



**Unlocking Arab Youth Entrepreneurship Potential**  
An Evaluation of the INJAZ Al-Arab Company Program



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## [ Foreword ]

Now, at the start of 2013 and still feeling the aftershocks of the Arab Spring, we must stand up and confront the troubling realities that have come to characterize the development challenges facing Arab youth.

Phrases such as the '100 million youth challenge,' 25%+ youth unemployment, and the looming deadline of 2020 all serve as foreboding reminders of the unchecked hurdles that our young people face. The data indicates that Arab youth are not simply held back in their educational and professional development, but that they are often times severely limited in their right to economic opportunity and many are completely deprived of an economic future.

These figures have become hardwired in our heads, and for many of us they are repeated constantly in our boardroom presentations, publications and events. If anything, the Arab Spring has informed us that these numbers only begin to tell the story.

So what now?


The need for action is at an all-time high and there must be recognition of models that work. This report begins to shed light on one model approach, rooted in a unique school of thought that offers promising results and replicability. Entrepreneurship, more specifically an education system rooted in entrepreneurship, is a globally tried and tested approach to creating a more productive, team-oriented and promising cohort of young people. The entrepreneurial skill set is more than business. It spreads across sectors and competencies and generates a more employable human being.

As a first step, this report is a call to action for Arab governments and private sector leaders to scale up entrepreneurship education at a time of grave unemployment.

We would like to recognize the leadership of Professor Fernando Reimers, the regional expertise of Paul Dyer, the research, analysis and project management of Maria Elena Ortega and Suzanne Lettrick. We would also like to thank Jamil Wyne for writing and advising in the development of the report. Most importantly, we would like to thank participants and alumni of the INJAZ Company Program who have been involved in contributing. Without them this report would not have been possible.



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Without them, this report and the master report supporting it would not have seen the light of day. We are most grateful for their time and efforts, which directly impacted not just this project, but the quality that we seek to achieve in the future.

Note: All data and findings on pages 1-10 are taken from "Entrepreneurship Education in the Middle East" Fernando Reimers, Paul Dyer and Maria Elena Ortega, August 2012 and subsequent findings on pg. 11-14 is taken from the report "Outcomes of the INJAZ al-Arab Company Program in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region: An Alumni Perspective, Suzanne Lettrick, January, 2012."

## [ About the Authors ]



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Suzanne Lettrick, Ed.M. is a social entrepreneur and future of learning consultant based in Northern California. She strives to develop innovative pathways for youth to learn, work, solve problems, collaborate, and create. Suzanne recently filed a patent for a mechanism that will enable any learner to engage in practical, real world forms of learning in more accountable and creditable ways. After completing a thesis envisioning the public learning spaces of the future, and graduating with her second masters in education at Harvard University in May 2011, Suzanne co-developed the first Middle East and North Africa entrepreneurship education policy proposal. She is founder of The Global Education and Action Network (GLEAN), providing custom-designed research expeditions and advocacy to teenagers studying global issues and cultures. Her most recent role is as founding partner of The Mind, Brain, Education Services Network, LLC (MBESN), a full service consulting and development company solving complex global learning issues via the interdisciplinary lenses of neuroscience, psychology, mind-body research, technology and education.



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"It's a dream come true; it's an adventure that I've always wanted to live. The program taught us a lot of things like working in teams, responsibility, listening to others, solving conflicts in a peaceful way, accepting others' opinions, and that making a company is not a difficult thing, it just needs managing and planning."

-Moroccan participant



# [ Executive Summary ]

By 2020, between 80 and 100 million jobs must be created in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) just to maintain current unemployment rates. The window of opportunity to meet these demands is small and new jobs must be created at a pace never seen before.

Simultaneously, the capabilities required for success in the 21st century are not taught by Arab schools and universities. On top of this, governments, the main employers in the past, cannot absorb the growing numbers of job seekers, while the private sector is not expanding fast enough to keep pace with population growth. The result is a divide between education systems and employers in the region, one marked by unprecedented unemployment rates and loss of economic prosperity for millions of young people as well as the region as a whole.

With traditional employers offering few opportunities to young people, Arab youth must take on the role of job seekers AND job creators. Yet to effectively assume this responsibility, they require skill sets that are both relevant to the current labor market and also enable them to start their own businesses.

Innovative educational programs founded on entrepreneurial skills and mindsets bridge the gap between education systems and the labor market. With the need to create new jobs and more competitive skill sets at an all-time high in the Arab world, these programs are now more essential than ever. INJAZ Al-Arab has been implementing entrepreneurship educational programs throughout MENA since 1999. INJAZ provides Arab students with entrepreneurship training, opportunities to develop soft and occupational skills, and the financial literacy required to start and run their own businesses as well as become more well-rounded and employable.

This report is the first critical assessment of the educational models that must be employed to ensure that young people in our region have access to a bright economic future. With the help of over 1,000 youth, two studies were conducted to better understand the impact of the INJAZ Company Program – an educational program that takes high school and university students through the process of starting a business.

