Please present your activity report according to the following lines. The whole report will not exceed 2 or 3 pages (as word document).

Name of the Program: Mechinat BINA
Year of activity: 2016-17
Name of the report's writer: Noga Brenner Samia
Function of the report's writer: Deputy Director, BINA
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Number of active participants in the program: 69
Estimated number of impacted participants: 250 beneficiaries

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines): We have just completed a successful year of activity at Mechinat BINA, 69 Israeli and international Jewish high school graduates took part in the one year program. Participants came from diverse backgrounds (Ashkenazi/ Mizrahi/ Ethiopian/ kibbutznikim/ cities etc.) and from across Israel, studying five full days each week, and volunteering in the communities of south Tel Aviv three afternoons per week. The students lived together communally in shared apartments in the Shapira neighborhood of south Tel Aviv. Throughout the year the group celebrated alternate Shabbatot as a group, with the activities led and planned by the participants themselves. They volunteered in BINA’s urban farm and ran Shabbat activities for families from the surrounding neighborhoods, connecting Judaism with the environment and nature. They took part in trips exploring different parts of Israel and Israeli society, strengthening and enriching their relationship with the Land and People of Israel, as well as participating in BINA’s holiday events and celebrations. In September 2017, we welcome our 12th cohort made up of 68 Israeli and international Jewish participants from across the globe.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.): 2016-17 was an eventful year for Mechinat BINA. We increased the number of participants, deepened our social action and held even more Shabbat and Jewish holiday events. Our graduates are all beginning their IDF careers and tell us that they feel prepared for a meaningful army experience. The participants enjoyed in depth study of Jewish texts and sources - including the Matanel Tikkun Olam course which was very well received. This year we increased the numbers of organizations that our students volunteer with and diversified the beneficiaries of the volunteerism. For the first time, our participants worked on projects that support the homeless, helped those trapped in the cycle of prostitution and met with the foreign residents of south Tel Aviv. They continued to work to support the underserved, diverse communities of south Tel Aviv and Jaffa – they participated in BINA’s support for the elderly program, making weekly home visits, collecting personal histories and visiting homes for senior citizens. After school hours, they created and led enrichment activities for children and youth at risk at the local absorption centers and at the community centers in the neighborhood. They staffed the BINA-founded Moadonit (after school program) providing homework support and enrichment activities for twenty elementary-school students. They also helped to oversee BINA’s new environmental program – local children work with the volunteers in planting and caring for BINA’s
new urban farm and help with the renewal of the botanical gardens project in south Tel Aviv. The group organized pluralistic Shabbat activities for local families in the gardens throughout the year. The participants planned and coordinated several large and small scale Jewish holiday events across the Jewish year: Yom Kippur – the students were involved in planning aspects of the annual community event which included music, poetry, study and introspection and was attended by hundreds of individuals. Purim - the Mechina participants organized and performed a highly successful theatrical performance of the Megilla. Yom Haatzmaut – the participants were involved in the torch lighting ceremony and planning and preparing the party attended by 300 people. Shavuot – the Mechina students planned aspects of the all-night learning event that was attended by 400 participants.

This year Mechinat BINA had its first legally blind participant – Ohad Metodi took part in all aspects of the program, living in an apartment with 15 other students, studying and volunteering as well as joining all the trips and excursions. Our program has proven that anyone can and should be able to participate in pre-army programs and we hope to pave the way for others to follow. Our 12th cohort includes a participant with cerebral palsy and we are confident that together we will overcome the obstacles and that she will have a successful and enriching year.

Mechinat BINA was extremely proud that this year Matan Harel, a Mechina participant took second place in Israel’s National Bible competition and went on to represent Israel in the International competition.

We wish to thank the Matanel Foundation for your generous support of Mechinat BINA – with your help the Mechina has reached new heights of study and social action and work in the community.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future…): All Mechina participants complete comprehensive pre-program, mid-year and end-year written and oral evaluations, as individuals and as groups with Mechina staff. In addition to assessing participant satisfaction and general feedback regarding program components, evaluations aim to assess program impact on participants’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. We also conduct alumni surveys to assess long-term impact, as well as collect general feedback from alumni about the transition from the programs into the IDF and their needs, interests, and desire for continued connection to the BINA and the Mechina as well as to Jewish study and social action post-program.

This year our evaluation surveys showed an increase in the level of connection the participants feel to their Jewish identity, an increased connection to Jewish holidays and lifecycle events as part of their Jewish Secular identity, and an increase in the connection to social justice and Tikkun olam.

Full evaluation summary attached. In terms of conclusions for the future, we know that we need to improve the way we work with our alumni – how we engage with them and keep them involved – it is especially challenging as they begin their IDF service and are not available to join our events and study sessions. We are looking to establish a second year (Shana Bet) at the Mechina for participants to continue on with the program before they join the army which will be the first steps towards building a long term relationship with our graduates and should also build the relationships between cohort, thus creating stronger bonds among the alumni community.

 Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year: In September 2017, our new cohort of 68 high school graduates will join the Mechina and we anticipate yet another fruitful year. We plan to further increase the numbers of participants in the Mechina, we particularly plan to increase our international participants (we hope to diversify and increase the numbers of countries and to attract even more European and South American students), as well as growing the numbers of programs and the numbers of courses that we offer. In 2016, we piloted an additional Mechina program – Mechinat Masabacha (Masa Ba Chevra HaYisraelit - Journey through Israeli Society) which is a unique mobile gap-year pre army program for groups of High School graduates that embark on a six-month immersive journey through Israeli society, gaining a deep
familiarity with diverse communities, groups and locations in Israel. Through 3-4 weeklong interactions (with seven communities that they would not otherwise meet) they learn about other ethnic and religious identities, and also become empowered to understand and express their own identities and become life-long advocates and change agents for a more cohesive Israeli society. We are continuing the program and next year our second cohort will begin their journey. The group is made up of 25 young people from a broad cross section of the population – religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, from towns and villages across the country. Some of the participants are preparing to draft for military service, and others are enrolled in the National Service program for outstanding students. The participants of the two Mechinot come together for joint study days and activities as well as two Shabbatot (each Mechina hosts the other) during the year.

We are currently in the process of evaluating our program and activities and will be building a five year strategic plan for the Mechina. Our strategy will include recruitment, marketing, alumni programing and will aim to increase the size and scope of the Mechina as well as to further diversify and expand our student demographic.

As we look forward to the coming year, we once again want to thank the Matanel Foundation for your support which is invaluable to Mechinat BINA, allowing us to fulfil all our existing and planned activities, as well as serving as an important endorsement which we proudly use to leverage future funding from municipal/governmental sources, from other foundations and private donors both in Israel and Internationally.

Thank you.

Please join the Evaluation Report, the Financial Report and the list of the participants to the program (as PDF documents)

Please join photos – as photos – and any link or any other document connected to the program which will seems to you relevant – as PDF document.