



Tsipora (Abraham) Israely, in early days of the Kibbutz she helped establish.

## **IS GENDER EQUALITY THE FAST TRACK FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES' PROSPERITY?**

*"Gender equality and women's empowerment are prerequisites for a thriving society rather than mere optional aspirations."*

### **THE 24/7 BOARDING SYSTEM**

My parents brought me straight from the Jerusalem hospital, where I was born, to the Kibbutz nursery, where I began my 18-year journey in the Kibbutz education system.

Unlike traditional education systems, the Kibbutz system, from nurseries through kindergartens and elementary school to the end of high school, operated and took care of us 24/7, year-round.

This is where we all, boys and girls of the Kibbutz, lived, studied, ate, showered, and slept in the same building.



Children in the Kibbutz at a meal in the shared children's home.

Think of it as a boarding school for children of all ages, from birth to 18.

Furthermore, unlike a traditional boarding school located away from home, the Kibbutz education system was the heart of the Kibbutz, often situated in the community epicenter.

By the way, every day, we had “family time” from 4 to 8 PM when we were with our parents and having dinner in the community dining room.

Here is an intriguing question - Why did we, the Kibbutz children, live, eat, and sleep together and away from our parents?

The popular view is that the Kibbutz boarding system, in which all children receive the same conditions, is directly linked to the core value of Kibbutz equality.

The truth is somewhat different and is related to reasons that preceded the birth of the first Kibbutz children.

The decision to have the Kibbutz children live together stemmed from one of the Kibbutz core values (i.e., collaboration, self-management, equality, and working the land), equality, and, more specifically, gender equality, and practical economic constraints, which we call, poverty.

In other words, the Kibbutz children's 24/7 boarding system began as an experiment due to economic necessity.

It was motivated by the desire to achieve gender equality for the Kibbutz members and to emphasize the critical role of the next generation in improving the country through proper education.

Indeed, we grew up knowing with our might that whatever there is in life, we must pursue to do more than others.

That led us, the Kibbutz children, to volunteer one extra year after high school and before the army service (In Israel, military service is mandatory), go to the most challenging army units, university studies, etc.

Years passed, and the Kibbutz had the financial ability to enable families to live and sleep together.

Yet, due to unwavering determination, the Kibbutzim continued to uphold the boarding system for several more decades, a testament to its cost-effectiveness.

At a later stage of the Kibbutz's development, an ideology emerged to justify the boarding system, claiming it was integral to the Kibbutz's identity.

Nevertheless, by 1990, most Kibbutzim had phased out the 24/7 boarding system, and children began sleeping at their parents' houses.

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

The first Kibbutz pioneers were single and young in their twenties.

They had no children, but as socialists, they believed and practiced *gender equality*.

This means that women demanded equal opportunity to practice any job men did.

The men on the Kibbutz had no objection to the women's demands since they believed in the same core values.

Hence, starting from the first Kibbutz (1910), you could see women working in the field, building, guarding against thieves and rubbers, serving as community leaders, and doing any other job.

My mother's career is an excellent example of gender equality in the Kibbutz community.

Her career included serving in the army in a combat unit before and during Israel's Independence War, being a pioneer who took part in establishing a Kibbutz, working in the Kibbutz's orchards, vegetable garden, cow sheds, laundry, and clothes storage (there is no equivalent to this job outside the Kibbutz), kitchen, caring for children in elementary school, being a dentist assistant, and being an alternative methods healer.

Oh, she was also a mother to six children and volunteered for many activities, primarily social-oriented, in and outside the Kibbutz.

My mother was living proof that a woman doesn't need to choose between career and family; she can have a versatile career while having a family.



## ECONOMIC IMPACT AND VISION

Gender equality's impact is vast when it arrives in impoverished rural communities, such as Kibbutz communities, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The positive impact on the Kibbutz's rapid development, economic growth, and prosperity can't be overstated.

It's basic math: When both genders participate in income-generating roles, the combined income nearly doubles compared to when only men are involved.

Furthermore, women bring a complementary set of skills to that of men, resulting in a synergy that further increases the community income.

Gender equality became part of the Kibbutz culture, and its people were rewarded generously for holding and practicing this core value.

It is time to ask again, "Why did the Kibbutz children live and sleep separately from their parents?"

## **SOCIAL IMPACT**

There is more than one reason why we lived and slept in a separate place from our parent's home, and it is related to gender equality and poverty.