## Details Of The Two Studies

1. Quantitative Assessment based on perceptions of 1,454 youth from 6 countries
2. Qualitative Study of 61 Company Program alumni from 9 countries

**“This experience gave me a lot because I gained team spirit. I also learned to be patient, responsible, helpful, understanding and got rid of my shyness by working in groups.”**

-Moroccan participant

The evaluations each explore how young Arab talent can be harnessed and maximized through entrepreneurship education. Globally, entrepreneurship has been tried and tested as not just a method for creating businesses, but as a teaching tool to develop more dynamic and productive human beings. It not only gives individuals the skills to build businesses, but also the confidence and core competencies to increase their employability and potential to effectively contribute to the labor market. Youth need practical learning experiences through which they feel more empowered and receive the skills needed to enhance their own lives. Some of the primary findings of the studies are as follows:

## Quantitative Highlights

- After participating in the Company Program, over 74% of the students feel more empowered to take a leadership role in the workforce in the future.
- Over 80% of the students say they understand the importance of managing their finances. The majority say that they have further developed their educational goals.
- Between 67% and 89% of participants say they have developed their career goals.
- Over 70% say that they now feel more confident about their ability to successfully compete in the workforce in the future.
- Over 63% say they now know more about entrepreneurship, and over 60% say they are now more interested in starting their own business.

## Qualitative Highlights

After completing the Company Program, 33% said they wanted to start their own companies and a high percentage of students said they had either obtained or enhanced the following skills:

1. Leadership (80%)
2. People skills (80%)
3. Teamwork skills (72%)
4. Problem solving skills (57%)
5. Confidence (54%)

Shahab al-Shahabi, 17, from Qatar: “[INJAZ] is teaching us when we are young how to be successful people and how to build a future. That is difficult for Arab youth, but [INJAZ] helps all students. I am one of them.”

Alwaleed Alyami, 17, from Saudi Arabia: “Yes, I have become more ambitious. Maybe one day I will become the Minister of Health. I am hoping that one day I will make a change in the world.”

Also important to note is that overall, most students felt that they had gained more initiative and self-motivation, critical mindsets in both the job search and entrepreneurial process in the Arab World. Given these findings, this study makes two contributions:

1. Rather than prolong the conversation on education and employment challenges, INJAZ Al Arab, Professor Fernando Reimers of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Citi Foundation seek to promote an entrepreneurship education model.
2. This report offers empirical data on the improvements to youth mindsets and skill sets as a result of the INJAZ Company Program.

What results is a set of encouraging data in support of a replicable formula that must be scaled throughout the region.



## [ The Backdrop & Current Economic Context ]

Over the past few decades, the Arab world has gone through a dramatic demographic transition. In turn, the region's youth population has surged. In fact, over the past decade, the Arab world's labor force has grown by an unprecedented annual rate of nearly 3.3%, with more than 3 million new individuals entering the job market every year.

Today, those aged 15 to 24 make up nearly 20% of the region's population, while those under the age of 25 make up more than 53%. The sheer size of this youth population has put intense pressures on the region's educational systems and labor markets, as these youth seek out opportunities that enable them to start their careers. By 2011, in the wake of the global financial crisis and the instability seen at the beginning of the Arab Spring, nearly 6 out of every 10 unemployed individuals in the region are between the ages of 15 and 24, and the average youth unemployment rate is four times that of adults. Moreover, unemployed youth in the region can expect their job search to last an extended period of time.

In this context, the region's economies have failed to create the economic opportunities for youth, while Arab educational systems have failed overall in preparing young people for the labor market. Schools and universities in the region often focus on the dissemination (and memorization) of facts, rather than the application of such knowledge to analysis or to collaborative problem solving. Little focus is placed on the development of creative thinking or soft skills like leadership, teamwork and communication. More tangibly, youth enter the transition from school to work without the competitive edge needed to secure gainful employment in a tight labor market.

Poor labor market outcomes for Arab youth are rooted in the inability of the educational system to prepare adequately for working life. Indeed, this gap between the skills provided by young job seekers and those sought by the region's employers is often raised by representatives of the private sector when defending their resistance to hiring youth.

Labor market participation rates are quite low for young women in the region, at an average 21% compared with young male participation rates of 52%. Those women who are engaged in the labor market are particularly vulnerable to unemployment. On average, the unemployment rate among young women in the region is nearly 38%, or twice that of young men. It is important to note that given the conservative nature of many countries in the region, women often face resistance within their families to their working and they have fewer "culturally appropriate" job options open to them than do young men. As such, when they do seek to work, they are often competing with a relatively large number of other women for scarce positions in a limited number of sectors, such as education and government administrative work. In this context, the fact that labor market participation rates are so low while unemployment is so high suggests a high degree of disguised unemployment. Although women may opt out of the labor market out of choice or familial expectations, they may be staying out of the labor force because of the perception that there simply are no jobs available to them.

According to the Arab Human Capital Challenge, only 54% of interviewed CEOs across the region feel that the educational system provides graduates with adequate skills, while less than half see that there are enough graduates with those skills to fill needed positions.

