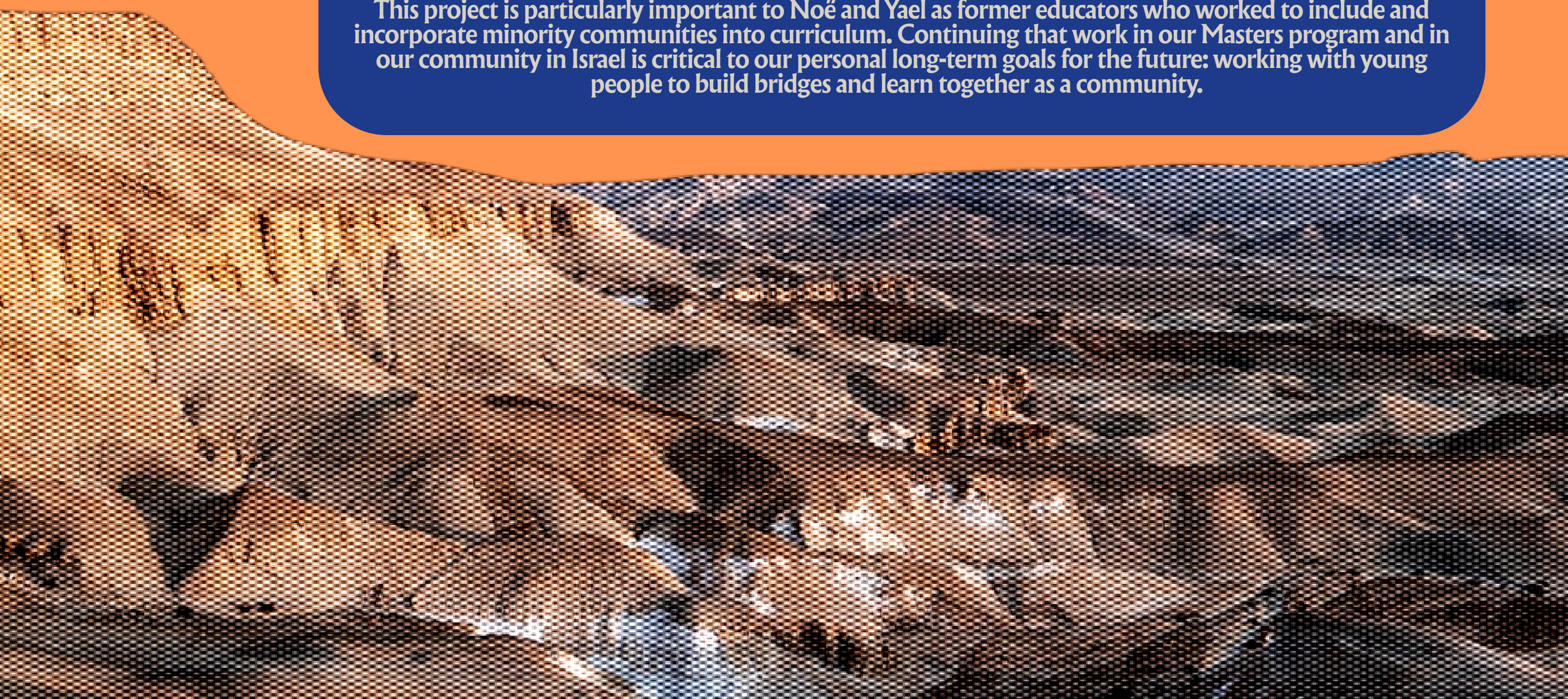




Goals:

