



تَقَدَّم
taqaddam

External Evaluation Report Summary 2015-2019



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This report is a summary of an external evaluation of years 1 - 4 of the Taqaddam programme commissioned by the British Council and delivered by Ecorys. The purpose was to undertake an evaluation with a view to providing evidence of outcomes that will generate wider interest from policymakers, practitioners and donors and enable future adaptations and growth.

Executive Summary

- Taqaddam is a partnership programme between HSBC and the British Council, which pioneers a holistic vision of education, providing young people between the ages of 15 and 17 with an opportunity to develop life skills.
 - Ecorys was commissioned by the British Council to undertake an evaluation on Years 1-4 of the Taqaddam programme with a view to providing evidence of outcomes that will generate wider interest from policymakers, practitioners and donors and enable future adaptation and scale up.
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- An outcome harvesting approach was used to identify how the programme benefited students and teachers. Evidence from interviews in Egypt, Oman and the UAE were triangulated with available secondary data and interviews with staff from across Taqaddam's other target countries.
 - The evaluation has found **positive impact of life skills learning** on young Arab participants and their teachers across target countries. Taqaddam's character strengths and soft skills are relevant, as demonstrated through the outcomes harvested.
 - For students, 16 outcomes were identified. The most frequently mentioned outcomes, supported by the strongest evidence include: **Enhanced social networks and improved teamwork, more effective communication skills and increased confidence**. Taqaddam contributed to these outcomes through multiple programme components, including the Make it Happen event, workshops, facilitators and inter-school component.
 - For teachers, 5 outcomes were identified: **new teaching techniques, professional advancement, personal development, lasting relationships between teachers and students and influence in school environments**. Taqaddam contributed to these outcomes through delivering teacher trainings and lessons plans.
 - The following programme components were reported as working particularly well: The Inter-school component, student handbook, synergy between programme strands, weekly sessions, workshops and tailored content for differing country contexts
 - The evaluation identified 8 recommendations to improve the programme, strengthen its innovation and sustainability and help it to remain competitive. Recommendations focused on refining the scope of the programme, enhancing local capacity and ownership, strengthening collaboration with graduate and external networks, optimising the digital platform and identifying a cohort of students to support longitudinal learning.

11,211
YOUNG PEOPLE
taken part



**OVER
306**
workshops

94%
rated
workshops
good or
AWESOME

2,188
SOCIAL
ACTION
projects



**IMPROVED
teamwork**

509
schools and
colleges

563 trained
AMBASSADORS

81%
said they KNEW
THEMSELVES
better

518 trained in
TEACHERS *life skills*
education



78%
felt better
CONNECTED
to different
people



developed
EFFECTIVE
communication
skills



improved
GENDER
relations

INCREASED
social
networks



*"Taqaddam provides a **safe** and **empowering**
space for young people to **build crucial skills**
that equip them to **lead fulfilling lives.**"*

Ecorys, External Evaluators, 2019

Executive Summary

Unique: One of few initiatives focusing on soft skills and addressing young people's social and personal needs. *"An anchor and compass to rely on when facing pressures."*

Relevant: Taqaddam's programme and curriculum are relevant, as demonstrated by the research and through the outcomes harvesting

Impactful: Positive impact of life skills learning on young people and teachers, with life long personal value

Timely: Responding to a unique window of opportunity in the region, and in young people's lives

Innovative: Through pioneering innovative approaches, Taqaddam is helping to shape the life skills conversation in the MENA region.

Sustainable: A strong core programme with a flexible model that can adapt to different contexts, to different audiences and to changing educational needs



"Taqaddam has provided a safe and empowering space for young people to gain a heightened sense of self and build crucial skills that equip them to lead fulfilling lives. It is the only programme of its kind in the Arab region to fully adopt a life skills learning approach and favourably intersect with existing educational, social, technological and family channels."

"What makes the programme particularly unique is its focus on soft skills and its ability to address the social and personal frustrations faced by young people across the region. While policy and programming in MENA overwhelmingly focuses on entrepreneurialism, 21st century skills and building future workforces, Taqaddam is occupying a niche gap by providing young people with a platform to have a voice and feel listened to. In doing this, it is responding to what young people in the region want and care about, including opportunities for active civic engagement, community volunteerism and social action, all of which lead to positive multiplier effects on their formal education and wider interaction with their communities and society, meeting a critical need in the region."

Ecorys Evaluation Report

Why Taqaddam?

Among policymakers, researchers, educators, employers and young people themselves, there is broad recognition that formal education systems are not fully preparing young people for life beyond the classroom. **Many students are graduating without the competencies and 'soft skills' required to succeed in further education and in the workplace**, and subsequently lack the social and emotional skills needed to navigate the next stage of their lives and build lasting personal and community relationships.

