



# **Mustaqbali Career Mentorship Program**

Impact Assessment (Pilot Phase) - 2018

Executive Summary



## **Table of Contents**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>PREFACE</i> .....                                  | 2 |
| <i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</i> .....                          | 2 |
| <i>MUSTAQBALI PROGRAM</i> .....                       | 3 |
| I. Program Description .....                          | 3 |
| II. Local Context .....                               | 3 |
| <i>IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF MUSTAQBALI PROGRAM:</i> ..... | 3 |
| I. Study Framework .....                              | 3 |
| II. Survey Design .....                               | 4 |
| III. Pilot Implementation .....                       | 4 |
| <i>SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS</i> .....               | 5 |
| I. Feedback on Mustaqbali .....                       | 5 |
| II. Behavioral Outcomes .....                         | 5 |
| III. Educational and Career Outcomes .....            | 5 |
| <i>SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS</i> .....               | 7 |
| <i>Appendix 1: The Kirkpatrick model</i> .....        | 8 |



## **PREFACE**

In 2018, Alnahda Program for Research launched a study of the Mustaqbali Career Mentorship Program (Mustaqbali) to determine the extent of the program's impact on its participants. As part of Alnahda Society's historical commitment to empower marginalized groups, especially women, Mustaqbali program has been offered to daughters of Alnahda's beneficiaries since 2011 with the objective of preparing them for their academic and professional pursuits.

Through research and impact assessments, Alnahda works to improve the design of its social development programs, such as Mustaqbali, and support advocacy for better policies that target women and low-income households. This summary will detail the findings of the pilot phase of an impact assessment, which aimed to inform the design of a full-scale Mustaqbali randomized controlled trial and testing the assessment tools that will be implemented on future program participants going forward. Accordingly, the pilot phase was conducted only on women who have already graduated from Mustaqbali, compared to their peers who had qualified for the program but didn't participate.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The pilot study on the Mustaqbali program was implemented by Alnahda Program for Research in collaboration with the Mustaqbali program team. The research team included Jawaher Al Sudairy, Chaza Abou Daher and Leen AlHajjar, as well as an affiliate researcher, Sarah Mousa, from Harvard Kennedy School who led the design and implementation of the research and analysis. As for leadership from the Mustaqbali program, this research benefited from Salma Alrashid, formerly the Chief Programs Officer at Alnahda, Hadeel Elesawi, Lama Alsahhaf, Munira Almuaarik, and Shatha Altamimi, as well as Mustaqbali instructors and coaches from Nefal and Dale Carnegie.



## **MUSTAQBALI PROGRAM**

### **I. Program Description**

Mustaqbali is a training and mentorship program that was launched by Alnahda Society (Alnahda) in 2011. The program targets high schoolers (ages 15-19) from Alnahda's beneficiary households. This population comes from a low-income background and is expected to face social and economic difficulties that may prevent them from completing their high school degree. Hence, Mustaqbali's objective is to ensure, first, that participants graduate from high school, and second, do so with a feasible future plan that is built on self-awareness and knowledge of academic and career opportunities.

The Mustaqbali program uses a mix of training and mentorship to aid students in developing life skills. Sessions are conducted once per week and are four hours in duration each. An estimated total of 22 sessions are conducted throughout the school year, resulting in a total of 88 hours of training and guidance per school year. Mustaqbali sessions are taught by 13-15 contracted instructors per year.

### **II. Local Context**

The Mustaqbali program lies at the intersection of an assembly of macroeconomic and labor market challenges facing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, including high youth unemployment (25% among those aged 15-24) (World Bank, 2017), low female labor market participation rates (23.4% of working age women) (World Bank, 2017), job mismatches<sup>1</sup> (ILO, 2013) and low productivity rates. Over recent years, career guidance has gained policy attention as a necessary intervention to achieve inclusive social and economic development. National career guidance strategies were introduced by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development in 2013,<sup>2</sup> and emphasized as part of Vision 2030 in 2016 (Vision 2030, n.d.).

