



## Amutat Kaima

### Activity Report

(January 2017 – June 2018)

### A Message from our (Still) Enthusiastic Founders

Five and a half years have passed since we first cleared the dense and prickly overgrowth and massive boulders from our mother farm, nestled in previously unattended fields, just outside of Jerusalem, in rural Beit Zayit. We were a group of nine highly determined educators, agriculturalists, and environmentalists; most of us had experienced exclusion in Israel's national school system; all felt compelled to question assumptions regarding the status quo of Israel's "one-size-fits-all" educational system and innovate toward change. We did so by digging into the ground and unearthing its healing messages.

Amutat Kaima is today an alternative educational network for young people who have left the school system or are at risk of doing so. Our activities take place not in a conventional indoor setting but in nature's great outdoor classroom – the farm. Tapping into the educational elements of employment, the Kaima model successfully re-engages dropout teens by combining hands-on organic farming, business learning, and community activities. Our young farmers help work the land, earn a salary, sell the farm's harvest to our CSA customers, and, in doing so, support the collective. Along the way, they learn critical lessons about their own self worth and social value as stakeholders in an important enterprise.

We are a powerful people-led network, united by shared values, committed to empowering the individual and engaging entire communities around issues of education, employment and environmental sustainability. In addition to our mother farm, the Kaima movement includes three sister farms in Israel and one in Africa! Below is a report on our recent activities. You can also read about the day that the [Times of Israel](#) spent with Kaima Beit Zayit's young farmers and staff.

***Happy Growing!***

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### Our Prototype Mother Farm – Kaima Beit Zayit

#### *Our young farmers show us their stuff*

- ⊗ Consistent with results realized in past years, 80% of Kaima participants returned to some form of traditional classroom settings and/or entered rehab.
- ⊗ We provided full-time vocational training and employment to 55 young people who would not likely have been given a chance or meaningful hands-on mentoring by another employer. This brings the total since our inception to around 250 youth.
- ⊗ All who turned 18 while part of the Kaima community are either planning to or are currently performing military/national, social commitments not on their radar before coming to the farm. During their time off, most still come to the farm to volunteer.
- ⊗ Youth are taking more responsibility and are advancing to higher management positions on the farm. One now serves Kaima's deputy agricultural operations coordinator; fertilizer and hydration coordinator; and warehouse coordinator.

## Enrichment seeds creativity under one roof

For a long time we have wanted to provide new enrichment activities for our youth to enjoy after they finish their farm shifts at the end of each day instead of returning to the pull of the streets. Now, some of those dreams are coming true as our multi-purpose warehouse is fast becoming the happiest place on earth. Each afternoon finds our amazing youth, jamming in our new music room, climbing walls (literally), and/or creating something wonderful in our PBL workshop. Best yet – it's all happening under one roof!

### Our PBL Workshop and Online Marketplace

This past year, Kaima gave greater launch to our Project Based Learning (PBL) initiative, an endeavor which allows our youth to tackle small construction projects under the guidance of some of the area's top professional hand-crafters. The effort is led by Michael Mizrachi, master craftsman with a degree in engineering from the Department of Industrial Design at Hadassh Academic College.

The results have been fantastic with more hours devoted each day to exploration and positive activity which brings about the type of pride and satisfaction that comes with working with one's hands. Michael, who has considerable experience working with youth in carpentry and photography, is highly adept at channeling the creativity and awakening an entrepreneurial spirit within our young people and has brought an added level of professionalism to our PBL track.

In that spirit, our youth are now offering some of their creations to the public through our new online marketplace. While some are working on sophisticated large pieces and home furnishings (which can be made to order), our web-shop is initially offering smaller household and garden items. As is the case with our farm sales, profits from our online marketplace will be reinvested into the collective. Check it out!



### Our Music Lab

One of the most exciting new developments is our music room. This has long been at the top of our teens' wish list. Together with our youth, we are physically building a sound proof room within our warehouse where our youth can play piano, guitars, etc., and are in the process of raising funds to hire a part-time music teacher. It's really exciting and a great way to continue to build positive relationships between teens and adults. Just as we have always viewed nature as a great tool for working with young people, we also understand the innate value of playing an instrument. Most of our kids never had any connection to creating music. Now they do!