### **Daytime and gender equality:**

In a typical rural community in developing countries, mothers stay home and care for the children while the men work.

However, in a society that believes in and practices gender equality, it is natural that both parents would work and not be home for much of the daytime.

When you work hard for a better future, the one thing you want the most is for your children to have the best education.

That explains why the Kibbutz daycare and education systems were known for their high quality.

Modern working mothers and individuals raised in urban settings easily comprehend this concept.

Yet, over a century ago, notions of gender equality and the imperative of providing children with top-notch education weren't universally acknowledged, especially not in impoverished rural communities.



## **Nighttime and poverty:**

When you visit a Kibbutz, you may find it hard to believe that it began as an impoverished society.

In the early days of the Kibbutz, those communities had so little money that they often slept in tents or dilapidated shacks, sharing each tent/shack among several members.

It was not realistic and unthinkable to build a house for each couple with a baby or to have babies and children in the same tent/shack with other members who needed to get up to work the following day.

Conditions were so extremely harsh that in some Kibbutzim, the members argued that couples should get community approval before having children. It was never accepted, but it represents the poverty and the tensions this issue caused.

**When the first children were born, the Kibbutz considered them their "treasure" and did everything it could to protect them and give them a better future.**

Therefore, the initial brick houses were constructed to house Kibbutz children, offering them a secure environment for nights, care during the day, and optimal conditions for growth. This elucidates why all children resided and slept in a single building, often the sole structure available.



My Kibbutz in its early days (around 1949): Women are preparing the land for the first huts, while at the back, we see the tents where members live.

## FEET ON THE GROUND

The mix of adhering to core values (i.e., equality, collaboration, self-management) while having both feet on the ground and taking a practical economic approach shaped the pre-Israel rural communities more than anything else.

While all rural communities obey economic constants, as if there is an alternative, few communities nurture core values to which they stick no matter what.

With time, it became evident that the Kibbutz's core values rewarded its members with bounty and sustainable economic growth.

Are core values “overweight” or an advantage to those embracing them?

The Israeli farming history provides an unequivocal answer:

From 1850 to 1910, farmers focused on the professional aspects of farming to achieve economic prosperity.

To this end, they reached out to acquire the most advanced technologies, knowledge, and production processing infrastructure and even received monthly wedges from philanthropists. Yet, they remained impoverished.

In 1910, with the same or less access to funds or technologies, farmers who established the first Kibbutz embraced **core values**, which can also be viewed as “constraints”, yet their economic situation swiftly improved.

Gender equality is part of the Kibbutz's broader view of equality as a core value.

The Kibbutz education system, where children reside, interact, learn, and cultivate skills together round the clock from birth to 18, exemplifies a novel approach to age-old challenges.

Such a solution couldn't have happened if those pioneer farmers didn't have and stick to their core values.

Theories and reality have repeatedly shown that shared core values are essential for reaching and maintaining sustainable prosperity.

Was it easy for the parents to have their children living and sleeping separately from them?

Though they got used to it, they sometimes wished it was different, but it was a price they were happily ready to pay to keep their core values intact and see their community thrive and their dreams come true.

## RURAL COMMUNITY INNOVATION

Economic constraints push us to change, but the direction of the change is determined by the core values we cherish and practice or their absence.

Previous “rural community innovations” sought **to conserve** “the values of the past”, e.g., the Amish and monks practicing agriculture in monasteries.

They survived and even thrived thanks to collaboration and cooperation.

However, conservative approaches, longing for nostalgic past glories, offered little hope for farmers seeking proactive progress, change, and integration into the modern economy.

The Kibbutz concept has thrived for over 100 years under three different administrations (i.e., Ottoman and British Empires, and the Israeli state) in varied environments (i.e., desert to snowing mountains), and energized by people originating from 70 countries, has proved its principles are global and timeless and can’t be accounted to technology, professional knowledge or financial support.

You see, ideology mixed with practical economic constraints sculpted the Kibbutz society into how it turned and made it to the success it is known for.

Ultimately, gender equality infused the Kibbutz with its distinctive essence, fueling its rapid ascent and accelerating the production of food, which was pivotal for rapid national population and economic growth.

In return, the national establishment, who understood the potential inherent in Kibbutz communities, supported their fertile efforts to produce educated people who would serve the national cause more effectively.



# UNPRECEDENTED ACHIEVEMENT

To get some perspective on the scale of achievement and added value the Kibbutz concept created, it is good to take a step back and look at the before-and-after macro agro sector state.

