



مؤسسة عبدالله  
الغريير للتعليم  
Abdulla Al Ghurair  
Foundation for Education

# BUILDING A STRONGER TOMORROW

IMPACT REPORT 2015-2020

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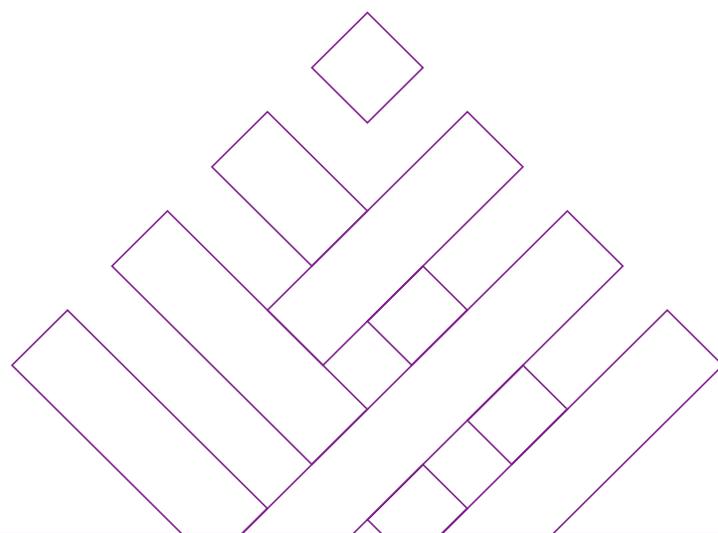
2021



## ACRONYMS

<b>AGFE</b>	Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education
<b>AQU</b>	Al-Quds University
<b>ASU</b>	Arizona State University
<b>AUB</b>	American University of Beirut
<b>AUC</b>	American University in Cairo
<b>AUI</b>	Al Akhawayn University
<b>AUS</b>	American University of Sharjah
<b>GPA</b>	Grade Point Average
<b>GPI</b>	Gender Parity Index
<b>KHDA</b>	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
<b>MENA</b>	Middle East and North Africa
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education UAE
<b>MOHRE</b>	Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization
<b>IIE</b>	Institute of International Education
<b>MIT</b>	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
<b>OLSP</b>	Al Ghurair Open Learning Scholars Program
<b>PolyMTL</b>	Polytechnique Montreal
<b>PPU</b>	Palestine Polytechnic University
<b>PSUT</b>	Princess Sumaya University for Technology
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>UCs</b>	University Coordinators
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>YTP</b>	Young Thinkers Program

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Message from the Chairman	4	2. Leveraging Online Learning	26
Message from the CEO	5	I. Al Ghurair MicroMaster Program with MIT	27
<b>Why Do We Exist? Challenges of Youth Education and Unemployment</b>	6	II. Blended Learning for Capacity Building in the Arab Region with AUB and AUC	27
<b>Who Are We? Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education</b>	8	III. UAE University Consortium for Quality Online Learning	
Our Mandate	9	Pillar 2: Career Readiness and Upskilling Programs	29
Our Purpose	12	Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals	29
Our Core Values	12	1. Al Ghurair Young Thinkers Program	30
Summary of Key Achievements 2015-2020	12	Program Overview	30
<b>What Do We Do? AGFE's Impact</b>	13	Progress to Date	30
Pillar 1: Strengthening Access to Quality Higher Education	16	<b>How Do We Do It? Enabling Factors</b>	34
Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals	16	Thought Leadership	35
1. Al Ghurair Scholarship Programs	16	I. Research and Policy Briefs	35
Program Overview	16	II. Reports	35
Progress to Date	18	<b>Moving Forward</b>	37
I. STEM and OLSP	18	Our Strategy 2020-2025	37
II. Academic Support	21	Get Involved	41
III. Career Pathways	23		
IV. Graduating Scholars (Alumni)	27		



“Through our data-driven and evidence-based approach to strategic philanthropy, we continue to deliver a more sustainable form of giving, which is wider in reach and has a long-term impact.”

## Message from the Chairman

When my father, Abdulla Al Ghurair, started his philanthropic journey more than 30 years ago, it was based on a genuine, heartfelt concern for the livelihoods of the marginalized and underserved in our extended community. Over time, as a family, we have transformed this form of discreet giving taking a more strategic approach. Our vision is to ensure that young Emirati and Arab men and women have a chance at a better life through high-quality education. In 2015, we committed to go beyond a charitable approach to giving, in a more institutionalized and impactful way establishing the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education.

Since its establishment, the Foundation has been committed to addressing a challenge facing youth in the UAE and the wider Arab region: access to high-quality education for the better livelihoods of youth. Through our data-driven and evidence-based approach to strategic philanthropy, we continue to deliver a more sustainable form of giving, which is wider in reach and has a long-term positive impact. We focus on addressing system-level challenges that go beyond achieving results at the individual level.

Our current strategy focuses on elevating livelihoods for youth in the UAE and the Arab region through strategic partnerships and innovative educational solutions. Youth need a holistic educational experience that will equip them with vital skills to reach their full



potential and contribute back to their communities. Our strategy reflects the vision of the UAE leadership and is aligned with national and regional priorities as well as global development agendas, particularly, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

It has been crucial to the development of our work to engage with governments, institutions, and individuals. These partnerships, rooted in a shared vision to improve the educational ecosystem in the UAE and the Arab region, have proven to be essential to our success. I hope that our work will inspire more stakeholders to support the mission and vision of helping to cultivate the next generation of leaders and empower youth to build a stronger tomorrow.

As we celebrate our first five years, we renew our commitment to work with valued partners to create a sustainable impact. I am pleased to present you with this report that reflects the first five years of our journey, and I hope that it will serve as a valuable resource and model of strategic philanthropy.

### H.E. Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair

Chairman, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education



**We are dedicated to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, and 17, which call for inclusive and equitable quality education that leads to improved standards of living, through strategic partnerships.**



## Message from the CEO

On behalf of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, I am pleased to present our impact report for the first five years. It comes at a significant moment in our journey as we embark on a strategic shift toward supporting learners and the education ecosystems in the UAE and the Arab region. This impact report aims to capture the progress the Foundation has made between 2015 and 2020 and lays the groundwork for our future efforts so that we can build a stronger tomorrow.

In the past five years, we have made noteworthy progress in strengthening access to high-quality education at 15 universities for over 1,000 underserved youth. Through our holistic scholarship model, we assure students are successful in their educational journey and beyond, to a successful career. In helping these impressive young people have the life chance they deserve, we contribute to elevating their livelihood, and expect they will elevate their communities and advocate for the next generation.

In response to the needs of youth in the UAE and the Arab region, we launched a tailored, online university and career readiness platform that has had a positive impact on over 28,000 youth by the end of 2020. These youth have gained insights into career pathways, transferable skills, and guidance for their next steps. While we keep our values at the heart of what we do,

in 2020, we reshaped our vision to embrace a new outcomes-driven strategy. Our focus on addressing system-level gaps means we will further engage in strategic partnerships and become more active in knowledge creation and sharing.

We will continue to promote and support a transformative vision of education for the benefit of youth in the UAE and the Arab region. We will focus on cultivating the future skills that they need for higher education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

We are dedicated to the realization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, and 17, which call for inclusive and equitable quality education that leads to improved standards of living, through strategic partnerships. By 2025, we aim to support 200,000 Emirati and Arab learners to become college and career ready.

We are conscious that to achieve these targets, we must engage with diverse stakeholders, adopt context specific approaches, and promote accountability and transparency for positive impact.

### **Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar**

Chief Executive Officer, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education



# WHY DO WE EXIST?

CHALLENGES  
OF YOUTH EDUCATION  
AND UNEMPLOYMENT



## Why Do We Exist?

### Challenges of Youth Education and Unemployment

#### In the Arab region

- Educational attainment is lower than the global average at all levels
- Graduates are unprepared for the workforce
- Youth unemployment is higher than the global average

Over two-thirds of the population in the Arab region is under the age of 30, with youth between the ages of 15 and 24 constituting up more than half of the youth population.<sup>1</sup> Since the early 2000s, the Arab region has made remarkable strides in secondary and tertiary enrollment, with impressive progress towards gender parity.<sup>2</sup> However, major challenges in the region persist and include lack of access to quality education, below average secondary school completion rates, and high rates of unemployment. An unprecedentedly large number of youth are at risk.<sup>3</sup>

Though considerable progress in school enrollment has been made, major challenges in educational attainment remain as more than 16.2 million children, adolescents, and youth of primary and secondary school age are out of school as of 2019.<sup>4</sup> Despite improvements in gender parity in educational attainment, according to UNICEF, one in every five children in the MENA region is out of school and female students are 1.5 times more likely to be out of school.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, lower secondary (grades 6-9) and higher secondary (grades 10-12) completion rates in the Arab region are lower than the global average. In 2019, the lower secondary completion rate for the Arab region was 70%, while the global rate was 76%;<sup>6</sup> tertiary enrollment was 34%, falling short by about 6% from the global average.<sup>7</sup>

A 2019 Brookings' report on youth employment concluded that the quality of education in the Arab region does not adequately prepare youth, including those who completed their education, for the world of work.<sup>8</sup> Too many young men and women find themselves graduating with a skills gap, which leaves them unqualified for, or unable to succeed in, the current labor market.<sup>9</sup> The Arab youth unemployment rate is the highest in the world, at almost 23%, compared to the global rate of 13.7%.<sup>10</sup> The unemployment rate is also noticeably high among female youth, estimated at around 42%.<sup>11</sup>

The ongoing political instability and humanitarian crises in the region, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic, have exacerbated the challenges facing Arab youth, but opportunities for youth to secure a prosperous future remain. With the right educational opportunities and support, youth can and will drive growth and sustainable development of the Arab region. The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE) was established to help elevate livelihoods of Emirati and Arab youth through education.