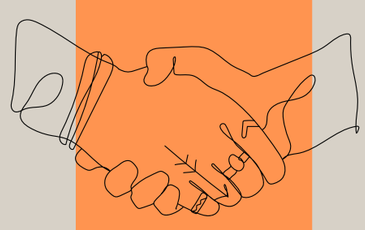
Our goal is to promote dialogue and integration of the Bedouin community in Israel into greater Israeli society through exposure to Tel Aviv University. The goal is to break down barriers between the two cultures within Israeli society, Jews and Bedouins, and ensure the Bedouin community feels welcomed at Tel Aviv University and can make the choice to attend. Having Jewish students make the effort to go to a Bedouin village and understand the society they live in will help them better understand and be open to Bedouin students, while the gesture of physically coming to meet and learn from the Bedouin community will help Bedouin students feel seen, heard, and a greater sense of belonging. Additionally, the project will include an invitation to the Bedouin students to visit Tel Aviv University for continued interaction, narrative building, and understanding. It will give students from both backgrounds an experiential tour of collaboration, inter-community acquaintance and creating human connections. They will gain exposure to new topics, diverse social and community perspectives, while networking with students from different fields of study. While many Bedouin students are beginning to attend universities in Israel, not many attend Tel Aviv University as they prefer to stay close to home and attend Ben Gurion in Be'er Sheva. Our project gives them direct contact with TAU students and a connection that may allow them to see Tel Aviv University as a possible option for the future. As one of the leading universities in Israel, it is important for TAU to reflect the society in which it serves, particularly those who are not heard as much, while providing windows into new perspectives to the students it already has.

This project is particularly important to Noë and Yael as former educators who worked to include and incorporate minority communities into curriculum. Continuing that work in our Masters program and in our community in Israel is critical to our personal long-term goals for the future: working with young people to build bridges and learn together as a community.



Learning Together

TARGET AUDIENCE:
Jewish Israeli Tel Aviv University students. These students are preferably in their first few years of studies and are interested in building connections across all parts of Israeli society. Ideally, students will be from diverse Jewish backgrounds and able to share their experiences.



TARGET AUDIENCE:
Israeli Bedouin students who are in their preparation year to attend Israeli universities; this is called Yud Gimmel or Grade 13. Students should be interested in attending universities and want the opportunity to learn about Tel Aviv University and meet students from the university.

ALL STUDENTS SHOULD BE OPEN, CURIOUS AND EAGER TO LEARN AND SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.





GOALS

- Students from both groups share their experience
- Breaking down social, political, and cultural barriers between community groups
- A deepened understanding of the other community
- Increased visibility and acceptance of Bedouin students at TAU

RESEARCH

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Background

One of Israel's minority communities, the Bedouin, are divided into two groups: North and South. While communities in the north have largely settled into registered towns, communities in the south live in predominantly unrecognized villages. The southern Bedouin villages are one of the communities with the highest rates of crime and hold fast to their traditional seminomadic and patriarchal culture. Bedouins are incredibly tribal with sheiks or tribal leaders dictating much of people's lives and being in charge of everything from tribal marriages, to conflicts, to who becomes the school leaders. The major concerns within the community arise as many want to embrace their roots but also integrate fully into greater Israeli society, and the economic opportunities it allows. One research study notes that this is a historical issue, as "half the Negev Bedouin were displaced from their land and located to these government-planned towns while the other half remain on traditional lands in makeshift villages that are not recognized by the state; our sample comes from one of the latter. Whereas the unrecognized villages are notably more agricultural, engaging in animal rearing, compared with the recognized towns, they have also undergone social and economic change away from a nomadic way of life" (Abu Aleon et. al, 2019). Bedouin society is currently experiencing a dramatic shift to less nomadic and more integrated into general Israeli society, but in a way that still respects their cultural traditions.

Barriers to Jewish-Bedouin Integration

Part of this social and economic integration involves Bedouin students entering universities and exposure to Jewish Israeli society. However, there are several barriers in place. First, the narratives the ingroup (Jews) tell about the outgroup (Bedouins) is that they are poor and as a result, violent. This narrative can bleed into the university environment: "the dual challenge faced by Arab-Bedouin society—exclusion and socio-economic struggles on the Israeli front, and the weakening of traditional structures within their own communities— adds layers of complexity to these students' experiences" (Abu-Gweder, 2025). A variety of interventions are needed to break down these stereotypes and to build trust and communication between the two groups in an honest way.

