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:** 2017-18  
**Name of the report’s writer:** Noga Brenner Samia  
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**Number of active participants in the program:** 56  
**Estimated number of impacted participants:** 330 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 another successful year of activity at Mechinat BINA, 56 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 two afternoons per week. The students lived together communally in shared apartments in the Shapira and Hatikva neighborhoods 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 2018, we welcome our 13th cohort made up of 65 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.): 2017-18 was an eventful year for Mechinat BINA. We increased the diversity of our participants, deepened our social action, and held even more Shabbat and Jewish holiday events. Our graduates are at the start of 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 in English (for the international GAP participants) and Hebrew which was very well received. This year we increased the number of organizations that our students volunteer with and diversified the beneficiaries of the volunteerism. Our participants worked on projects that support the asylum seeker population of south Tel Aviv, the homeless, helped those trapped in the cycle of prostitution, and met with the foreign residents and their children in the neighborhoods surrounding the Mechina. 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 environmental program – local children worked with
the volunteers in planting and caring for BINA’s urban farm and helped with the renewal of the botanical gardens project in south Tel Aviv. The group organized pluralistic family friendly Shabbatot 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 and amusing theatrical performance of the Megillah. Yom Haatzmaut – the participants were involved in the torch lighting ceremony and planning and preparing the party, attended by 200 people. Shavuot – the Mechina students planned aspects of the all-night learning event that was attended by 500 participants and included study, discussion circles, music, spoken word, poetry, walking tours of the neighborhood and much more.

Mechinat BINA continues to strive towards equality and inclusion. This year the campus was modified to be more accessible with the addition of new paths and wheelchair friendly ramps. We had our first participant with Cerebral Palsy, Maya Lender. Maya was able to participate in all aspects of the Mechina program including the hikes (see her testimony in the attached evaluation report) and volunteering. Maya has just graduated from the program and has just drafted as a volunteer in the IDF. We are 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 and all challenges and together made sure that Maya was included in all Mechina activities. Another participant Roi, has Asperger’s Syndrome, and he became an integral and active member of the program, leading the Mechina to victory in the National Sports Day for Israeli Mechina programs, where we won gold medals in both the women’s football competition and the men’s football competition. 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.

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, social action and work in the community.

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, and 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 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. Our Alumni survey results indicate that growing numbers of our graduates are participating in a more meaningful army service, rising to the ranks of officers and commanders in the IDF. Full evaluation summary attached. In terms of conclusions for the future, we have been working to improve the way we engage with our alumni – how we communicate 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 – possibly based in Haifa, the location of our newly opened branch of the BINA Yeshiva Network. This will allow 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 cohorts, 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 have opened an ‘environmental track’ at the Mechina. The 13 participants of the new Maslul Yarok will focus on the topics of sustainability and the connections between society, Judaism and the environment. The group will study texts and sources focusing on (but not only) environmentalism and sustainability, and will volunteer in the Urban Farm and the Botanical Gardens, creating and leading environmental educational content programs for local schools and kindergartens. Mechinat Masabacha (Masa Ba Chevra HaYisraelit - Journey through Israeli Society) – our mobile Mechina - continues to flourish and in the coming year we will welcome the third cohort of this unique gap-year pre-army program. The new cohort is made up of 21 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 have increased the Mechinat BINA team and we now have two new dedicated staff members who oversee the various Mechina programs. They are responsible for all coordination, development and the day to day running of the programs.

To deepen our connection and outreach to the neighborhoods surrounding our south Tel Aviv campus, the 13th cohort will be divided into 5 groups, each linked to a neighborhood in south Tel Aviv – Jaffa. Each group will work with community members to develop local neighborhood initiatives and events that will bring the residents together and introduce BINA’s values of “Yahadut Hevratit” (Social-Justice Judaism) and Jewish pluralism to wider members of the communities where the participants volunteer. We plan to further increase the numbers of participants in the Mechina, in particular, we hope to increase our international participants (we wish to diversify and increase the numbers of countries and to attract even more European and South American students), as well as continue to develop new programs and grow the number of courses that we offer.

We are currently in the process of evaluating our program and activities, as well as working on a multi-year strategic plan for the Mechina. Our strategy includes recruitment, marketing, and alumni programing, and aims 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 from 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.