# WHO ARE WE?

## ABDULLA AL GHURAIR FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATION

“I hope this foundation will help deserving young Arabs fulfill their education quest and that they in turn will help others.”

– Abdulla Al Ghurair – Founder of the  
Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education

## Who Are We?

### Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education

### Our Mandate

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE) is one of the largest privately funded philanthropic foundations in the Arab region. Abdulla Ahmad Al Ghurair, a leading Emirati businessman and philanthropist, committed a third of his wealth to ensure Emirati and Arab youth have access to a high-quality education that

will help them to thrive and contribute to the sustainable development of the region. Established in 2015, the Foundation works to fulfill our mandate of improving access to quality higher education that leads to better livelihoods. AGFE is committed to realizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8, and 17, focusing on inclusive and equitable quality education that leads to improved standards of living.

### Governance

AGFE is governed by a board consisting of the following board members:

- H.E. Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair – Chairman of the Board
- Ali Rashed Ahmad Lootah
- Rashid Abdulla Ahmad Al Ghurair
- Sultan Abdulla Ahmad Majid Al Ghurair

The board members are dedicated to furthering the vision of the Founder, Abdulla Al Ghurair, and to overseeing the Foundation using principles of good governance. The board provides strategic direction and keeps the Foundation accountable through regular engagements with the Foundation leadership.



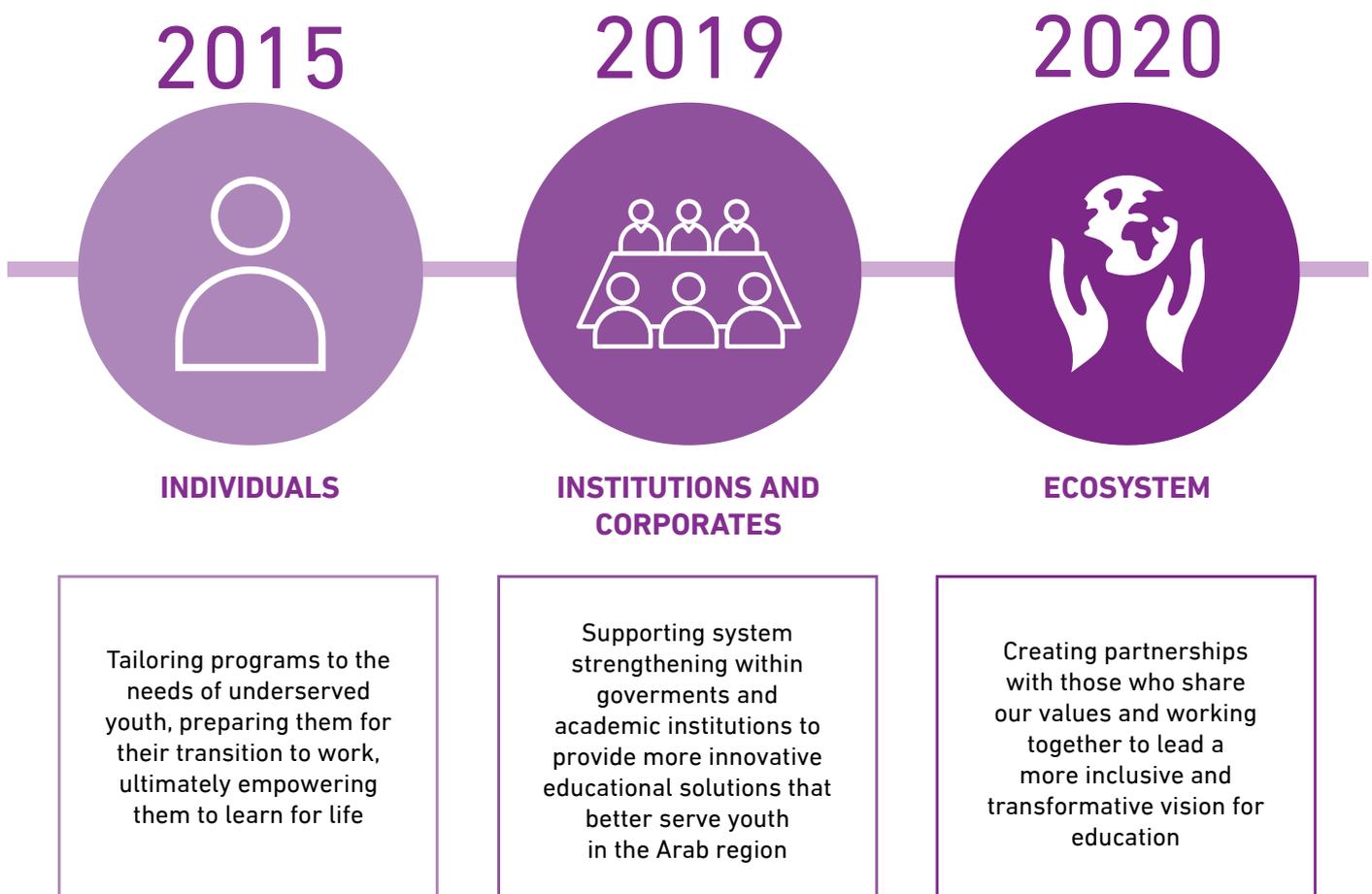
## Strategic Shift

Upon our establishment, AGFE targeted underserved, high-achieving students and focused on providing them with access to quality higher education through the Al Ghurair scholarship programs. The Foundation also launched the Al Ghurair Young Thinkers Program (YTP) in 2018 in response to a research-based need identified in the UAE and across the Arab region. YTP is a digital education and career readiness platform developed to equip youth with the skills they need to succeed in education and in the workplace and make well-informed education and career decisions.

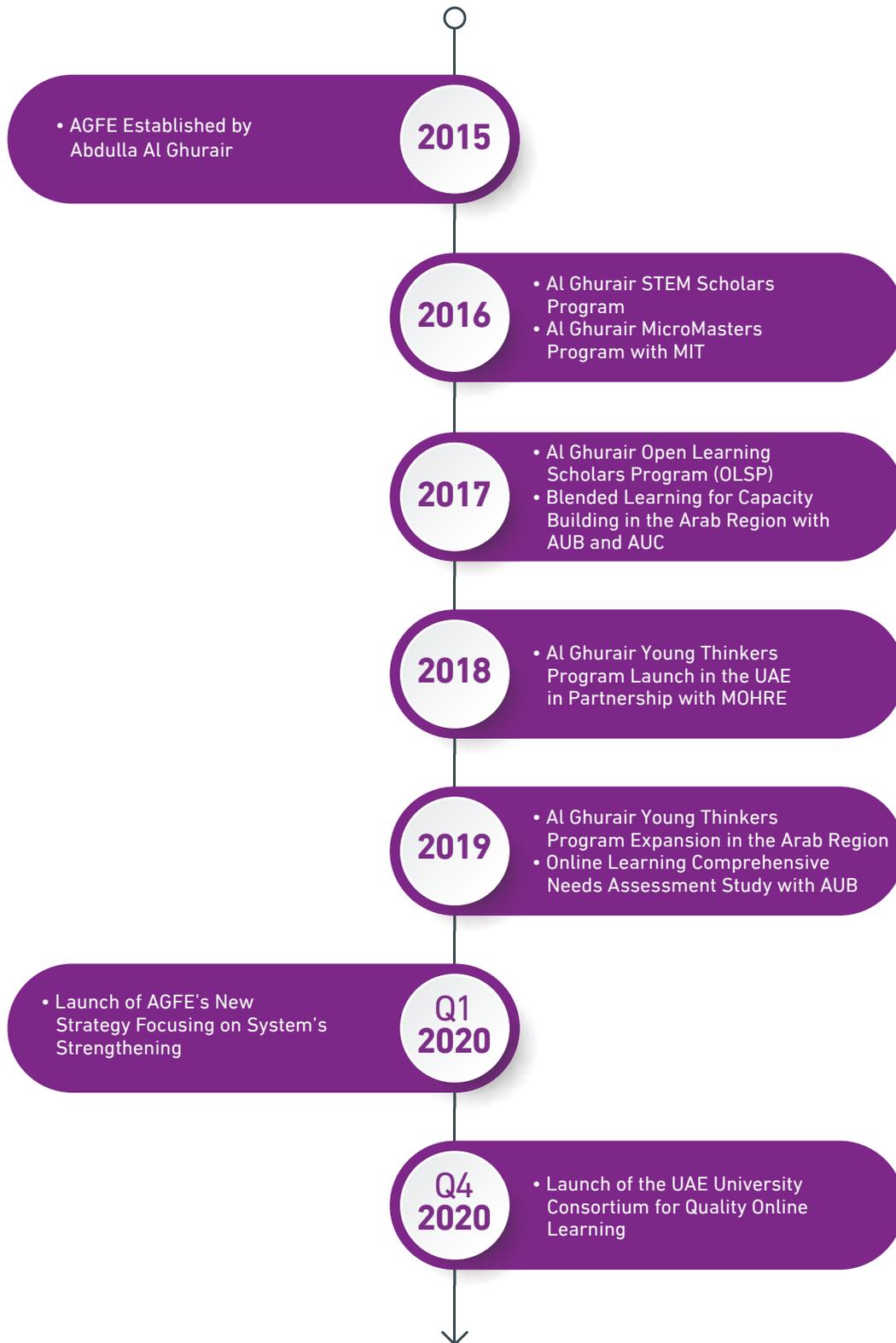
The scholarship programs and YTP benefitted a substantial number of students. Yet, the feedback from our beneficiaries drove us to work towards having an even greater positive impact. This accentuated the importance of working with stakeholders such as universities and governments to strengthen systems and maximize impact. In 2019, AGFE

