

MATANEL FOUNDATION
ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: "Urban Leadership" (GARIN IRONI)
Year: 2013-2014

Name of the Program: "Urban Leadership" (GARIN IRONI)

Year of activity: 2013-2014

Name of the reporter: Uri Carmel

Function of the reporter: Director of Community Programs, BINA

E-mail: uri@bina.org.il **Phone:** +972-52-257-8281

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

This year (2014-2015) we have seen significant growth in the program. We currently have 50 participants, which includes: our largest-ever cohort of 23 new pre-army participants from Tel Aviv-Yafo volunteering and studying Beer Sheva, and 9 pre-army participants from Beer Sheva volunteering and studying in Tel Aviv-Yafo. These are in addition to the members of the 2012-2013 cohort (9 from Beer Sheva and 9 from Tel Aviv) who completed their basic army service in 2013-2014 and have returned to volunteer and study in uniform in their home community. Each young adult volunteer works approximately 3 mornings/week in a local school and 4 afternoons/week in an afterschool program, in addition to 1.5 days/week studying Jewish sources and gaining volunteer skills. In both cities the volunteers have helped to organized Sukkot and Hanukkah events, each drawing 80-150 participants. We are in the midst of recruiting our 2015-2016 cohort.

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

Full Year of Volunteer Service, Leadership Training, and Impact - 2013-2014 was the first year that the Urban Initiative (GARIN IRONI) program operated for a full year (September-August) as opposed to previous years where the cohorts volunteered and studied for 6 months (September-February) before being drafted into the IDF. This was the result of ongoing discussions with the IDF, the demonstration of success of our program, and our request (with the support of our volunteer beneficiaries) to operate a full year program for greater impact. The outcome of the full-year program was indeed a more successful and impactful program - both for the young-adult volunteers and those whom they served. Instead of having to leave the local youth in the middle of the school year, they were able to continue their process through the entire school year and into the summer.

In 2013-2014 - 40 young adults participated in the program including: 16 pre-army participants from Tel Aviv volunteered and studied in Beer Sheva, while 8 pre-army participants from Beer Sheva volunteered and studied in Tel Aviv. These were in addition to the members of the 2011-2012 cohort (7 from Beer Sheva and 9 from Tel Aviv) who completed their basic army service in 2012-2013 and returned to volunteer and study in uniform in their home community.

During the school year, each volunteer worked 3 mornings/week in a local school. Each volunteer was paired with one class of approximately 30 students, and worked closely with 10-15 at-risk youth through individual and small-group tutoring and mentorship, as well as providing in-class assistance and preparing special interactive activities. Together the volunteers also organized whole-school and whole-grade social-cultural activities during recesses and surrounding holidays.

After school, the volunteers worked approximately 4 days/week in afterschool programs for at-risk youth in local community centers, running social-cultural-creative enrichment activities, as well as homework help and mentorship. In many cases the volunteers worked with some of the same youth in the morning and in the afternoon, providing an approach of holistic care. Each volunteer worked regularly with 10-20 youth in afterschool programs.

During the summer, the volunteers worked in summer day camps, until the Gaza war broke out, during which they volunteered by organizing children's activities in shelters.

Together, the 40 young adult volunteers in Tel Aviv and Beer Sheva directly served over 800 at-risk youth, and indirectly an additional estimated 800.

These volunteers helped to improve the academic performance, attendance, participation, motivation and self-esteem of the youth with whom they worked. This year also saw an increase of over 10% in youth participation in the afterschool programs where the young adults volunteered.

Events: In Tel Aviv, the young adult volunteers helped to organize community holiday events for Hanukkah, Tu Bishvat, Passover and Yom Ha'atzmaut. In Beer Sheva the volunteers helped to organize events for Hanukkah, Tu Bishvat, Purim and Yom Ha'atzmaut. Each event brought together 80-300 local residents from different backgrounds, particularly many of the at-risk youth with whom the volunteers worked, together with their families. In total, over 1000 local residents participated in events organized by volunteers in Tel Aviv and Beer Sheva.

Strengthening the Leadership/Study Program for Young Adult Volunteers: This past year, in addition to the weekly 1.5 days of study for each group on its own, we ran 5 joint weekend seminars that brought together all of our young adult volunteers. These seminars included: an orientation seminar, IDF preparation seminar, Jewish identity seminar, desert navigation seminar, and year-end seminar. This helped to build connections between the different groups and build a stronger sense of commitment to a larger community and cause. This was also the first time we ran a seminar dedicated specifically to Jewish identity, and the feedback from participants was very positive.