Meanwhile, **the world is changing at an accelerating pace**. New technologies and industries are shifting how the world and workplace operates. Artificial intelligence and automation are raising questions about the future of work, social media is changing the way we connect, and the boundary between the online and offline world is increasingly blurred. The climate crisis, resource depletion, increasingly competitive labour market requirements and growing inequalities mean that **business as usual is no longer an option**. Social, political, economic and environmental uncertainty is bringing additional challenges to young people during their most formative years and poses a significant challenge to **education systems which struggle to adapt and modernise**. These challenges continue to profoundly affect Arab youth, who represent one third of overall Arab populations and represent the second largest demographic in the world.

At the same time, this changing world is also energising **a new and socially engaged generation that is driving innovation and creativity**. Taqaddam capitalises on this by providing young people with core life skills which build their resilience to change and inspires them to galvanise their skills and lead the way.

There is a well-documented global demand with organisations like UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and many others advocating for the kinds of life skills education that Taqaddam delivers.

A Window of Opportunity in MENA

Between 2025 and 2050 the Arab region is expected to experience a demographic dividend, with a unique and timely window of opportunity emerging whereby there will be significant growth in the working age population compared to dependents¹. Crucial to capitalising on this opportunity will be the contribution of a generation of confident and empowered young people equipped with the life skills to successfully navigate and lead change.



Adolescence

Adolescence is the optimal time to be exposed to experiences and lessons that develop emotional and social skills. During this time, the brain has the potential to develop physically in ways that support positive ways of thinking and behaving.

What is Taqaddam?

Taqaddam is a Life Skills programme for young people. It supports young people to move forward with confidence into the future with the skills they need to flourish in life, work and society.

- Taqaddam was launched in 2015 and has recently concluded its fourth year of delivery.

¹ UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (2014)

- It is a partnership programme between HSBC and the British Council, which pioneers a holistic vision of education, providing young people between the ages of 15 and 17 with an opportunity to develop life skills.
- The programme aims to build young people's confidence, communication skills, self-awareness and learning mind-set to help them lead more resilience and productive lives, with a particular focus on life skills that develop creativity, leadership and critical thinking.
- Taqaddam takes place over a 10 to 13 week period and is largely delivered in schools.
- To date, the programme has reached more than 5,400 students, over 370 teachers and 250 schools across the Middle East and North Africa region. (Up to year 4)
- The programme has operated in Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and the UK.

Taqaddam teaches participants five core character strengths, as well as five key soft skills. These skills are critical for their success in higher education and the workplace yet are not always explicitly provided through formal education.

Character strengths

-  **Spark:** enjoying what you do, being interested in things and wanting to learn more
-  **Purpose:** feeling meaning in life, having future goals and working towards these
-  **Confidence:** understanding who you are, believing in yourself and your capabilities
-  **Mettle:** being resilient, determined and persevering when things are difficult
-  **Positive emotions:** exploring emotions and becoming more connected and open

Soft skills

-  **Creativity and imagination:** expressing thoughts and developing innovative ideas
-  **Critical thinking and problem-solving:** thinking independently and developing solutions
-  **Communities and citizenship:** taking a more active role in improving society
-  **Communication and collaboration:** articulating and listening and working with others
-  **Student leadership:** identifying problems and seeking creative solutions

Some of the intended outcomes of the programme include young people understanding the value and importance of life skills; having a greater sense of self-awareness and agency; and feel an increase in confidence and connection with their communities. Taqaddam has a focus on outcomes for girls and young women and monitor engagement by gender.

Core Programme Components

Weekly sessions are structured about the **five character strengths**, and help students to understand what they mean, apply these in their everyday lives and reflect with one another on how this has impacted them.

Taqaddam employs a **blended-learning approach**, combining online activities with practical face-to-face workshops for teachers and young people and ending with an inter-school competition.

The programme is made up of six **core components**:

- Workshops
- Online platform
- Student Handbook
- Teacher training
- Make it Happen projects and event
- Alumni network



Workshops: These interactive sessions build understanding of Taqaddam and the five core strengths of spark, purpose, confidence, mettle and positive emotions, whilst providing an opportunity for students to engage with students from other schools and backgrounds.

Online platform: Includes 30 digital missions for students to complete based on character strengths and soft skills.

Handbook: Provides an overview of how soft skills and character strengths work together, and includes case studies with reflection tasks encouraging students to write and draw what they have learned and develop action plans.

Teacher training: Teachers receive training in how to apply the life skills ethos, materials and curricula in their practice, and then deliver weekly classes at school with Taqaddam students.

Make it Happen: The Make it Happen event is the culmination of the Taqaddam programme, bringing students from participating schools together to devise, research, develop and present an original idea or product designed to address a problem in their community.