shifted its focus to leverage strengthening collaboration with key stakeholders and institutions. This joint-work approach cultivates sustainable, innovative education solutions that better serve youth in the region, addresses system-level challenges and overarching barriers to higher education, and positively influences the education ecosystem for Emirati and Arab youth.

AGFE believes in creating a sustainable impact through outcomes-driven philanthropy. Therefore, as we move forward with our programs and partnerships, our focus is to support systems and programs that address challenges on the ground with our partners through customized and evidence-based solutions. We work together with our partners to lead a more inclusive and transformative vision of education in the region. The figures below illustrate the evolution of AGFE's work and influence since our establishment.



## AGFE Timeline 2015-2020



## Our Purpose

**To empower Emirati & Arab youth to thrive and contribute to the sustainable development of the region, through innovative education solutions and authentic partnerships.**

## Our Core Values

# R



### RESULTS

To measure impact and enable long-term change in the region through education.

# I



### INNOVATION

To explore ideas and be bold in our approach to designing education and learning solutions for real-world challenges.

# S



### SYNERGIES

To authentically engage and work with diverse stakeholders to better serve the region through educational solutions.

# E



### EXCELLENCE

To operate and continually improve to meet the highest standards for ourselves and our stakeholders.

## Summary of Key Achievements 2015 - 2020

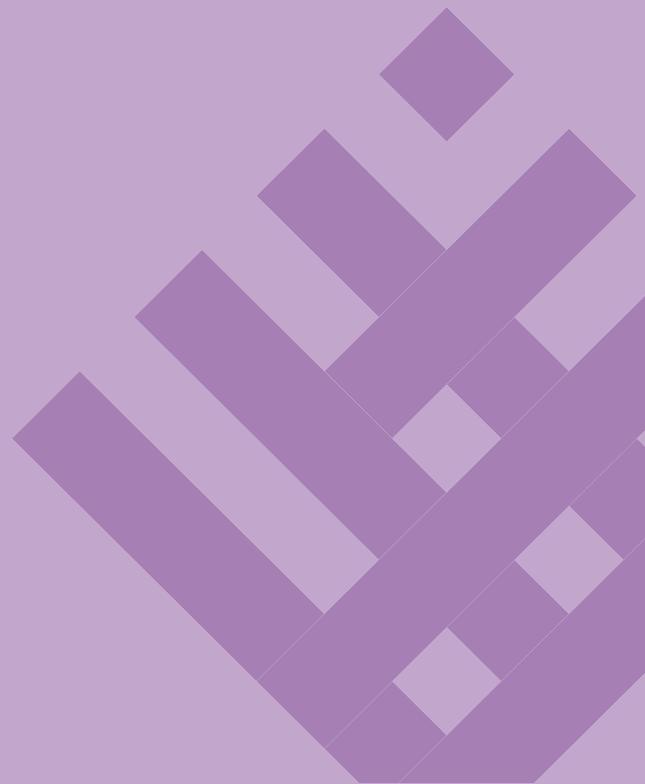
Data Point	Value (December 2020)
<b>AGFE Impact from all programs</b>	
Total Number of Learners (December 2020)	30,338
Total Number of Emirati Learners	10,075
Total Number of Refugee Learners	107
Total Number of 1st Generation Learners in Higher Education	417
Total Nationalities Supported	21
<b>Pillar 1: Strengthening Access to Quality Higher Education</b>	
Number of Scholars (STEM, OLSP and MIT)	1,020
Percent Female Scholars*	47%
Percent of Scholars with Refugee Status*	10%
Percent of Scholars who are 1st Generation Students*	39%
Number of Internships Completed by Scholars	+350
Number of Mentors in the Mentorship Program	166
Number of Mentees in the Mentorship Program	185
Total Number of Graduates	241
Employment Rate of Graduates	48%
Beneficiaries of Capacity Building Implemented with AUB/ AUC	1,196
<b>Pillar 2: Career Readiness and Upskilling</b>	
Number of Users on the YTP Platform	28,122
Number of Courses on the YTP Platform	27
Percent of Emirati Users on the YTP Platform	36%
Percent of Female Users on the YTP Platform	53%

\*% calculated for STEM and OLSP Scholars only



# WHAT DO WE DO?

AGFE'S IMPACT



## What Do We Do? AGFE's Impact

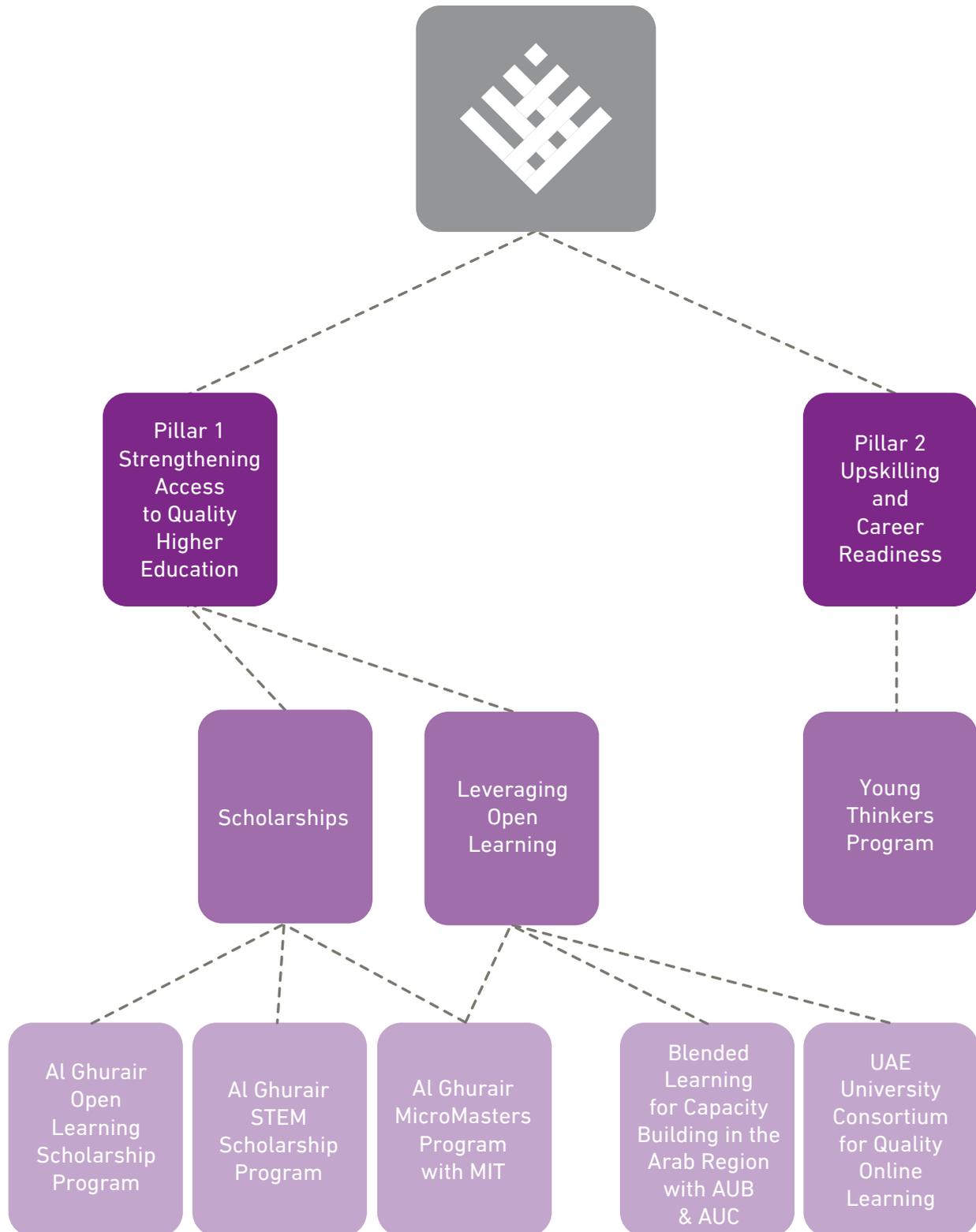
Over the past five years, AGFE has created multiple opportunities to activate the untapped potential of Emirati and Arab youth by providing scholarships, support, and skills training to underserved, high-achieving students. Moreover, AGFE has created strategic partnerships to provide and advance innovative educational solutions that respond to an underserved need through programs such as YTP. As we plan our way forward and prepare to create more partnerships to positively impact the educational ecosystem in the UAE and the Arab region, we take the opportunity to reflect on our most notable

achievements over the past five years.

