

CSD Report

**Mishlavim Project – The inclusion of
youth with special needs into
National Youth Service in Israel
Program Evaluation Research (2003-2004)**

Karin Amit and Nicole Fleischer

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**Center for Social Development
Global Service Institute**



 **Washington**
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George Warren Brown School of Social Work

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special needs into National Youth Service in Israel
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1: Introduction

The national youth service in Israel provides an opportunity for young people aged 18 to 22 who are exempt from military service to volunteer for a period of one or two years. Those who complete at least twelve months of voluntary service are entitled to various benefits, similar to soldiers completing compulsory military service. Since its inception in 1971, the national youth service has been operated by non-profit organizations which recruit some 8,000 volunteers annually. Most of the volunteers are Jewish women from the national-religious sector, but the number of volunteers from other sectors of society increases from year to year. Following an appeal to the High Court of Justice, the government decided in July 2001 that men who received exemption from military service could volunteer for national service and receive the same benefits as the women.¹ Most of the young people with special needs are exempt from military service and are not admitted to the national youth service.

Mishlavim is a project initiated and designed by the Ashalim organization to establish an integrated system of national service for young people with special needs, helping them through the intermediate stages in the precarious transition from the formal education system to the adult world. The expectation is that the normative exposure to the values of society and work will act as a stimulus for the integration of this population in Israeli society. Since this project was introduced, in 2001, 313 volunteers with special needs have completed or are about to complete national service through *Mishlavim*.

The *Mishlavim* project is implemented according to three major models: one for high school graduates who serve full time and are supervised by a coordinator from the *Mishlavim* team; the second for psychologically disturbed youth, who also serve full time and are supervised by the mental health services in addition to the *Mishlavim* coordinator; and the third for students in special schools who serve four days a week and study at school two days a week. In this model, which is called *national-educational service*, the volunteer is supervised both, by the *Mishlavim* coordinator and by his/ her school.² The present evaluation research was conducted on the *national educational service* implementation model.

¹ The voluntary national service law (experimental program for men) temporary provision 2001.

² Youth with special needs can continue its school education until age 21.

In 2003-2004, the *Mishlavim* project operated in four areas: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the south. The *Mishlavim* team worked in collaboration with the NGOs that operate the national service: *Bat Ami*, *Aminadav*, *Shlomit*, and the *National Service Unit in the Jerusalem municipality*. The *Gevanim* NGO for Development of Education, Society and Community, which is the executive body of *Mishlavim*, was involved in developing the project and creating links with the many partners to the project. *Ashalim* is a partnership of the state of Israel with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the UJA Federation of New York and is responsible for the planning and development of services for children and youth at risk in Israel. The organization, administration, guidance, supervision and funding of the *Mishlavim* project are carried out by a coalition of bodies: the NGOs *Gevanim* and *Ashalim*, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Welfare and various funding Foundations.

The National Educational Service (NES)

The NES proceeds in three main stages (all references to the volunteers appear in the masculine form solely for the purpose of convenience).

1. Planning and selection. This stage takes place in the special education frameworks. The school staff recommends a number of students for national service and fills out forms with the required data. The candidates are then selected through interviews with the coordinator. The school staff, the student and the coordinator together choose the place of service suitable for the student. The student is introduced gradually to the place of service, in collaboration with the school staff or the coordinator, who also prepares the host organization for receiving the volunteer.
2. Service. The volunteer serves in the selected place four days a week and studies for two days in the special education setting, which also accompanies him with support and supervision. The *Mishlavim* coordinator maintains regular contact with the volunteer. The hosting organization does not pay for the volunteer's stipend nor other expenses.
3. Completion. At the end of the service the volunteers are expected to return to the school framework. It is hoped at this stage, that the experience acquired in the service will facilitate their integration in employment and in society.

Evaluation research goals

The overall aim of the research was to examine whether the NES of youth with special needs enhances these youths' ability to integrate into the community. In this context we examined the following:

- ❖ The influence of NES on the volunteers
- ❖ The influence of NES on the host organizations
- ❖ The influence of NES on the attitudes and expectations of the volunteers' parents

Before going on to describe the research method and the findings, it is important to mention that evaluation studies of this kind, whose aim is to examine the effect of a program on a group of subjects, are subject to many limitations. The possible limitations will be described in Appendix C, focusing on the limitations of the present study and the ways in which we coped with them.

2. Methodology

2.1 The subjects

This formative evaluation study was conducted over the years 2003-2005 through questionnaires administered twice, ongoing follow-up of the reports of the service coordinators, interviews with teachers, counselors, parents, volunteers, host organizations and focus groups.

The groups investigated include: volunteers of the *Mishlavim* national educational service in 2003-2004 (hereafter “volunteers”), the volunteers’ parents (“parents”), staff at the volunteers' placements (“hosts”), *Mishlavim* coordinators (“coordinators”), counselors, teachers, student counselors or school principals (“counselor”), students of special education aged 17-19 with high functioning, serving as a control group (hereafter “control group” or “students”), and graduates of *Mishlavim* NES in the year 2002-2003 (“graduates”).

TABLE 1 a. Description of samples, first and second administration of questionnaires, Hosts, Parents, Counselors

	first administration T1	second administration T2
Hosts	N= 45	N= 33
Percentage answering T1 and T2	-	82%
Percentage of first time special needs host	50%	
Parents	N= 51 (75% mothers)	N= 19 (75% mothers)
N answering T1 and T2	-	18
Use of volunteer's monthly stipend	32% all for the child's use 32% used to fund his food & transportation 11% used for family's daily subsistence 5% deposited in trust fund for child's future	
Counselors	One time administration only (May 2004)	
N of counselors	N= 18	

Some of the places of service host more than one volunteer, and at our request the hosts filled out parts of the questionnaire for each of the volunteers in their organization. Thus, we received a total of 77 completed questionnaires (more than one questionnaire was returned for 21 of the volunteers. The additional questionnaires were filled out by various role bearers in the host organization). In the second administration of the questionnaires, 33 of the hosts

filled out questionnaires, yielding in all 47 completed questionnaires for all the volunteers in the host organizations (for 8 of the volunteers more than questionnaire was received, the additional ones filled out by other role bearers in the organization). Altogether, 52 different organizations host *Mishlavim* volunteers.

In addition, the table shows that although less than 50% of the parents filled out the questionnaires the second time round, there is no outstanding difference between the results of the first and second time. In both cases 75% of the parents who completed the questionnaire were mothers.

TABLE 1 b. Description of samples, first and second administration of questionnaires
Volunteers and Control Group

	first administration T1	second administration T2
Volunteers	N= 62 (30 males)	N= 56 (29 males)
Volunteers who answered Questionnaire	N= 51 (26 males)	N= 30 (15 males)
Disability distribution*	70% Mentally challenged 16% Learning disabilities 6% Cerebral Palsy (CP) 2% Hearing impaired 2% Down Syndrome	79% Mentally challenged 14% Learning disabilities 7% CP
Living quarters	96 % with parents	
Placement type	21 % Secretarial work 21% Aids at pre-school 17% Aids in school system 36% other: agriculture, dog pound, nature preservation,..	
Control group: Students	N= 50 (24 males)	N= 21 (10 males)
Disability distribution*	50% Mentally challenged 22% CP 8% Psychologically disturbed 4% Learning disabilities 16% Other	52% CP 48% Mentally challenged
Living quarters	88 % with parents	
School sends them to sheltered work	43%	
Graduates	N= 23 (8 males)	
Disability distribution*	87% Not specified 9% Mentally challenged 4% Learning disabilities	—
Living quarters	91 % with parents	
School sends them to sheltered work	67%	

*This rubric is for illustration purposes only as in many cases the volunteers special needs are a combination of these listed disabilities.

