



Dear Friends and Partners,

This week, the first "Shared Encounters" seminar for the 2014-15 year took place in Giva'at Haviva. Over 600 young Ma'ase programs' participants – Jews and Arabs, Druze and Bedouin, new immigrants and native born, from the periphery and the center, religious and secular –who operate in some 60 communities countrywide, attended the seminar. In light of recent events, the prevailing atmosphere of intolerance and absence of dialogue, such unmitigated encounter between the various groups composing Israeli society is rare and extremely important.

The seminar theme was "My place in Israeli society – examining identity and encounter of identities." The content of the workshops was developed by representatives of the various programs and Ma'ase staff. The participants met in mixed groups with two facilitators in Arabic and Hebrew. In the first session, participants defined the rules of the conversation in order to create a safe zone in which to engage in a respectful and tolerant discourse. While discussions arose in some groups about complex and painful topics, we feel that the participants came to know the "other," his pain and aspirations.



The current Israeli reality, of violence, hatred, fear and seclusion of each group unto itself, the mere occurrence of a mixed seminar that allows for mutually respectful dialogue, is a badge of honor to our programs' participants and a source of hope for a better future for us all.

The programs participants wrote a song in 4 languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, and English) to reflect this hope:

What could happen if we live in peace?  
Stop everything and live together,  
Let us all live a life of fellowship  
Get up and walk the path of peace  
All of us together for a better future  
Despite the differences we will overcome  
difficulties  
Let's dream together, let's try  
Together we can do something!

Thank you for your partnership,  
Ma'ase Center staff and program participants