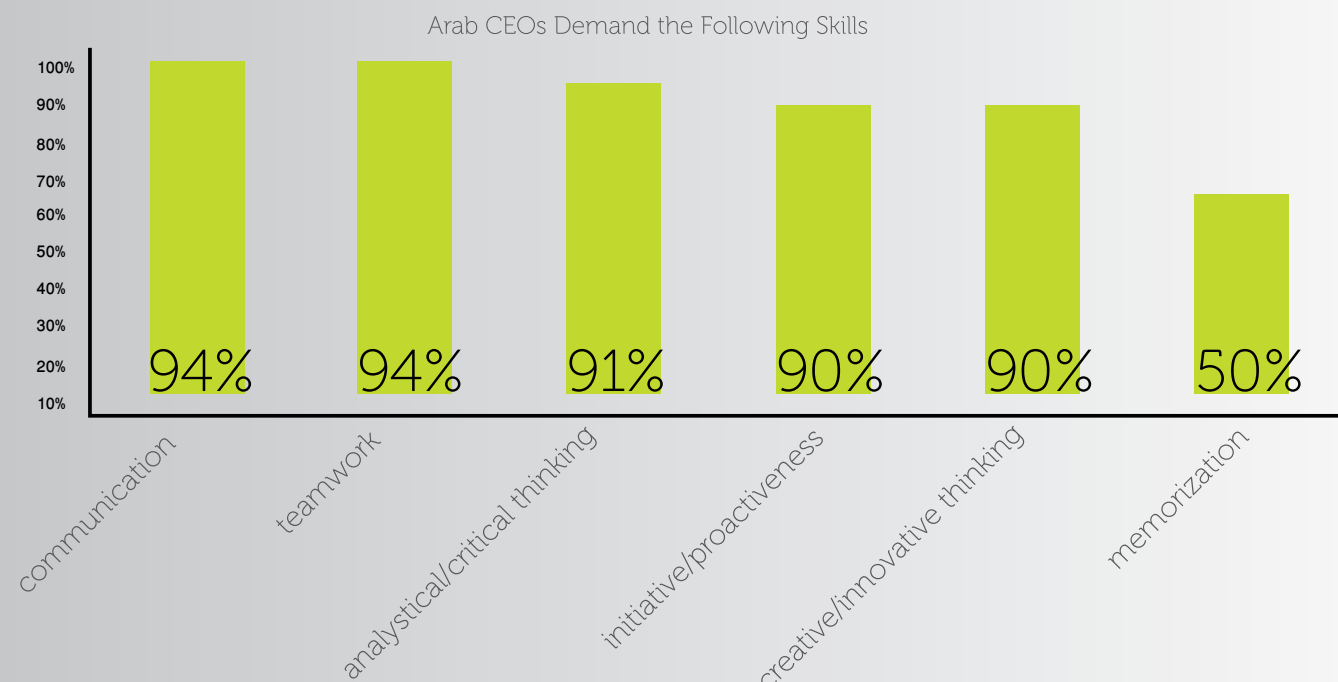
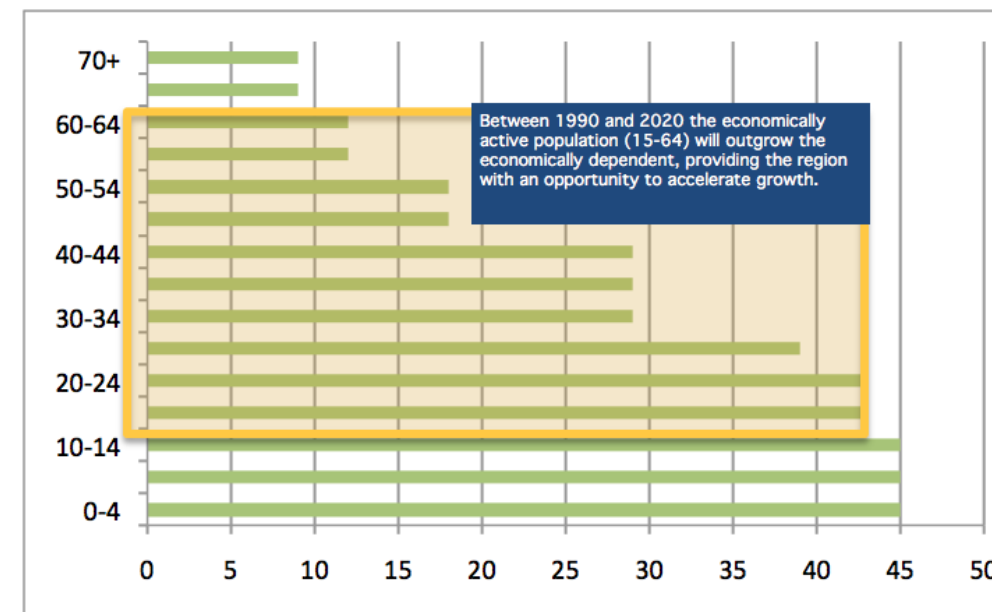


