



**MATANEL FOUNDATION
ACTIVITY REPORT**

Program: The Yitzchak Rabin Pre-Army Leadership Program
Year: 2013-2014

Name of the Program: **The Yitzchak Rabin Pre-Army Leadership Program**

Year of activity: **2013-2014**

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

The Mechina's 17th cohort started the year by volunteering to help rehabilitate communities in the south affected by Operation Protective Edge. Upon their return, they began the regular program of intensive study on topics related to leadership, Jewish and Israeli history, and Jewish and Zionist values. Participants experience Bet-Midrash style study and take on leadership roles throughout the program. By November, the participants began community volunteer work with children and the elderly in schools, community centers and other support services, where they present compelling role models to the local youth. After graduation, all Mechina participants enlist in the IDF, generally assuming leadership positions. After the army, some graduates go on to establish and live in *Young Communities* in socio-economically disadvantaged cities and towns.

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

After reviewing over 2,000 applications, the 17th cohort consisting of 90 outstanding young men and women was selected, the largest group to date. This increase was made possible, thanks in part to the support of the Matanel Foundation. At the beginning of the year, the group unanimously decided to spend several weeks volunteering in communities in the south, helping the residents return to normal life after Operation Protective Edge. The Mechina participants' volunteer work continued in Kiryat Ata and Kiryat Tivon, within the framework of the study year. One morning and two afternoons each week, the participants lead Jewish culture and identity activities in schools, community centers and other community frameworks, benefitting hundreds of children. Graduates of the 16th cohort have enlisted in the IDF, many in elite units in Kfir and in the Tanks Units. Some graduates with a later enlistment date are continuing their community service work until they enlist, while living in Shana Bet (Second Year) Communes or with post-army Mechina graduates in Young Communities.

All mechina participants are strongly encouraged to continue their community activism in the framework of a Shana Bet Commune or post-IDF Young Community. This past year approval was secured to establish a new Young Community in Haifa, joining the network of communities already operating in Jerusalem. The Young Communities are focal points for community involvement, driven by the energy and vision of the graduates who live in them. The villages sponsor weekly study meetings and special activities related to leadership, Jewish life and values, and community service, and are magnets for attracting like-minded, civic-oriented young Israelis. The Young Communities receive professional support from the Mechina Graduates Coordinator, who is employed by the Mechina to facilitate the activities of some 1,500 graduates, helping them engage effectively in community activism.

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

Program evaluations are held in January and at the end of the academic year. In the interim, the teachers, guides, counselors and faculty conduct ongoing observation and evaluation of the participants' emotional and educational processes. Small groups allow for intimate discussion about personal changes, growth and challenges, and provide a safe place to vent, work through frustrations and grow. Additionally, two Mechina graduates have begun conducting a longitudinal survey of every Mechinat Rabin graduate, and the results will provide an important picture of the mid- to long-term impact of the Mechina on the graduates' experience as leaders and activists in Israeli society.

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

The Mechina has been steadily growing and we anticipate that it will continue to grow in the coming year. At this point, our curriculum, teaching and guidance staff and volunteer frameworks are all well-established and operating smoothly. We anticipate in the year to come that we will be expending additional effort in coordinating the activities of the Mechina graduates. The positive impact on Israeli society that can be made by these motivated, visionary and capable young adults can be significantly enhanced with proper guidance, and we intend to invest in the activities of the Graduates Coordinator for this purpose. In addition we are busy preparing for next year's תשע"ו launching of our newest branch in Haifa.