

פנימה
PNIMA **بنيما**
פתרונות ישראלים

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EQUAL FOR ALL

From the service crisis to
a guideline for renewal

Israeli service and volunteering -
Executive summary

PNIMA was established in 2016 to address the growing rifts and schisms in Israeli society. Its Executive Board, Israeli leaders representing all communities, came together to propose a [new Israeli agenda based on solidarity, tikkun and hope](#).

We have chosen issues at the heart of Israel's internal controversies. PNIMA's strategy of change shifts the debate from the sphere of superficial consensus to a sphere of practical solutions, fully utilizing in-depth processes of familiarity and dialogue, discussion of different ideologies and adopting new paradigms that promote social unity.

Among the issues PNIMA is addressing are those of religion and state, Jewish-Arab relations, the distribution of wealth, and cultural controversy. It is our belief that the forthcoming elections enable Israeli society to re-examine these painful core issues and heal the rifts. [This document addresses the issues of service in the IDF, which is one of the most prominent hotspots of contention](#).

The issue of service has been with us since the establishment of the State. The IDF was set up as "the people's army", and alongside its role as the main response to the new country's security needs, it has also played a role in the building of a society with a common vision. Its designation as a "people's army" expressed the need to bring together all the communities in the newly-forming nation. However, the expectation that all young people in Israel would participate in the various service settings never materialized.

[After 70 years of independence, only about half the people in the relevant age group serve](#). Moreover, following the ongoing rise in population alongside the evolution of the IDF into an advanced technological body, not everybody of the relevant age group is needed. Ever-growing parts of Israeli society do not see themselves as part of the "people's army", especially the younger members within the ultra-orthodox and Arab communities. They remain outside this public realm of Israeli life and are not part of the establishment circle of contributing and giving. However, Israel's controversy surrounding the question of service has focused exclusively on the issue of recruiting Yeshiva students into the IDF. [This long-standing controversy is dividing Israel and in an expression of the profound polarization within it](#).

The various initiatives to resolve this by the political establishment, including the setting up of civilian-national service and the Enlistment Law, has not enables certain populations to integrate into the service settings, which has only led to a widening

of the rift and a heightening of the controversy. The civilian-national service arrangement did, indeed, offer an alternative, mainly for girls in the religious-Zionist sector, and in recent years also for some Arab girls. However, national service has not become an alternative for all those who do not enlist.

[The distancing between the different communities in Israel has led to ignorance and alienation](#). Moreover, many communities have become fearful, anxious and often filled with hatred towards other communities. There is a sense that values that are sacred to one community are dismissed out of hand by a neighboring one. The ultra-orthodox community feels that Israeli citizens are not familiar with Torah studies and see Yeshiva students as 'shirkers'. Israelis believe that the ultra-orthodox do not share the burden of defending the country and discriminate between their own blood and the blood of those who serve. The Arab community is amazed by the desire to impose national service upon them, when their national identity is so complex. The Jewish majority is ready to give up on the Arabs, and not kindly.

[Every community in Israel has its own narrative, worldview and anxiety about change](#). During the process of building the guideline, we tried to be attentive to all narratives and let them all belong, but without giving up on the creation of a single shared solution for everyone. Our ultra-orthodox partners feel that the secular public does not see their faith and Torah study as a value that protects Israel. Our Arab partners feel that the word 'service' is threatening and suggests exclusion. Arab society wants to participate but without giving up their identity. The general public feels that it has to carry the burden while ever-growing groups are not partners in this journey of service. In light of this, the proposed guideline speaks in general terms that is not always pleasant to the Israeli ear, but makes way for an opportunity to engage in serious, precise and shared discourse to be conducted as this shared journey continues.

In a long and thorough process in which dozens of experts, spiritual and public leaders and field activists from all communities in Israel participated, we have constructed a new guideline of service, equal for all, that constitutes the model of a meta-strategic solution. This PNIMA guideline may serve as the model for solutions to other issues threatening the cohesion of Israeli society.



We are all partners

Every citizen in Israel will contribute in a way that benefits the various needs of society.



Adapted settings

Diverse channels of service and volunteering that allow every young adult to contribute in a meaningful setting suited to their lifestyle.



Israel's security needs are addressed

Diverse channels of service and volunteering that allow every young adult to contribute in a meaningful setting suited to their lifestyle.



Exceptions – proportionality and transparency

Proportional and transparent recognition according to clear and uniform parameters regarding the exceptions entitled to exemption from service due to excellence or in accordance with the needs of the country and of society.



High-quality management setup and investment in worthy volunteering infrastructures

Management via a government setup representing all communities and streams, in an effort to develop volunteering infrastructures.

Israeli service and volunteering - a new proposed guideline: equal for all.

The model below constitutes the essence of the new guideline for service and volunteering. The plan allows every citizen to fulfil the duty of service and volunteering in light of the above principles, while truly catering to the needs of the country and of society. It appropriately incentivizes the efforts the young adults make and creates new pathways to mobility, employment and social integration.

The guideline has three channels: IDF, Internal Security & Rescue, Education & Welfare. For each channel there are a range of jobs of different intensity. Certain tracks will enable young people advance into positions of management, training and leadership. The array of incentives will match these different positions while taking into consideration the level of intensity, the risk to life, the family situation and socioeconomic needs.