The first time the questionnaires were administered, all the volunteers who were capable of it, filled out the questionnaires. The second time, there was a hitch in distributing the questionnaires to volunteers in the central area and Jerusalem, hence the number who answered was relatively small. Six of the volunteers did not complete their service in 2004, one of them following a suicide attempt, one due to absences and lateness, two because of a general decline in their motivation to serve, one because of violent behavior, and one due to lack of funding for travel expenses on account of his age.

Table 1b shows that the control group resembles the group of volunteers in terms of gender profile, with a similar rate of boys and girls in each group. However, the groups are not identical with regard to distribution of disabilities. It is important to understand that this classification of disabilities is solely for the purpose of illustration, since the definition of the various disabilities is not clear-cut. To construct the control group we approached those schools that had students in national service and asked them to choose 3-4 students whose functioning was sufficiently high for them to be candidates for national service the following year (2004-2005). When the questionnaires were first administered these students were not aware of the possibility that they would be candidates for national service, but the second time round they knew of this possibility, and some of them had already been interviewed and selected for service in the 2004-2005 school year. In addition, we approached *Oranim School* in Haifa, which has students with CP, and asked them to choose students with a high level of functioning. Thus, we could conclude that the control group would include students with relatively "strong" characteristics.

The group of graduates was composed of volunteers from the year 2002-2003 who were still at school towards the end of 2003. Interviews with their counselors revealed that many of the graduates left school on completing their year of volunteering in the national service. We reached these graduates at a point in time when they were still in the school framework.

2.2 Research instruments

In this study we used both quantitative measures (questionnaires) and qualitative research tools (focus groups, observations, interviews).

Quantitative research instruments

To examine the research questions we constructed a closed questionnaire covering the subjects' attitudes in the social and personal sphere, questions on motivation and their motives for volunteering for the service, satisfaction with the service, characteristics of the volunteers in the service (type of institution and type of service, etc.), and questions relating to the subjects' background (family, socioeconomic, etc.). The questionnaire was changed somewhat after it was first administered (Questionnaire 1, see internet site). The second version will be referred to as Questionnaire 2 (see internet site). Both versions contain identical questions concerning the volunteers' attitudes, questions in a similar format on motivation for service, as well as questions examining the volunteers' characteristics and background. Questionnaire 2 also includes a set of questions dealing with the volunteers' satisfaction with various aspects of the service, their expectations of the service and their perception of the contribution of the service to the community and to themselves.

We also incorporated questions concerning motives for service (Gal et al., 2003), questions dealing with the actual functioning of the volunteers. In addition, we used the following psychological questionnaires that are familiar from the literature:

General self- efficacy scale (Chen & Gully, 1997). This questionnaire was translated into Hebrew by Eden (1997) and comprises 14 items reflecting the subject's beliefs regarding his abilities. The respondent is asked to indicate the extent to which he agrees or disagrees with each of the statements in the questionnaire, on a five point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questionnaire scores range between 14 and 70, the higher score indicating higher general self-efficacy. The authors reported a level of reliability (Cronbach's α) of 0.92 (Chen & Gully, 1997, 2001). The reliability of the Hebrew version was found to be 0.91 (Rosen, 1998). 15.45

Coping mechanism questionnaire – based on the work of Shnan (1961). The questionnaire was translated into Hebrew and adapted as a multiple choice sentence

completion questionnaire in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for candidates for military service (Rot, 1988). The questionnaire consists of nine items with five possible distractors, arranged so that the first one indicates a tendency for passive response or avoidance and the fifth indicates active coping. Each subject's score is the mean of his scores on the nine items that compose the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha reported on the military sample is 0.83.

Self-image questionnaire – in this questionnaire the subject is asked to grade himself on 30 personality traits on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all characteristic of me, 5 = very characteristic of me). This questionnaire is used to examine candidates for military service. The Cronbach's alpha reported on this sample is 0.93 (Rot, 1988).

Qualitative research tools

These tools include semi-structured interviews with the staff of the hosts and the schools, as well as observations based on the coping mechanisms questionnaire described above. In order to prepare the focus groups we used extracts from the interviews. Some of these extracts are quoted in this report as side- vignettes.

2.3 Research procedure

Following a series of interviews with the project coordinators and volunteers near the end of their service (June 2003), questionnaires were constructed with the help of the professional literature. The questionnaires were approved by the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Education and were distributed to the volunteers, their parents and the hosts in November 2003, when most of the volunteers had completed one month of service. The volunteers from the southern region received the questionnaires in January 2004 – at the end of their first month of service. This process was repeated toward the end of their period of service, in August 2004 and January 2005 respectively. The questionnaires for the *Mishlavim* graduates were administered during the month of November 2003.

After analysis of the first set of questionnaires, in view of the difficulty experienced by some of the volunteers and their parents in understanding the questionnaires, we decided to construct another questionnaire, which we had not planned, to examine how the counselors saw the changes that had taken place in the volunteers. These questionnaires were

administered to the counselors at the end of the interview with them, in the course of May 2004.

In addition, we decided to simplify the questionnaire for the volunteers and their parents and to reduce the scales in questionnaire 2. Due to their difficulties in filling out the questionnaires the first time, most of the indexes were reduced in Questionnaire 2, from 7 point scales to 5 point scales, and from 5 point scales to 3 points scales. To permit statistical comparison of Questionnaires 1 and 2, all scales were reduced so as to match the second round. In the course of the year, interviews were conducted with parents, volunteers and hosts. In addition, a researcher from the Carmel Institute participated in regional *Mishlavim* conventions, at the *Mishlavim* steering committee- the coalition of organizers, and the first employers' conference that took place in Haifa.

2.4 Data analysis

The statistical analyses performed were mostly descriptive and they display the differences between the various research groups. It is important to note that the research groups were not a sample of the population. We attempted to reach the entire population that was able to answer questionnaires in Hebrew, the entire population of volunteers, parents and hosts. Therefore, there was no need to perform tests of significance of differences found.

3. Findings and discussion

3.1 Motivation to serve

In Questionnaire 1 the volunteers and their parents were asked about their reasons for joining the national service and they were requested to rank the reasons in order of importance (1-5). In addition, the counselors were asked to indicate what they thought were the main motives for volunteering of each of their students in *Mishlavim*. The results appear in Table 2.

. Table 2: Motivations for Service, ranked by importance (1-5), in phase 1 and 2,
Volunteers, parents and Counselors

Motivation	Volunteers T1 Mean (Standard Deviation) 1- not important, 5- very important) N= 51	Parents T1 Mean (Standard Deviation) 1- not important, 5- very important) N= 51	Counselors T1 Percentage of Counselors giving highest levels of importance N= 47
An opportunity to be independent	4.73 (0.64)	3.69 (1.57)	10%
An opportunity to volunteer and help society	4.62 (0.71)	4.43 (0.95)	15%
Because I / he wants to be like all youth my / his age	4.47 (1.00)	o	0%
An opportunity to gain knowledge and professional experience	4.46 (1.00)	4.22 (1.19)	28%
The responsibility as a citizen to serve the country	4.53 (1.01)	4.53 (1.01)	16%
As an alternative to military service	4.16 (1.2)	o	0%
An opportunity to collect monetary benefits	3.93 (1.39)	2.91 (1.66)	14%
Because it is expected of me/ him to serve	3.09 (0.7)	2.88 (1.61)	7%