Figure 1: Population Growth in Arab World

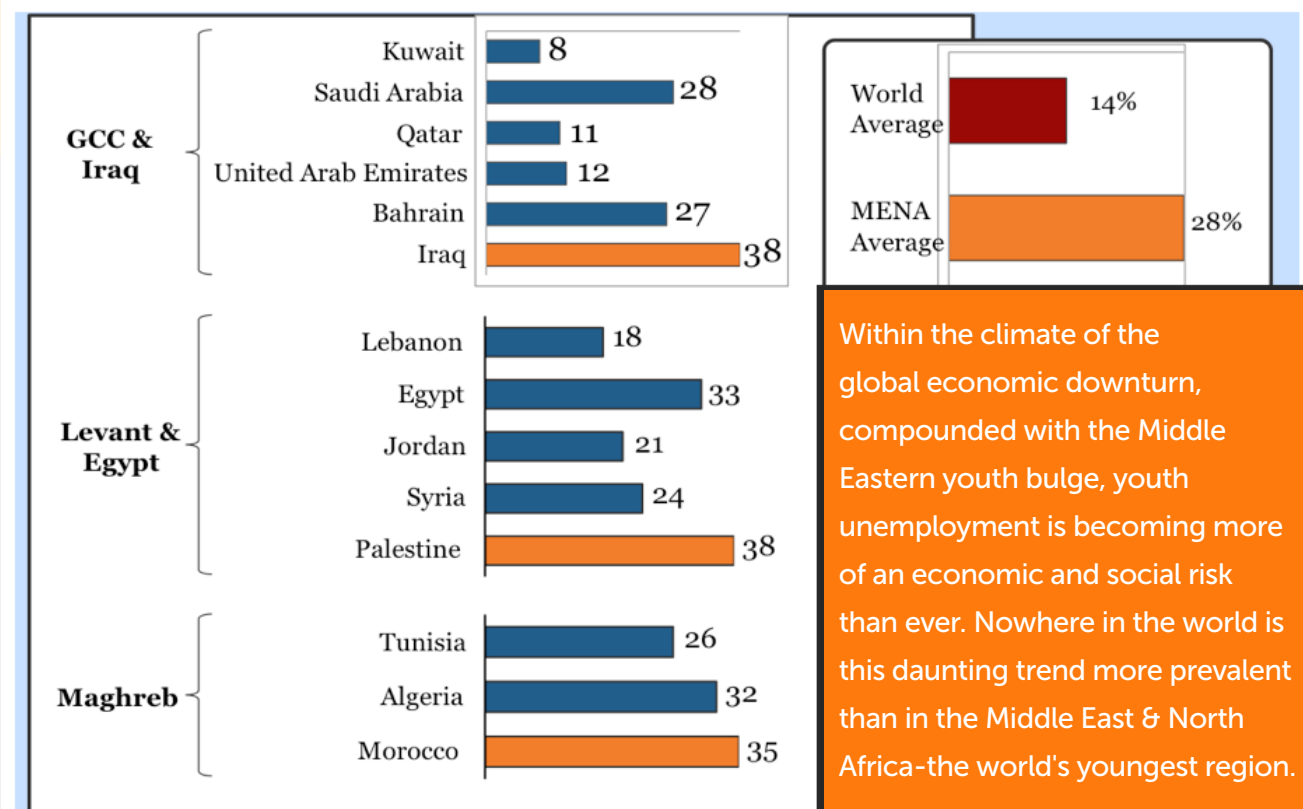


Over the next 10 years the Arab labor market will receive 90 million new entrants.

Source: International Finance Corporation, *E4E Education for Employment: Realizing Arab Youth Potential*, 2011.

In particular, these CEOs voice concerns about the weaknesses of graduates in regard to soft skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership. They are interested more in skills that enable workers to be self-motivated, flexible and innovative in the workplace than in any particular basis of knowledge, and stress that these are the areas in which the educational system is weakest.