In this impact report, we focus on the two main pillars of AGFE's work: **Strengthening Access to Quality Higher Education** and **Upskilling and Career Readiness** and present the programs that have been implemented from the inception of the Foundation until the end of 2020. The report dissects the outcomes of the programs and partnerships and lays the foundation for AGFE's vision of furthering our impact in the next five years.



## AGFE's Work Under the Two Main Pillars 2015-2020



## PILLAR 1: STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION

### Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals



In keeping with SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 4, whose objective is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning by 2030, the Al Ghurair scholarship programs aim to provide high-achieving underserved Arab youth with access to relevant and high-quality higher education opportunities in top-quality universities.

- Target 4.3: Equal access to affordable technical, vocational, and higher education
- Target 4.5: Eliminate all discrimination in education
- Target 4.b: Expand higher education scholarships for developing countries

### 1. Al Ghurair Scholarships Programs Program Overview

In 2016, AGFE launched the **Al Ghurair STEM Scholars Program (STEM)**. The program supports Arab youth between the ages of 17 and 30 who want to pursue an undergraduate or graduate degree in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) at one of the Foundation's 15 partner universities. Since its inception, the program has been providing full financial sponsorships, academic support, career pathways support via workplace learning (mentoring, career advising, and internships), and leadership skill-building opportunities to 648 scholars from 17 Arab nations.

By focusing on career preparedness, the Al Ghurair scholarship programs also contribute to the realization of SDG 8, which is to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all by 2030. The programs are designed to equip scholars with the knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to secure gainful employment and contribute to their communities. Moreover, upon graduating, scholars become part of a larger alumni network that lives beyond the scholarship program and supports their pathways to elevated livelihoods.

- Target 8.6: Promote youth employment, education, and training

Finally, in line with SDG 17, AGFE collaborates with over 15 universities to facilitate higher education opportunities for over 1000 students.

- Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development

In 2016, as part of the vision to promote online and open learning, AGFE collaborated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to facilitate access of Arab students to micro-credential programs. The **Al Ghurair MicroMasters' Scholarship Program** was launched to pilot AGFE's work in the online learning space. It focused on enhancing employability by enabling 68 students from 13 Arab countries to enroll in two programs: Supply Chain Management and Data, Economics, and Development Policy (DEDP).

In 2017, AGFE launched the Al Ghurair Open Learning Scholars Program (OLSP) with the goal of giving Arab youth access to accredited online degrees and credentials from leading universities. The aim of the program is to help scholars improve their existing skill set and

increase their value proposition in the labor market while simultaneously continuing their education at Arizona State University (ASU) by enrolling in one of 38 supported degree programs. By the end of 2020, the program was supporting 304 scholars from 18 Arab countries.

Table 1: Al Ghurair Scholars by Nationality

Nationality	Total Number of Scholars
Algeria	22
Bahrain	2
Comoros	4
Djibouti	3
Egypt	353
Iraq	10
Jordan	85
Lebanon	111
Mauritania	3
Morocco	76
Oman	1
Palestine	172
Saudi Arabia	5
Somalia	10
Sudan	33
Syria	80
Tunisia	20
United Arab Emirates	6
Yemen	24
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1020</b>



**Total Scholars: 1020**  
 STEM: 648  
 OLSP: 304  
 MicorMasters: 68

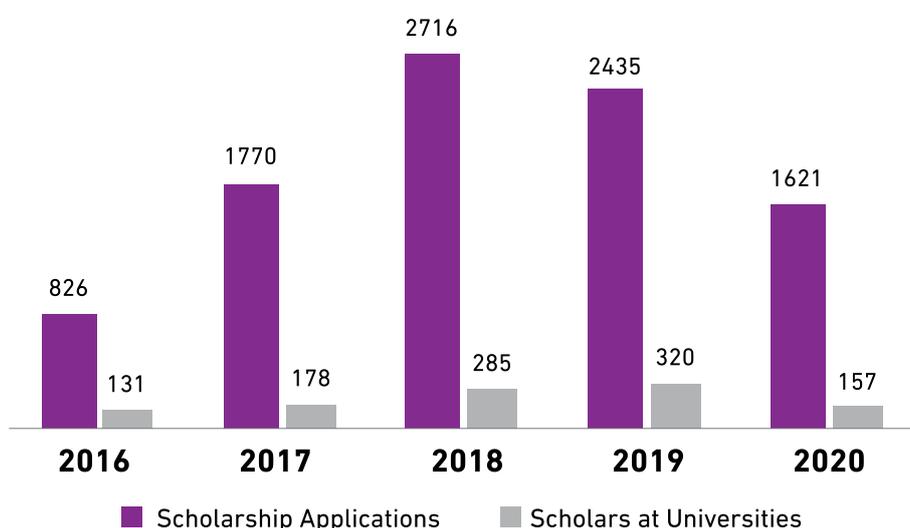
## Progress to Date

### I. STEM and OLSP

Between 2016 and 2020, the number of applicants for both the STEM and OLSP scholarship programs from all Arab countries increased significantly.<sup>12</sup> AGFE devised a nine-week rigorous selection procedure to identify the highest-achieving students with the greatest financial need, as well as those who were the best matches for

the programs' objectives. By 2020, AGFE was supporting a total of 648 scholars as part of the STEM Scholars Program and another 304 scholars as part of the OLS Program. For both programs, Graph 1 shows the total number of scholarship applications received and the total number of scholars who started their studies each year.

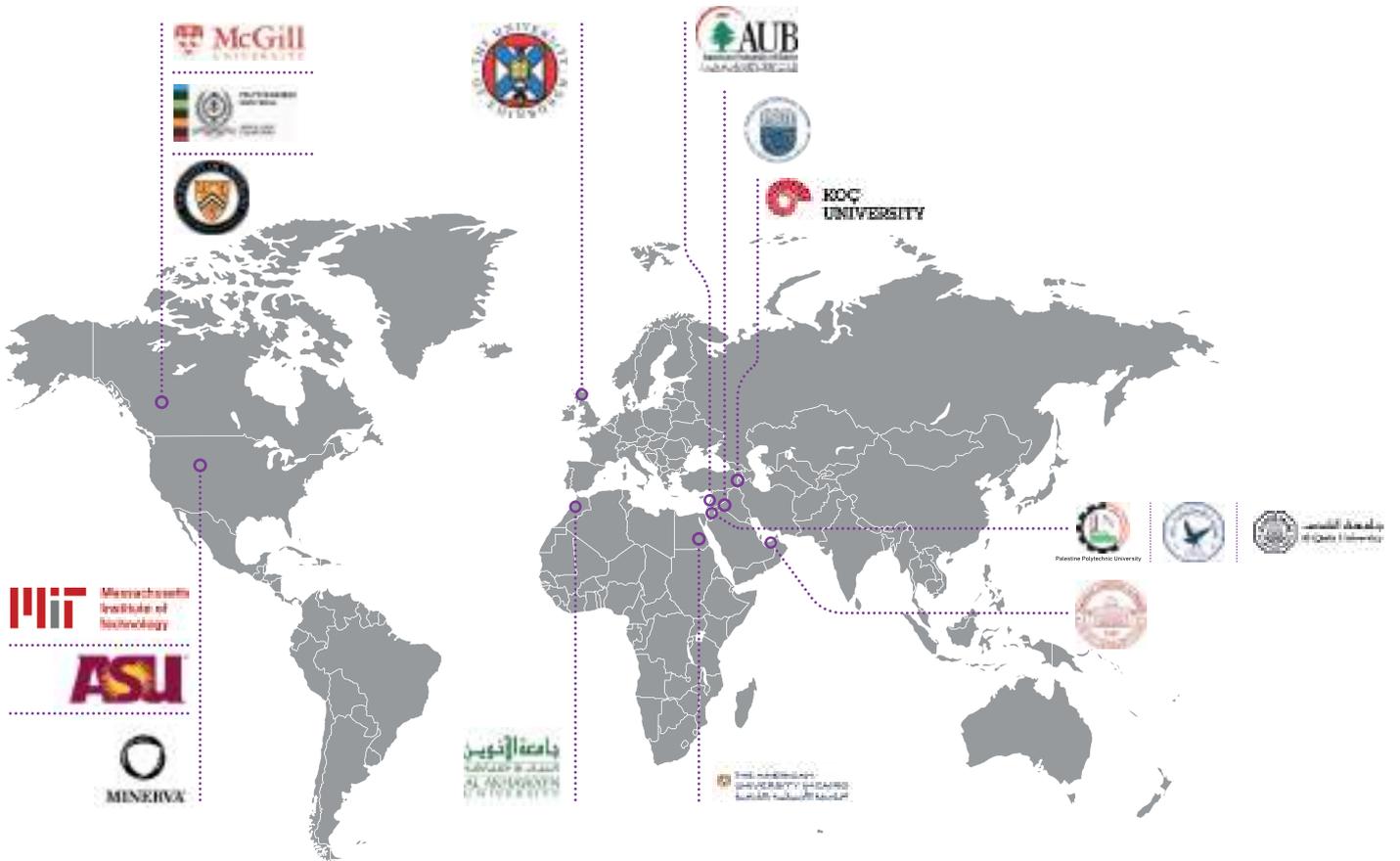
Graph 1: Total Students' Application vs. Scholars at Universities for STEM and OLSP