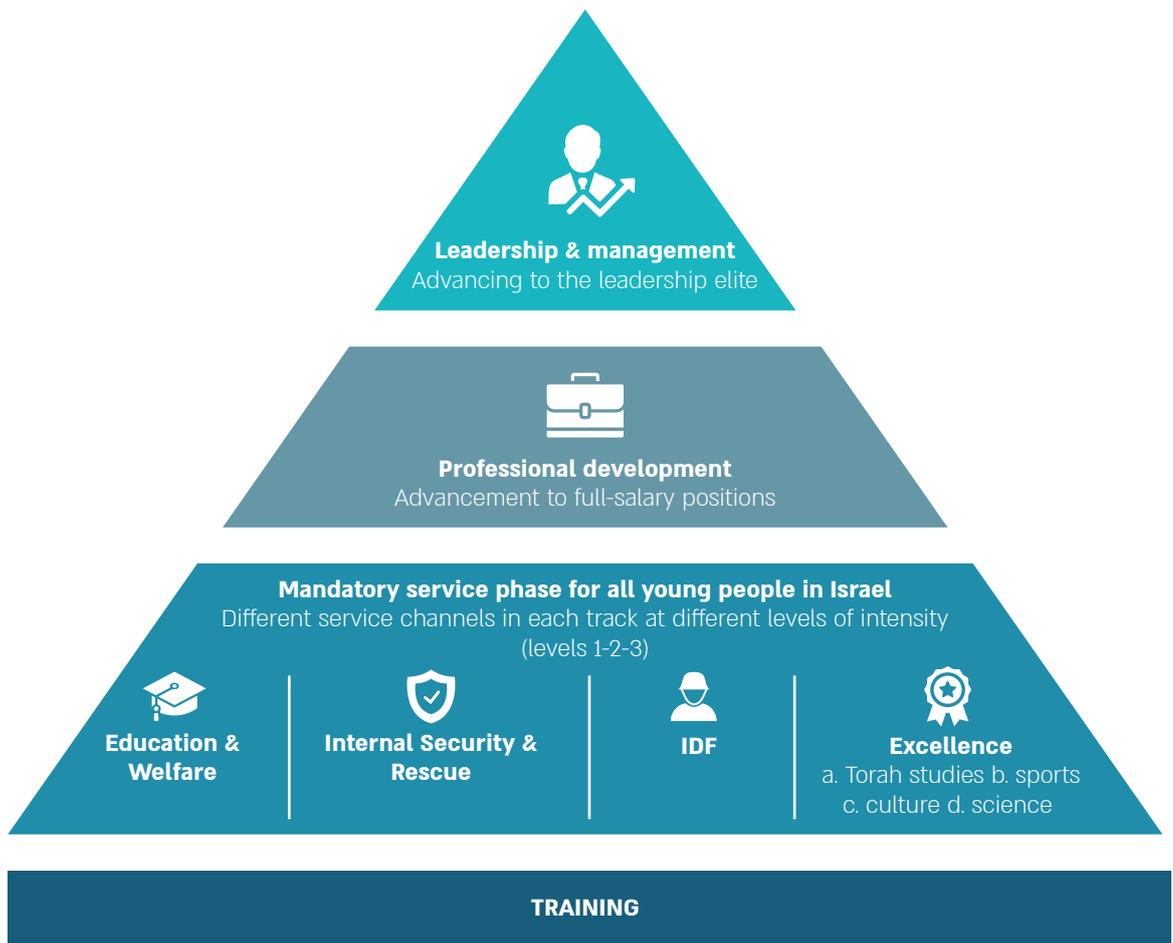


Figure 1: Service and volunteering pyramid



The economic significance of the guideline

The guideline was examined by the Aharon Institute headed by Prof. Zvi Eckstein and was found able to contribute significantly to the economy, in terms of both productivity and improving social services. Such service will contribute greatly to improving mobility, raise possible income levels and considerably reduce welfare and income assurance payments.

The main concept underlying this analysis is that service for all has economic potential and offers worthy alternatives to military service. This is because **service can be a means of developing human capital, imparting skills, increasing integration and trust in closed or excluded groups and connecting them to general society.** The combination of these two channels of influence indicates the possible contribution of service to raising the level of education, increasing employment, raising incomes and productivity and even causing changes in the family structure. All these can drive social and economic mobility and growth.

In order to realize this economic potential what is of the utmost importance is high-quality training at the start of each service and volunteering track that combines general human capital learning and soft skills. We estimate that such training will raise the cost of the service by some ILS 10,000 and that in terms of future salaries, this will yield a 4-6% return and thus is a worthwhile investment, covering costs, and proving that service and volunteering is a positive and cost-effective contribution.

If such training is provided, an initial cost-benefit analysis shows that service and volunteering indeed make a positive contribution; the total benefit pays back the cost by the end of the service and volunteering, or even before that, and the additional salaries pay back the additional costs of the training setup after about four years.

Legislation and the High Court

In September 2017, with a majority of eight out of nine judges, the High Court rejected Amendment 21 to the Security Service Law passed in November 2015. The High Court instructed the Knesset to find an arrangement that would augment equality among Israeli citizens in a graduated manner in an effort to lead meaningful social change, within one year of the verdict. The 20th Knesset passed a first reading of an amendment to the law, but the Knesset was then dispersed, also due to the controversy surrounding this law. The 21st Knesset was also dispersed within 30 days, and a government was not formed, among other things, because no compromise was reached on the issue of the Enlistment Law.

In anticipation of the 22nd Knesset, PNIMA recommends including a law of continuity or, if necessary, to reinstate Amendment 23 of the Defense Service Law, 2019 in the format proposed by the Ministry of Defense and the IDF, with no changes, as accepted by the Knesset first reading only. Immediately following this, we recommend halting the legislation process, establishing a public commission composed of representatives of the different parties sectors and communities



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