Youth Unemployment in Arab World



Source: World Bank



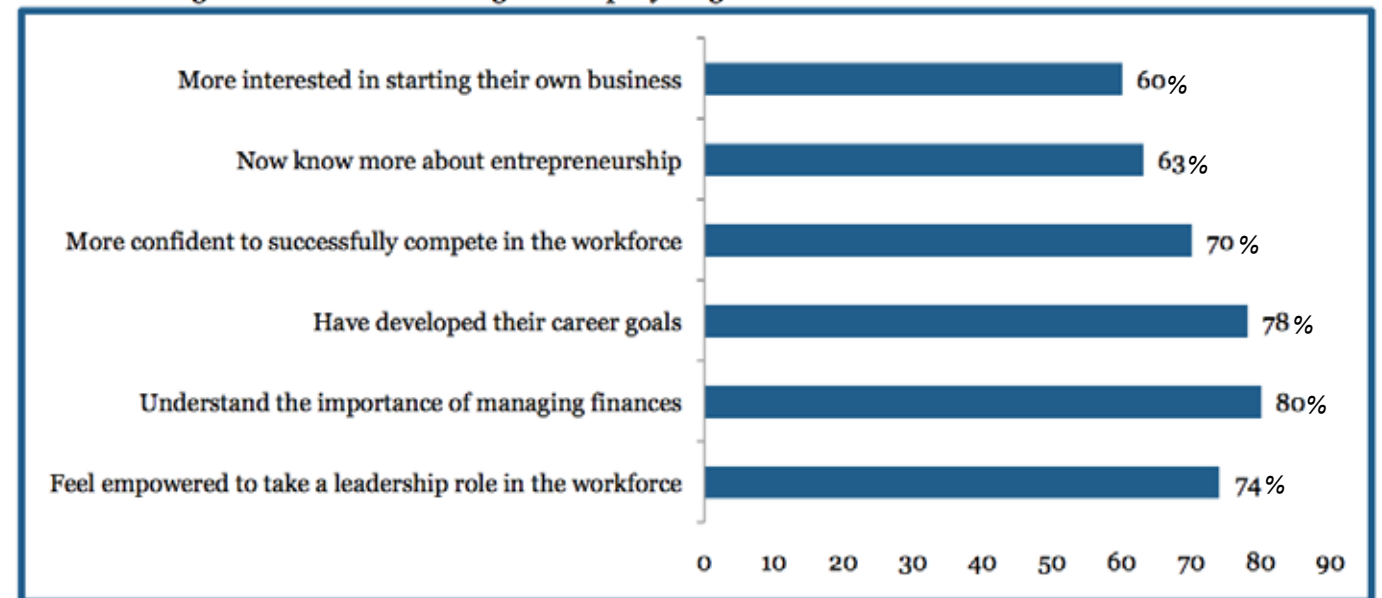


INJAZ Al-Arab is an organization that promotes entrepreneurship education training in the Arab world. Working under the umbrella of Junior Achievement Worldwide, INJAZ initially started in Jordan in 1999. In 2004, its founders expanded their approach to include the entire Arab world and since then the organization has grown to include 15 countries across the region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Pakistan. Since 2004, over 1 million students have participated in the various programs offered by INJAZ.

INJAZ seeks to provide young students with a broad base of entrepreneurship training opportunities aimed both at developing the basic business skills and financial literacy they need to start and run their own businesses as well as softer job-ready skills that are increasingly in demand by the private sector.



**Shifting Youth Mindsets following the Company Program:**



ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST - MEASURING PROGRAM IMPACT: Professor Fernando Reimers, Paul Dyer, and Maria Elena Ortega (Harvard Graduate School of Education), August 2012



# [ Entrepreneurship Education in the Middle East Measuring Program Impact ]

Professor Fernando Reimers (Harvard Graduate School of Education), Paul Dyer (Middle East Youth Initiative) and Maria Elena Ortega (Harvard Graduate School of Education), August 2012

The Company Program is the banner program among INJAZ's offerings. During the Company Program, student groups (consisting of about 25 students) work together, with the support of a volunteer from the private sector, to develop a business idea and subsequently a business plan. Following completion of the business plan, students work with the local business community to design and produce their identified product or service and develop a marketing plan before selling their product within the community. At the end of the program, students close the business, liquidating the company's assets and compete in national and regional competitions amongst their peers in the program.

The program exposes students to the fundamental elements of business to spark a greater interest in entrepreneurship and also hones students' leadership, teamwork, negotiation and communication skills. As such, the experiential approach is designed to improve each participant's ability to work with a team, learning in the process how to effectively communicate their own desires while negotiating toward a common goal.

In general, Company Program students emerge with a heightened awareness and appreciation of the entrepreneurial process. Though the overall levels of knowledge are low before participating in the program, findings of the evaluation in 6 MENA countries - Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi, UAE, Egypt - are consistent: Participants (average age between 16 and 17) gain extensive knowledge of entrepreneurship and financial management while also displaying higher aspirations for themselves and others, soft and business skills development and a heightened interest in business creation.

*"It was an unforgettable experience. It helped me to fulfill my dream of establishing a company. It gave me self-confidence. We learned that the secret to success is to believe in what you do and team work."*  
– Moroccan participant

Students who completed the program have very positive attitudes towards the INJAZ program in terms of its aid in developing their leadership skills, confidence and soft skills. In most countries they evaluate the program and all of its components in very positive ways.

## How Do Students in the Company Program Describe the Effects of the Program?

- After participating in the Company Program, over 74% of the students feel more empowered to take a leadership role in the workforce in the future.
- Over 80% of the students say they understand the importance of managing their finances. The majority say that they have further developed their educational goals.
- Between 67% and 89% of participants say they have developed their career goals.
- Over 70% say that they now feel more confident about their ability to successfully compete in the workforce in the future.
- Over 63% say they now know more about entrepreneurship, and over 60% say they are now more interested in starting their own business.

"It was an unforgettable experience. It helped me to fulfill my dream of establishing a company. It gave me self-confidence. We learned that the secret to success is to believe in what you do and team work."

– Moroccan participant

Most students also say that the program helped them develop the capacity to innovate as well as useful critical thinking and business skills. Most students say they also developed or strengthened the following competencies and practices:

- Initiative and self-motivation
- Leadership
- Problem solving skills
- Decision making processes
- Communication and negotiation with others
- Public speaking skills
- Capacity for creative thought



## [ Aspirations, Views of Self & Worldviews ]

Students spoke excitedly and assertively about how the program helped them to develop stronger initiative and motivation. In fact, most students thought that people can get ahead by working hard in Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt, a sentiment that can mold a more adventurous and contributory individual.

**"It was an amazing experience. I learned how to take responsibility for my actions, interact with my team, self-confidence, trusting the team, be optimistic, recognition of my mistakes, and thinking about the others before myself."**

– Moroccan participant

Additionally, more students believe that women can play an important role in the success of a business in Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Egypt after participating in the Company Program. This finding is important within the current Arab context, where the workforce is male dominated and few women work in the private sector. The results suggest that through entrepreneurship education this particular cohort of females is open to private sector employment and has effectively demonstrated their value to their male counterparts.