## Climbing Wall

In another effort to offer positive activities to ensure the kids stay off the streets, we've also just built a climbing wall – materials donated.

Wall climbing involves different stages of difficulty which help build confidence and self-esteem, a great simulation for tackling life challenges.

It's also fun, super healthy and offers great pre-army experience.



## Educational and Enrichment Activities- Offsite

To build our team and stimulate curiosity, we expose participants to other agricultural activities and outdoor challenges off the farm. Below are some examples:

- ✿ **Employment enhancement:** We offered a two-part program to explore interests and prepare for future professional endeavor. Part one included a ten-meeting workforce entry workshop focusing on self-esteem building, decision-making, and assuming responsibility, led by NGO Hut HaMeshulash. Kaima workers were also given the option to participate in external courses of their choosing in order to explore potential vocational interests and build new skills. Upon completion of these externships, some of which lasted up to six months, participants received certification in a new field.
- ✿ **Making new friends:** This past year brought a number of interesting groups to the farm. Visitors from abroad included families; synagogue groups; women's groups; visiting academics; representatives from the World Bank; and others. Local visitors came from IVN, JDC, the Ankori school system; Leyada high school, run by Hebrew University; the Israel Association of Psychiatrists; Intel; and others.
- ✿ **Annual survival and teambuilding trip:** Again we organized our annual, three-day trip to Israel's southern Arava desert, an incredibly inhospitable region which against all odds is now has some 600 farms supplying more than 60% of Israeli exports of fresh vegetables. One night was spent at a mechina facility and one outdoors where the group was able practice survival and self-reliance skills necessary to persevere in the desert's harsh conditions.
- ✿ **Getting to know our neighbors:** Kaima hosted the Abu Tor "[Good Neighbors](#)" Project which brings together Jewish and Palestinian residents in the neighborhood of Abu Tor located on the seam between East and West Jerusalem. The event included a group of Jewish and Palestinian women who enjoyed a wonderful Friday visit to the led by Rina Epstein, Kaima's pedagogic agriculturalist and agricultural director. The day included lovely walk to the farm; a tour of the fields and the green house; picking and tasting fresh vegetables; and checking in on the chickens. Together we made a healthy, delicious meal and enjoyed wonderful conversation.
- ✿ **Hanging out at the Hub:** Last spring, our entire team, including youth and adults, got to know our partners at Jerusalem's Botanical Gardens which hosts our off-site hydroponic greenhouse and to better understand the role Kaima can play in the organization's "Hub for Social and Environmental Activism". Later that month we returned to the gardens and hosted a DIY hydroponic workshop for our customers and other community members which included talks by our youth on the challenges and benefits of growing without soil.

- ✿ **Celebrating Tu B'Shvat:** We celebrated this super fun holiday - marking the "New Year of the Trees" - by bringing a bit of the farm to Jerusalem. Four of our young farmers, this day on the Jewish calendar presents a great opportunity to promote ecological awareness, meet the public, and sell our veggies. We participated in two Jerusalem fairs in the Armon Haatziv and Beit HaKerem neighborhoods, made some new friends, and signed up some new customers.
- ✿ **Giving thanks:** In gratitude to all who give of their time and energy with our youth and in the fields, Kaima Beit Zayit organized a spring Volunteer Thank You event. Around 20 volunteers attended a lecture by Irit Joely, the mother of one of our national service volunteers. Irit spoke about the Indian tradition of Ayurveda ways of eating healthy. Yoni Yefet Reich, Amutat Kaima CEO, and Omri Joely, volunteer coordinator, gave words of thanks. To top of the day, the group enjoyed a homemade lunch on the farm.
- ✿ **Learning about Israel's rich agricultural traditions:** We think it is important for our youth to learn about Israel's array of educational farms, many geared to community development. This past year we toured [Hava & Adam](#), an educational farm located near Modaiin. The farm was founded by a group of educators, environmentalists, scientists and social activists as a platform for personal growth and reflection on the deep connection between the individual and nature.
- ✿ **Safety first:** The whole team – adults and youth – took part in a first aid and resuscitation workshop led by an Magen David Adom professional.
- ✿ **Beekeeping:** We also enjoyed learning about the art of beekeeping and Israel's voracious appetite for the sweet gooey stuff. From one end of the country to the other, there are some 500 beekeepers caring 100,000 hives, of which 60,000 are placed in agricultural areas to pollinate crops.