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF MUSTAQBALI PROGRAM:**

In July 2018, the Alnahda Program for Research conducted a retrospective impact assessment to measure the education, career and behavioral outcomes of the Mustaqbali program.

### **I. Study Framework**

The assessment draws from literature on global career guidance programs, Mustaqbali program curriculum, primary data collected through surveys of Mustaqbali participants and their peers, and interviews with Mustaqbali administrators, instructors and coaches. The outcomes measured in this study are designed based on the Kirkpatrick model, which has been referenced by the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) in its previous assessments of career guidance programs in Saudi Arabia (Appendix 1).

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<sup>1</sup> There is an over-representation of Bachelor level graduates unable to find employment, and only 5% of the working age population holds a technical or vocational qualification.

<sup>2</sup> Then known as the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Labor and Social Development (MLSD)



## II. Survey Design

The Mustaqbali survey aims to capture levels 1 (Reactions), 3 (Behaviors) and 4 (Results) of the Kirkpatrick model in order to assess the impact of the Mustaqbali program (Appendix 1). The objectives of the survey are:

*1) To collect feedback from program participants to determine their reactions,* including: extent of their satisfaction with the program, identifying areas for improvement, and assessing curriculum, pedagogy, instructors, and logistics.

*2) To determine the impact of Mustaqbali on self-reported participant behaviors,* including: self-confidence, ability to communicate and disagree with others, ability to handle stressful situations, ability to set and plan for goals, and ability to overcome challenges.

*3) To determine the impact of the Mustaqbali program on participant results,* including: employment and/or level of education, academic performance, academic or career stability, income, community engagement, and satisfaction with education and career decisions.

As a pilot assessment, there are limitations on the extent to which findings may be interpreted or generalized. Considering that this assessment does not include baseline data means that comparison is limited to reported data and cannot include change in performance over time. This limitation especially impacts our ability to analyze behavioral outcomes. However, the main purpose of this study was to test the survey tools that will be implemented on future cohorts. It was also an opportunity to identify outcomes that are readily measurable and can shed light on the areas of impact this program produces.

## III. Pilot Implementation

The pilot included a total of 133 young girls between ages 17 and 25 divided into treatment and control. The treatment group (n=65) consisted of girls who had graduated from the Mustaqbali program. The control group (n=68) for this study was formed by identifying individuals nominated by sister organizations with the same demographic characteristics as the treatment group (e.g. age, household income, etc.), and who did not receive any form of sustained career guidance or mentoring of any type. Assignment was not random as all graduates and non-graduates who responded to the research team and consented to answering the survey were recruited into the study. Surveys were conducted by phone and carried out by volunteers recruited through Qudra program at Alnahda.



## **SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS**

When the Mustaqbali program was first launched in 2011, it was meant to boost the development of education and career paths among participants. More specifically, the program was established in response to low completion rates of high school, as well as low pursuit of higher education and employment among Alnahda beneficiaries. Hence, the program was intended to mitigate the mismatch between academic qualifications and employment, encourage pursuit of higher education and qualifications, and support participants to find a path to financial independence. Additionally, Alnahda female beneficiaries exhibited low labor market participation rates estimated at 15%, compared to 23.4% nationally (World Bank, 2014). Overall, this study found that these low rates of education attainment and job-uptake have increased since 2011. This section highlights the outcomes of the Mustaqbali survey including: 1) feedback of Mustaqbali participants on the program; 2) behavioral outcomes of the program; and 3) educational and career outcomes.

### **I. Feedback on Mustaqbali**

Surveyed Mustaqbali participants provided consistently positive feedback on the program to an extent that hindered the usefulness of the survey as a constructive tool for assessing the program. A number of factors could have contributed to this, including reluctance to express criticism to Alnahda staff; memory bias; or weakness in critical thinking.

### **II. Behavioral Outcomes**

Mustaqbali graduates reported stronger behavioral outcomes on the periphery along the scale that measures the key behavioral skills Mustaqbali aims to foster. This means that Mustaqbali graduates chose options that indicate that they are more likely to “always” embrace a positive behavior or “never” embrace a negative behavior compared to their peers who did not join Mustaqbali. Additionally, Mustaqbali graduates demonstrated significantly better behavioral outcomes in the category of ability to set plans and goals, handle stress, and have self-confidence (Figure 1).

