



Social and economy equity

Action 3.1

Action 3.2

Action 3.3

FOOD POLICY

Food Bank for Asylum Seekers in Tel Aviv Yafo

KEY WORDS

Food security, food banks, food aid

✓ OBJECTIVES

- To minimise food insecurity of vulnerable groups.

📄 POLICY DESCRIPTION

In March 2020, as a consequence of the restrictive measures in effect due to the Covid-19 crisis, 80% of the asylum seeker community found themselves unemployed. Without access to a livelihood or government financial assistance, the community struggled to meet daily basic needs. Access to nutritious foods proved to be a critical challenge; an official study conducted in 2020 by the Ministry of Health and the Tel Aviv-Yafo municipality found that 86% of asylum seekers endured food insecurity.

In 2021 the municipality established the first “client choice” food bank for asylum seekers and undocumented people to address the acute food insecurity. This holistic solution aims to tackle the four pillars of food insecurity: availability, access, utilisation, and sustainability. The program serves 782 among the most vulnerable families (3,076 individuals in total), who shop for “free” at the food bank twice a month. The space is set up just like a grocery store, promoting a culture of respect and customer service among a vast array of cultures, traditions and diversity of backgrounds and needs. Shelves are filled with culturally adapted items and fresh vegetables. Signs in various languages display suggest quantities clients can select based on nutritional standards. Clients shop independently and choose what they want, thus cutting down on food waste while supporting autonomy and encouraging self-efficacy; all of them critical factors in strengthening resilience and recovery in times of crises.

The program aims to serve 1,000 families in total. The plan includes developing a nutrition education program; offering materials, learning opportunities, parental guidance, and tools for healthy habits.

CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



It started in July 2021 and is currently undergoing, with the intention to continue.

🏠 DEPARTMENTS IN CHARGE

Environment and Sustainability Authority





KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Tel Aviv Municipality Welfare Division: (*MESILA* – Treatment for Families of Migrant Workers and Asylum-Seekers)

Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice

Nutrition research department

The Volcani Institute, agricultural research.

NGOs: *Lasova*, *Leket Israel* (the National Food Bank), *Latet*, *Eritrean Women's Center*, Sudanese Community Center

Strauss and *Teva*, private companies.

Philanthropic Funds: *Tel Aviv Foundation*, *Shapiro Foundation*, *The Asper Foundation*



BENEFICIARIES

3,076 individuals, 782 asylum seeker families directly benefited from the bank.

BUDGET

Annual project budget – 614,561 €

ASPIRATIONAL QUANTITATIVE OBJECTIVES

To reach 1,000 families of asylum seekers.

Overall aspiration of the food policies committed to The Barcelona Challenge:

<https://toolkit.thebcnchallenge.org/challenges/report/363>

STRENGTHS AND SUCCESS POINTS

The program provides an innovative approach to food assistance by mitigating food waste and promoting cultural and diet diversity, dignity and resilience as integrated components of addressing food insecurity. Instead of dictating clients diets with pre packed boxes of food, the grocery store shopping experience supports freedom over one's diet, recognising how food and mealtimes can not only influence the physical health of a family, but also their socio-emotional wellbeing. This model of "client-choice" food bank is the only of its kind that supports asylum seekers and undocumented people in the MENA region. Additionally, the program aims to limit environmental impact and food waste by partnering with Israeli food rescue NGOs, Latet and Leket, who supply in-kind dry foods redistributed from grocery stores and food suppliers, and fresh vegetables from local farms. The environmental impact is also limited by the food bank by growing its own leafy greens.

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

The initiative presents certain challenges related to the level of engagement and ownership of the beneficiary population. In that sense, the aim is that the beneficiaries will engage themselves rather as leaders of the food bank, by enabling their self-organisation and potentially adapting the model to include a more cooperative approach. In addition, clients will be encouraged to work around 2 hours per week in the co-op store, thus investing in their own food and nutrition security, strengthening ownership, self-efficacy, and sustainability.

Sustainability practices are also at stake and the City Council is thinking about how to promote them and decrease the environmental impact, by scaling up the supply of rescued food items, providing alternatives to plastic packaging and limiting waste wherever is feasible to do so.

CRITICAL POINTS

The program provides free food to over 3,000 individuals and reduces food and monetary resources via rescue and redistribution efforts, amounting to 57,000 € worth of dry food. Within the past three months approximately 900 kilograms of fruits and vegetables were distributed. Clients of the program save an average of 200 € each month on groceries and, as mentioned, clients shop for a "food basket" of items and quantities based on nutritional standards by family composition.



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FURTHER INFORMATION

Mesila summary report