**"It helped me become a stronger person who is not afraid to express her opinion in public. I can express myself in a more creative way."**

– Lebanese participant

Most students found it valuable or very valuable to work in teams, noting how they had a higher appreciation of other people's views, attributing these mindset shifts to the Company Program's collaborative environment.

### Perceptions On Entrepreneurship

After participating in the program, more students believe that there is potential for an entrepreneur to be successful in Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In fact, a greater percentage of students indicated that they had an idea for a possible business after participating in the Company Program in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt. As such, many students would prefer to work for themselves rather than someone else, would like to use their skills effectively, would like to create and develop new ideas, would like to resolve important social problems, believe that they can earn more money running their own business, would like to create jobs and foster economic growth, and would like to become famous entrepreneurs.

In terms of obtaining support for their business ideas, about half of the students indicate that they could access funding for an entrepreneurial venture from their nuclear family or from a bank, and around a quarter of them say they would receive support from a government grant or from their extended family. Few would obtain those funds from a friend.

More students also believe, after participating in the program, that entrepreneurs create jobs for others in Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while a greater percentage of students believe that entrepreneurs contribute to the economic development of the country after participating in Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

Perhaps most importantly, many students noted their confidence in successfully completing a job interview and in their ability to be hired in the private sector following the Company Program. These outcomes are particularly crucial as they suggest youth mindset shifts away from public sector employment and also demonstrate how entrepreneurship education can lead to both new enterprises and new opportunities for job matching in the private sector.

## [ Encouraging Feedback on the Program ]

**"It's a dream come true; it's an adventure that I've always wanted to live."**

The program taught us a lot of things like working in teams, responsibility, listening to others, solving conflicts in a peaceful way, accepting the other's opinion, and that making a company is not a difficult thing, it just needs managing and planning."

– Moroccan participant

**"The program helped me to improve my communication skills, manage disputes, and respect the opinions of others. It helped me to be courageous and to be able to confront anyone. I think the program should give others the opportunity to participate by expanding to the whole country."**

– Moroccan participant

**"The program was a great help as I ran a project and a full staff. Now I can also do that from the beginning of any project."**

– Saudi Arabian participant

**"INJAZ's Company Program helped us in all of life's aspects. It made us think about the future more seriously and made us insist on achieving what we dream about."**

– Jordanian participant

**"It helped us in building our personalities and self-confidence, and taught us how to express our ideas clearly."**

– Jordanian participant





The findings of this evaluation are remarkably consistent: Youth participating in the INJAZ Company Program have very high levels of access to entrepreneurs in their lives, medium levels of knowledge of basic entrepreneurial concepts. They also have very high and positive aspirations, views of self and others, self-efficacy and interest in business creation, and favorable attitudes towards entrepreneurship and business.

The evidence in this study is very consistent across the various domains examined. The regularity of these changes in the viewpoints and knowledge of students before and after participation in the program leads us to conclude that participating in the INJAZ Company Program has positive effects for the students.

Given that school systems are not currently helping students develop some of these skills, and given that these skills are highly valued by employers, programs such as the INJAZ Company Program are valuable educational opportunities for students in the region. A policy challenge is whether and how these programs can be scaled up to serve a larger and more diverse group of students.

This report, while limited, suggests that the road ahead to identify ways to help youth in the Arab world to become architects of their own lives and contributing members of their communities will gain much from expanding options for the kind of experiences that INJAZ makes possible to students who participate in the Company Program.

## [ Success Story 1: Shuq Masri & ESCO, Palestine ]

Challenge, future, and structure are the three words Shuq Masri used to describe INJAZ. Shuq Masri is a 17-year-old Palestinian university student and the CEO of ESCO (Electrical Solutions Company), INJAZ's 2011-2012 Regional Company Program Competition winner.

While working as students with full course loads and limited funding, Shuq and her ESCO colleagues invented B-Touch, a technology that allowed home owners to turn off their electrical appliances when they were out of the house. The technology was sophisticated for high school students – any time someone left their home and forgot to turn off a heater, fan refrigerator or other appliance, they simply called their voicemail and typed in a code, which triggered the appliance to shut down. To develop the software that served as B-Touch's backbone, Shuq and her colleagues recruited a programmer and also worked closely with the Etisalat Telecom Company. Along the way, the young entrepreneurs also received mentoring from Emad Elewi, Treasurer at the Palestinian Telecommunication Company.

Before starting ESCO, Shuq says that she had been waiting for years to enroll in the Company Program. She had attended several INJAZ courses when she was younger, but never had the opportunity to create her own business. Now, following the success of B-Touch, Shuq has decided to continue running the business and is also mentoring young aspiring entrepreneurs in her country.

Shuq's story can serve as an inspiration for other students who want to venture into the entrepreneurship space. Her efforts and success demonstrate that young people can assume the role of both students and entrepreneurs and that their venture can indeed have an impact.

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The qualitative study was carried out over a period of two months during which 61 Company Program alumni from 9 countries were interviewed. The results of this portion of the study suggest that marked changes had taken place among many of the youth as a result of the program.