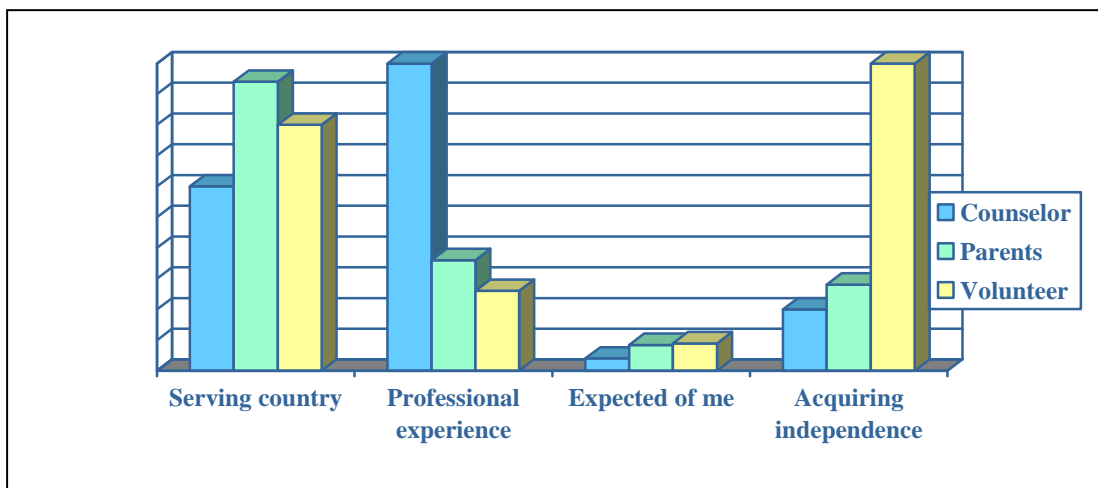
The table shows that the volunteers attach great importance to personal reasons for volunteering. They see the service as an opportunity to be independent and to accumulate professional knowledge and experience. It is important to them to be like their normative age group and serve in a voluntary framework. In contrast, the parents emphasize mainly the responsibility to serve the country and help people. While the volunteers ascribe much more importance to acquiring their independence, only 10% of the counselors indicate this motive as meaningful to the volunteers, and the parents do not ascribe much importance to it. In

addition, the table shows that all the respondents ascribe little importance to expectations of normative behavior – “because it is expected of me/him.”

When the parents and the volunteers were asked in a follow-up question to state directly the major reason for volunteering, 47% of the parents said responsibility to serve the country, 18% referred to the acquisition of professional knowledge, and 14% said independence outside the home. The volunteers answered the same question in the following way: 40% stated serving the state as the major reason, 13% indicated the opportunity to acquire professional knowledge and experience, and 13% indicated the opportunity to help people in need. The volunteers’ responses to this question were very similar to those of the parents. However, their replies to this direct question differ considerably from the results that appear in the table, where they ascribe greater importance to personal reasons.

This latter finding is congruent with the findings from the qualitative part of the study – from the interviews with the volunteers. Although they spoke of serving the country as an important factor, later in the interview other dimensions arose: the fact that they possessed money, that they could decide independently what to do with the money, that they (some of them) were free to use public transport. As we will see in subsection 3.1.3, when the parents were asked about their main reason for supporting their children’s volunteering, most of them replied “the opportunity for them to be more independent.”

Figure 1. Main motives for service, as seen by counselors, volunteers and parents



A comparison of the volunteers’ replies in the questionnaire as they appear on Table 2 with their answers to the question about their major reason for volunteering, reveals that their

reply to the direct question is much more socially-oriented. It may be that the request to state the reason explicitly raises the possibility of social compliance, the wish to answer in the direction perceived as more positive.

Another point that emerges from the questionnaire is that the volunteers wanted very much to volunteer for national service. A mean of 4.72 (0.61) was obtained on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = did not want to at all, 5 = wanted to very much).

3.1.1 The hosts' motivation

In order to examine the hosts' motivation, we asked whether they would recommend to a friend or acquaintance to accept volunteers from *Mishlavim*. The majority of the hosts (87%) gave positive answers in Questionnaires 1 and 2.

We asked the hosts what was their main reason for recommending the volunteers. In Questionnaire 1, 71% said that the main reason was the social contribution of volunteering, 12% said the reason was the volunteers' efficiency in certain types of work, and 11% stated that it was a good deed. After the year of service, 80% of the hosts stated that the contribution to society was the main reason, 7% of them referred to the volunteers' efficiency, and 7% stated that it was a good deed. This comparison reveals that after a year of service the hosts had a stronger understanding of the service as a contribution to society,

but the order of their reasons for the recommendation had not changed.

A host at the end of the third month of service:

" I don't know what I can ask of her and what I can't. Poor thing, she was born like that. But my boss tells me that she comes here to actually work!."

In the wake of interviews and observations that we conducted at the beginning and halfway through the service, a need arose in certain cases to redefine the volunteer's role. This need found

expression in the hosts' arguments that the volunteer did not take initiative, that he spent part of the time doing nothing, that they gave him tasks out of pity or didn't expect anything of him. In some of these cases, after discussion with the counselor or coordinator from *Mishlavim*, a daily schedule of tasks was defined for the host and the volunteer.

3.1.2 The parents' support for the children's decision to volunteer for national service

The parents' report regarding their support of their children's volunteering for national service reveals a very clear picture. 90% of the parents stated that they strongly supported their child, as opposed to 4% who noted that they supported them to a lesser extent. The mean obtained was 6.76 (on a scale of 1 to 7). The volunteers on their part testify that their parents strongly supported their decision to volunteer. The mean obtained was 4.77 (0.52) on a scale of 1 to 5.

The parents were asked what had led them to support their children's volunteering for national service and requested them to indicate the degree of importance that they ascribed to the various reasons. The reasons appear in the table in descending order.

Tables 3 . Reasons for supporting the service
(Mean and Standard Deviation)

Reasons	(1- not important, 5- very important)
An opportunity for gaining independence	4.83 (0.48)
A positive experience for him	4.80 (0.50)
Will help him to enter the work force	4.70 (0.72)
Because he wanted	4.52 (0.95)
An opportunity to serve the country	4.47 (1.06)
An opportunity to gain professional experience	4.36 (1.06)
An opportunity to collect monetary benefits	2.80 (1.58)
Because his family expects him to serve	2.93 (1.50)
Because his friends expect him to serve	2.09 (1.34)

When asked for the main reason, the following results were obtained: 38% of the parents indicated responsibility to serve the country as their major reason for supporting their child's volunteering, 23% stated the opportunity to be independent, the other reasons received less than 10%.

It emerges from Table 3 that the parents' main reason for supporting the volunteering is congruent with the main motive of the volunteers to serve – “to be more independent.” It is

worthy of note that the parents' opinion of their children's main motivation for service, "responsibility to contribute to the state," is ranked only fifth on Table 3, however it matches the parents' choice of the main reason for giving their support.

Here too, as with the motivations for service, we see that the request to state the reason explicitly raises the likelihood of social compliance, namely, the wish to respond in the manner perceived as more positive.

The parents were asked how they had learned of the *Mishlavim* program. It emerges that 92% of the parents heard of the program from the school, 4% had contacted NYS operating NGOs and 4% heard of the program through their child.

3.2 Expectations

In Questionnaire 1 the volunteers were asked a number of questions regarding their expectations and the contribution of their service. The findings appear in Table 4, in descending order of importance.

Table 4. The volunteers' expectations of their service
(Mean and standard deviation)

	(1- not important, 5- very important)
My service will mainly contribute to the hosting organization.	4.72 (0.67)
I will make use of all my abilities	4.6 (0.61)
My service will contribute mainly to the society / community will benefit mainly	4.10 (1.19)
My service will mainly benefit myself	3.98 (1.18)

Table 4 shows that at the beginning of their service the volunteers believed that they would contribute mainly to the organization in which they served and to the community, and less to themselves. They thought they would succeed in making use of their abilities in the framework of the service.