During the first half of the 19th century, under the Ottoman Empire, in the territory of modern-day Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, 80% to 90% of the population (Arabs and Jews) lived in rural villages, versus 10% to 20% who lived in urban centers.

Although most of the population was involved in food production, there was always a food shortage, poverty among most farmers, and occasionally hunger.

Then, in 1910, the first Kibbutz appeared.

Today, a mere 0.1% of Israel's populace engages in food production, which is export-oriented.

Furthermore, 100% of Israeli farmers belong to the middle or high class, and no farmers suffer poverty or hunger.

This contrasts with the countries surrounding Israel, where 30% to 60% of the population is involved in farming, and most farmers belong to the low-income class.

Sixty-eight years after the Kibbutz where my father was born and 35 years after my parents established the Kibbutz where I was born, in 1983, I helped to establish a new Kibbutz.

In this Kibbutz, the children lived with their parents from the very start.

Today, having the children live and sleep together but separated from their parents is no longer necessary or a prerequisite to establishing a prosperous Kibbutz.

Although the Kibbutz is remembered for its children's boarding system, it was never part of its core values or principles.

The core values and principles underpinning the creation of a flourishing Kibbutz community have remained steady for a century.

*The value of equality*, in its broad sense, including *gender equality*, remains integral to this ethos and continues to be a pillar of the Kibbutz values.

Furthermore, it made its way to the entire Israeli society and became its norm, e.g., women serving in the army.

The narrative of Kibbutz history teaches us the pivotal importance of actively pursuing gender equality.

Gender equality is not merely a moral imperative but also a pathway to tangible financial and social benefits.

This approach empowers farmers to ascend into the national middle class, fostering economic growth and nurturing future generations.

One of the things I am most proud of in my career is that Biofeed, a company I founded and led, won the Ministry of Economy *Gender Equality Award*. I walk the talk.

How would you imagine the path and outcome of a successful agro-sector transformation in your country?

Sign up to be part of [The Nova Kibbutz Stewardship Community](#).

If you enjoyed this column, please share it with a friend who will enjoy it too.

=====

Here are four ways you can work with me to help your rural communities step forward to shift from poverty into ongoing prosperity:

\* **Consultancy** on rural communities' models: Why, What, and How, e.g., **based on** the Kibbutz and Moshav lifestyle models.

\* **Local & National programs related to agro-produce export models - [Dream Valley](#)** global vertical value and supply chain business model and concept connects (a) input suppliers with farmers in developing economies and (b) those farmers with consumers in premium markets.

\* **Crop protection: [Biofeed](#)**, an eco-friendly **zero-spray control technology and protocol** solution, is most suitable for developing countries.

\* **IBMA Conference - To learn, share, and practice novel business models: the IBMA 2025 conference** theme is "*Reshaping Agribusiness Models for Building Prosperous Rural Communities.*" Register now or contact me.

# TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

- **Core Values** Provide Direction and Fuel Economic Development.
- **Embracing equality** and collaboration amid economic constraints drives sustainable progress.
- **Gender Equality** generates prosperity.
- **The Kibbutz children's boarding system** reflects an innovative approach to problem-solving.

=====

More on the October 7th genocide in South Israel:

[Humanity is one organism](#)

[Videos - The October 7 genocide](#)

=====

If you got to here, read this column, and enjoyed it, please be nice to your friends, share it with them, or help them [Subscribe](#).

*"Mental and Economic Freedom Are Interconnected."*

See you soon,

Nimrod



Dr. Nimrod Israely is the CEO and Founder of [Dream Valley](#) and [Biofeed](#) companies and the Chairman and Co-founder of the [IBMA conference](#). +972-54-2523425 (WhatsApp), or [email nisraely@biofeed.co.il](mailto:nisraely@biofeed.co.il)

**P.S.**

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "[Can Farmers Thrive Without A Traditional Salary and Yet Avoid Poverty and Hunger?](#)"

**P.P.S.**

**OPEN BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES:**

- 1) Exporting fresh fruits from Africa to the EU under the Dream Valley regenerative protocol brand for the 2024 season.
- 2) Joining the Nova-Kibbutz concept project or establishing a similar initiative in your region.

Kindly provide your background and credentials to receive tailored next-step instructions.

**P.P.P.S.**

[Dream Valley](#) is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli Model.

You can follow me on [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and [Facebook](#).

\*This article addresses general phenomena. The mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.