

THE ISRAELI VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVE

"He whose deeds surpass his wisdom, to what is he compared? To a tree whose branches are few, but whose roots are abundant; even if all the winds in the world come and blow against it, they will not be able to move it from its place." (Pirkei Avot)

The Israeli Volunteerism Initiative is a four-year, tri-sector campaign launched by the Government of Israel to change the face of volunteerism in Israel by broadening the scope, upgrading the quality, and intensifying the impact of volunteer activities throughout the country. The Initiative will reinforce feelings of loyalty and shared goals among millions of Israel's citizens, at the same time offering the opportunity to care for Israel's most vulnerable citizens as well as an opportunity for them to actively volunteer.

The Initiative is designed to introduce a system of standardization and to **build an infrastructure that will support any type of volunteer program in every kind of framework imaginable across Israeli society**. Through more effective allocation of human and financial resources, the Initiative will benefit both sides of the equation: organizations, companies, and public bodies that use volunteers will have better access to the pool of available recruits, while those who wish to contribute time and energy will be able to identify those entities that are in most need of their particular skills and expertise.

AN INITIATIVE FOR NATIONAL AND PERSONAL WELL-BEING

"The goal of the initiative is to expand the quality, quantity and influence of volunteerism and civic engagement in Israel." (Request for proposals 288-2011, Prime Minister's Office)

In June 2011, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services issued a call for action, to bring together best practices, knowledge, and expertise from the three sectors of society – government (public sector), business (private sector), and the nonprofit world (third sector) – to dramatically advance volunteerism in Israel. **JDC-Israel was privileged to have been chosen to fulfill the lead professional role in the four-year initiative, and to serve as the convener of the myriad other organizations involved in its implementation.**

The principal outcome of the initiative will be the creation of an infrastructure that integrates and reflects the diversity of Israeli society, and that encourages volunteerism across the religious, political, ethnic, and socioeconomic spectrum.

Additionally, with JDC-Israel leading the initiative, we can ensure that the voice and needs of the country's most vulnerable citizens will be prominent—not only as groups benefiting from volunteerism—but also in understanding and utilizing their volunteer potential. The initiative aims to:

- **Improve the quality of volunteerism:** By providing volunteers with task-specific training; by devising technologies that will broaden the scope of activities suitable for volunteers; by proposing legislation that will provide volunteer organizations with additional resources; by applying new methods of measurement and assessment to volunteerism
- **Increase the quantity of volunteerism:** By raising the public's awareness of volunteerism; by creating more inclusive and accessible frameworks that will bring in every segment of the population; by fostering volunteerism within workplaces
- **Enhance the impact of volunteerism:** By placing volunteerism high on the public agenda and incorporating its values into the spheres of education, employment, recreation, health, culture, environmental protection, and more

Volunteerism in Israel

66 years after the founding of the State, many Israelis are deeply involved in their community and in society at large. Many neighborhoods have committees that prepare meals for families after the birth of a child or the death of a loved one; every school has a parent-teachers association; political parties abound, each made up of citizens who are passionate about the future of the country. And when there is a national emergency, be it military confrontation, terrorism, or natural disaster, Israelis come out in droves.

Although there is still a pervasive sense in Israel of communal responsibility, that is no longer enough today.

- 20% of Israeli adults volunteer¹, a percentage much lower than that found in many other Western countries. In certain sectors of the population – among them Israeli-Arab, Bedouin, and Druze communities, as well as people with disabilities and youth at risk – there is an even lower rate of participation in volunteer activity.
- Israel – like the rest of Western society – has become increasingly fast-paced and digitalized with a greater focus on the individual.
- Gaps among sectors in Israeli society are growing, reflected in educational achievements, income levels, poverty rates and access to health care.
- Privatization has led to a shift in the provision of social services, with non-profit organizations providing about half of public services (health, social, educational services).

¹Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012

- Israel does not have a centralized system that can make effective use of volunteers, particularly in times of crisis.

In their call to action, the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services gave voice to the growing realization that, for all of these reasons, the nation needs an upgraded, expanded, and standardized system of volunteerism.

Defining Volunteerism

To advance the vision of making volunteerism an intrinsic societal norm and an immutable part of day-to-day life for Israelis of all ages, the government and JDC-Israel have adopted the definition of “volunteerism” put forth in the Volunteer Convention of the National Council for Volunteers in Israel:

“Volunteerism is the donation of time, service, expertise, knowledge, prestige, and/or contacts by a person who is working on behalf of his/her fellow man and society, of his/her own free will, without monetary compensation, for some period of time to which the volunteer commits himself/herself, directly or indirectly, to people known (outside of family members) or unknown, to organizations, to institutions and movements, to the community, and/or to the environment.”

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ISRAELI INITIATIVE

The organizational structure of the Israeli Volunteerism Initiative consists of three layers: the Steering Committee, the Public Council, and the Professional Forums. The Professional Team in JDC- Israel is responsible for implementing the work plans approved by the Initiative's Steering Committee, for advancing collaboration between partners, and for maintaining ongoing contact with agencies and organizations from the public, private and third sectors.