In Questionnaire 1 the volunteers were asked what would be the main contribution of their service. 28% indicated that the service would contribute mainly to their professional

Volunteer: "I am in national service! I donate my work to a hospital and that's important. And the hospital is important to the country. It's not like the work last year - this is really important."

experience, 24% indicated to the country, 22% to the organization in which they served, 18% to their personal development and 8% to the society/community.

When the parents were asked how the service would contribute to their children, 26% said that it would help their personal development, 26% said it would boost their self-confidence, 19% mentioned the contribution to the institution where they served, 12% said it would increase the volunteer's professional experience, and lower percentages spoke of the contribution to society and the state. Table 6 shows the distribution of the parents' evaluations of the contribution of the service at the beginning and end of the service.

Table 5. The parents' evaluation of the contribution of their children's service

I think that my child's service will contribute mainly to:	first administration	second administration
His personal development	26 %	16 %
His self assurance	26 %	16 %
His professional experience,	13 %	11 %
Society/community	8 %	21 %
The hosting organization	19 %	21 %
The country	8 %	10 %

Table 5 shows the differences between the first and second administration of the questionnaire. Whereas in Questionnaire 1 the parents thought that their children's service would contribute mainly to themselves, in Questionnaire 2 they thought the service contributed mainly to society and to the organization in which they served. We may, perhaps, see here the parents' surprise at discovering that their child could indeed contribute to the country and not just to himself. An examination of the parents' reports in Questionnaire 2, distinguishing between parents of male and female volunteers, shows that the boys' parents mention the contribution to personal development as most significant, while the girls' parents consider the contribution to professional experience, to society/community and to the hosting organization as more meaningful for their daughters.

Finally, we asked the hosts at the end of the year of service to what extent their expectations concerning the costs of integrating the volunteers had been

Parent: "The IDF (military) gave him the runaround with paperwork and finally rejected him. He was miserable and stayed in his room all the time, until the school told us about national service and look at him now. He's blossoming, he says what he thinks and he's just like his brothers. "

realistic. On a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = very much so), the mean score was 3.89 (1.11). 66% of the hosts testified that their expectations had been largely realistic, as opposed to 34% who stated that their expectations had been only moderately so.

3.3 Cost/benefit

3.3.1 Cost/benefit as seen by the host organizations

In the second part of the questionnaire the hosts were asked to reply generally to a number of questions on all the *Mishlavim* volunteers who were working in their organization. These questions concerned the perceived benefits and costs of integrating volunteers with special needs in their organization. The findings with regard to the main benefits of the service appear in Table 6.

Table 6. Benefit of the service for the organization as seen by the hosts

What is in your opinion the main benefit of service of the volunteers with special needs in your organization?	first administration	second administration
An example of giving	33 %	45 %
Development of staff's tolerance toward the "other"	33 %	21 %
Enhancement of team cohesion	7 %	10 %
Cheap labor	7 %	6 %
Professional work	5 %	0 %
Other	15 %	14 %
No benefit at all	0 %	0 %

This table reveals certain differences between the first and second administration of the questionnaire, mainly as regards order of preference. Whereas in Questionnaire 1 the hosts viewed "example of giving" and "development of tolerance" as equally important, in Questionnaire 2 they ascribed the main importance to "example of giving." Toward the end of the service they ascribed no importance to receiving professional work from the volunteers, although at the beginning of the service they had anticipated a certain

contribution in this dimension. Alongside these differences, the similarity in several dimensions is salient. In Questionnaires 1 and 2 some 10% of the hosts stated that the major benefit to the organization was enhancement of team cohesion. The benefit of the service as cheap labor also received low percentages, which were similar both at the beginning and end of the service. None of the hosts thought that the organization gained no benefit from the service.

In the following set of questions (Table 7) we sought to clarify the hosts' attitudes on some fundamental issues concerning the volunteers' employment.

Table 7. The hosts' attitudes

	first administration Percent of positive answers	second administration Percent of positive answers
Would you agree to employ the volunteer as a hired worker at a minimum wage?	52 %	56 %
Would you prefer a national service volunteer without special needs?	31 %	35%
Would you prefer another worker to do the volunteer's job?	29 %	25 %

The table shows that some 50% of the hosts would agree to employ the volunteer as a hired worker at a minimum wage. At the end of the service this willingness even rose a little. However, when asked whether they would prefer another worker to do the volunteer's job, at the end of the service 29% of the hosts answered in the affirmative, as opposed to 25% at the beginning of the service. A similar picture is revealed in answer to the question as to whether they would prefer a national service volunteer without special needs. When the hosts were asked in interviews why they preferred the volunteer to a hired worker or a volunteer without special needs, some of them answered that few workers in the past had remained in that specific job for months because it was too monotonous or simple. Some of the hosts said that the very fact of accepting the volunteer had enhanced the social solidarity in the work team, which greatly improved the atmosphere in the organization.

Another question we asked the hosts was whether they thought that the work done by the volunteer would be done better by another worker. At the beginning of the service 42% of them thought that the work would not be done better by another worker, while another 42% stated the opposite, and these replies were similar at the end of the service (43% and 41% respectively).

Alongside the benefit to the organization, we asked the hosts about the major cost of this service for the organization.

Table 8. Cost of the service to the organization as seen by the hosts

What is in your opinion the main cost to your organization of the inclusion of volunteers with special needs?	first administration	second administration
Investment of employees' time	63 %	40 %
Creating new tasks	16 %	21 %
Organizational changes	8 %	13%
Emotional cost	8 %	12 %
No cost at all	4 %	4 %

Here too, differences are revealed between Questionnaire 1 and Questionnaire 2. At the beginning of the service the hosts stated that the main cost to their organization was the investment of employees' time in helping the volunteers (63%). Toward the end of the year of service this was still the major cost in the hosts' opinion, but it was significantly less central (40%). After a year of service the hosts referred to the cost of creating new tasks for

A host in the third month of the service: "He doesn't initiate anything! Everything he does I have to explain to him ten times, even if it's exactly the same thing that I explained to him ten times yesterday. And if I ... just a bit... begin to lose my patience he goes wild, and then I have no idea what to do!"

the volunteers and of making changes in the organization in order to integrate them. Emotional cost did not appear in the questionnaire as one of the choices; nevertheless, in the first questionnaire

four hosts indicated emotional cost under the heading of "others" (more moments of frustration, investment of energy and patience in solving conflicts and giving social support), and toward the end of the service six hosts reported emotional cost. This finding matches the reports of the *Mishlavim* coordinators during the course of the year on the hosts' emotional investment due to the erosion of worker-employer relations and the need to repeat instructions constantly.

Despite this impression that is received from the coordinators' reports, the hosts stated in the questionnaire that the volunteer knew to a large extent how to maintain proper worker-employer relations (4.41 on a scale of 1 to 5).

The hosting organizations were also asked about the benefits of the service to society and the community. Table 9 shows the findings that were obtained in the two administrations of the questionnaire.

Table 9. Benefit of the service to the society/community as seen by the hosts

What is in your opinion is the main benefit of the inclusion of volunteers with special needs for society/ community?	first administration	second administration
Strengthening tolerance to the "other"	36 %	29 %
Creating norms of volunteering	25 %	20 %
A whole hearted service	13 %	14 %
Setting a personal example	9 %	18 %
Improving conditions and services to the public	8 %	10 %
Saving the country money	6 %	7 %
Other	3 %	2 %
No benefit at all	0 %	0 %

A comparison of the findings in Questionnaires 1 and 2 shows that after a year of service the hosts ranked the benefit of the service to society slightly higher in saving the country money and improving the conditions and services. Their evaluation of the service's contribution to society in strengthening tolerance and creating a norm of volunteering was lower at the end of the year, although they still ascribed importance to the contribution of these values. At the end of the year they ranked setting a personal example more highly. In comparing these findings with the findings concerning the main benefit for their organization, it is surprising to see that the hosts rank the benefit of "an example of personal giving" much lower when referring to society than when referring to the organization. On the other hand, they ranked the importance of "personal example" significantly higher in the second administration of the questionnaire.

