

MIDOT

לעשות טוב, טוב יותר

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The Young and the Restless

Organizations Working with Young Adults
in Israel - An Analysis of the field

1. Executive Summary

In this report, Midot wishes to review the field of young adults in Israel, both by looking at this population's unfulfilled needs and by comprehending its unique potential to contribute to society in general and to the future of the State of Israel.

The term 'young adults' refers to people who are legally of age, but have yet to achieve mental adulthood. The boundaries of this period of life are unclear. They are mostly defined according to age and/or transition tasks into adulthood that the youngster has yet to resolve. For the purpose of this report (and in accordance with most perceptions in Israel), a young adult is defined as a person 18-35 years old who is dealing with at least two out of a variety of unresolved issues: career choice and employment, education, identity building, affiliation, and family. These issues can be divided into three circles: intimate relationships, career and affiliation. This definition is very wide and is founded both on the unique characteristics of Israeli young adults - most prominently military service - and on the historical development of services in Israel and the choices made by the active players in this field.

During the last decade (until the end of 2012) there has been great progress in this field: from a state in which the term 'young adults' was not used at all, to a point that today various players are well aware of the issue – the government, municipalities, non-profit organizations and donors. These players understand that this is a large population that is well-worth their investment. There are currently hundreds of organizations working in the field, among them are roughly 40 Centers for Young Adults (Merkazei T'seirim) – the product of cooperation between municipalities, the government, JDC-Israel and philanthropic foundations. These centers play a main role in providing a holistic response to the needs of their target population.

We attribute the growth of this field to the use of a work-model in which the interests of various players converge into cooperation and mutual fertilization in a number of arenas, while each player has its own motivation for action: non-profit organizations that believe the population in question is not realizing its potential for contribution to society as a whole; Philanthropic funds and organizations that see the field of young adults as a niche to care for, whatever their reasons may be; Academic researchers who find the subject of this population and varying sub-topics within it

worthy of studying; Government officials (Welfare, Immigration Absorption) who understand the potential problems that could arise if the needs of young adults are ignored; Political actors who realize the great potential in young men and women for promoting Israeli society, as well as their potential to become young political leaders in municipalities; And the Israeli young adults themselves, who put the challenges they face on the public agenda.

However, in spite of the growth in the field, the supporting political wind it enjoys and the far-reaching consensus for benefiting policy-making, sufficient legal expression for promoting the interests of young adults is still lacking. This may be harmful to further development of this area, as well as to maintaining past achievements. Moreover, there are still many unanswered needs of various populations, as well as numerous opportunities that have yet to be fully realized.

This report offers a variety of ways that enable organizations, funders and the government to continue improving their handling of the young adult population.

A. Recommendations for the single organization:

Organizations mentioned in the research done for this report have demonstrated relatively evolved patterns and levels of performance in the area of setting relevant goals and objectives, as well as in measuring organizational success and effectiveness. A significant number of organizations employ a holistic outlook on services and opportunities (responding to needs and perceiving young adults as a resource) and a systemic thought process regarding the field as a whole. In addition, the organizations set appropriate aims for measuring their own success as well as surveying their own achievements.

Although these organizations have already adopted such advanced perceptions, we put together some useful tips that could help them do their work better still: continuously observing the young adult for a long period of time and responding to needs and opportunities that may arise; working towards integrating activity in the political sphere; accentuating the differences between goals, objectives and success indicators, and developing an outlook that could translate them into measurable success indicators; developing success indicators with the participation of the target population; development and financing (by organizations and funds) of evaluation and

measuring processes, and establishing infrastructure for their performance – for activities both in the short and the long term.

B. Recommendations for the general field:

1. Extending the scope of existing responses provided for these populations – areas that currently offer solutions only to a few problems, and are far from answering the needs of the target population as a whole, must be expanded:

residential and holistic solutions for young adults lacking family backing; educational supplementing for vulnerable young men and women; offering aid in the fields of employment, vocational training, guidance regarding studying opportunities and higher education scholarships for three groups – ultra-orthodox Jews, Arabs and people with disabilities; assisting those who are not eligible for assistance according to the ex-servicemen law (populations that do not serve in the military, people who completed their service more than 6 years ago); being available for the general population of young adults (in the areas of identity and social involvement).

2. Development of services and new infrastructures in a variety of areas or populations, that are currently offered no solutions: vulnerable young adults in a broader sense - not only graduates of types of foster care and former youth at risk; providing tools for independent life (budget, romantic relationships, family, career-planning, and balancing work and family); employment for those without education (relevant vocational training, various specific solutions, scholarships); alternatives for residence, promoting an understanding of the issue of housing and how to obtain it; an overarching systemic approach towards leadership and social involvement; leadership and social involvement for Arabs and ultra-orthodox Jews.

3. In addition, there are a number of transverse challenges in the field and that are significant in regards to its sustainability and development:

- a. Forming a governmental policy in regards to this population in general and vulnerable young adults in particular.
- b. Adequately describing the role of municipalities in this issue.

- c. Self-regulation and mutual fertilization amongst non-profit organizations.
- d. Maintaining a dialogue within the sectors and between them (non-profit organizations, donors and the government) regarding the role of the organizations and the limits of responsibility – forming a coherent perception of work with the government and understanding the points of weakness and strength of the third sector in the field of young adults.
- e. Producing bodies of applicable information regarding ongoing activities in this area, and making it accessible.
- f. Developing and strengthening financial sustainability of the area and of the organizations, as well as promoting the field as part of an integrated market.
- g. Raising awareness of existing needs and increasing willingness to accept assistance among the target population.
- h. Inviting young adults to participate in developing services and defining relevant issues.

In Conclusion, it may be said that in spite of the significant leap the field has experienced in the last decade, the area itself and those employed in it still have ample room for growth, and there are still questions regarding its foundations and existence in the future. This report emphasizes the importance of developing opportunities for young adults in general - on top of working for solutions aimed at specific groups – with the understanding that investing in this population is first and foremost an opportunity to make them meaningful actors in society, socially involved and innovative for the benefit of society as a whole.

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