Steering Committee: Policies, Priorities, and Budgets

The Steering Committee is comprised of ten members: a representative from the Prime Minister’s Office, a representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, two representatives from JDC-Israel⁴, and the chairs of the six Area Forums. The Committee will meet four to six times per year, and all decisions will be made by consensus. Primary areas of responsibility include: Setting overall policy directions for the Initiative, Approving work plans submitted by the Professional Forums, Establishing milestones and modes of operation for advancing the Initiative and Presenting a draft budget to the Budget Committee

Public Council

The Israeli Volunteerism Initiative, a partnership between the Government of Israel and JDC-Israel, already has 166 entities on board. All of the 166 organizations that responded to JDC-Israel’s public announcement will be represented on the Public Council, which will meet annually to monitor implementation of the Initiative, build partnerships, and pool resources.⁵

The Public Council membership is reflective of the wide variety of needs that exist today in Israel and are supported through volunteer efforts – such as the elderly and Holocaust survivors, people with special needs, youth at risk, and people dealing with crisis or illness, education challenges and poverty.

The Professional Forums

JDC-Israel and the Government have set up six Professional Forums, overseen by the Steering Committee:



Each Area Forum comprises 16 members (for a total of 96 members) who have been officially appointed by the government. These representatives are drawn from foundations, NGOs/projects, corporations, and public ministries/agencies/municipalities. In addition, 16 academic experts participate in relevant discussions as needed.

The mandate of the Professional Forums is to create a framework for professional give-and-take and cross-sector dialogue based on a culture of understanding, partnership, and agreement. The Professional Forums will seek to introduce innovations to their respective fields, while bolstering existing volunteer programs, as can be seen in these detailed tables:

Legislation and Policy <i>Chair: Dan Oren, LLB, Ministry of Justice</i>		
Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteerism and Civic Engagement Law • Supporting policies • Financial aid and grants to organizations in all sectors that use volunteers • Units within local authorities and the government, tasked with advancing volunteerism • Official procedures for working with volunteers, and the mechanisms to monitor their implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost no legislation exists, including provision of National Insurance benefits to volunteers • No continuity in terms of budget allocations for volunteer frameworks • No procedures for managing volunteers in the public or business sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation that supports volunteerism and civic engagement • Incentives to encourage volunteer initiatives • Mechanisms to meet the needs of organizations using volunteers
Research, Knowledge and Measurement <i>Chair: Prof. Liat Kulik, School of Social Work, Bar Ilan University</i>		
Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system for measuring and collecting systematic and comparable data on volunteer work in Israel • Volunteering impact assessment tools • Accessible pool of academic and applied knowledge • Scholarly research projects • Quality assurance standards for volunteer involving organizations • Forum for professionals involved in knowledge development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Bureau of Statistics and Ben-Gurion University, among others, have surveyed the field in Israel • Numerous articles and studies in past few years, in Israel and abroad; fusion of academic research and field expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools to measure Israeli volunteerism • Tools for pooling, sharing and developing professional knowledge base • Theoretical and applied research • Standardization of field of volunteer management

Technology and Raising Awareness

Chair: Cnaan Rabino, Director, Ruach Tova

Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National mass media/Internet campaigns National Volunteer Week Pairing volunteer opportunities with events such as Day of the Child, Earth Day Recognition Ceremonies for volunteers at national, organizational and local levels University credit given for volunteering Cross-sector technological infrastructure: events, instructional materials, databases, opportunities Volunteer management Software 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few national campaigns to encourage volunteerism No national-level observance of international days of recognition Rewards for volunteers given nationally and locally Websites, Facebook, Twitter used to recruit volunteers, fundraise Tailor made software for volunteer management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities that foster a spirit of volunteerism Accessible opportunities for people from all sectors to volunteer and become engaged in society Technological infrastructure to facilitate management of volunteer programs

Field Infrastructures

Chair: Dr. Galit Shaul, Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services

Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National umbrella organization to foster cross-sector volunteerism Earmarked funds to develop innovative programs and models Agencies within each of the three sectors, dedicated to advancement of volunteerism Cadre of local, cross-sector leaders Targeted programs to encourage volunteerism among every sector of society A volunteer initiative incubator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most volunteering today is in fields of education and welfare Professional offices exist within Ministries of Social Affairs and Social Services, Education and Health Professional offices exist within local authorities to encourage volunteerism among youth, young adults and adults Some NGOs have designated personnel responsible for volunteer management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce existing mechanisms that effectively support volunteerism; development of new ones at the national, local, organizational levels Encourage innovative field solutions to community needs Infrastructures to advance multi- age and multidisciplinary volunteer frameworks Leadership development for volunteer organizations Cultivate volunteerism among the marginalized and vulnerable

Professionalization and Training <i>Chair: Yoram Sagi-Zacks, LLB, Chairman, National Volunteerism Council</i>		
Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make volunteer management a recognized profession, with legal basis • Place qualified professionals in organizations that use volunteers • Create academic and practical training courses • Develop quality assurance standards • Professional network at the national, local, and field level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few organizations have employees dedicated to managing volunteers, and even those employees have little or no professional training in the field • The knowledge base that has accumulated has not been transitioned into training or study programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer management as a recognized profession • Programs for training and certifying volunteer managers • Development of tools, knowledge, and quality assurance standards for organizations that use volunteers
Volunteering in the Workplace <i>Chair: Ahuva Yanai, Director, MATAN</i>		
Planned Outputs	Baseline Status in Israel	Forum Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of entities in all three sectors that put volunteering on their agenda • Guidelines for Implementing workplace volunteerism • employees in all three sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several ministries and government-owned companies have extensive volunteer programs • Little data is available on the incidence of volunteerism among employees in the third sector • Concept of corporate responsibility quite widespread, with 8.9% of Israeli companies involved in some type of community activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased volunteerism among employees in all three sectors • Cultivation of an atmosphere of volunteerism in workplaces • Development of new areas of volunteerism that respond to issues on the public agenda • Promotion of cross-sector cooperation