

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: *Mechinat Ha'Emek*

Year: **2019-2020**

Name of the Program: *Mechinat Ha'Emek*

Year of activity: 2020

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Number of active participants in the program:

The program impacts approximately 5,000 people in the Emek HaMa'ayanot region, including:

65 participants

600 graduates

Approximately 500 opportunities to volunteer for the underprivileged and vulnerable

Several thousand residents spanning the communities that host the program

Give the actually state of the program (where the program stands at the date of the activity report, no more than ten lines):

As of now, this year's program has come to a close and the participants await their military enlistment.

The Mechina staff is currently preoccupied with preparations for next year's activities, which begins August 2, 2020 with training the new team, followed by the arrival of the new participants on September 1, 2020.

At the same time, as we look ahead to the start of the new year, the management, together with the organization's affiliates, continues to derive lessons learned from the issues arisen over the course of the COVID-19 period, and reflecting on their significance from all aspects, including the program schedule, organizational structure, budget, planning and development, etc.

Likewise, the program for graduates continues to operate throughout the country:

- Accompanying and mentoring the year group over the course of their military service by two program graduates.
- Meetups with groups due to return to reside and work in the Emek.
- A virtual learning center for program graduates.
- Organization of meaningful events for graduates over the Jewish month of Tishrei (September/October), accommodating COVID-19 conditions.

The main achievements during the last year of activity (main achievements, number of events, number of participants, etc.):

1. Establishing a comprehensive, state-of-the-art program in the first half of the year.
2. Swift assessments while facing the challenges of COVID-19, which suddenly brought the year's activities to a standstill, and creating a new operations system, including volunteer work in accordance with the national emergency regulations, volunteer or remote learning groups, and maintaining the Mechina lifestyle in capsule format. In addition, all-inclusive organization of the final month of the program, including meeting all operational objectives, despite the limitations due to COVID-19.
3. Formulation of new volunteering arrangements under COVID-19 conditions with *Beit Uri*, an institution for the challenged and special needs in Afula. Rearranging the volunteer schedule throughout the COVID-19 period and maintaining it for two months (with respect to volunteers from abroad, when COVID-19 necessitated their return home)!
4. The creation of *Challenge 49* – an online platform with the aim of working on positive attributes over the seven weeks of the *omer*. The challenge was developed by graduates and leaders at the Mechina, and undertaken by groups throughout the country, as well as abroad. A total of 1,000 people participated in the project!

The evaluation (methodology, results, comparisons with the precedent year, conclusions for the future...):

- Feedback provided both midway through the program and at the end of the year.
- Summary circles on topics chosen by the participants.
- A summary evening with significant personalities from the community.
- Written summaries from each team, committee, organizational team, and position holder, which are kept for later organizational use.
- A summary report from the Mechina staff in conformance with research center guidelines

Key insights and conclusions:

1. Participants should be trained throughout the year in independent/work modules without a framework, in order to function optimally should a situation arise resulting in an interruption of activity, as occurred with COVID-19.
2. To undertake the challenges of COVID-19, the following needs to be addressed:
 - Development of a flexible, modular schedule at the locations of large field events for the second half of the Mechina program.

- Development of a volunteer study schedule based on the small groups in the Mechina, as well as a guide for independent capsules for functioning alone.
- Preparation of an organized action plan for all COVID-19-related situations that may arise - full lockdown, partial lockdown etc. - which will include the educational, logistical, and financial ramifications, among others.

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

1. Laying down an educational and organizational infrastructure for opening a division of the Mechina for the purpose of returning to intimate processes at the group level.
2. Expanding and growing the activity circles in the community, with an emphasis on the City of Beit Shean.
3. Creating a work plan for the graduate committee, established this year.
4. Increasing manpower and budget resources in line with the due return of graduate communities to the Emek.