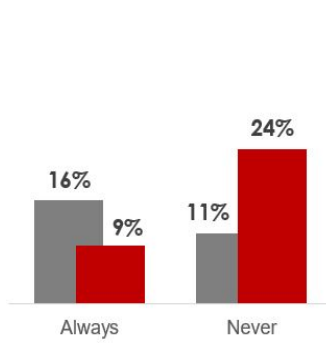
### **III. Educational and Career Outcomes**

On educational outcomes, Mustaqbali graduates were three times more likely to score 75 or above on university-entrance exams (Qudurat and Tasheeli), compared to their peers who did not join Mustaqbali. Moreover, Mustaqbali graduates were twice as likely to be enrolled in a degree-granting university, compared to their peers who did not join Mustaqbali (Figure 2).

On career outcomes, Mustaqbali graduates were three times more likely to be in full time employment and less likely to be outside of the labor force, compared to their peers who did not join Mustaqbali. Furthermore, similar proportions of treatment and control were searching for jobs (12.3% treatment and 11.8% control) or not employed (32.3% treatment and 36.8% control) (Figure 2).

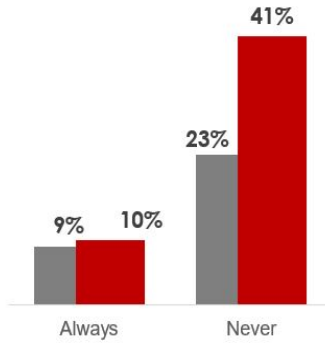
### Self-confidence

"I often feel like I don't know the right thing to do or say"



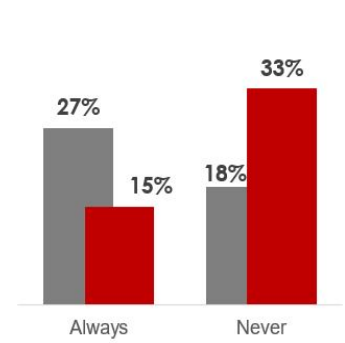
### Ability to handle stress

"When I face a problem, I am very discouraged"



### Ability to set goals

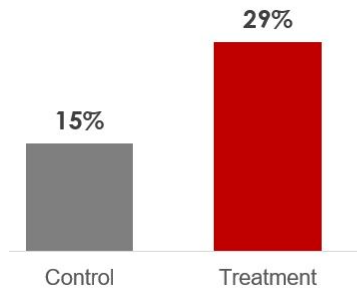
"I feel that I have very little control over my education and career path"



■ Control ■ Treatment

Figure 1: Participant reactions to statements on self-confidence, ability to handle stress and set goals

### Enrolled in University



### Full-time Employment

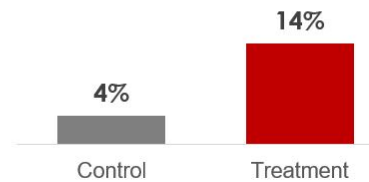


Figure 2: Enrollment in university and employment status

## **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the survey, as well as a review of Mustaqbali strategy documents, and curriculum, and interviews with staff and trainers, this report proposes the following recommendations in regard to the strategic plan and data collection for ongoing program feedback and assessment:

### **1) Refine Mustaqbali's current strategy and action plan for greater effectiveness**

As it stands, while the Mustaqbali program does have all aspects of a strategic plan hierarchy, not all components are clearly articulated. The program would benefit from revisiting its mission statement, objectives and KPIs to more explicitly determine the outcomes of interest (e.g. behavioral, academic and career).

### **2) Continue to conduct session and instructor evaluation on a semester basis**

Evaluation should continue to be conducted for all sessions and instructors at the end of each semester or at the end of each series of a session type, so that participants have a clear recollection of strengths and weaknesses. The method of evaluation should allow for and encourage honest and critical input.