In addition to these challenges, "ethnic identity in Israel is often constructed in opposition to the other group's narrative, resulting in limited empathy and mutual resentment. For instance, the events of 1948 are celebrated by Jewish Israelis as a defining moment but are mourned by Israeli Arabs as a national disaster" (Abu-Gweder, 2025). There are thus still significant levels of trauma and narrative shaping around these events. Part of the Bedouin narrative is that if their villages had been Jewish they would have just established them - but instead, the newly founded state of Israel pushed people to smaller sections of land and expanded the desert in 1948. This is perhaps complicated by the fact that "when approaching the other's narrative, members of the minority group who wish to communicate sympathy towards the pain of the other, express their emotional and behavioural readiness for such an encounter cautiously and by seeking some common ground or a well-known symbol" (Lazar et. al 2015). This acknowledgement of both Bedouin and Jewish trauma is critical to the development of an intergroup narrative that can bring the societies closer together as part of a greater Israeli society. In fact, "historical group trauma does not inevitably lead to the development of orientations that exacerbate intergroup conflict, such as a sense of ingroup victimhood. The two opposing orientations presented in this research have contradictory effects on group-based guilt, moral decision making, readiness for intergroup reconciliation, attribution of responsibility, and memory of harm to ingroup and outgroup members" (Schori-Eyal et. al, 2017). The purpose of our project is to do just that.



Tactics: The project in and of itself is an action and behavior change. We are having students from distinct backgrounds interact and connect with each other and learn about shared valued as well as their own distinct groups.

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PROJECT STRENGTHS

CALL TO ACTION: THE PROJECT INCLUDED A STRONG CALL TO ACTION BY HAVING TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DIRECTLY MEET WITH BEDOUIN STUDENTS AND ENGAGE IN ACTIVITIES TO LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER.

GENUINE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: THE PARTNERSHIP WITH DESERT STARS WAS VITAL TO CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE STUDENTS FROM TAU WERE ABLE TO ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH BEDOUIN STUDENTS AND WHO WERE ABLE TO WORK WITH THE TAU STUDENTS. THIS WAS NOT ABOUT PERFORMATIVE ACTION, BUT BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION (ROOTED IN POSITIVE EMOTIONS AND TRUST) TO BUILD THE DESIRE OF BOTH GROUPS TO WORK TOGETHER.

POSITIVE RESULTS WITH INTERVENTIONS: TO FACILITATE THE MOST EFFECTIVE INTERGROUP CONTACT, WE HAD A MIX OF FORMALLY-STRUCTURED AND INFORMAL TIME FOR STUDENTS TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER. THIS MIX ENSURED THAT STUDENTS HAD A SAFE SPACE TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER, BUT ALSO THE FLEXIBILITY TO CONTINUE BUILDING THEIR RELATIONSHIPS.

CONTINUATION: AS OF NOW WE ARE CURRENTLY PLANNING TO BRING THE BEDOUIN STUDENTS TO TOUR TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY AND ENGAGE IN CONTINUED WORK WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE TRIP. THE DISCUSSION WAS TO DO THIS IN LATE MARCH BEFORE THE PASSOVER VACATION, BUT WITH THE CURRENT OUTBREAK OF WAR WE WILL LIKELY NEED TO RESCHEDULE.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

TIME: GIVEN THE COMPRESSED TIMELINE FOR THE PROJECTS, HAVING AVAILABLE MARKETING MATERIALS WOULD HAVE INCREASED PARTICIPATION FROM THE ISRAELI STUDENTS ON CAMPUS AND PROVIDED STUDENTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE AND PREPARE FOR THE TRIP. IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS, WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO DO THIS EARLIER IN THE SEMESTER RATHER THAN AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER IN THE MIDDLE OF FINAL EXAMS.

LANGUAGE: WHILE WE MADE THE PROJECT WORK, IN ORDER TO ENSURE PARTICIPATION FROM TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY, WE INCLUDED SOME INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LEADERS IN THE PROJECT. THE LANGUAGE BARRIER CREATED SOME ADDITIONAL UNEXPECTED BARRIERS WHICH MADE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE PARTIES MORE CHALLENGING; BEDOUIN STUDENTS LARGELY SPOKE ARABIC, ONLY SOME BEDOUIN STUDENTS SPOKE HEBREW, AND FEWER SPOKE ENGLISH WHEREAS MOST OF THE TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY STUDENTS SPOKE HEBREW AND ENGLISH AND LITTLE TO NO ARABIC. IN THE FUTURE, BEING SELECTIVE ABOUT THE GROUP OF STUDENTS ATTENDING TO ENSURE FEWER LANGUAGE BARRIERS WOULD BE HELPFUL, THOUGH THE ACTIVITIES WE DESIGNED WERE. AT THE END OF THE DAY, OVERCOMING THIS BARRIER WITH TRANSLATIONS MADE THE DAY EVEN MORE REWARDING.