## Economic Advancements

Adhering to social business principles, Kaima operates according to a unique cost-sharing formula. We currently cover 55% of its programmatic costs from agricultural sales (an outstanding achievement for an NGO); 11% comes from services provided to educational/welfare authorities (a number we are actively seeking to increase); the balance is derived through philanthropic investments. Below are some of our notable economic accomplishments and challenges:

- ✿ **Growing more:** We planted 15 dunam (including one at our offsite hydroponic greenhouse, located on the grounds of Jerusalem's Botanical Gardens) which enabled us to deliver 17,500 baskets (an increase of 17.5% over the previous year) to an average of 350 customers weekly. Customers were able to choose to have their baskets delivered to their homes (for a nominal fee) or to one of our 20 distribution points scattered throughout and surrounding Jerusalem. Such growth which is helping us move appreciably closer to becoming more financial sustainable.
- ✿ **Building sustainability:** We began manufacturing our own seedlings for both the hydroponic greenhouse and Beit Zayit farm, thus lowering the costs of having to purchase starter plants.



- ☼ **Government support begins:** Though we continue to aggressively lobby Israel's Ministry of Welfare to participate in their "fair share" of our outreach, in 2017 we partnered with two government agencies: the Ministry of Finance and Bituach Leumi. Once we establish solid, multi-year support of the entire Kaima Alternative Educational Network on the part of government stakeholders we be able to reduce reliance our still much-needed reliance on limited philanthropic partnerships.

## Community Activities

- ☼ **Giving back:** Kaima, committed to contributing to the larger community, donates vegetable baskets to the needy. For example, we supply vegetables to families in Mevasseret, Nes Jarim and Jerusalem and local Sudanese asylum seekers via Sadig Ismail, a former Kaima national service volunteer. We also donate part of our crops to Saint Vincent Monastery in Ein Kerem and Atnachta, a hostel for homeless teens in Jerusalem.
- ☼ **Just a few (400) of our closest friends:** In October 2017, Kaima's young farmers organized our annual community Sukkot celebration, an occasion when the farm is open to all visitors. Some 400 people joined the daylong event full of activities for people of all ages. Offerings included arts and crafts activities; a face painting station; pita baking in a taboun made with locally crafted olive oil and fresh toppings from our fields; tours of the farm; and more. Participants also picked cherry tomatoes and cucumbers and could purchase other veggies at our farmer's market. The best part was the pride felt by our young farmers whose hard work was on full display!

## Unanticipated Challenges

In December 2017 and into January 2018, we had to contend with serious theft of expensive farm equipment and vandalism of property. This was followed by a number of repeat incidents. The experience rattled both our staff and our young farmers who found it particularly painful to see their beautiful work and materials stolen and tamped with. This was a significant financial and emotional set-back but one we've risen above with the help and support of our friends and donors.

## Alumni return to do good!

In May 2018, we organized an overnight at our mother farm for around 60 program alumni - some now back in school and others in the army or performing national service. The group gathered to do some much needed work on strengthening the original terracing which has been in place for generations and prepare the land for what we hope will one day become the site of a modest visitor's center. Of course,



the work-a-thon also involved our current youth who had the chance to learn from our graduates. The team surprised us by building a set of benches using recycled wood and discarded industrial canisters. We are blown away that the farm remains an anchor for so many and an inspiration to do so much.

