

MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

**Program: Maamakim Gap-Year
Year:2025**

Name of the Program: Maamakim Gap-Year

Year of activity: 2025

Website / Facebook address of the organization: <https://www.zofim.org.il/>

Number of active participants in the program: 60 members

Estimated number of impacted participants: 78 members and staff

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

During 2025, The Maamakim Gap-Year program continued to develop and deepen its activity in the Eshkol Regional Council in the Gaza border region. 2 cohorts were active during the year: Cohort B (January to July 2025) and Cohort C joined the program in September and is currently participating in the ongoing program year.

Cohort B began the year by returning to the program's base in Eshkol after a year of war, the return to the region carried both symbolic and practical significance: rebuilding the program's routine while actively contributing to the recovery of local communities. Throughout the year, participants combined educational studies, field seminars across Israel, and extensive community volunteering. In close coordination with the Regional Council, we focused on supporting community resilience, assisting returning residents, and contributing to the gradual restoration of everyday life.

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

The main achievements of the program during 2025 include:

- The successful return and continued operation of the program in the Regional Council despite the ongoing challenges faced by the Gaza border communities.

- Engagement of program participants in extensive **community volunteering**, including agricultural work, cleaning and restoring damaged buildings, and supporting elderly residents in local communities.
- Development of meaningful educational activities for children from the surrounding communities, including **cooperation with 'Nofei HaBesor'** school, where participants supported weekly field studies classes and accompanied students during educational activities and field trips.
- Personal mentoring and **support for children with special needs** from the region.
- Establishment of '**Deshe Tarbut**', a cultural and social gathering space for young adults in the region. During 2025 the program hosted approximately 20 cultural and community events, providing opportunities for young residents to gather, reconnect, and rebuild social life following the disruption caused by the war.
- **Community fairs for small businesses from the Gaza border region** – 2 fairs were organized at the Maamakim campus during the year, hosting approximately 30 small business owners who presented and sold their products. The fairs were led by program participants and became vibrant community events supporting local economic recovery.
- Participation of dozens of program members in ongoing community initiatives aimed at **strengthening local resilience and rebuilding social connections** following the events of October 7.

Beyond the direct activities themselves, the presence of the program participants in the region played an important role in restoring a sense of normalcy, solidarity, and hope within communities that are still recovering from the trauma of the war. As a leadership gap-year program, Maamakim also contributes to cultivating a generation of young Israelis who are personally connected to the communities of the Gaza border region and committed to strengthening their resilience and future development.

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

An evaluation of the program's community activities was conducted in June 2025 through an online questionnaire completed by 21 of the 23 participants of Cohort B. The questionnaire mapped the scope of the participants' community involvement and their perception of the outcomes of these activities.

The findings indicate that the program has successfully positioned itself as a meaningful and contributing presence within the local community. **95% of respondents believe that the program contributes significantly to the community, and 97% reported forming meaningful relationships with local residents.**

Activities with children emerged as a central pillar of the program's community engagement. **90% of participants described these activities as extensive, and 81% personally conducted educational activities with children from the surrounding communities.** The reported benefits included enjoyment from the activities (95%), exposure to positive role models (81%), academic support (81%), and strengthening feelings of stability and security (76%).

Cultural and social activities for young adults were perceived as meaningful but still in a developmental stage, indicating an important direction for continued growth of the program's community engagement in the coming years.

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

Based on the experience gained during the past year, The Maamakim Gap-Year program plans to continue expanding and strengthening its educational and community activities in the Eshkol Regional Council.

Key directions for the coming year include:

- Expanding the program's educational content around liberal democracy, including encouraging respectful public discourse, civic responsibility, and community activism among participants.
- Increasing international outreach by introducing the program to Jewish Israeli youth living abroad through the Tzofim Olami (Israeli Scouts worldwide) network, with the goal of encouraging them to join the program for their gap-year experience in Israel.
- Developing a structured alumni program, including gatherings and activities aimed at maintaining and strengthening the connection with graduates of the program.
- Expanding the mentoring program for children with special needs across communities in the Eshkol Regional Council, in cooperation with the municipal welfare department.
- Continuing and further developing the "Deshe Tarbut" initiative, which provides cultural and social activities for young adults and residents of the region.