



Aumtat Kaima
Planting Hope, Harvesting Opportunity
2023 Activity Report

Introduction

Below is our report on Amutat Kaima's youth employment and empowerment initiative carried out at our prototype educational farm, Kaima Beit Zayit, and our response to unanticipated events unfolding in the wake of October 7. This tragedy required that we not only maintain our outreach to the young people already in our care but address emerging needs across our educational network. While the war upended many of our planned activities, we are proud to have adjusted to our new reality, provided meaningful engagement for the young people in our care, kept the local food chain moving, and used our human and agricultural resources to help feed the hungry. While the future impact of the war Israel is now engaged in is unknown, what is certain is that Kaima farms will continue to reach out to youth, the community, the displaced, and those in need.

Impact on the individual

1. Quick stats

- 76 youth (ages 15-18) and young adults (ages 18-21) participated in our full-time farm employment program.
- ~50% assumed more than one position on the farm, including leadership roles.
- ~85% returned to normative educational/social settings within six months.
- ~95% left at the age of 18 to perform military/national service or enter the workforce.

2. Additional details

- Provided each participant with a minimum of 7.0 hours of daily farm employment and complementary educational programming, on average, four days weekly, amounting to 106,400, hours annually, an 18% increase over the pervious year.
- Facilitated onsite Project Based Learning (PBL) programming for 30 youth in our sophisticated carpentry workshop. PBL projects benefited either the individual or the farm, for example by upgrading infrastructure. This was consistent with the previous ear.
- Facilitated offsite certification courses for 11 youth in areas such as welding, blacksmithing, carpentry, product design, jewelry making, and tractor-driving. This number dropped from the previous year but we are working to increase participation in the second half of 2024.
- Provided intensive one-on-one mentoring to help each young person (upon turning 18) transition off the farm and into an undertaking of his/her choice, such as army/national service, additional education, or workforce placement.
- Provided full-time alternative national service programming for 12 young men and women participating in the Tmura initiative for young people, who, for a variety of reasons, cannot be recruited into conventional army or civil service programs.

In combination, these activities encourage independence; personal accountability; positive intergenerational relationships; entrepreneurial thought; return to more conventional educational settings; resolution of personal trauma; family reconciliation; matriculation and army/national service; and the development of other important skills tied to educational advancement and workplace readiness.



Kaima farmer enjoying the harvest



Kaima farmer helping to shepherd for a day

3. A look at one young person's story

BEFORE KAIMA

Meet Y. From a young age, he witnessed and internalized extreme violence against women. With his mother having died, and his father in prison for assault, Y and his younger brother entered the foster care system. While the two were initially placed together, Y was eventually kicked out of their shared home for aggressive behavior and went to live with another foster family on his own. Previously, Y had been living in boarding schools and youth villages, where he frequently got into violent fights.

AT KAIMA

We met Y. just prior to his 17th birthday. While he first appeared to be kind, funny, and open, with the readiness to tackle the hard physical side of agricultural work, we soon recognized a number of problems. He openly made disrespectful and sexist comments, would throw cigarette butts on the floor, and spat everywhere. We also found Y to be very sensitive and easily hurt. When challenged, he would shut down and remain silent for long periods of time. Indeed, he lacked the ability to communicate his emotions aside from striking out.

Fortunately, Y developed a strong bond with our farm manager, Didi. She and Y spent a lot of time together, mostly talking about relationships between women and men. Recognizing that Y had grown up witnessing profound domestic violence, she worked very hard to teach him about healthy relationships. She understood that despite Y's sweet nature, his disdainful and aggressive attitude towards women was impeding his ability to connect to others. Over time, his attitudes began to shift as did his capacity for self reflection. This would lay the foundation for Y to develop positive relationships with girls and women.

Little by little, Y's aggression started to dissipate and he was able to grow further. While he consistently worked hard as part of the farm team, he eventually developed an interest in motorcycles and mechanics. To encourage him, we contacted a mechanic well known to the farm and familiar with our work with youth. The mechanic agreed to accept Y as his apprentice. With our further encouragement, Y also managed to complete all 12 years of studies and graduated from Project Hila, a government-affiliated educational initiative for school-excluded youth.

AFTER KAIMA

At the age of 18, Y. left Kaima enrolled in a professional mechanics course, after which he swiftly secured a job in a Jerusalem garage, while also working in a restaurant on the weekends. He managed to save money, got a driver's license, and bought himself a new motorcycle.

In preparation for recruitment into the army, not something on his radar prior to joining Kaima, Y enrolled in a pre-military training program designed for boys and girls in distress. It is there that Y underwent other significant personal changes. When we met up with him again, Y's perspective about relationships and women had shifted considerably.

Now, at age 20, he is in a stable and respectful relationship and has finally succeeded in enlisting in the army, despite having previously received an exemption given the IDF's initial perceptions about him. He will soon finish his training as a combat fighter.

Y remains in contact with Didi, who listens to him when he needs someone to talk to.

Impact on the community

- A** Maintained our weekly CSA customer count of 500 families, who consumed over 280,000 pounds of our harvest, the proceeds of which helped support ~60% of our budget.
- B** Helped initiate and facilitate "A Taste of Unity" – an initiative swiftly established with a local catering company in the aftermath of October 7 to prepare and deliver daily meals for up to 1,000 people, including first responders, the IDF, bereaved families, families of the kidnapped, the displaced, and NGOs. Kaima's team harvested much of the produce sourced for the undertaking and volunteered daily in the kitchen.
- C** Donated 915 boxes of veggies (7,800 pounds) to hungry families.
- D** Carried out programming for the general community on agricultural diversity, conservation, zero-waste farming, farm-to-table lifestyles, etc.
- E** Organized our annual fall Open Day festival which brought together 700 members of the community for family activities, arts and crafts, and farm tours, led by our young farmers.
- F** Painstakingly restored 50 meters (165 feet) of ancient, damaged terracing on land on which the farm sits. This is a multi-year undertaking and part of our commitment to environmental stewardship.

In combination, these activities demonstrated the viability and desirability of Kaima's diverse financial operating model; engaged our young farmers in modeling one of the highest forms of Tikkun Olam by feeding the hungry; provided environmental educational experiences for the general public; and enabled us to play a prominent role in safe food-delivery systems, particularly important given the war's profound impact on agriculture.

May we soon see peace restored to our land and people.



*Intergenerational cooperation in pop-up kitchen –
A Taste of Unity Project*



Eco-educational workshop



Chatting between the veggie beds



Heading out after a hard day's work