## Network Building

### Our Sister Farms

Beyond Kaima's founding farm located in Beit Zayit, there are currently three other farms in our growing Israeli network and one in Tanzania! Some details about their path as a social franchisee appear below.

**Kaima Beerotayim**, established in 2016, is run by two generations of women who were using family owned land to provide birthday parties and bar/bat mitzvah celebrations for local underprivileged children. After retiring from nearly three decades of sales and service management in Tnuva, the world's largest kosher food manufacturer, Irit Shevach, who owns the land, heard about Kaima. So taken with our model she immediately applied for NGO status and, after an intensive vetting process, signed on as our first franchisee.



**Kaima Hukuk**, founded in 2016, was established by a collective of four women educators and two social workers who lived in a far-flung part of Israel's north with a passion for agriculture, teaching, social activism, and empowering those less fortunate. The group sought us out initially to study our educational model and then determined to adopt it as their own. Led by Efrat Noy, an alum of the Arava Institute of Environmental Studies; Tel Hai College's Center for Peace and Democracy; and the Hofen Alternative Teacher Training Program, the cofounders bought an existing farm and turned it into an *amuta* – Hebrew for NGO.



Read about this little gem of a farm here: [Make Eat](#)

**Kaima Nahal**, founded in 2017, was established on the grounds of Yesh-Meain Ecological Farm, an eco-educational farm co-founded in 2007 by Merav Carmi as a center for environmental and social awareness and a tool to encourage key changes regarding agricultural consumption and perceptions/misperceptions of abundance in Israeli society. Additionally, since 2014, Yesh-Meain, under separate management, had been running its own small-scale CSA program. In the words of the farm's founder, *"Adopting the Kaima Beit Zayit model as a social franchisee represented a natural progression in our evolution and an opportunity to do more with our resources."* Nahalal is our first all-girl fun farm.



Read about how the Green Apprenticeship program at Kibbutz Lotan inspired Merav Carmi to establish Kaima Nahalal, the fourth franchise farm in the Kaima network here: [Israel 21c](#)

**Kaima Tanzania**, established in 2018, is our first farm outside of Israel. Considerable time and effort was invested in this undertaking with Kaima Tanzania founder Fabian Bulugu taking part in two multi-month Kaima immersion trainings. Kaima Tanzania's pedagogic mission is slightly different from the Israeli operation in that the African farm will be working with both teens and young adults. Given the particulars regarding demographics, unemployment, farming practices, and other local issues, Fabian, who studied our model both during his Glocal MA studies at Hebrew University and at our prototype farm, has modified the model in interesting ways.



This is one of those great stories that not only reads as a triumph of exporting Israeli knowhow but of building real relationships in the common cause of addressing global challenges – in this case of education, employment, sustainable agriculture, and resource management.

Read about Fabian's efforts here: [Israel21c](https://www.israel21c.org/2018/07/20/kaima-tanzania/).

## Growing the Network Further

It looks like our next sister farm may be established in Switzerland. Since September, we have been working with Oliver Schneitter whose family's organic farm regularly plays host to intercultural/international youth work projects. Oliver, who had previously studied at Hebrew University, had been in the country researching ways to strengthen his agricultural youth programming when we met. We are now discussing how he can adopt/adapt our model in his region. Even as the involved vetting process gets underway, Oliver, eager to team up, arranged for funding to enable ten of our teens to travel earlier this year to the Gantrisch Mountains in Switzerland for a cultural youth exchange program with teens from Switzerland and Portugal. It was a trip of a lifetime. *Next year in Jerusalem* – literally...plans are underway for our Swiss friends to come to Israel in the coming year!

## Jerusalem Creator Award

In June 2018, Aumtat Kaima was awarded first prize (selected from 1,500 non-profit organizations) in the WeWork Jerusalem Creator Award competition in the non-profit category in recognition of our employment as education model. (WeWork is an international company that provides shared workspace and growth services for non- and for-profit entrepreneurs.) Tipping the scale in our favor was a passionate explanation by young farmer Hudi about how the Kaima community changed his life for the better.

Check out our [video](#) presented at the finals!