We sought to clarify the extent to which other workers in the organization expressed opposition to the service of the *Mishlavim* volunteers. The hosts were requested to indicate this on a scale of 1 to 7 (7 = very much). The findings reveal that the other workers expressed almost no opposition to these volunteers both at the beginning and the end of the year of service (1.45 in Questionnaire 1 and 1.60 in Questionnaire 2).

We also asked the hosts to indicate the reason for the workers' opposition, to the extent that it existed. Less than 40% of the hosts answered this question in both administrations of the questionnaire. Those who answered referred to the investment of time required, and disruptions of the work routine as possible reasons for opposition.

3.3.2 Benefits of the service as seen by the volunteers

The volunteers were asked about the benefits of the service to themselves.

Table 10. The major benefit of the service as seen by the volunteers

Benefit	Second administration Percent
I gained life experience	30%
I became independent	29 %
I developed	28 %
I acquired a profession	10 %
I'll receive monetary benefits	3 %

The table shows that the volunteers think that the major benefit of the service to them is the life experience and the independence they acquired and the personal development they experienced. An examination of the gender differences reveals that both male and female volunteers consider the acquisition of life experience and personal development as a significant benefit for them. However, the boys ascribe more importance to achieving independence.

When we asked the volunteers whether there was someone who had influenced them during the service, 30% stated that there was no such person, 19% mentioned the professional worker in their place of service, 15% mentioned the school counselor and the coordinator, 7% mentioned other volunteers, and the remainder referred to other people outside the service.

3.3.3 Characteristics of the volunteer compared with other workers in the organization

We asked the hosts to evaluate the characteristics of the volunteer compared with other workers in their organization.

The findings reveal that a certain percentage of the hosts think that the volunteers are less efficient and slower than the other workers in the

Host: "There is no-one more meticulous than he is in sterilizing the instruments in the clinic. One day when he was sick the nurse told me that she didn't know how to work the sterilizer without the volunteer's help."

organization, and this percentage rose slightly at the end of the year of service. In addition, a high percentage of the hosts think that the volunteer initiates less than other workers, and this rate was significantly higher at the end of the service. Alongside these findings there are also many other findings: the hosts testify that the volunteers are less aggressive, less impulsive, and less lazy than the other workers. At the end of the service the hosts' opinions were even firmer in this direction.

Regarding work-related characteristics, the hosts testify that the volunteers work in as orderly a manner as the other workers and even more so, they are no less polite and even more polite than the other workers, they arrive for work on time, their appearance is neat and they take criticism in good spirit as much as the other workers.

A comparison of the hosts' replies to Questionnaires 1 and 2 indicates that at the end of the year they see the volunteers as less efficient and resourceful, a little less polite and industrious, but also less aggressive and lazy. In addition, they take criticism in a better spirit and are meticulous in performing their work.

3.4 Change in functioning

We sought to examine and compare the reports on the volunteers' daily functioning from various sources: the volunteers' self reports, reports by the parents and the counselors. The volunteers and their parents filled out the questionnaires both at the beginning and end of the service, the counselors only at the end. The means obtained are summarized in table 13.

Table 11. Report on the volunteers' daily functioning by the parents, the counselors and the volunteers themselves

	Volunteers		Parents		Counselor
	T1 N= 51	T2 N= 30	T1 N= 51	T2 N= 19	N= 47
Travels independently to the workplace	2.57 (0.80)	2.63 (0.72)	2.67 (0.72)	2.74 (0.65)	2.83 (0.57)
Arrives on time to the workplace	2.35 (0.46)	2.90 (0.31)	2.98 (0.14)	2.89 (0.46)	2.91 (0.41)
Gets ready alone to leave home	2.88 (0.44)	2.97 (0.18)	2.82 (0.44)	2.89 (0.32)	2.89 (0.38)
Arrives appropriately dressed to the workplace	2.93 (0.33)	2.97 (0.18)	2.98 (0.19)	2.89 (0.32)	2.87 (0.40)
Persists in performing tasks that he is requested to do	2.91 (0.29)	2.75 (0.52)	2.81 (0.49)	2.68 (0.48)	2.85 (0.36)
Gets help from family members in withdrawing money from the bank	2.30 (0.86)	2.00 (0.82)	-	-	2.40 (0.76)
Succeeds in establishing friendships with peers at work	2.29 (0.90)	2.43 (0.86)	2.48 (0.72)	2.32 (0.82)	2.10 (0.83)
Manages his money by himself	2.19 (0.94)	2.07 (0.83)	1.80 (0.91)	1.79 (0.79)	1.89 (0.89)
Keeps contact with peers from work beyond work hours	1.71 (0.90)	1.69 (0.85)	1.60 (0.79)	1.84 (0.90)	1.32 (0.63)
Asks for help with daily tasks at home	1.30 (0.70)	1.45 (0.78)	1.35 (0.71)	1.72 (0.96)	1.32 (0.69)

In bold values that show decline

Table 11 indicates a rise in the functioning of most of the volunteers, although the parents see no significant change in their children's functioning. However, it is important to note that the parents reported from the start a high level of functioning in terms of punctuality, neat appearance and persistence. Nevertheless, we see a certain rise in the children's persistence and independence in traveling to the workplace by themselves. Similarly, there is an improvement in the social context, according to the parents their children are more in contact with friends from the service beyond working hours. On the other hand, the parents think there has been a certain decline in the volunteers' punctuality and neat appearance at the work place and in their diligence in performing tasks. The volunteers themselves also see a certain decline in their task performance, although they state that they arrive on time and with a neat appearance. The volunteers report more that they get themselves ready to leave the house, need less help from family members in withdrawing money from the bank, and are more in contact with friends from the place of service. The counselors are more skeptical than the parents and volunteers with regard to the social dimension, namely the volunteer's contacts with friends from the workplace.

The counselors agree with the parents and the volunteers that the volunteers do not need the

Volunteer: "For example, today I can go by myself, take the bus and go... almost everywhere, I have learned that, to take the bus by myself."

help of family members in performing their daily tasks at home, but on the other hand they state that the volunteers are not in contact with friends from work and that they do not really manage their money by themselves.

Volunteer: "For example I have learned to call the farm manager if I am late or if my mother says that I am sick and I have to stay at home."

To examine what changes had occurred as a result of the service, we asked the hosts, the counselors, and the volunteers' parents a number of questions at the end of the service. The findings are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12. Evaluation of changes in the volunteer following the service

To which extent would you say that because of this service experience: (1= to a small extent, 3= to a large extent)	Host	Counselor	Parents
The volunteer's self-image became more positive	2.89 (0.39)	2.90 (0.41)	2.68 (0.48)
The volunteer's self-confidence has strengthened	2.83 (0.48)	2.90 (0.41)	2.84 (0.37)
The volunteer is able to follow instructions and carry them out	2.85 (0.42)	--	2.84 (0.37)
The Volunteer succeeds more in performing tasks	2.77 (0.48)	2.86 (0.45)	2.74 (0.56)
The volunteer believes more in himself	2.64 (0.61)	2.76 (0.51)	2.68 (0.48)
The volunteer is more able to make friends with people	2.55 (0.65)	--	2.68 (0.67)
The volunteer despairs less when faced with new situations	2.51 (0.69)	2.61 (0.57)	2.00 (0.82)

According to all three groups of respondents, significant changes took place in the volunteers following the year of service. The hosts and counselors see the most significant of these as the change in the volunteers' self-image, which became more positive, and in their increased self-confidence. The parents and the hosts also mention the volunteer's improved ability to follow instructions and carry them out. In addition, the three groups of

respondents point to a change in the volunteer's higher sense of self-efficacy and success in performing tasks. The hosts see very moderate changes in the volunteers' ability to make friends with people, in contrast to the parents, who see changes in this area too. The three groups agree that there are some more moderate changes in the volunteers' reactions to despair when faced with new situations. The picture that emerges from this evaluation is of positive changes following the service.

