

# OUR IMPACT

## Overseas Stories:

## With New Possibilities, Israeli-Arab Youth Thrive



Until recently, Amir, 21, was adrift, bouncing around various construction jobs in Sakhnin, a densely populated Arab community in Israel that is primarily agrarian and substantially impoverished. “My dad wanted me to be a builder with him and I didn’t know I could be anything more,” he explains.

For many Israeli Arab youth, what begins as a lack of direction and guidance in early adulthood continues as a pattern of poverty that leaves them unemployed and increasingly vulnerable as they age. Of the 220,000 young Israelis that are unemployed, almost half are Israeli Arabs, Bedouins, or Druze.

JDC works to break this cycle of unemployment and to reverse the trend of the growing disadvantaged underclass through the *Afikim* (Channels/Paths) program. The initiative helps young Israelis like Amir learn to operate within society’s frameworks and to excel in work and life. Group workshops and personal guidance help youth to develop self-confidence, set goals, craft a resume, learn how to pursue a degree, and find good jobs. As they progress on their path and begin to bring home new incomes, these young adults literally break the cycle of poverty for families who have always relied on government entitlements.

Amir says for him the program was “not just about work, but about life. People really invested in me and empowered me to change my course. I learned that I can be more than a builder—and today I am working towards becoming a dental technician.”

Muhammad, 20, a fellow Afikim participant who has gained a new view of his future, says he lacked confidence and employable skills when he went into the program. Through Afikim he built up his self-image, and decided to utilize what he’s good at—working with his hands—to learn about cars and study electronics and mechanics. “I knew I had to work but now I know what I want to do and what skills I need. I am on my way to a more fulfilling life.”

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