

News Release

New centre for study of philanthropy to be launched today

Despite holding government responsible for social programs, public views philanthropic efforts as essential, HU survey shows

Jerusalem, March 9, 2008 – Even though there is considerable opinion among Israelis that much of the public social programs and projects should be the responsibility of the government, the public nevertheless views philanthropic activity in a highly positive light and believes that it plays an essential role in Israeli society.

This conclusion arises from a public opinion survey on philanthropy in Israel conducted by Prof. Hillel Schmid and Avishag Rudich of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Centre for the Study of Philanthropy in Israel under the auspices of the B.I. Cohen Institute for Public Opinion Research. Prof. Schmid is director of the centre.

Their research and others was to be presented today at the opening ceremony and conference of the Centre for the Study of Philanthropy in Israel, being held on the university's Mt. Scopus campus. The centre was established jointly by the JDC Israel and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and operates at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare at the Hebrew University.

Schmid and Rudich's survey sample consisted of 800 participants from three main population groups in Israel: the general Jewish population, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Arabs. Sixty-seven percent of the participants from the general Jewish population and 54% of the Arab participants believed that social programs and projects should be initiated and implemented by the government, compared with 39% among the ultra-Orthodox participants. Most of the participants believed that philanthropy supplements the activities of the government but is not a substitute for government activities (92% of the general Jewish group, 91% of the ultra-Orthodox, and 80% of the Arab participants).

Among the participants in the general Jewish group, 66%-67% believed that the contribution of philanthropists is motivated by personal motives and interests, such as prestige, power and reputation, as well as for promoting political interests and establishing relationships with decision-makers and with the government. These percentages were found to be lower among the ultra-Orthodox and Arab participants.

Nevertheless, generally speaking, attitudes toward philanthropy were very favourable among all three groups (81%, 90%, and 80% of the participants in the general Jewish, Arab and ultra-Orthodox groups, respectively).

Regarding opinions about the contribution from Jewish communities abroad, 88% of the general Jewish and ultra-Orthodox participants expressed a very positive attitude toward those contributions. Moreover, 58% of the participants in the general Jewish group believed that the extent of contributions from Jewish communities abroad is high.

Notably, participants with low levels of education expressed more favourable attitudes toward philanthropy than did those with higher education (65% and 40%, respectively). Also, participants with average and below-average income expressed more favourable attitudes toward philanthropy than did participants with above-average income (83% and 73%, respectively).

Participants were also surveyed regarding their views of the roles of government and philanthropy during the Second Lebanon War. Fifty percent of the participants in the general Jewish group believed that philanthropists did what the government should have done, whereas the proportions were lower among the ultra-Orthodox and Arab participants. In contrast, 53% of the participants in the general Jewish group believed that philanthropists took advantage of the Second Lebanon War as an opportunity to improve their status in Israeli society. Here, too, the proportions were lower among the ultra-Orthodox and Arab participants. However, 65% of the participants in the general Jewish group and 66% of the ultra-Orthodox participants believed that philanthropists played an essential role in the Second Lebanon War, and that their contribution went above and beyond rhetorical statements, whereas the proportion of Arabs who felt that way was much lower (only 36%).

For more information, or for press contact with students, faculty or spokespersons from HU, please speak in the first instance to Mikki Saperia, on +44 (0)20 7691 1479 or email mikki.saperia@bfhu.org.



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