It is important to note that the interviews we held with volunteers yielded the information that they felt socially isolated. On the one hand, they were no longer at school full time, and on

Volunteer: "I don't have friends any more. I mean really good friends. During Spring break they will all go on a school trip and I'm not allowed to go with them, because I have to work here."

the other hand, they were not in contact with their co-volunteers in the work place. In addition, they had no social contacts with the other Mishlavim volunteers. This finding did not appear in our interviews with the volunteers in Jerusalem, who reported a high level of

satisfaction with the social meetings in the city hall organized by the coordinator. It was not possible to hold such meetings in other regions because of the geographical scattering and the lack of funding for transporting the participants to the meeting. When the volunteers were asked whether they were in contact with other national service volunteers in the organization, most of them said they were not or that they didn't even know that there were any.

Table 13. The parents' and volunteers' attitudes on independence

Questions posed to Parents	First Administration	Second Administration
To which extent would you define your child as independent? (1= totally dependent, 3= totally independent)	2.51 (0.74)	2.63 (0.60)
How important or unimportant is the independence of your child to you? (1= not very important, 3= very important)	2.98 (0.14)	2.95 (0.23)
Question posed to Volunteers		
How independent or dependent would you define yourself as independent? (1= dependent, 3= independent)	2.77 (0.52)	2.69 (0.70)

Table 13 shows that at the end of the service the parents define their child as a little more independent. The parents ascribe a very high degree of importance to their child's independence and this is stable over the two administrations of the questionnaire. It is

interesting that the volunteers define themselves in both questionnaires as more independent than their parents do, but less in the second questionnaire than in the first. This finding may indicate a more sober assessment of their abilities on the volunteers' part and a more realistic view of their condition.

Some of the questions examining daily functioning were tested both among the control group (students) and the graduates. The findings presented here on the volunteers and the students are taken from Questionnaire 2 (the starting data of the group of students in the first questionnaire are more or less similar to the data in the second). The findings on the graduates were collected in Questionnaire 1, soon after this group had completed its service.

Table 14. The volunteers' daily functioning compared with the control group and graduates (Means and Standard Deviations)

(1= small extent, 3= large extent)	T 2 Volunteers	T 2 Control: Students	Graduates
Gets ready alone to leave home	2.97 (0.18)	2.24 (0.89)	2.86 (0.47)
Arrives appropriately dressed to the workplace	2.97 (0.18)	2.90 (0.44)	2.91 (0.29)
Persists in performing tasks that he is requested to do	2.75 (0.52)	2.86 (0.36)	2.81 (0.51)
Succeeds in establishing friendships with peers at work	2.43 (0.86)	2.43 (0.98)	2.59 (0.80)
Manages his money by himself	2.07 (0.83)	1.65 (0.81)	2.23 (0.92)
Asks for help with daily tasks at home	1.45 (0.78)	1.95 (0.97)	1.38 (0.74)
Seeks help or professional advise at work	1.71 (0.71)	2.44 (0.80)	2.10 (0.94)
Seeks help from peers at work to perform requested tasks	1.60 (0.62)	2.9 (0.95)	2.23 (0.87)

Table 14 shows many positive differences in favor of the volunteers and graduates in dimensions that reflect independent functioning. The volunteers and the graduates are better at getting ready to go out, better at managing their money by themselves, and need less help from family members in daily functioning and less help from their workmates or professionals in the workplace. In most of the dimensions of functioning the graduates are slightly better than the volunteers. This may suggest that the influence of the service is not merely short term and the graduates who finished their service some months ago still function well.

It is also important to examine the changes that occurred in the group of volunteers compared with the group of students between the first and second administration of the questionnaire. These changes are summarized in Table 14a.

Table 14 a. Changes in the volunteers' daily functioning compared with the control group of students
(Direction of change observed in means between first and second administration)

(+ positive change, - negatives change, = no change)	Volunteers	Control: Students
Gets ready alone to leave home	+	-
Arrives appropriately dressed to the workplace	+	-
Persists in performing tasks that he is requested to do	-	+
Succeeds in establishing friendships with peers at work	+	+
Manages his money by himself	-	-
Asks for help with daily tasks at home	+	-
Seeks help or professional advise at work	+	=
Seeks help from peers at work to perform requested tasks	+	+

Table 14 a shows many more changes for the better in the daily functioning of the volunteers compared with the group of students.

3.5 Change in the volunteer's status at home

From the interviews with the volunteers' parents it emerges that in their opinion one of the most outstanding changes that took place following the service was their child's status in the family, from someone who had to be supported to someone who gives support. The volunteer brings money home, money which in some cases is a substantial contribution to the family income. Moreover, some of the parents reported in the interviews that the fact of their child's service gave them a sense of pride (one of the mothers said that she was "proud of her child for the first time in his life") and at the same time they were surprised that their child was really capable of contributing to the workplace in particular or to the state in general. Support for this point was received from the interviews with the volunteers themselves, who reported that their siblings respected them for volunteering, for serving the country, or for contributing to the family income.

As so much importance was ascribed in the interviews to the matter of receiving money, the parents were asked in Questionnaire 2 what was done with the sum of money that their son

or daughter received each month. 37% of the parents testified that the child kept all the money, 32% said that the money was used to pay for the volunteer's food and travel expenses, 11% said they had to use the money for daily household expenses, and only 5% stated that the money was saved in order to pay for a hostel for the child in the future. A comparison of the replies of parents of boys as opposed to girls reveals that a similar percentage (37%) of the parents testified that all the money was kept by their son or daughter, but while 25% of the parents of girl volunteers stated that they had to use the money for living expenses, the parents of male volunteers did not mention this possibility and a higher percentage of them said that the money was spent on the child's travel expenses.

Figure 2: Seven dominant traits

careful	tidy	industrious
tidy	kindhearted	kindhearted
industrious	sociable	tidy
patient	careful	obedient
sociable	industrious	meticulous
obedient	obedient	resolute
kindhearted	popular	popular
Volunteer	Control: Student	Graduate

An examination of those volunteers whose parents reported that all the money was kept by the child reveals that these volunteers define themselves as more independent than the other volunteers (mean 3.00 vs. 2.69), they are higher in self-efficacy than the others (mean 2.60 vs. 2.45), and are characterized by a more active coping style than the others (mean 3.78 vs. 3.51). Clearly, we do not know whether this is the direct influence of the year of volunteering or whether the parents let them keep the money themselves because these volunteers were more independent to start with, with a more active coping style and higher self-efficacy.

3.6 Change in self-image

A questionnaire enumerating 30 traits was administered to the volunteers, who were asked to indicate the degree to which a given trait characterized them on a scale of 1 to 3. The seven traits that they reported as most characteristic of them were (in descending order): Tidy, kindhearted, obedient, patient, sociable, industrious, and popular. In Questionnaire 2 the seven most characteristic traits were (in descending order): careful, tidy, industrious, patient, sociable, obedient, and kindhearted. The dominant traits reported by the group of graduates were (in descending order): Industrious, kindhearted, tidy, obedient, meticulous, resolute and popular.

We chose to focus on the ten dominant traits and compare the changes that occurred in the volunteers and in the students (control group) between the first and second administration of the questionnaires (examination of the differences between the first and second questionnaire is meaningful only for these two groups). The comparison reveals changes in opposite directions in seven of the ten traits. The volunteers reported a change for the worse in most of the traits, while the students reported more positive changes. It is important to note that the same traits were still prominent in the second questionnaire, and the changes reported were not very big, and perhaps this finding also testifies to a more realistic self-image of the volunteers after a year of service.