ATTENDANCE: WE HAD SEVERAL STUDENTS DROP OUT AT THE LAST MINUTE, INCLUDING SOME ARABIC SPEAKERS. IN THE FUTURE AND TO PROVIDE SOME COST MITIGATING MEASURES, WE THINK IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO HAVE STUDENTS PAY A SMALL FEE TO INCREASE COMMITMENT. THIS WOULD ADDITIONALLY ALLOW US TO FUND FUTURE TRIPS AND SUPPORT OUR PARTNERS IN PART TWO OF THE PROCESS OF VISITING THE UNIVERSITY. SIMILARLY, WE HAD PARTNERED WITH SEVERAL NGOS TO HELP US PROVIDE MEDIA COVERAGE, BUT DUE TO TENSIONS WITH IRAN THEY WERE NO LONGER ABLE TO COMMIT.

Measures of Effectiveness

Research

We did initial research into ingroup and outgroup experiences, specifically for Bedouin university students in Israel and on strategies to support a narrative sharing experience. One of the factors of effectiveness was to do continued exposure for:

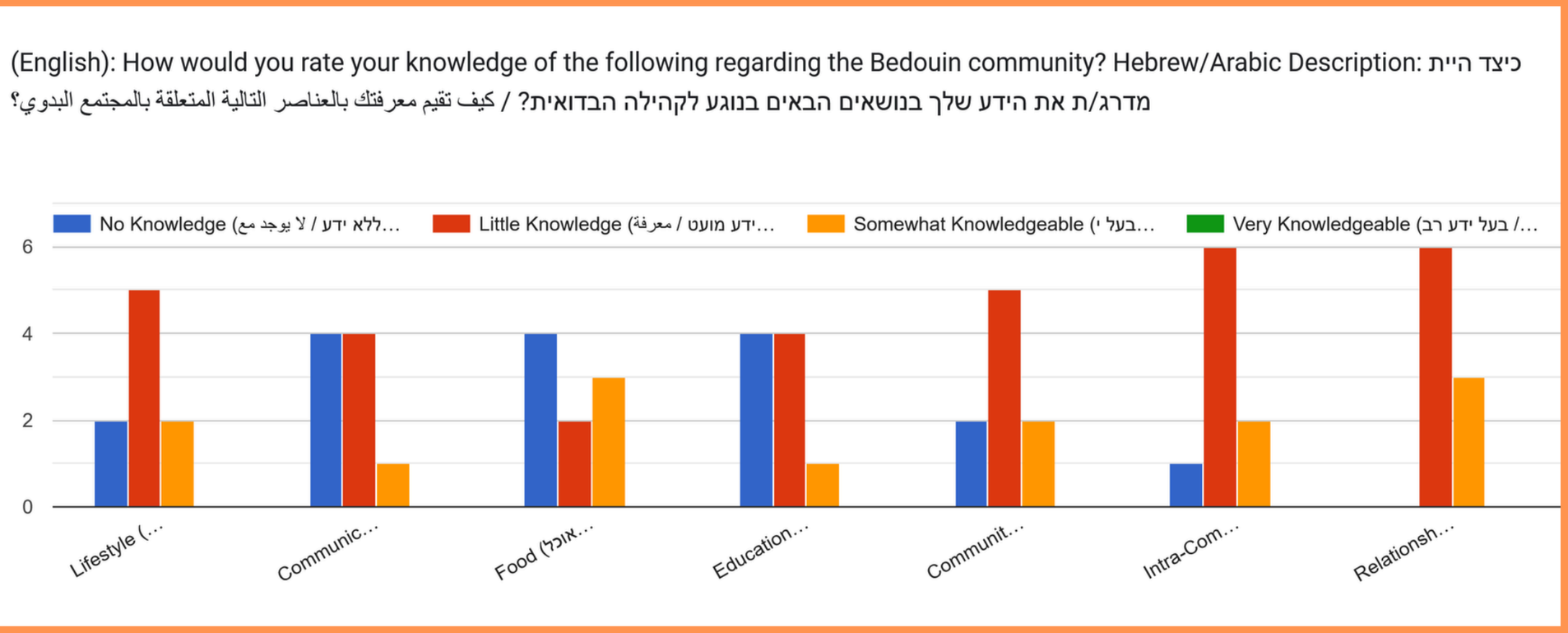
- Students from both groups to share their experiences
- Break down barriers between community groups
- Deepen understanding of the other community
- Increase visibility and acceptance of Bedouin students at TAU