### 1. The Company Program Promotes A Greater Awareness Of The Future

The first finding of the qualitative study is that the INJAZ Company Program triggers greater clarity and dedication to participants' own economic futures - 34% of respondents state that for the first time they were able to decide on a university major aligned with their interests.

"People who entered the Company Program seem more aware of what life might offer."

-Gaelle Feghali, 17, Lebanon

After participating in the Company Program, 33% of alumni state a strong interest in going down the path of the entrepreneur and starting a business.

"At first, I didn't want to do any business in my life. I just wanted to be a doctor. When INJAZ came into my life, I thought to myself, I want a business."

-Mohammed Sadeq Al-Salman, 17, Kuwait

### 2. The Company Program Hones Soft Skills

The second finding is that the Company Program encourages the development of soft skills amongst participants. Alumni highlighted a range of skills that had either been discovered or were further strengthened after participating in the program. 60% of the top twenty skills identified belonged to the soft skills or "21st century skills" category.

"The Company Program really helped me because I got to know I had lots of hidden skills."

-Nada Hasweh, 17, Palestine

Of these skills, both leadership and people skills came out on top at 80% each, with teamwork at 72%. Problem solving and confidence were also highlighted at 57% and 54% respectively.

"I was really shocked because I didn't know I could handle all of this stress and keep myself together and keep my team together."

-Reem Al-Khalid, 17, United Arab Emirates

### 3. The Company Program Helps To Develop Occupational Skills

The third finding is that the Company Program helps develop occupational skills (also known as business skills). Of the top twenty skills highlighted by alumni as further developed or strengthened skills, 40% belong to the occupational skills category.

"The way we were taught in INJAZ was totally different, because we were asked to actually apply what we learned. At school we memorize, at INJAZ we learned through application."

-Shuq Masri, 16, Ramallah

Sales (59%) marketing (43%) and networking skills (43%) emerged as the three most important occupational skills either improved or developed during the program. These valuable skills were closely followed by business management (31%), finance (28%), professionalism (25%), entrepreneurship (21%) and team management (20%).

RecycloBekia started as the idea of several Tanta University students who wanted to launch a company in an industry that did not even exist in Egypt. A year later, this Arab recycling company has 23 employees, a strategic partner in Hong Kong, its own factory in Egypt, two angel investors and is worth \$400,000.

RecycloBekia is the first e-waste recycling company in Egypt. The company started with \$1,000, and sent all of their materials - used electronics, CDs and other tech waste - to a factory in China to be recycled. Then USAID connected RecycloBekia to two angel investors, Dr. Khaled Ismail - Intel managing director, CEO of SysDsoft and one of the board directors at Orascom Telecom- and Mr. Hussien Elsheikh - Proceed Advisory LTD. The angel investors signed 1 million EGP to RecycloBekia, and in return they received 40% of the company's shares. The partnership agreement stated that if the target goals are reached after 3 years, 10% of the shares will be returned to RecycloBekia free of charge.

Yet their quick rise has not been without challenges. Mostafa Hemdan, CEO of RecycloBekia, says that working with such a young team - all students - with no business experience (including himself) was the largest hurdle RecycloBekia had to overcome. Hemdan says the only way he and his team were able to move beyond this challenge was for them to collectively "think like entrepreneurs". They were told by many that starting a new business in the aftermath of the Egyptian Revolution was difficult, but attempting to start a new industry was impossible. As they could not find any local experts in E-Waste, the RecycloBekia team worked without reference points and mentors. However, what drove them was the will to not simply create a project in the INJAZ Company Program, but to launch a real company.

This same drive is seen in the attitude Hemdan and his colleagues display as they continue to lead RecycloBekia. To this day, all of the company's managers remain students still enrolled in university. They are united by a common mentality that Hemdan captures in his mantra - "We all think we want to work for someone, but we need to think that we can work for ourselves."

Like their entrepreneurial peers in other INJAZ programs, the RecycloBekia team proves that not only can young students become entrepreneurs, but they can also take ownership over their own economic futures.

## [ Success Story 2: Mostafa Hemdan, RecycloBekia ]





#### 4. Practical Engaged Training Allows Important Soft Skills To Flourish

The fourth finding is that practical training is critical to soft skills development. 82% of alumni note the value of practical training as part of a comprehensive education.

**“I believe that with the skills (developed during the Company Program) you can do anything”**

- Abdulsalam Shaker, 23, Jordan

The Company Program offers a practical, fully engaged platform which not only compliments traditional, theory-based education, but paves the way for the development of important hard and soft skills.

#### 5. Participants Emerge From The Company Program With Clearer Visions Of Their Roles In Society

Many participants leave the program with a specific mindset on how they might contribute to the nation or region and fill a gap in society. 56% of participants state that they wish to contribute to the region through business, while 54% would like their business to fill a gap in areas like the environment, poverty, healthcare, education and elderly care.

**“Yes, I have become more ambitious. Maybe one day I will become the Minister of Health. I am hoping that one day I will make a change in the world.”**

-Alwaleed Alyami, 17, Saudi Arabia

39% of participants on the other hand shared plans to hire a range of different employees, including hiring marginalized people.

Finally, 34% of participants believe that passion is the key to both commitment and success.