3.7 Changes in coping styles

In the first and second administration of the questionnaires we asked about the volunteers' coping mechanisms. From a questionnaire composed of nine items examining coping styles in various situations, we calculated a general index with values ranging between 9 and 45. The higher the score, the more active the manner of coping. A comparison of the scores obtained on this measure between the two administrations of the questionnaire shows that there was barely any change in the volunteers' scores – from a mean score of 3.58 (0.50) the first time to a slightly lower mean of 3.51 (0.50) the second time. An examination of the differences between boys and girls in this measure reveals that the girls' coping style was more active than that of the boys in the first administration of the questionnaire (3.67 and 3.48 respectively), but the second time round no difference was found between genders (3.50 for both). Also, as mentioned earlier, the level of active coping was found to be higher among volunteers who were allowed to handle the money they received for their service by themselves.

An examination of the findings on coping styles among the control group and the graduates reveals that in the first administration of the questionnaire the control group obtained a mean

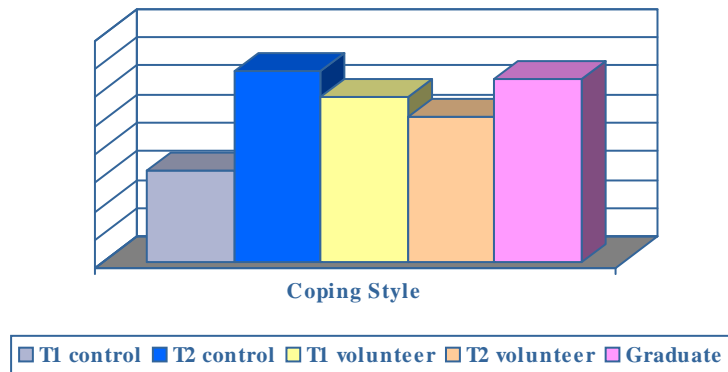
Volunteer: "I have become much more independent, because when the kindergarten teacher tells me something that I don't understand, I have learned that I can ask her. I'm not ashamed to ask any more."

score of 3.32 (0.64) on the measure of coping style. This is lower than the mean obtained by the volunteers at the beginning of the service and

may indicate a difference between the groups. It is important to note that the allocation to these groups was not done by random selection. In the second administration of the questionnaire, the mean obtained by the control group in the measure of coping style was 3.67 (0.62), slightly higher than the mean obtained by the volunteers.

Figure 3 shows a slight decline in the volunteers' coping style between the beginning and end of the year. Among the control group, on the other hand, a considerable difference was found between the two points in time, revealing a more active coping style in the second administration of the questionnaire. By that time this group had reached a level of coping close to that of the volunteers at the beginning of their service

Figure 3: Comparison between the copying manners of the volunteers, graduates and the control group



and of the graduates a few months after the end of their year of voluntary service. These findings may indicate that the very fact of being chosen as candidates for national service (as stated, the control group was composed of students whose functioning was high enough to permit their participation in national service the following year, although they were not aware of this when filling out the first questionnaire) improved the coping abilities of these students in the second administration. In addition, the findings with regard to the graduates lead us to conclude that the level of coping persists over time, even after the year of volunteering is over. As for the volunteers, the slight decline in their coping style over the year may indicate a process of becoming more realistic in their self assessment. This finding is congruent with other findings presented above.

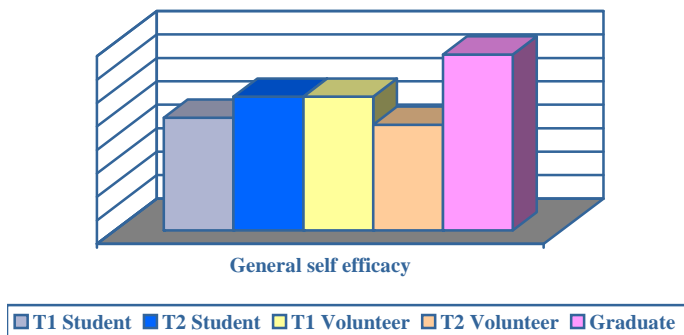
3.8 Changes in the sense of general self-efficacy

To examine the volunteers' sense of self-efficacy we used a questionnaire with 14 statements. The respondent was asked to indicate the degree of his agreement with each statement on a scale from 1 to 3 (after adaptation of the questionnaire in the first

administration). The final score on this measure is the mean calculated on all the statements.

The first administration of the questionnaire yielded a mean score of 2.57 (0.47) among the volunteers. This score declined slightly in the second administration – 2.45 (0.41). All in all, it emerges from these scores that the volunteers' reported level of self-efficacy is high but declines slightly at the end of the service. Again, this may be an indication that by the end of

Figure 4: Comparison between the sense of general self-efficacy of the volunteers, graduates and the control group



the service the volunteers have a more sober estimation of themselves and a more realistic view of what they are capable of doing. The control group's (students) score on self-efficacy in the first administration of the questionnaire was 2.48 (0.54), lower than the volunteers' score

in the first administration, but in the second administration the control group's score rose to 2.57 (0.31), a level identical with the initial level of the volunteers. The group of graduates obtained a higher score than the volunteers and the students, with a mean of 2.75 (0.31).

Figure 4 shows that these means are congruent with the findings relating to coping styles. That is to say, they reveal a certain measure of disillusionment concerning their abilities among the volunteers completing national service, a rise in the sense of self-efficacy of the students in the control group following their candidacy for national service, and among the graduates a high level of self-efficacy which remained stable over time. The high sense of self-efficacy of the graduates may indicate that self-efficacy may be strengthened in the longer term in light of the experiences that the graduates acquire after completing the service. However, it is important to qualify this statement because we have no data on the graduates before their service and it may be that their sense of self-efficacy was higher to begin with.

3.9 Relations with the organizing bodies

We asked the coordinators about their relations with the school and we asked the school about the nature of the relations with the coordinators. Both sides wondered whether there was a need for a more rigid definition of their roles. Although opinions differ on this question, it was not raised as a problematic issue by the parents, the volunteers, or the hosts. Apparently it is clear to most of them that the coordinator is responsible for contacts with the hosting organization and the counselor is responsible for contacts with the parents. This definition is reflected in the agreement expressed by most of the parents that “it is the school’s responsibility to support my child’s integration in the place of service” (2.65 on a scale of 1-3, when 3 = strongly agree, in the first questionnaire). In the focus group with the participation of the coordinators, the project manager and a representative of the Ministry of Education, all the participants agreed that it was better to retain a certain ambiguity in these definitions, leaving them flexible enough to adapt to the character of the counselors and the culture of the various schools.

From the qualitative part of the study it emerges that the *Mishlavim* team - the coordinators, the project manager, and a director from the special education division of the Ministry of Education – is a learning team that is attentive to events in the field, improves procedures from year to year, consults the schools and includes them in decision making. This is reflected in the reports of counselors who described the swift response of coordinators following the sexual abuse of one of the volunteers (not in the framework of the service). They immediately requested the counselors to provide sexual education for the volunteers. Similarly, the counselors praised the improvements in the selection and integration of the volunteers this year compared with the previous year – 2003. The coordinators reported that they worked in full cooperation with the counselors and received a swift response to all their requests.

3.9.1 Information flow

The hosts were asked to rank the extent of their agreement with two statements concerning the flow of information in the *Mishlavim* program. The findings appear in Table 20.

