



Evaluation of Volunteering Programs

Executive Summary

November 2014

Program Description

The Ma'ase Center Association aims to enable young people in the periphery from all population sectors to develop and realize their potential by using volunteering as a tool for empowerment and personal growth. High school graduates participate in a year of volunteering in the community, working with children and youth in educational settings. Ma'ase supports its volunteers through training, individual and group instruction, career guidance and development of leadership and social responsibility. Meetings and dialogue between volunteers from different population groups helps to promote a tolerant and democratic society. Ma'ase participants work with thousands of children and youth in dozens of towns every year, and serve as role models for them.

Purpose of the Study

To examine the extent to which Ma'ase achieves its short-term goals: advancing participants towards social mobility via personal empowerment and guidance regarding higher education and employment, as well as strengthening civil society through increased social involvement. Furthermore, the study is designed to identify strengths and weaknesses in the programs as a whole and separately.

Methodology

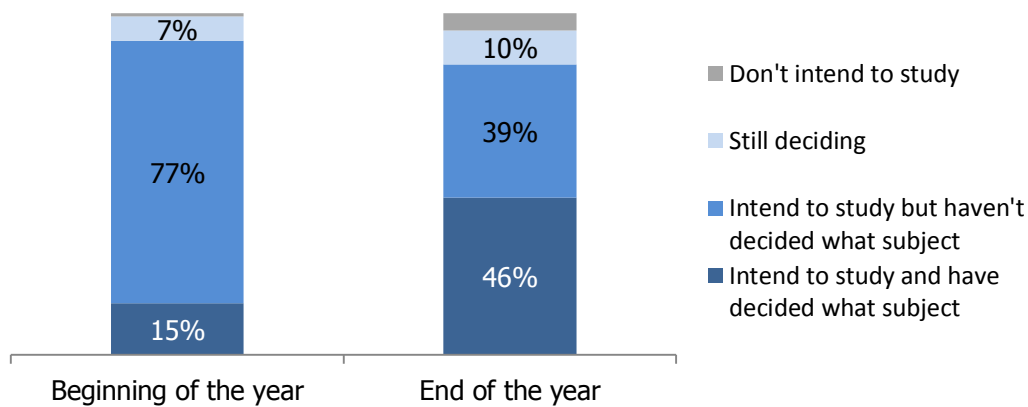
The evaluation was carried out through questionnaires completed by participants in several Ma'ase programs in 2014. The questionnaires were relayed at the start of the year's activity and at the end, and were completed by 456 people who constituted 81% of participants. They examined the quality of preparation for higher education and employment that participants underwent, the perceived overall contribution of the program and its impact on personal development and adoption of democratic values.

Main Findings

- Compared to their situation at the start of the program, at the end of the year participants showed significant improvements in their readiness to continue on to higher education: there was a clear increase in the participants' sense of educational capability and in understanding the requirements for acceptance to academic studies.
- Similarly, in the programs dealing with preparation for higher education, the rate of participants who intended to enter studies within the coming two years and have

already decided on the subject has tripled between beginning and end of year (from 15% to 46%).

Participants' intentions to study in the upcoming two years (N=456)



- In indicators related to employment, there were improvements in all programs when comparing the end of the year with the beginning: an improved sense that they could be productive employees and greater belief that they would be able to find a good job in the future. In those programs that dealt with career guidance, there was also a noticeable improvement in familiarity with academic subjects that could be suitable and also in deciding on a professional direction – at the start of the year, 67% did not know in which profession they would like to work in the future; by the end of the year, this figure had dropped to 26%. Regarding the factors to consider when choosing a profession, there were changes in some programs but not overall. The only change was an increase in the demand for prestigious professions. The guidance efforts may need to be more focused in this topic.
- Among most participants there was a significant improvement in their sense of control over life events and in their sense of capability to cope with difficulties and challenges.
- While there was a clear and uniform improvement in topics related to social mobility, in regard to civil society the results were not consistent; improvements could not be identified in social involvement, a desire to make an impact, willingness to volunteer or to make efforts to improve society. On the other hand, the values of equality and democracy were strengthened: there was more openness towards other groups, more willingness to listen to other opinions, greater acknowledgement of the rights of non-Jews. At the same time, it appears that participants have difficulty in applying the value of equality in real life. In fact, the rate of those who responded actively to discrimination against their own group or other groups did not increase and even declined. It seems that the participants encountered discrimination in different situations during the service year and didn't know how to respond to these events.
- The participants felt that taking part in the program benefitted them significantly in every aspect that was examined. Perceived contribution was particularly high in relation to learning about current affairs and to personal development: internal focus and sense of control, self-confidence and coping ability.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study showed that participation in the programs of Ma'ase contributed to improvement in social mobility among young people from the periphery and also to strengthening of democratic values. In these aspects, the programs achieved their main goals. At the same time, the study showed differences among the programs in various parameters; therefore it is necessary to work to improve the activities that were less effective.