#### 6. The Company Program Allows Students To Begin Reversing Societal Stigmas

48% of participants shared anecdotes demonstrating a fear of failure and making mistakes while many participants also spoke of women’s limited role in society, including within the workplace. Additional roadblocks were students’ recognition that in general their societies rarely saw them as active economic contributors and that they were not commonly encouraged to follow their passions.

These barriers to success also prevent youth from pursuing their entrepreneurial passions. The Company Program helps to overcome these hurdles by providing them with an open platform to explore, experiment and imagine.

#### 7. Students Demand Follow-Up Support After The Company Program:

Many alumni demanded follow-up support to aid them in the entrepreneurial process. Specifically, students called for the following services:

##### 1. Funding (43%)

Alumni particularly wanted connections to investors and were open to direct funding from INJAZ or connections to other potential sources of funding.

##### 2. Guidance (38%)

Alumni want connections from INJAZ for incubator opportunities, locations in which to run their businesses, good employees, as well as real world learning experiences with business leaders.

##### 3. A Comprehensive Ecosystem Of Support (35%)

Alumni recognized the need for an INJAZ-led ecosystem in which youth entrepreneurs are nurtured and they have access to private sector mentors.

Two months after the Egyptian Revolution, entrepreneurs Bassem El-Hady and Bahy Aboelegg started Kijamii, a Cairo-based social media company that is driven by the passion and energy of its young founders.

Several years prior, while in university, Bassem and Bahy had enrolled in the INJAZ Company Program. They thrived while working alongside classmates, and their student enterprise won the INJAZ Egypt company competition and placed 3rd overall at the pan-Arab regional completion. Bassem says that this experience “inaugurated them into the world of entrepreneurship”. Bahy echoes a similar sentiment, stating that before INJAZ he had no intention of starting a business, but after going through the process of building a team and a product from scratch he became hooked. During this period Bassem and Bahy were on a journey of self-discovery, and as they delved deeper and deeper into their project they unearthed their passion. More importantly, they discovered that they could spend their lives pursuing what they loved, a realization that gave birth to Kijamii.

Along the way the Kijamii team has faced a series of challenges. They received little support from their community, with people often telling them they were too young to start a business. The government offered them little to no support or information. Accounting, legal, and registration procedures were vague, and without anyone to help they risked a misstep that could put their entire venture in jeopardy. They also sacrificed countless nights and weekends, virtually giving up their social lives in the interest of growing and sustaining their business.

Despite these challenges, Kijamii has become a success. Since its inception the company has grown to a team of 12 employees. It develops social media tools and experiences for high-profile clients such as Coca-Cola, Schweppes, UNWomen, and the British Council in Egypt.

Beyond Kijamii and Bassem has used his experience as an entrepreneur to explore other activities, such as co-founding TedX Cairo and speaking at the world-renowned Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Oxford.

Despite their success, the Kijamii family has remained close to the young entrepreneur community in Egypt. Bassem sees a need to continue a dialogue about entrepreneurship with today’s youth and encourages them to focus on and believe in their passions. Today both he and Bahy engage with youth through INJAZ and other programs.

Both are excited not only about their company, but also about the dramatic changes occurring in Egypt’s entrepreneurship ecosystem. Bassem and Bahy feel that mindsets are shifting just as resources are becoming more abundant. In the middle of it all, they are inspiring entrepreneurs, both young and old, to follow their passions.

## [ Success Story 3: Bassem El Hady & Bahy Aboelegg – Kijamii ]







## [ Conclusion ]

Across the board the message from Company Program participants is that a change had taken place. The evaluation strongly suggests that participants emerge from the program with good knowledge of entrepreneurship and financial management, higher aspirations for themselves as well as others, improved or acquired soft and occupational skills, greater self efficacy, a deeper appreciation toward women in the workforce and a heightened interest in business creation. 21st century skills such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving were either further improved or developed as a result of the Company Program.

Against the backdrop of weakened political and economic systems, youth simply need to feel empowered and capable of taking control over their lives. Company program graduates exemplify this very mindset. However, there must be other mechanisms and support entities in place to guarantee that young people have adequate room to exercise this empowerment and maximize their potential.

A healthy entrepreneurship ecosystem with young entrepreneurs at its core must be developed, and Arab youth must be fully supported as they strive to fulfill dreams based on their own interests, values and goals. Education systems throughout MENA must be reformed and entrepreneurship education must be integrated at the primary through tertiary levels. Teachers should be fully engaged and more entrepreneurship and financial literacy programs should be promoted throughout the region.

The Company Program and similar initiatives should not be seen as a substitute to reform and active private sector engagement, but a model that must be implemented and scaled at the national level. INJAZ programs across the board rely on careful coordination with government ministries and local private sectors, serving as a nexus point where the various stakeholders can contribute their respective expertise in the best interest of youth. Yet without holistically integrating this and other models into national curricula, impact will be limited. Only with full public and private buy-in will we begin to see across-the-board empowerment of our region's greatest asset – our youth.



Empowering young people to learn about enterprise creation is a cornerstone of Citi Foundation's focus on youth livelihoods – the survey results show the impact this type of intervention is having on youth in the region. It is tremendously encouraging.

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