Table 15. The hosts' attitudes toward the volunteers and their work
(Means and Standard Deviations)

Extent of consent (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)	First administration	Second administration
I did not received enough information about the volunteer's disability	2.51 (1.48)	2.51 (1.41)
Any information I would have received on the volunteer's disability would not have helped me to cope with the volunteer himself	2.23 (1.44)	2.27 (1.29)

Table 15 shows that the hosts, both at the beginning of the service and at the end, thought that they had not received enough information about the volunteer's disability; this expresses their wish to know more about the volunteers. On the other hand, the hosts agree with the statement that more information would not necessarily have helped them to cope with the volunteers themselves. This finding is congruent with the findings from the interviews, in which the hosts said that they would like to know more but at the same time they understood that more information on the disabilities would not help them. This subject arose in almost every regional meeting of the *Mishlavim* team and the school counselors that we attended. Regarding the question as to what kind of information to convey to the host and how much, the participants in these meetings agreed to supply the minimum information required so that the volunteer could start with a clean slate. The decision regarding what information to supply was left largely to the counselor and the coordinator.

Table 15 also shows rather high standard deviations, and therefore we analyzed these replies according to region. The analysis reveals that the host organizations in the central and southern region claimed to have received less information than their colleagues in the north and in Jerusalem.

Another question in the questionnaire asked the hosts directly whether they had received sufficient guidance in the integration of those with special needs. At the beginning of the service period the hosts reported that they had not received sufficient guidance (mean 2.71 on a scale of 1-5), but this improved toward the end of the service (mean 3.28), although this mean still expresses an inadequate level of information. In Questionnaire 2 we asked the hosts whether they had agreed to participate at the beginning of the period in a seminar on the integration of youth with special needs. A substantial majority of the hosts (79%) replied in the affirmative. Analysis according to region reveals that 70% of the hosts in the north

and the south had agreed to participate in such a seminar, compared with 100% in Jerusalem and the central region.

The parents were asked about the amount of information they had received. At the end of the service they agreed less with the statement that they had received too little information about the program (1.49 in the first questionnaire vs. 1.21 in the second, on a scale of 1-3 in which 1 = strongly disagree). In other words, the parents felt that they had received sufficient information about the program.

3.10 The volunteers' adjustment to the service

The hosts, the parents and the volunteers were asked questions concerning the volunteers' integration in the service. In Questionnaire 1, at the beginning of the service, the replies expressed the respondents' expectations regarding the volunteers' integration, while the replies to Questionnaire 2, toward the end of the service, expressed their actual functioning. Several interesting findings emerge: first, both the parents and the volunteers think that guidance from the school is significant for the volunteers' adjustment to the service, but both see it as somewhat less important toward the end of the service. It may be that help from the school is more significant in the early stages of integration into the service. The hosts, on the other hand, still ascribe great importance to the school's support toward the end of the period. One question that we asked the hosts only reveals the importance of the type of disability in the volunteer's adjustment process. These findings are congruent with the findings from the interviews that we held with all the participants.

In addition, we asked the parents to indicate in the questionnaire whether they thought it was the responsibility of the school to support their child's integration in the service. At the beginning of the service the parents believed that it was the responsibility of the school to support their child's integration in the place of service (mean 2.65), but toward the end of the service they considered that the school's responsibility in this matter was less (mean 2.21). The parents understand the contribution of the family's support to their child's integration, though in the second questionnaire they ascribe somewhat less importance to this support (mean 2.74 vs. 2.68).

A host by the end of the second month of the volunteer's service: "She's a good girl, really, a nice kid. But she never takes any initiative. Sometimes she does more, sometimes less. The truth is we have no expectations of her."

The interviews, the focus group, and the written replies in the questionnaires all indicate that in the third-fourth month of service there is a need for the hosts to redefine the

volunteer's job, breaking it down into small details. In addition, questions arise among the hosts concerning the manner of coping with the special difficulties of the volunteer himself. Another finding that strengthens this point is the significant rise in the number of reports by coordinators on problems in the service (from 8 in the first two months to 15 in the third and fourth month and back to 9 a month on average for the rest of the year). These reports refer to problems of rising severity in the workplace (from shyness, crying and lack of initiative in the first two months to stealing, outbursts, inappropriate behavior and absences in the third and fourth month). From the fifth month on the number of incidents drops.

3.11 Satisfaction from service

The hosts were asked a number of questions evaluating the volunteer's service in the organization. Table 15 shows the findings from Questionnaires 1 and 2.

Table 16. The hosts' evaluation of the volunteer's service in the organization
(Means and Standard Deviations)

	First Administration	Second Administration
How happy are you with the volunteers' performance (1 = not happy at all, 7= very happy)	5.77 (1.36)	5.59 (1.27)
How meaningful is the volunteer's contribution to your organization (1 = not meaningful at all, 7= very meaningful)	5.64 (1.38)	5.64 (1.28)
I think that the volunteer is capable of performing most of the tasks successfully in the framework of the national service (1 = totally disagree, 7= totally agree)	5.30 (1.70)	5.20 (1.49)
What level of effort is required to integrate the volunteer into his assigned work? (1 = very little effort, 7= very big effort)	3.75 (1.82)	4.21 (1.68)
I think that the volunteer is fully integrated at work (1 = totally disagree, 7= totally agree)	3.80 (1.38)	4.17 (1.18)
My staff is having a difficult time because of the volunteer (1 = totally disagree, 7= totally agree)	1.74 (1.01)	1.98 (1.19)

This table shows that the hosts' evaluation of the volunteer's contribution to the organization did not change during the period of service. They think that the volunteers' contribution is meaningful to the organization and they are satisfied with the volunteers' performance. They believe that the volunteer is capable of performing successfully most of the tasks in the framework of the national service, although they believed this more at the end of the service. Another difference between Questionnaires 1 and 2 concerns the degree of effort required of the host in integrating the volunteer. At the beginning of the service they estimated that not much effort would be required of them but at the end of the period they understood that the effort required was more than they had anticipated.

4. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, we present below four major points for consideration and application:

1. Toward the third month we recommend conducting a thorough review of the volunteer's role and examining the necessity for reconstructing the role in consultation with the host and the volunteer. The coordinator should examine the problematic points, identify frustrations of both sides and locate sources of friction. For this purpose we recommend that the *Mishlavim* team together construct a questionnaire that will serve the coordinator as a tool for examining the need for intervention and what should be done. Perhaps, for example, some of the volunteers need a written daily schedule detailing the various tasks, perhaps it is necessary to adapt the host's expectations to the abilities of the volunteer or to raise the threshold of requirements from the volunteer. In certain cases the coordinator, with the help of the counselor, can suggest to the host a kind of menu of tasks that the volunteer can perform, after consulting with the various team members. In other cases the school staff can work with the volunteer on the performance of specific tasks that are required by the host. The *Mishlavim* team may draw great benefit from some training in organizational psychology.

2. We recommend holding a seminar for hosting organizations in the summer, before the beginning of the voluntary work, in order to explain about *Mishlavim* and clarify expectations. In this seminar it is important to describe cases of successful integration as well as cases when the volunteers dropped out of the service. We recommend using some of the data from this research; for example, on the emotional cost, the high level of satisfaction, disillusionment observed in many variables and also possible crises in the third month. Appendix A contains a list of possible topics for such a seminar as they arise from the hosts' requests.

3. It is important to organize several conventions of *Mishlavim* volunteers in the course of the year, to promote social reinforcement and group cohesion and also to discuss shared issues. If possible, the volunteers might design together a shirt or hat that they can wear proudly. We also recommend initiating meetings of *Mishlavim* volunteers with other national service volunteers in the hosting organization (if such exist).

4. We recommend holding a regional meeting with the parents at the beginning of the year, so that they can become acquainted with the coordinator and the framework, and also to answer their questions. Some of the findings of this research can be presented to the parents; for example the importance of the stipend for the volunteers, the importance of their independence, adapting expectations and so forth. In addition, it is important to explain to the parents of volunteers in the national educational service what the volunteer will be doing the following year at school or elsewhere.

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