MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program*:* : Leadership for Sustainability and Ecology

Year: 2024–2025

Name of the Program: Leadership for Sustainability and Ecology

Year of activity: 2024–2025

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Number of active participants in the program:

150 active participants, grades 8–12, engaged in hands-on research, sustainability initiatives, and leadership training throughout the year.

Estimated number of impacted participants:

Approximately 1,000 participants, including younger students (grades 4–8), as well as a broader audience who participated in public events, conferences, seminars, and educational workshops.

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

After two years of pilot development the program entered its next phase in 2024–2025. We launched the *Climate Cadet Program* for high school students, partnering with *Engineers Without Borders Israel* and the *Porter School of Environmental Studies at Tel Aviv University*. Students lead research and innovation projects addressing climate, agriculture, and sustainability, and report a strong sense of purpose, contribution to society, and environmental impact. In response to the impact of October 7, three regional councils from Israel's south and north have expressed interest in adopting the program to support youth and restore educational stability.

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

- Launched the *Climate Cadet Program*, a two-year track for outstanding 10th–11th grade students.
- Increased the number of direct participants from 91 to **150 students**, actively engaged in advanced research and project-based learning.
- Expanded indirect reach from 300 to **1,000 participants**, including younger students, educators, and the wider community through events, workshops, and dissemination.
- Integrated **Artificial Intelligence for Climate and Environmental Solutions** as a core theme in the program; students use AI tools to analyze data, model environmental systems, and develop sustainable solutions.
- Introduced a new **professional development course** for 30 teachers from various communities and schools in Israel, combining climate education with the pedagogical use of AI technologies.
- Students received national recognition, winning prestigious awards such as the ***Yad Hanadiv Environmental Research Prize***, the ***Gur Aryeh Award for Excellence***, and the ***Adam & Sea Award*** for research on human impact on marine ecosystems. They also presented their projects at the **President's Residence**, in the presence of President ***Isaac Herzog***.
- Shared the program's educational approach with **over 30 schools** across the country.
- Expanded partnerships with ***Engineers Without Borders Israel***, the ***Porter School of Environmental Studies***, and organizations in ***Kenya, Uganda, and the Comoros Islands***.

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

An internal evaluation process was conducted by the educational and administrative team of the Ecological Greenhouse in Ein Shemer, in collaboration with educators from participating schools and communities.

The process included student questionnaires (before, during, and after the program), reflection activities, and structured feedback from school staff.

The evaluation focused on students' development in knowledge, skills, values, and collaboration, as well as on the quality of program design and implementation.

The full details are attached in the evaluation report:

- **Student recruitment:** Students reported that their expectations of the program matched the actual experience. For future improvement, the recruitment process should begin earlier in the school year to allow better planning and alignment with school schedules.
- **Program planning:** The structure of the program was described as both diverse and in-depth. To enrich the experience, participants suggested adding more field trips and opportunities to meet professionals and experts.

- **Environmental, social, and global awareness:** Students consistently reported increased awareness of environmental and social issues, alongside a growing understanding of

global challenges. Some initiated contact with professionals and entrepreneurs abroad to explore real-world applications of their projects.

- **Teamwork and collaboration:** Teams generally worked well together. This year, we placed a stronger emphasis on social learning experiences, which significantly enhanced collaboration.

- **Motivation and scientific rigor:** Participants showed strong motivation to achieve academic excellence. They engaged with scientific literature, conducted experiments, and applied research-based approaches to their work..

- **Program enrichment:** Students expressed a need for more structured exposure to real-world applications, additional visits to laboratories, environmental organizations, and start-ups. A clear need also emerged to broaden their knowledge about organizations working in developing regions.

- **School collaboration:** The program's success is closely linked to the cooperation with school staff, involved in designing evaluation tools, supporting students throughout the year, and aligning the program with school learning goals.

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

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- **Expand the Climate Cadet Program** to include two full cohorts: first-year and second-year students, deepening continuity and peer learning.
- **Develop an advanced research track** for cadets completing their first year, including mentorship by university students and collaborative projects with academic institutions.
- **Enhance the integration of AI tools** in climate and environmental education, through dedicated modules and hands-on training for students and teachers.
- **Strengthen partnerships with schools**, by offering co-designed content, teacher training, and support in adapting the program to diverse educational contexts.
- **Broaden the geographic reach** of the program, with pilot implementations in Sha'ar HaNegev, Eshkol, and Mateh Asher regional councils.
- **Facilitate international engagement**, particularly with youth from developing countries in Africa, through joint challenges and virtual collaboration.
- **Host a national youth climate summit**, led by program participants, to showcase research, foster cross-school dialogue, and build a nationwide network of young climate leaders.
- **Increase community involvement**, including parents, local municipalities, and industry partners, to create a broader ecosystem of support and relevance.
- **Invest in documentation and dissemination**, producing professional materials to share methodologies and findings with educators across Israel.
- **Establish a long-term evaluation framework**, combining internal reflection with external assessment to track growth, quality, and long-term impact.