As shown in Graph 1, the scholarship programs witnessed a steady increase in demand over the years. In 2019, AGFE's master's-level STEM scholarships were absorbed into OLSP and are now only available online. This was in accordance with the Foundation's mission to promote high-quality online education, which was in great demand the following year due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

Our STEM and OLSP scholars have been pursuing educational degrees at 15 of our partner universities located in the Arab region and internationally. The figure below presents all our partner universities.

## Partner Universities for the Scholarship Programs



AGFE also made specific efforts to reach disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women, refugees, and those who are the first in their families to pursue higher education (“first generation university students”). The display below depicts the demographics of our scholars in the two flagship scholarship programs. As shown, women make up 47% of the scholars, first-generation university students make up 39% of the scholars, and refugees make up 10% of the scholars.

These figures are particularly notable when put into a larger context. For example, 34.4%<sup>13</sup> of females in the Arab region were enrolled in higher education in 2019, while 42%<sup>14 15</sup> were enrolled globally. Additionally, UNHCR reported that in 2019, only 3% of refugees were

enrolled in higher education worldwide, compared to the global average of 37% among non-refugees,<sup>16</sup> and only 5-8% of Syrian and Palestinian refugees have<sup>17</sup> access to higher education in Jordan and Lebanon. Finally, statistics from the USA show that 33% of higher education students are first in their families to enroll in a university or college.<sup>18</sup>

At the end of 2020, AGFE awarded the last cohort as part of these scholarship programs and continued our institution-level work and capacity-building efforts with academic institutions and the public sector. The next section describes how the scholarship team continues to support the last cohorts until they graduate and become alumni.

## Demographic Information on STEM and OLSP Scholars



\*Refugee and First-Generation students' statistics are calculated for STEM and OLSP scholars only



## II. Academic Support

Though the Al Ghurair scholarships were competitive and selective, the scholars selected for our STEM and OLSP programs came from backgrounds that made successful integration into high-quality universities away from home difficult. As a result, AGFE has continued to look at university integration options to optimize scholars' success.

The AGFE scholarship team closely monitors students' performance to support success.

### A. University Coordinators

As part of the STEM Scholars Program, University Coordinators (UCs) are appointed at each partner university. The UCs facilitate daily activities and communication between scholars and their universities throughout the scholarship period. This includes

The STEM and OLSP scholarship programs are performance-driven, compelling scholars to thrive academically and maintain a high GPA. The team also encourages scholars to volunteer and participate in career-readiness activities.

AGFE's scholarship model purposefully includes dedicated University Coordinators and Success Coaches to advise and support all scholars.

following up on scholars' requests and inquiries. In total, the UCs have processed over 1,200 requests from different stakeholders. The UCs also ensure that scholars fulfill their responsibilities as expected by AGFE and the corresponding university.



### B. Success Coaches

Though the Arab region has seen an increase in openness to and demand for online learning, navigating a fully online program remains challenging for many students. AGFE ensures that OLSP Scholars have access to dedicated success coaches online for guidance from enrollment up until graduation, a resource that has

proven key to scholars' success and positive experience with online learning. 74% of OLSP scholars at ASU reported finding their success coaches very helpful in supporting their academic success at the university.

## International Students

AGFE supports students pursuing their higher education at universities that are internationally recognized for their STEM education. The STEM Scholars Program has enabled 107 scholars to attend seven international universities in Canada, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Many scholars rose to the challenge and are now thriving.

### Initiatives

**Duaa Kambal**, an OLSP scholar studying Science of Health Care Delivery, MS at ASU, started an initiative, Sanad, to support street children in Sudan by providing healthcare, social services and education. Duaa's initiative won third place at the SDG-focused Visualize 2030 competition.



### Pioneering

**Salim Abdi**, a STEM scholar at PolyMTL University, has successfully developed a new technique for the fabrication of metal contacts on the novel Germanium Tin Semiconductor System. According to Salim, this new technique has a wide potential of applications such as infrared cameras for self-driving cars.



### Community Support

**Yousteena Bocktor**, a STEM Scholar and McGill University alumna, worked with several students at Homework Zone to inspire them and develop their interest in STEM. HZ is an after-school mentoring program connecting McGill university student volunteers with elementary school students in under-served neighborhoods of Montreal.



### III. Career Pathways

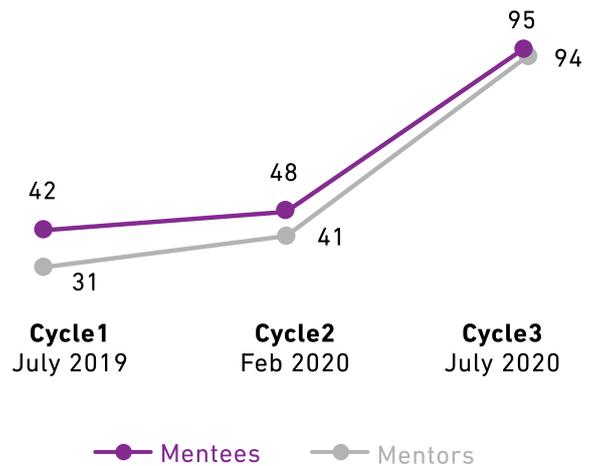
In addition to providing full financial coverage and academic support, AGFE provides scholars with extracurricular support to ensure career success and pathways to elevated livelihoods; this includes leadership

#### A. Mentoring and Advising

To support scholars' skill-building efforts and facilitate their transition from university to the workplace, AGFE set up a mentorship program for scholars, delivered both face-to-face and remotely, depending on mentor and mentee preferences. While AGFE continued to survey scholars to better understand their needs from a mentor, we also looked to corporate partners willing to engage with their time and expertise. AGFE matched mentees and mentors based on industry, location, and career aspirations. Participating mentors represented several industries including management consulting, engineering, and e-learning. Across the 3 mentorship cycles, AGFE was able to match a large number of mentors and mentees, with a total of 185 mentees and 166 mentors participating in the program. Two additional cycles of the mentorship program are planned for 2021.

and community service, workplace learning through mentoring and advising, internships, and access to AGFE's Alumni Network.

Figure 1: Participants in the Mentorship Program (Cycle 1-3)



**Abdel-Hameed Hamidisaker**  
BSc Mechanical Engineering, AUB, Lebanon

"This experience came at the perfect time for me. I was part of another mentorship program, but I was mismatched and didn't benefit much. This time, the program pushed my career so much further and I benefited a lot from it."



**Nour Abu Seif**  
BSc Nursing, An-Najah National University, Palestine

"It is one of the most amazing experiences I have had, and that goes back to my mentor. She helped me focus on my weaknesses so that I can transform them into strengths."



## B. Leadership and Community Service

AGFE encourages our scholars to give back to their communities through community service projects. By the end of 2020, our scholars have completed over 24,000 hours of community service work.

### Scholars Extracurricular Activities

While pursuing their academic degrees, our scholars continue to partake in skill-building activities and engage within their communities. Some examples of scholars' extracurricular activities include:

#### Participation in Competitions

As part of AUI's Mechatronics team, **Ikram Rachak and Asmae Guemrani** participated in Morocco's National Competition VEX-U Robotics. They **designed robots**, partly autonomous and partly driver controlled, and won **first place** nationally, earning them a spot in the **international edition** of RoboTalents.



#### Award Winning

As part of the National Model Arab League in 2018, our scholar at AUC, **Nada Samy**, **won the Best Delegation Award**, which is the highest award possible in this conference. Nada applied again this year and was accepted to **represent the delegation** of Djibouti in the Social Affairs Council on behalf of AUC.