Results

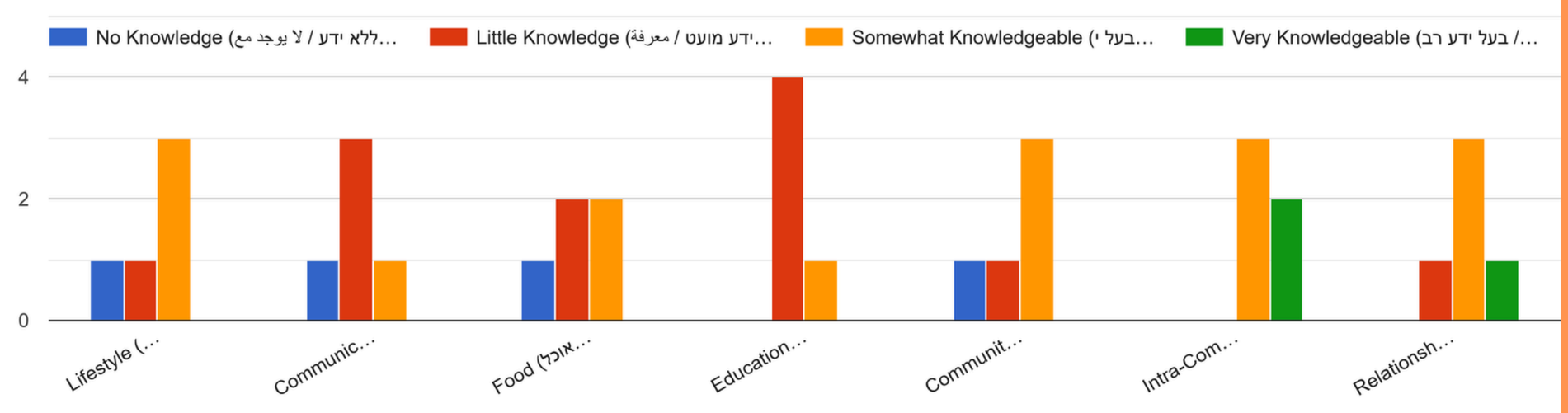
Our research indicates that after our program, students became much more knowledgable about Bedouin peoples, culture, lifestyle, and their relationship to the State of Israel. Moreso, it has increased the emotional desire to continue learning together.

The results also indicate that now that the relationship has been established, future programming should dive deeper into coexistence, dialogue-building activities.

Jewish Israelis Before



Jewish Israelis After



Bedouin Students Say:

What is most important to share about your community?

- The positive side of the Bedouin community
- We are a society that loves education and an ambitious society
- The Bedouin community education is relatively poor and we need access to education
- We have the capabilities and qualities that we have, but no one knows them and no one knows about them.

Bedouin Students Say:

What are you excited about today with Tel Aviv University students?

- To discover the course of educational life from different perspectives
- Identifying students who are learning at a university from a high academic level encourages me to know what their ambitions are in life and what they want to do with the future and their initiatives
- Meet students from another community. I'm happy.

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Sustainability & Scalability Plan

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The project itself was designed with the idea that it would be scalable to future trips and gatherings between Jewish and Bedouin Israelis, as well as applicable to other groups and communities attempting to integrate an outgroup to an ingroup society at large.

- **Financial sustainability -** This would require funds. As discussed above it would be financially wise to charge students a small sign up fee of $30usd or 100nis (with some scholarships available to account for accessibility) in order to ensure attendance and to pay for food and transportation costs. It would also subsidize the cost for bringing our partners to the university. In terms of scalability for other groups, it would vary based on the communities and funding available.

