

MATANEL FOUNDATION ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: *Kaima Nahalal Farm*

Year: 2017-2018

The Matanel Foundation has generously provided Kaima Nahalal with a three-year grant to help underwrite our young farmer work stipends – a central component of our “employment as education” programming. Below is our report on year one of this grant.

Name of Program: Kaima Nahalal Farm

Year of activity: 2017-2018

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Number of active participants in the program

We initially projected the ability to recruit a rotating group of 22 young farmers to part in our agricultural employment programming during our first year of operations. We exceeded this target by engaging 29 young farmers, 11 of whom are considered long-term workers (participating at 2-4 times per week for at least 4 months). The others are current/past participants in our intensive summer program. Eighty percent of those participating in our summer 2018 program were also participants in our 2017 program.

Estimated number of impacted participants

In addition to our intensive educational work with our core group of teen farmers (noted above), we provided educational experiences for approximately 2,000 individuals who also volunteered a few hours or few days on the farm. (See details below.)

Program status (at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines)

Since our founding in 2017, NGO Kaima Nahalal has made substantial progress establishing ourselves in Israel's northern periphery as a change-maker for teens, particularly girls, who have left the school system, supporting their return to normative educational institutions, encouraging their sense of personal satisfaction, and building their capacity for self-respect. Our employment-as-education model (conceived of/developed by Kaima Beit Zayit, the founding farm in the Kaima Educational Farm Network, supported through the Matanel Foundation) is designed to foster the conditions and relationships so important to re-engaging Israeli teens who have dropped out of school and direct them toward meaningful endeavor. Our approach works by utilizing organic farming principles and practices to develop vocational and social skills; offer work experience; teach teamwork; encourage leadership development; build a sense of community; cultivate personal accountability; and promote environmental stewardship. In our first year of operations, we piloted our summer program with a group of 12 boys and girls. This allowed us to study our model, eventually leading to the establishment of our all-girl young farmer program which now runs year round. On the business side, we have maintained a modest but faithful CSA customer base whose support of our agricultural activities is helping to support our educational enterprise.

The past year's main activities - achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc

Select activities and accomplishment follow:

- 1. Established relationships with local authorities and other direct service providers:** This past year we invested considerable time liaising with local education and welfare authorities to identify needs and encourage recruitment. Our efforts to establish good working relationships gradually proved beneficial as the number of youngsters referred to us is increasing at appreciable levels. We are particularly proud of our ongoing, strong cooperation with the welfare, education, environmental, and teen units of the Jezreel Valley Regional Council, under whose jurisdiction we fall. The Council, which does not have

access to basic Ministry of Education mandated Kidum Noar Youth Advancement resources, made immediate use of our programming during the summer of 2017 and again in 2018. Note: our official region encompasses 15 kibbutzim, 15 moshavim, 2 Bedouin villages, and 6 other communities.

2. **Mapped regional needs:** Having researched the availability of social services for teens who have dropped out of school in our own region, we uncovered many others from surrounding communities including Afula, Kiryat Tivon, and Nazareth Illit (a mixed Jewish-Arab city). Today, partners include neighboring municipalities, regional councils, boarding schools, temporary youth shelters such as Beit Lilach, and high schools whose professional leadership now regularly make referrals to us.
3. **Piloted our employment as education program:** Below we relate specifically to our Lavender Project – the cornerstone of our outreach and our platform for our work with girls – which currently operates according to two main tracks:
 - **Employment initiative:** Our intensive employment program targets girls between 15-18 years old. Participants earn a salary, incentive which helps them take responsibility for themselves, the team and the farm. Our young farmers learn to grow, cultivate, market and sell the farm's organic products in one of our community distribution centers and deliver weekly portions to our subscribers' homes. Activities will take place daily, from 7:00-14:00.
 - **Empowerment activities:** We facilitate discussion groups and offer lectures for girls on body image, setting healthy boundaries, effective communication, and more. We have found that the farm's safe and caring community and all-female dynamic creates a positive environment for initiating and maintaining essential conversations for the adolescent girl.
4. **Extended programming to the wider community:** We offered activities for the local community, schools, families, the IDF, Mechinot Kdam Tzvait volunteers (participating in pre-army non-formal education programming) and groups such as Nigun HaLev (a collective of local residents addressing the spiritual needs of nonaffiliated Jewish Israelis, operating in partnership with New York's Bnei Jeshurun synagogue), and Women Wage Peace, the country's largest non-political women's dialogue group focused on promoting coexistence. We also hosted Jewish and Arab teens during the summer and throughout the school year; pensioners; regional professionals in charge of informal teen education; and Diaspora visitors, including teen girls from Detroit and a women's delegation from Ann Arbor.
5. **Established our financial model:** We rolled out our financial model based on a three-tiered cost sharing formula with support derived from a) self-generated revenue from farm sales, b) government buy-in, and c) philanthropic/in-kind support. Our primary customer base is our CSA membership of 30 customers who each week receive a box of fruit and vegetables grown by our youth as well as sales to the general public at a local co-op. Our surplus produce is sold wholesale to a local store specializing in the sale of organic products. This year we also participated in two successful community exchange markets where we sold a range of agricultural products, including vegetables, seeds, starter plants, food, and pastries. In addition to adding to our bottom line, these efforts mean that we are able to meet our philosophical commitment to no waste. On the philanthropic side, in addition to the Matanel Foundation's lead donation, we secured two new funding partners: Tzionut 2000 and the Nedivot Fund, affiliated with the UJA Federation of New York. We were also able to arrange for important cost saving in-kind donations from Netafim, a global leader in irrigation solutions for sustainable agriculture; Plasson, shading nets and protective products for agriculture; and Ginigar, offering a range of multilayer agricultural and non-agricultural plastic mulch films to help increase yield.

Evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with previous year, conclusions for the future):

1. **Methodology:** Lacking the resources to engage in an external evaluation process, all evaluation is conducted by Kaima Nahalal staff and with the assistance of the Kaima Center for Economic Development and Educational Training, an umbrella body which provides business and pedagogic resources to all Kaima farms of which there are currently four in Israel and one abroad, in Africa.
 - **Daily:** Each day ends with a staff review of each participant and shifts in the group dynamic.

- **Weekly:** Every week we conduct an education meeting of the full adult team.
- **Monthly:** Every month we organize a special activity such as a friendship circle, a picnic at one of the many local springs, or an offsite lunch for both our young and adult team members to share and speak about both farm issues and life experiences.

2. Lessons learned:

- We remain in close contact with past participants/visitors to lend direction to program development.
- We are upgrading our customer ordering system (currently conducted through whatsapp using our cell phones) to a more professional online platform developed and utilized with strong results by our mother farm, Kaima Beit Zayit.
- Without previous business experience, we knew there would be a learning curve in terms of implementing our economic model. With a year now under our belt, have made small but important adjustments regarding agricultural expenses and income projections.

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year

- 1. Increase collaboration with local council authorities:** In early July 2018, we attended an important meeting with Jezreel Valley Regional Council professionals from the education and welfare units who shared their profound appreciation of our work and confirmed their readiness to work more closely in the coming year given our program's potential as well as internal restructuring on their part.
- 2. Increase collaboration with other service providers:**
 - After a considerable investment on the part of our staff to foster a connection with a local closed hostel for homeless girls, we are pleased that they have agreed to modify their policy of providing all outreach onsite and will send us 5 participants in the coming year.
 - We were approached by a newly established pre-army mechina for girls (ages 18-20) whose own life experiences reflect that of our own teens, so many coming from backgrounds which may include drug/alcohol abuse, physical and sexual violence, and prostitution. The mechina is in the process of vetting volunteer options and has expressed interest in our model. This summer we will host all 22 participants, exposing them to all aspects of our farm programming, after which they will select 5 to join us weekly, starting in September, as volunteers. Should we succeed in raising additional funds, we would like to integrate them into the farm as paid young farmers. We are very excited to bring on board slightly older girls who have already come a long way in improving their lives.
- 3. Work with special needs populations:** We made a decision fairly early on to integrate girls with special needs into our educational farm. Having worked with a *bat sherut* (national service) worker with special needs we are now looking for ways to expand our work with this population.
- 4. Increase our customer base:** We seek to grow our CSA customer base from 30 to 50.
- 5. Fortify our professional team:** Like other Kaima social franchise farms, our professional staff agreed to accept below minimum wage for the first year of operations during our initial start up phase. This placed a strain on us and kept our budget artificially low. We remain challenged to grow the project in ways which also allows our staff to earn a respectable income. Note, as a Kaima franchisee, we work according to a staff to participant ratio of 1-3. This means that currently we are only able, with 2 adult staff, to work with 6 girls at a time.
- 6. Develop and offer more diverse learning opportunities such as:**
 - Leadership development, particularly important as we seek to integrate special-needs girls into our community.
 - Building and practicing new skills to enter the job market.
 - Encouraging entrepreneurial thinking and new product development. For example, we hope to soon create and sell natural soaps and other beauty products using flowers we grow and dry ourselves.
 - Advancing our sustainable profile by repairing building new farm structures, many made with mud according to a process learned at Kibbutz Lotan.