#### Community Support

**Ahmad al Zuhbi**, our scholar pursuing his Master of Healthcare Innovation at ASU, is working as a **physiotherapist for Syrian refugees** in Al Azraq Refugee Camp. He is focused on the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities and assessing those with injuries to create a suitable treatment plan.



### C. Workplace Learning (On-Campus and Off-Campus Working Experience)

AGFE facilitates access for our scholars to opportunities where they can gain quality practical experience in a real work environment. This is done through purposeful engagement with good-fit corporates, partner university career centers, and proactive searches by scholars to fulfill their AGFE internship requirement ahead of graduation. By 2020, scholars have completed over 350

internships, and more than half of them (63%) have completed over 47,000 on-campus working hours. Our scholars have completed internships at highly reputable companies representing different sectors in the Arab region. The highest number of internships were secured in three key sectors: **Information and Communication Technology, Engineering, and Medical/Health.**

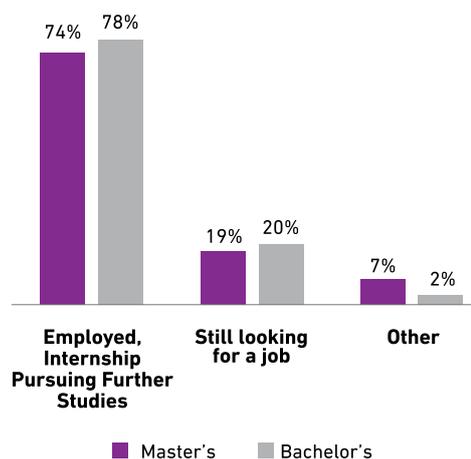
## IV. Graduating Scholars (Alumni)

By the end of 2020, 207 STEM and 34 OLSP scholars have graduated with either a master's or a bachelor's degree. 74% of graduates with a master's degree and 78% of graduates with a bachelor's degree went on to pursue jobs or internships in their fields or to pursue further studies. Our graduates have secured jobs in various governmental agencies, academic institutions, and multinational corporations, such as: Ministry of Education (UAE), University of Cairo (Egypt), Bain & Company (UAE), Cloud Solutions (KSA), and Toshiba (Japan). Moreover, STEM and OLSP graduates that have opted to pursue further studies have been accepted into tier one universities, such as McGill University (Canada) and The University of British Columbia (Canada).

Of the 144 scholars who graduated during the COVID-19 pandemic in a tough labor market, 56 are currently employed, have found an internship opportunity, or are pursuing further studies. For those still looking for employment opportunities, AGFE is supporting alumni

transition into the workplace through the AGFE Alumni Network.

Graph 4: Status of Graduates by Program Level



### AGFE Alumni Network

To continue supporting our scholars in their transition to the world of work and to foster a community of scholars committed to paying it forward and bettering their communities, AGFE continues to engage and support our alumni through the **Al Ghurair Scholars Alumni Network**. Alumni convene through an online communication platform to network and share relevant opportunities, as

well as to connect in an informal and interactive way. For example, during the challenging lockdown period amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the platform was used to share mental health resources, provide job application tips for remote opportunities, and to offer support to our alumni and continuing scholars.

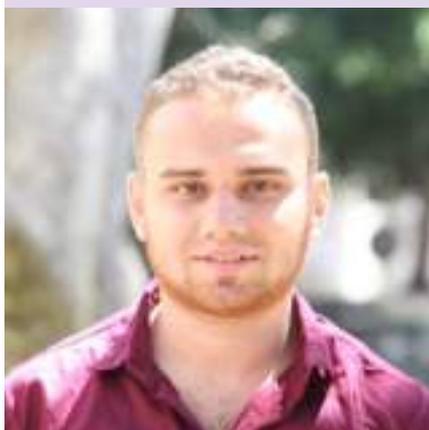
Having achieved our goal of empowering hundreds of deserving Arab youth to become leaders in their respective fields and communities, AGFE is currently

exploring other avenues to expand our reach to serve more youth through education.

### **Abdallah Alhaj Sulaiman**

Syrian, American University of Beirut

“AGFE taught me how to value myself and benefit others. Most importantly, AGFE gifted me hope for a better future.”



### **Ahmed Abderraouf**

Mauritania, Polytechnique Montreal

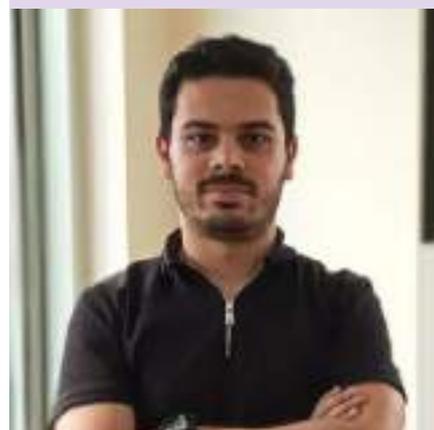
“AGFE provided me with the opportunity to realize my dream.”



### **Abdul Malek Naes**

Syria, Koc University

“AGFE supported me through one of the most crucial stages of my study, which served as a bridge to the successful completion of my educational journey.”



## **2. Leveraging Online Learning**

AGFE has been advocating for high-quality online learning spaces since 2016. As detailed below, we first started our journey with online learning through a collaboration with MIT to facilitate access to micro-credentials that would equip Emirati and Arab youth with skills to enhance their employability. Our experience in this program and feedback from beneficiaries informed our future work. In 2017, when we designed the OLS Program, we engaged with experienced and leading institutions to create a program based on best practices and tailored

to the regional context. We also continued to leverage our partnerships to advocate for online education and capitalized on the lessons learned through this journey to engage public and private partners, later launching the UAE Consortium for Quality Online Learning (UCQOL), which will become an example of how sustainable and innovative partnerships can shape the education ecosystem to be more agile to students' needs.

## I. Al Ghurair MIT MicroMasters Program

In 2016, as part of the vision to promote online learning, AGFE collaborated with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to facilitate access of Arab students to micro-credential programs. The **Al Ghurair MicroMasters Scholarship Program**, AGFE's first entrée work in the online learning space, focused on enhancing employability by giving students the opportunity to enroll in two programs: Supply Chain Management and Data, Economics, and Development Policy (DEDP). The

intention was to create a flexible model which could allow the learner to set their own pace to complete the MicroMasters degree. We quickly learned that online learners in our target groups needed more support and that we could achieve a deeper impact by refining the model. The MicroMasters Scholarship Program provided support to 68 students from 13 Arab countries, and our learnings from the experience informed the design of the OLS Program that followed.



68 Scholars



97% Graduated



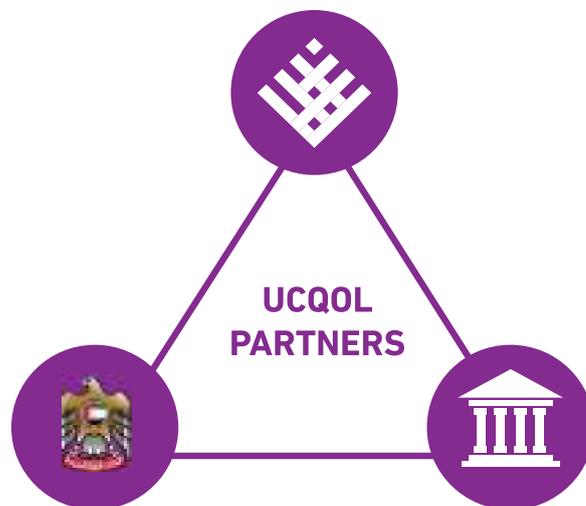
## II. Blended Learning for Capacity Building in the Arab Region with AUB and AUC

In 2017, AGFE collaborated with MIT again for a two-year project to support the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) to build regional capacity for online learning. A critical mass of faculty and instructional designers were trained and coached as part of the initiative to help these universities redesign undergraduate courses and offer online and blended learning courses in selected STEM fields. To date, the courses have allowed 1,196 students to learn STEM subjects online.

In 2019, AGFE continued its collaboration with AUB, this time working with the Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. The project supported AUB through a capacity needs assessment to inform the initiation of a hub that would launch new online degrees and certificates and digitize existing residential courses to transform instruction and make courses accessible to more students. Establishing this hub at AUB will allow it to serve as a regional model for other universities to pursue a similar path.

### III. UAE University Consortium for Quality Online Learning

Following the shift in our focus towards supporting the educational ecosystem, at the end of 2020, AGFE launched a public-private partnership with the UAE Ministry of Education to support nine leading universities in the UAE to help develop high-quality, accredited online programs at their institutions. The UAE University Consortium for Quality Online Learning (UCQOL) serves as a model initiative in the Arab region. It fosters collaboration among leading universities as they launch high-quality online programs and share lessons learned and best practices throughout the process.



The consortium includes nine leading universities in the UAE: American University of Dubai, American University of Sharjah, British University of Dubai, Khalifa University, New York University Abu Dhabi, UAE University, University of Dubai, University of Sharjah, and Zayed University.