Operation Protective Edge / Gaza War - The summer war posed a number of challenges to the program, but in the midst of the challenges our staff and volunteers and community partners were able to come together to provide needed support for youth at-risk. During the war, many municipally-operated youth summer programs were cancelled, and particularly in Beer Sheva, many youth had to spend extended hours in shelters. In response, our Beer Sheva-based volunteers, who were joined by several of our Tel Aviv-based volunteers who came down to Beer Sheva to assist, organized and led activities for youth in the shelters, provided needed stimulation and positive distraction for the youth, and respite for parents.

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

Program evaluation was conducted through: formal written surveys and oral feedback sessions with young adult volunteers, evaluation sessions with program staff, formal and informal interviews with community partners (staff of schools and community centers, etc.). Surveys of young adult volunteers demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the program, in both the volunteering and learning components, as well as reported high degree of personal impact. In relation to previous years, surveys this year demonstrated a stronger sense of connection between the discussions on the study days and social action on volunteer days. This, we believe, is a result of our increased attention to Jewish identity and quality, study program. The following are a sample of quotes from participant surveys:

- *“The studies at BINA opened my eyes to a whole new world. I had never opened a page of Talmud before!”*
- *“I often used learnings from my study days – and sometimes the texts themselves – and integrated them into my work with the kids.”*
- *“The study days and deeper understanding of Judaism helped me to better connect with the kids from more traditional backgrounds that I volunteered with.”*

This past year (2013-2014) we began working with a consultant (expert on evaluating community programs) to develop the next phase of our evaluation plan, part of which has already been implemented through a series of interviews with community partners conducted by the consultant. Initial results of these interviews have highlighted the positive impact of our work, and the sense that BINA is not just an “external agent” that comes in to operate “programs”, but a family that truly “cares” about the wellbeing of the people that it serves. The following is an excerpt from such an interview with Asmera, Director of Absorption Center for Ethiopian Jews in Tel Aviv-Yafo, where several of our young adults volunteered in the afternoons.

“While many of the families of Ethiopian origin lead religiously ‘traditional’ homes in one sense or another, they connect very strongly with BINA’s pluralistic approach that fosters mutual respect and understanding. Because of the history between Jews and non-Jews in Ethiopia, there is still a certain fear toward non-Jews – particularly here in Jaffa – but that has been diminishing, and BINA has helped significantly to reduce such prejudices and pre-existing fears, especially among the youth and young adults. It has been particularly important for us to see how BINA treats our young people – as capable individuals seeking and building their own personal and communal identities – and BINA’s impact and programs for youth development and empowerment have been invaluable. BINA’s programs have helped our youth – both boys and girls – think about and plan for their future, with the wonderful help of the BINA young adult volunteers who serve as vital role models and mentors, helping the youth in their studies, and also in developing their own confidence and strength.”

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

Strengthening of Jewish Content: Based on feedback from young adult volunteers, program staff, and commitment to BINA's mission to developing of informed young Jewish-Israeli leaders with a strong sense of identity, empowered and inspired by Jewish values, and committed to social improvement in Israel - we have decided to continue efforts to improve, strengthen, and deepen the Jewish-educational content of our study program for young adult volunteers, and reinforce the connection between the learning component and volunteer

component of the program. Specifically, this year, we will replicate the Jewish identity weekend seminar

Based on evaluation conducted by, with, and of program staff and administration, we have also noted:

- A need for increased and closer mentorship and involvement of counselors of our young adult volunteer groups, as we continue to recruit an increasing number of volunteers from more challenged socio-economic and family backgrounds (many having been past beneficiaries of BINA volunteers, now coming of age.) For 2014-2015 we have already increased the number of salaried hours of hired counselors for our groups, and increased our supervision, support, and training for these counselors.
- A need for increased content relating to Mizrahi Jewish culture. In 2014-2015 we have added a new class exploring traditional Jewish sources through Mizrahi Jewish music.
- A need for improved recruitment methods to recruit young adult volunteers from the Beer Sheva area, as it is less a part of the local culture to postpone IDF service for a year of volunteering and/or study. We are currently in the process of working with a marketing consultant for this purpose.
- A need for increased scholarship funds to enable young adults from socioeconomically challenged backgrounds to participate in the program. We are currently exploring options for additional funding.

SEE ATTACHMENTS:

- *A summary table specifying the progress in the program since the beginning of the encouragement by the Matanel Foundation according to the main parameters and objectives such as: Number of events, Number of participants, Number of beneficiaries*
- *Financial Report*
- *List of the participants to the program*
- *Photos*
- *Testimonial Letter*