

MATANEL FOUNDATION

Evaluation REPORT

Program: *Mechinat BINA* - The Arye Lova Eliav Mechina

Year: 2017-2018

All Mechina participants complete comprehensive pre-program, mid-year and end-year written and oral evaluations, as individuals and as groups with Mechina staff. The purpose of our pre-program evaluation is to establish a baseline for comparison in our post-program evaluation. 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 program into the IDF and their needs, interests, and desire for continued connection to BINA and the Mechina as well as to Jewish study and social action post-program.

Quantitative Impact (gathered through evaluation surveys)

91% response rate

Nearly all of the participants (89%) demonstrated an increase in the level of connection they feel to their Jewish identity, as well as feeling an increased connection to Jewish holidays and lifecycle events as part of their Jewish Secular identity.

93% demonstrated an increase in their connection to social justice and Tikkun Olam as well as expressing a commitment to carrying on volunteering/get involved in their local community in the future.

91% demonstrated that they feel better prepared for their IDF service and that as a result of their participation in the Mechina, they believe the time they spend in the army will be all the more meaningful.

95% of respondents said they would like to stay involved with BINA, be that through continuing in BINA's Nahal program ('year of service' for IDF soldiers), through attending events or continuing to learn at BINA.

87% of participants expressed a desire to continue their Jewish studies, and 95% would recommend the program to others.

92% of respondents saw the inclusion of International participants (the GAP program) as beneficial to the program as a whole, 79% feel that through getting to know the GAP participants, they feel a greater understanding of the Jews in the Diaspora and 65% felt they had learned something new about world Jewry.

Qualitative Impact

Gathered in focus-groups, group feedback sessions, written evaluations, and discussions with participants, our qualitative assessment has highlighted a few specific areas of impact, most notably that participants feel a sense of personal growth, a greater ability and desire to take responsibility, they feel they have learned to think critically, have gained new perspectives, are more task/goal orientated, more independent, more confident, have a deeper understanding of Israeli society, and a greater commitment to activism and social justice.

Participant quotes:

How did your year at the Mechina affect your Jewish identity?

“The year has had an enormous effect on me: Before the Mechina I didn’t have a fully formed Jewish identity at all, and I didn’t at all see the relevance of the topic to my life. And now I am a believer in social Judaism with all my heart and love Judaism and see its place in my life from now on”

“I have come to realize how important it is to me to raise my children as Jewish and I think I better understand the place of the diaspora/exile in my Jewish identity. I understand now that I don’t like the idea of fractioned streams and that it is important to me to preserve the Jewish community and my personal connections to it. I want to learn and continue the process of learning and forming my Jewish lifestyle and worldview through my life.”

“The Mechina and BINA as an organization focus on something that is genius – on Hiloni identity – something I’d never encountered before. I’ve come to understand how important it is to ask myself what I AM and not what I’m NOT.”

“I feel that I understand much more deeply how Judaism is involved in my life as a Hiloni Jew and what I want to take from it in the course of my life.”

How did your year at the Mechina and the time you spent living and learning with the GAP (international) program affect your feelings of connection to the Jewish People.

“It gave me a greater awareness that living in this country isn’t a given, it can’t be taken for granted and that it’s a lot more complex than I thought. The International participants have such an affinity for the land that it strengthened my feeling of pride and love for Israel and led to many interesting discussions.”

“I’m so happy that the Mechina includes young Jews from all over the world. I think it’s good for both sides of the equation. I got to know new cultures and new worlds, and of course made new friends. It made me feel a stronger connection to global Jewry and made me want to find other frameworks to participate in that involve International Jews!”

How did your year at the Mechina affect your approach to Social Action / Israeli Society and how will this be expressed in the future?

“I’ve realized how important it is for me to have an impact on society and that I need to find a job that will allow me to do so.”

“Participating in the Mechina program emphasized to me the importance of social action and made me understand how important it is for me to sound my voice on various issues and to work for change.”

“I learned that when I’m afraid, it’s because something is unfamiliar. I’m much more open now to new communities, opinions and lifestyles and I think that will have an impact on all my future connections.”

*“I’ve always liked to explore issues and learn more about them, but the Mechina program made me want to spring into action. That is, this year ignited in me the desire to actually **do** activism and not just to read about it.”*

“I’ve learned to pay more attention to the margins of society, I have been lucky to have had the opportunity to learn more about the many layers in society and about many different perspectives. I plan to remain active in society on the issues that are important to me, and I will certainly remain aware of what is going on in the country and to stay up-to-date on what is happening in the country.”

Participant Testimony

"Two weeks ago I went on my first real hike. Not another hike where I meet up with the group when possible, and spend most of the time sitting on the side. Not another hike full of frustration and lack of motivation because there is nothing to do but wait for the rest. I am always fighting, fighting to do the things that are important to me, fighting to be able to hike like everyone else.

This amazing invention is called Trekker, a special wheelchair adapted for hiking and field trips, and it made the first three day hike of my Mechina (pre-army) program one of the most significant experiences I've ever had. The whole experience created an opportunity for me to join my friends in the first real group bonding activity of the program, it gave me a chance to learn about real teamwork, and to take part in the whole hike. It also gave the Mechina group the opportunity to see that hiking with a person with a disability like mine is possible, educational and more importantly, fun.

During the hike, I learned that it is important not to concentrate on what is challenging and difficult, but simply to enjoy the amazing scenery and the whole experience without any worries. My Mechina group were there for me all along, and I could not have asked for a better experience. It is not a given that I would be able to participate in a hike, without the tremendous motivation in the group there is no way that this would have happened. I have come away from the experience full of motivation and anticipation for the year ahead in BINA's Mechina program.”



Maya Lender has just graduated from BINA's Mechina Program and has just drafted as a volunteer in the IDF. BINA is so proud to have been part of Maya's Mechina experience, we are especially proud of Maya and the other high school graduates who embraced any challenges and together made sure that Maya was included in all Mechina activities.