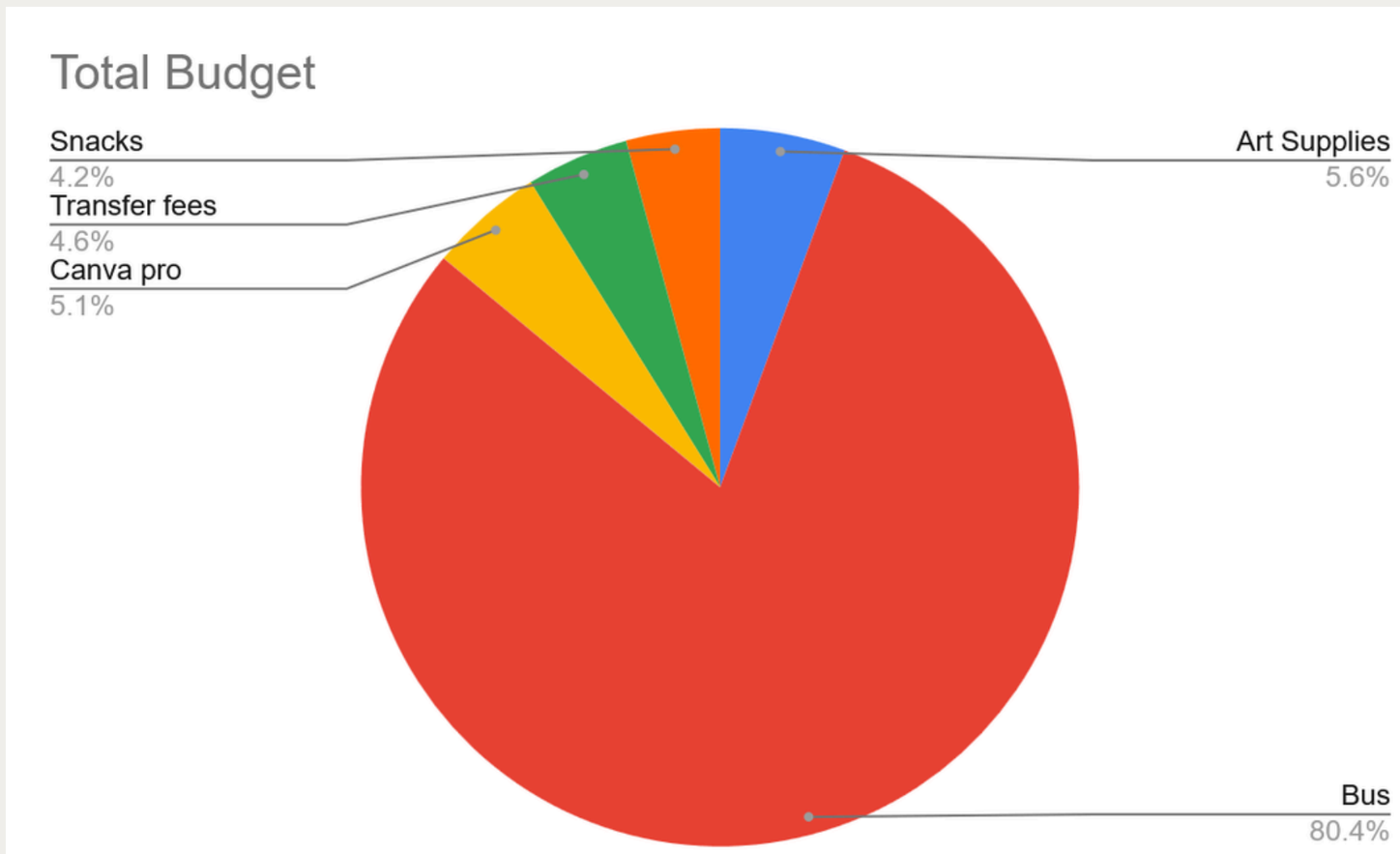
- **Cultural sustainability -** The only way to continue to bridge cultural gaps is to sustainably and continuously build the relationship. Research shows continued contact changes ingroup and outgroup cultural relations, so continued expansion of these programs that focus on empathy, dialogue-building, and diverse perspectives will require expanded, consistent participation.