### **3) Integrate critical thinking into the Mustaqbali curriculum**

Considering the responses received from Mustaqbali candidates on their assessment of the program, and the lack of constructive feedback exhibited in their answers, there is merit in considering critical thinking among the behavioral skills to be cultivated in Mustaqbali students.

### **4) Measure behavioral outcomes prior to and after sessions**

Measuring the program's impact on behavioral outcomes is a difficult exercise, especially considering the debate on whether some skills (e.g. resilience) are teachable, let alone measurable. Regardless of the methodology used, these skills are best measured using "pre and post" assessments in order to compare changes among the same group of individuals rather than across groups.

### **5) Track education and career performance outcomes annually**

For both Mustaqbali participants and graduates, education and work status should be tracked during and after the program on an annual basis. Participants' educational performance prior to enrolling in Mustaqbali should also be recorded. This will allow for evaluation of the medium- and long-term impacts of the program.



## Appendix 1: The Kirkpatrick model

| Description and Purpose   | Example Information  | Timing  | Example Evaluation Tools  |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Level 1: Reaction</b>  |  |   |   |
| <p>'Reaction' measures participants' feelings and personal reactions to the program. It assesses participants' perceptions of program features such as: instructors, topics, material, timing, and venue.</p> <p>The purpose of this dimension is to understand participants' perceptions of the program, and to establish input for any needed modifications in the design of the program.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings about the program</li> <li>• Relevance of the program</li> <li>• Good use of time</li> <li>• Opinion on venue, timing</li> <li>• Practicality and applicability of knowledge</li> <li>• Style of instruction</li> </ul>      | <p>This is ideally measured immediately after the end of the program. In the case of Mustaqbali, this can be conducted at the end of each term or year.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Happy sheets" provide a quick and visual way of measuring reaction</li> <li>• Feedback forms allow for subjective responses</li> <li>• In-person interviews can provide in-depth responses</li> <li>• Instructors may take note of observed reactions during sessions</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Level 2: Learning</b>  |  |   |   |
| <p>'Learning' measures the increase in participants' knowledge, skills or attitudes due to participation in the program.</p> <p>The purpose of this level is to determine whether or not the program is successful in meeting its learning objectives.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment of knowledge intended to be taught</li> <li>• Extent of attainment of knowledge intended to be taught</li> </ul>   | <p>This is ideally measured through assessments before and after the training or each year.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The method of assessment should be linked with the goals of learning. For example, presentation skills can be measured through observation of presentations.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Level 3: Behavior</b>  |  |   |   |
| <p>This dimension of the model seeks to identify how participants apply the knowledge gained in order to change behaviors.</p> <p>The purpose of this dimension is to identify whether gains in learning (Level 2) are applied towards the attitudes and behaviors of participants.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the evidence of changes in behaviors?</li> <li>• Did the participants put their learning into effect by practicing new behaviors?</li> <li>• Is the participant aware of changes in behavior, knowledge or skills?</li> </ul> | <p>This is ideally measured immediately post-training or several months after training.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative observations and interviews over time are best to identify change.</li> <li>• The opinion of the trainee carries potential for bias.</li> <li>• Assessments should be designed with set performance indicators and criteria.</li> <li>• Measurement of behavioral change is more complicated to quantify than 'reaction' or 'learning.' It requires well designed integration into the program.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Level 4: Results</b>   |  |   |   |
| <p>This dimension seeks to identify outcomes linked to the program, mainly quantifiable outcomes. Results typically indicate impact on both individual and social or economic spheres.</p> <p>The challenge is identifying which outcomes were influenced by the training</p>   | <p>The results measured should be directly linked to the aims of the training. For Mustaqbali, results include factors such as: educational attainment; employment; income; satisfaction.</p>  | <p>While some results can be measured during the program, others require completion of the program and secondary school</p>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much of the information needed to identify results is built into the design of management and reporting. The challenge is accounting for external factors in order to identify the extent of influence of the training</li> </ul>  |