#### Nine UAE Universities Participating in UCQOL



In 2020, the project team started implementing the first of four phases. By 2022, UCQOL will be working to achieve the following objectives:

- Creating a university consortium to strengthen collaboration among UAE universities
- Building capacity of leading UAE universities online learning
- Making high-quality accredited online programs available to a wider pool of students

- Serving as a model of online learning for other countries
- Cultivating public-private partnerships

## PILLAR 2: CAREER READINESS AND UPSKILLING PROGRAMS

### Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals



AGFE's upskilling programs reflect the UAE's and Global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda's commitments to equitable and universal access to education, economic growth, and decent work.

In line with SDG 4, the upskilling programs specifically cater to the needs of Emirati and Arab youth, providing them with high-quality education and employment resources. YTP, for instance, was designed taking into consideration the digital barriers facing youth and the lack of high-quality Arabic content available online. Therefore, content is provided in both Arabic and English, free of charge, to youth who may have not been able to access this information previously. In addition, by developing their leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills through the YTP platform, youth are better positioned to pursue higher education opportunities and achieve workplace success. Ultimately, this leads to improved livelihoods for Arab youth and their

communities.

-Target 4.4: Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success

In accordance with SDG 8, AGFE's Upskilling and Career Readiness Programs contribute to improving livelihoods by supporting Emirati and Arab youth across the Arab region alongside private and public sector stakeholders. Given the commitment to elevating livelihoods, there is a focus on creating content to support soft skills development, identifying technical and vocational training opportunities, removing socio-economic barriers (especially for females), and sharing region-specific labor market information via YTP's career assessment tool.

-Target 8.2: Diversify, innovate and upgrade economic productivity

-Target 8.6: Promote youth employment, education and training

Finally, in line with SDG 17, AGFE fosters partnerships across the Arab region to support the engagement, outreach, and acquisition of various upskilling programs. For YTP, AGFE currently engages with a network of 33+ partners who actively promote the program; several have fully integrated it into their mandates and activities. In just over two years since YTP's launch, AGFE has

managed to reach 28,122 youth by the end of 2020, exceeding the program's initial five-year target of 5,000 youth by 462% (4.5 times).<sup>19</sup>

- Target 17.16: Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development
- Target 17.17: Encourage effective partnerships

## 1. Al Ghurair Young Thinkers Program

### Program Overview

Launched in 2018, the Al Ghurair Young Thinkers Program (YTP) was developed as a university and career readiness platform to help Emirati youth. AGFE helps Emirati and Arab youth between the ages of 15 and 35 anywhere in the world, so that they have direct and open access to high quality education and employment-related

information in Arabic and English. AGFE designed YTP in collaboration with Arizona State University (ASU). The UAE's Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE) endorsed YTP and has been using it as part of their efforts to promote better career preparation for Emiratis.

### Progress to Date

Some 48 hours after the program's launch in October 2018, Success Advisors had already reached full capacity. The number of users increased sharply, with 10,996 users joining between October 2018 and December 2019, and an additional 17,126 (156% increase) new users registering in 2020 alone.<sup>20</sup> By the end of 2020, 36% of the registered users on the platform were Emirati and 53% of them were women.

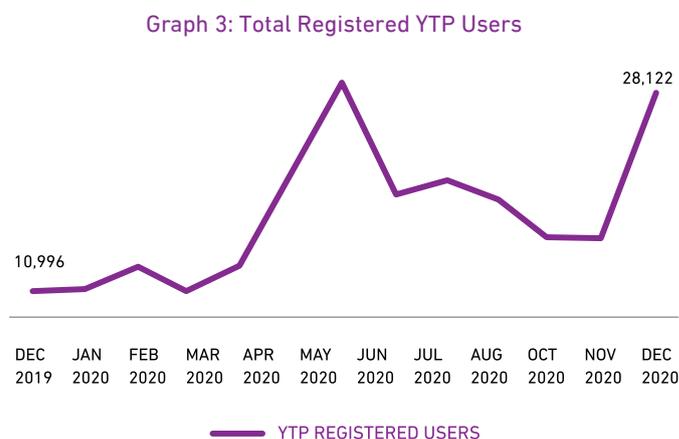


Chart 1: Breakdown of YTP Users by Nationality<sup>21</sup>

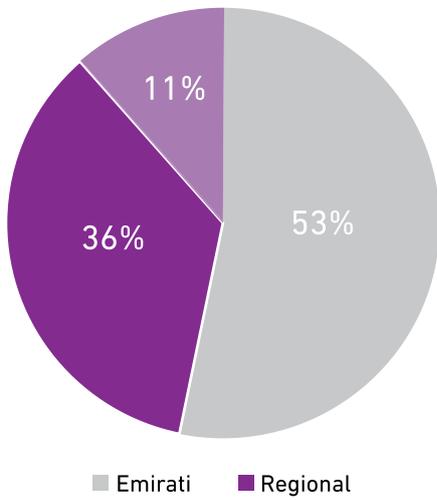
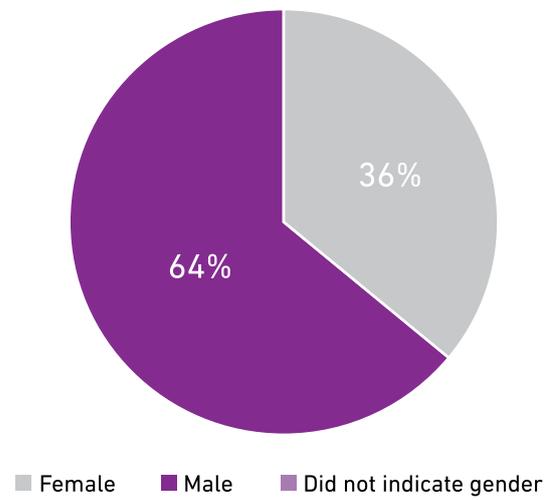


Chart 2: Breakdown of YTP Users by Gender<sup>22</sup>



YTP courses cover a wide range of themes, including university preparedness, career planning, communication skills, leadership and personal development, financial literacy, information and digital literacy, and online safety. All these courses were chosen and developed in response to emerging needs of Emirati and Arab youth and are tailored specifically to meet their aspirations. By the end of 2020, YTP users had completed over 14,000

courses. All courses are offered in both English and Arabic except for the ASU-delivered English Composition and College Algebra & Problem-Solving courses. In 2019, AGFE embarked on adapting the program to ensure relevance to the regional context, in addition to the UAE context. The program’s adjustments have been well received, extending its positive impact to a wider pool of beneficiaries.

### Impact of COVID-19 on YTP

During the COVID-19 pandemic, AGFE adopted an online campaign to promote the program to a wider Arab audience, tailoring it to regional needs and reducing the risks it posed to our stakeholders. As more youth went online during the pandemic, YTP expanded, and partnerships with new institutions were forged to ensure long-term engagement. As partners continue to recognize the value of the content and incorporate it into their operations, the program can be expanded for broader, sustainable outreach.

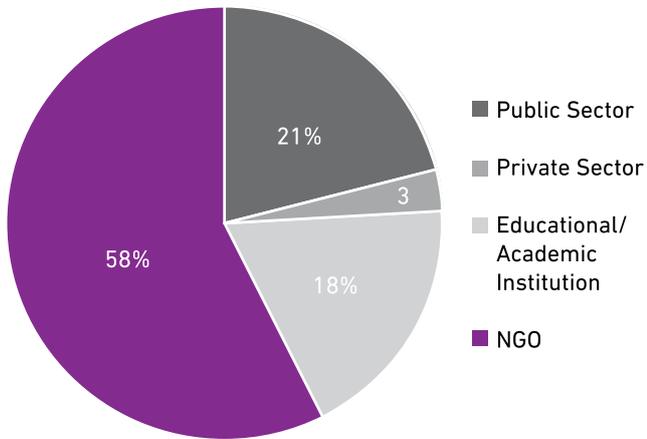
YTP has expanded rapidly and organically since its inception. The shift in 2019 has initiated strategic partnerships with more stakeholders in the public sector and civil society. When COVID-19 struck, AGFE was already implementing a new partner-led strategy for program adoption and implementation. AGFE's model, which identifies strategic youth-facing partners whose mandates also include upskilling, has ensured that the program will expand beyond the Foundation's immediate reach. Several partner organizations, including Zayed

University in the UAE and Luminus Technical University College in Jordan, have started to incorporate YTP into their operations. Similarly, the UAE's Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE) has endorsed YTP and has been using it to boost its efforts to promote career readiness for Emiratis. By 2020, YTP had established 33 formal and non-formal partnerships in the UAE and the Arab region, as shown in Table 2. Charts 3 and 4 clarify the type and location of YTP partners.