- **Institutional sustainability -** It is in the university's best interest to have diverse student populations. They have pledged to continue to fund and support initiatives such as Learning Together.

- **Environmental sustainability -** The activities themselves can be implemented with other minority and outgroups seeking to enter the ingroup of a society, specifically through university level education. However, visiting the environments of both groups fosters stronger levels of respect.

- **Social sustainability -** Many students who could not attend the initial trip have reached out to request and ask about future trips. There is a desire from both the Jewish and Bedouin students to continue to maintain relationships and grow within this program's structure. This includes both formal events such as workshops and campus visits, and informal communication through personal social media and Whatsapp messages to keep in touch.

Budgeting



Art Supplies: 160
Bus: 2,280.37
Canva pro: 145.89
Transfer fee: 131.26
Snacks: 120

Total spent: 2837.52

Total budget: 2855.26

Marketing

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نجوم الصحراء
כוכבי המדבר
DESERT STARS

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
The Lowy International School

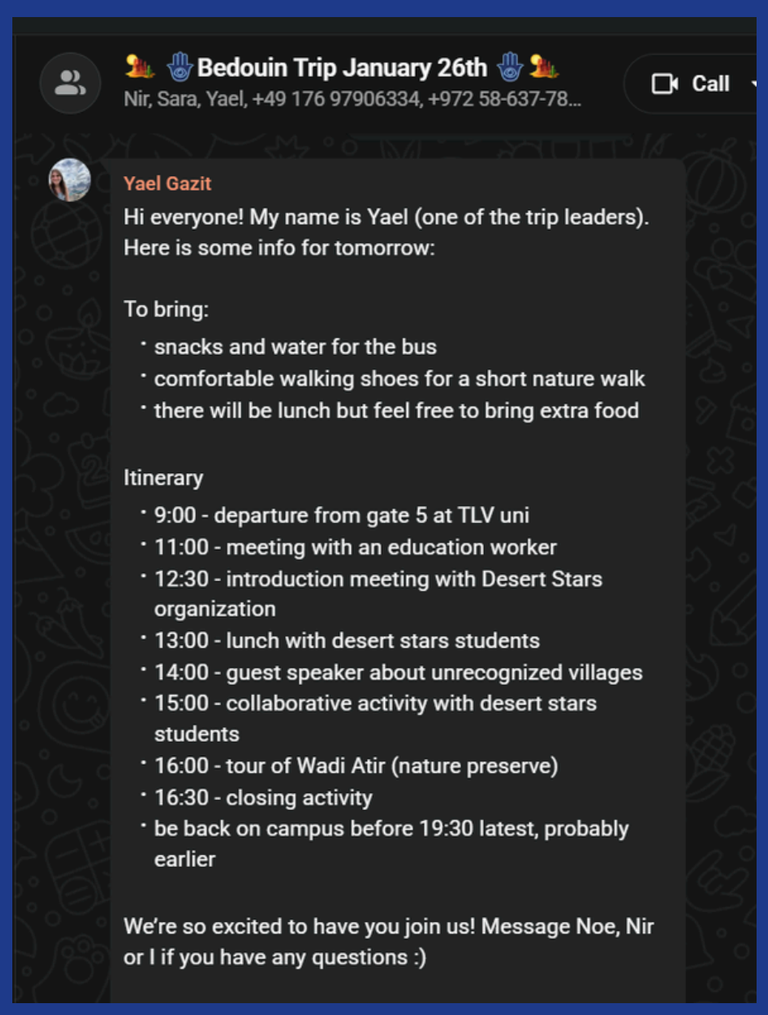
Israelis communicate predominantly through WhatsApp groups. This is common both for promoting events and for coordinating events. For this reason we chose to focus our efforts on targeted WhatsApp promotion and through professors who teach relevant courses to reach our target audience in the most effective way.

Additionally, promotional materials for recruiting Tel Aviv University students were done in Hebrew and English, but all surveys were done in Hebrew, Arabic, and English to accommodate all participants.

WhatsApp













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Photos









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Final Video Recap



https://youtu.be/4srZZ8p-y3o?si=PWM0SqZUJMaULn0x