Evaluation of the Neurim Program

Executive Summary

November 2014

Program Description

Neurim is a national program that was initiated by the Prime Minister's Office in partnership with non-profit organizations (Lautman Foundation, Jewish Federation of San Francisco, Rothschild-Caesarea Foundation, Rashi Foundation). The program works to develop and advance leadership, volunteering, excellence and equal opportunity in Druze communities, through the operation of youth centers that provide a range of quality activities.

Purpose of the Study

To examine the effectiveness of the intervention model and the extent to which it leads to desired outputs and results; and to examine ways of improving operating methods and making them more efficient.

Methodology

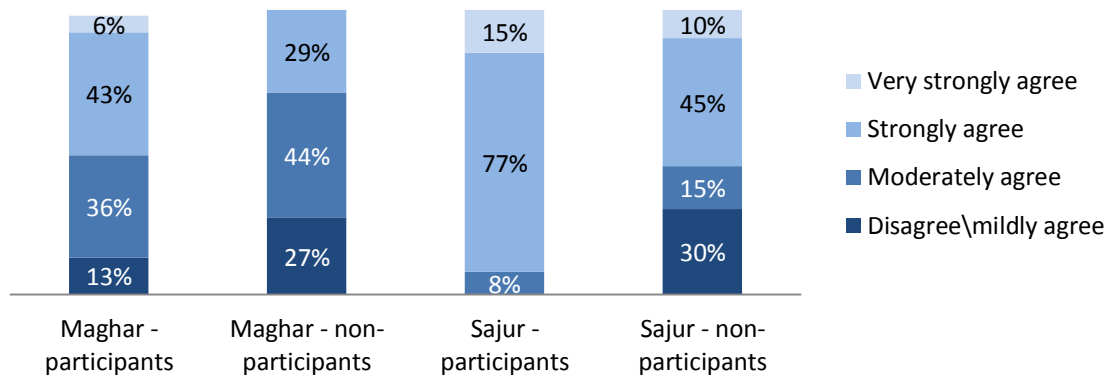
The Center for Educational Technologies (CET) was commissioned to carry out the evaluation study. The quantitative evaluation checked the extent to which the program achieved its goals, using a questionnaire that looked at parameters related to strengthening Druze identity, increased social awareness and social skills, strengthening the sense of capability, familiarity with a range of career and employment fields, acquisition of learning skills, and improved educational results. The qualitative evaluation examined ways to develop and improve the program's operating model through in-depth interviews, observations and focus groups of officials in the towns and parents. The study took place in two centers: in Maghar and in Sajur, and compared youth attending the Neurim Center and youth that did not attend, as well as the participants in two learning centers that operated in different models. In total, the quantitative questionnaire was answered by 318 students in 9th grade.

Main Findings

- The level of social awareness and social skills was higher among Neurim Center participants, and conspicuously so in Sajur. For example, when weighing a number of statements related to this topic it was found that on average, 77% of Sajur's participants agreed to a great extent with statements that described their involvement in the community and motivation to contribute to the community, as opposed to 44% among non-participants. Furthermore, the Neurim participants in Sajur expressed

stronger identification with the Druze heritage than their peers in Maghar. Even so, members of the Neurim Maghar group were more intent on enlisting in the IDF than their non-attending peers in the town.

Social awareness and social skills among participants vs. non-participants



- In the qualitative study, participants reported that the program especially contributed to strengthening a sense of their own capabilities. A 2013 study of this same population found that participation in the program also contributed to increased civic involvement, greater social awareness and familiarity with the range of possibilities in education and employment.
- The study did not find significant differences between the trial and control groups in indicators of perception of own capability, intellectual curiosity, learning skills and expectations related to employment and higher education.
- Participants in both towns reported high satisfaction with the centers. Around 90% of them are interested in continuing their attendance next year and would recommend the center’s activities to their friends.
- The qualitative study’s interviews with local officials revealed that the Neurim Centers are regarded as leading varied and high-quality activities for youth. They are perceived as a “warm home” that brings together a community of youth and parents for free, culturally-suitable activity. Furthermore, the centers play a central role in the towns’ array of informal education and lead community initiatives.
- The center directors expressed a deep commitment to their work and were perceived as very significant to the participants, parents and local officials.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study shows that the Neurim Center serves as a major and important educational anchor in the community. Participation in the center’s activities contributes to developing social and communal awareness and helps participants and volunteers nurture a sense of their own capability, improved educational abilities and sense of their identity and heritage. It is recommended to continue developing content and methods to strengthen the Druze identity and make an effort to reach out to youth who are not yet involved in activities.