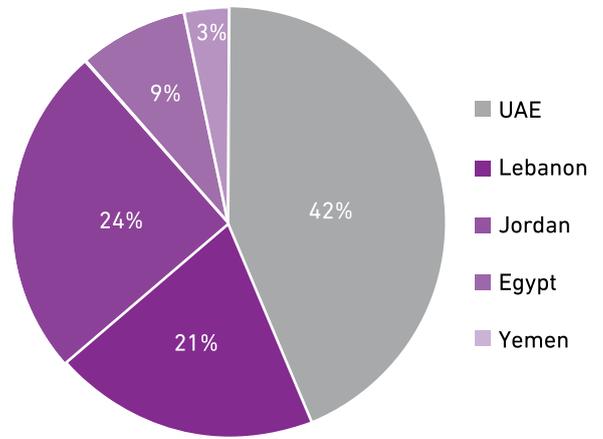
Table 2: List of YTP Partners

Partner	Location	Type of Organization
Crown Prince Court	UAE	Public Sector
Dubai Future Foundation	UAE	Public Sector
Dubai Government Human Resources Department	UAE	Public Sector
Federal Youth Authority	UAE	Public Sector
Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)	UAE	Public Sector
Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation	UAE	Public Sector
Youth4Sustainability/ Masdar	UAE	Public Sector
CareersUAE	UAE	Private Sector
GEMS FirstPoint School	UAE	Educational/Academic Institution
Higher Colleges of Technology	UAE	Educational/Academic Institution
United Arab Emirates University	UAE	Educational/Academic Institution
Zayed University	UAE	Educational/Academic Institution
Emirates Foundation	UAE	NGO
UNHCR UAE	UAE	NGO
American University of Beirut (AUB)	Lebanon	Educational/Academic Institution
Algorithm Lebanon	Lebanon	NGO
DOT Lebanon	Lebanon	NGO
Kiron	Lebanon	NGO
United Lebanon Youth Program (ULYP)	Lebanon	NGO
War Child Holland - Lebanon Office	Lebanon	NGO
World Learning	Lebanon	NGO
Luminus Technical University College	Jordan	Educational/Academic Institution
Crown Prince Foundation	Jordan	NGO
DOT Jordan	Jordan	NGO
The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human	Jordan	NGO
Development Relief International	Jordan	NGO
UNHCR Jordan	Jordan	NGO
UNICEF Jordan	Jordan	NGO
War Child Holland - Jordan Office	Jordan	NGO
Career Guidance Egypt	Egypt	NGO
Institute of International Education (IIE)	Egypt	NGO
Sawiris Foundation	Egypt	NGO
Hadramout Foundation	Yemen	NGO

Graph 3: Type of YTP Partners



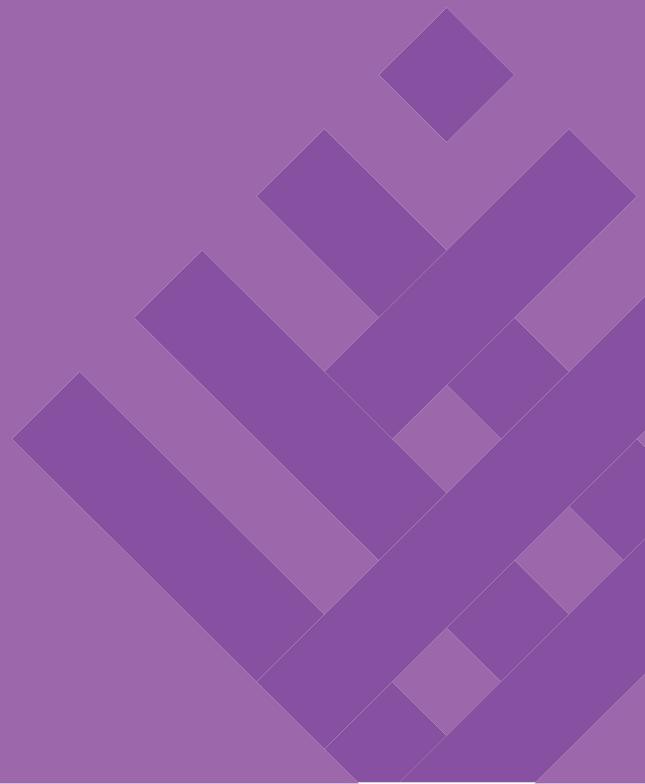
Graph 4: Location of YTP Partners





# HOW DO WE DO IT?

ENABLING FACTORS



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## How Do We Do It? Enabling Factors

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### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Since the Foundation was established, research has been instrumental in informing and supporting the development of our programs and strategic orientation. AGFE has positioned itself as a thought leader in the region by supporting policy makers and other stakeholders through our policy-focused and evidence-based approach.

AGFE is contributing to enriching knowledge about education in the Arab region. Moreover, AGFE works together with other key players to collaborate on joint projects and share expertise to build a regional community of evidence-informed decision-makers.

Below are some of our key publications:

#### I. Research and Policy Briefs

- Charting a Path Forward: a Multi-stakeholder Collaboration to Promote Blended Learning in the Arab World (2020)
- Emergency Remote Teaching or Online Learning? Arab Students Experiences during COVID-19 (2020)
- Empowering Emiratis to Drive the Nation: The Al Ghurair Young Thinkers Program (2020)
- Online Learning in the Arab World: An Educational Model that Needs Support (2020)
- Employment Trends, Challenges and Opportunities for Refugees in Jordan (2019)
- Pathways to and Beyond Education in Jordan and Lebanon (2019)
- Investing in Tomorrow's Talent: A Study on the College and Career Readiness of Arab Youth (2018)

#### II. Reports

- Foundations & The Future of Higher Education: Highlights from our Forum (2019)
- Inception Report: our First Years in Review (2018)
- 2017: A Year in Review

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Partnerships and collaborations with stakeholders that share our values enable us to scale the Foundation's positive impacts. We have been engaging with various stakeholders including academic institutions, the public and private sectors, and NGOs, to promote a more inclusive and transformative vision of education in the Arab region. Together, we are researching

and co-creating practical cross-sector solutions that are preparing our youth for better employment and opportunities for elevated livelihoods.

Effective collaborations like these generate measurable impact, which is crucial to building successful ecosystems for students and their communities.

To accomplish this, we:

- Support initiatives and practical research that lead to system level change;
- Engage private and public-sector stakeholders in co-designing and implementing outcome-focused solutions; and
- Build capacity of educational institutions to design and provide high-quality online learning opportunities.





# MOVING FORWARD

OUR STRATEGY  
2020-2025



## Moving Forward: Our Strategy 2020-2025

The Foundation is committed to promoting access to quality higher education for a greater breadth of vulnerable people in a region that has multiple challenges and is dedicated to the realization of the UN SDGs 4, 8, and 17. As we enter the next chapter of our work, focusing on system strengthening and innovation in education that leads to employment, our strategic goals for 2025 include:

- ✔ Supporting **50,000 Emirati learners** in becoming ready for higher education and work;
- ✔ Providing **150,000 Arab youth** with a path to sustainable elevated livelihoods through high-quality educational solutions; and

- ✔ Leveraging **knowledge and technology partnerships** to help ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning solutions in the Arab region.

Our new strategy focuses on **creating better cohesion of programs for bigger impact and creating influence for sustainable change** at the local (UAE) and regional levels through **authentic engagement, strategic partnerships, and knowledge sharing and production.**

We remain committed to ensuring Emirati and Arab youth have access to a high-quality education by providing them with ladders of opportunity to build a stronger tomorrow.



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Arab Human Development Report. United Nations Development Programme, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Data pulled from Arab Development Portal.

<sup>3</sup> Youth Employment in the Middle East and Africa: Revisiting and Reframing the Challenge. Brookings, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> UIS Institute for Statistics. United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), 2020. (The UNESCO Arab States' averages do not include Comoros.)

<sup>5</sup> Data pulled from UNICEF MENA Education Programme.

<sup>6</sup> Lower secondary completion rate, total (% of relevant age group), World Bank, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Youth Employment in the Middle East and Africa: Revisiting and Reframing the Challenge. Brookings, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Gatti, R., Morgandi, M., Brodmann, S., Angel-Urdinola, D., Moreno, J.M., Marotta, D., Schiff Bauer, M., Mata Lorenzo, E. Jobs for Shared Prosperity Jobs for Shared Prosperity, Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa. World Bank, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Global Employment Trends for youth 2020: Arab States. International Labour Organization, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Applications are received from 21 Arab states: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

<sup>13</sup> School enrolment, tertiary, female (% gross) - Arab World. World Bank, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> School enrollment, tertiary, female (% gross) – World. World Bank, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> School enrollment, tertiary, female (% gross) - Arab World. World Bank, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Refugee students in higher education, DAFI Annual Report, UNHCR, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> El-Ghali, H. et al., Pathways to and Beyond Education for Refugee Youth in Jordan and Lebanon, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) and the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE), 2019.

<sup>18</sup> <https://firstgen.naspa.org/>

<sup>19</sup> The initial target was set for 5,000 students by 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Data extracted from Salesforce (the data platform powering YTP)

<sup>21</sup> Users' data Jan – Oct 2020

<sup>22</sup> Data pulled from ASU Scorecard, dated Jan 2021.





# GET INVOLVED

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To learn more about our work and to stay updated with AGFE news

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Connect with us on Social Media



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