Alumni network: Students are encouraged to stay involved after completing the programme by becoming a Student Ambassador. They receive training in coaching and helping to mentor future students.

Background to the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Generate evidence of programme effectiveness and provide clear, tangible recommendations for improving programme design, implementation, innovation and sustainability;
- Provide an assessment of good practice established under the programme, including enabling and constraining factors that have both supported and prevented positive results from manifesting;
- Provide an assessment of gaps under the programme, including identification of recommendations for future improvement.

The evaluation was conducted in two phases:

Phase 1 focused on establishing an overview of key activities and results. It involved a review of programme documentation, monitoring and evaluation data and previous evaluation reports, as well as remote interviews with available stakeholders.

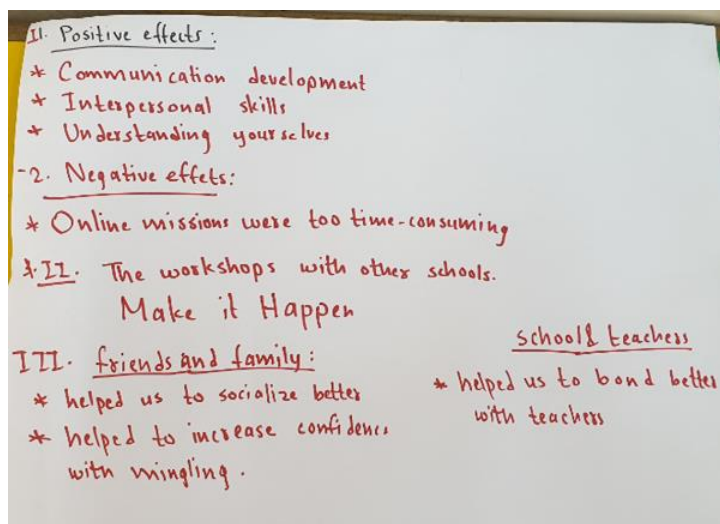
Phase 2 involved ‘deep dives’- more thorough investigation of the programme – in Egypt, Oman and UAE, including primary data collection in-country as well as remote interviews with stakeholders in Qatar.

Stakeholder	Numbers interviewed
Students	111
Teachers	25
School leaders	2
Parents	10
Government	2
External	9
Internal	17

- Data collection was interactive and focused on young people and teacher’s experiences. Researchers worked with students and teachers to ‘map’ what changed, identify specific, observable examples of this and understand the contributing programme and external factors.
- Overarching questions:
 - **What happened, to who, and why?**
 - **What are the contributory factors?**
 - **How do we know this? What is the corroborating evidence?**
- An outcome harvesting approach was used to identify how the programme benefited students and teachers; Evidence on how the programme affected students and teachers was categorised and outcome descriptions were formed based on the interpretation of emerging themes.
- Evidence from interviews in Egypt, Oman and the UAE was triangulated with available secondary data and interviews with staff from across Taqaddam’s other target countries.

Overview of Outcomes

- The outcome harvesting approach identifies a broad range of outcomes across stakeholders.
- Key outcomes identified across students and teachers, categorised by how common they were (based on the number of stakeholders who mentioned it unprompted) and how strong the supporting evidence was for them and Taqaddam's contribution.
- We assessed the strength of evidence for the outcomes. Those with the strongest evidence are outcomes that were verified by multiple stakeholders (including students, teachers, principals, facilitators, programme staff, parents and independent external experts), with clear and concrete examples that the outcome occurred and direct links to Taqaddam activities.



Student outcomes and strength of evidence

16 individual outcomes were discovered. Overall, the most frequently mentioned outcomes among students were:

- **Enhanced social networks and improved teamwork**
- **More effective communication skills**
- **Increased confidence**

For these, there was **strong evidence of change** which was corroborated by a range of stakeholders, and specific examples were provided of Taqaddam's contribution, as well as **strong links and descriptions** of how the programme supported these outcomes.

Frequency				
Almost all (80%+)				
Most (50-80%)				
Some (30-50%)				
Few (10-30%)				
Very Few (0-10%)				

Strength of Evidence	Colour
Strong	
Moderate	
Weak	

Outcome: [Improved]	Frequency	Evidence: Taqaddam contribution	Evidence: For the outcome
Social Network & Teamwork			
Communication Skills			
Confidence			
Presentation Skills			
Self-Awareness			
Social Awareness			
Gender Relations			

Student Outcome

Example: Improved social network and teamwork

Explanation of outcome

- Students exhibited improved teamwork, demonstrating more willingness to collaborate and showing an improved sense of community and support for one another.
- Students commented that the programme eliminated rivalry between schools.
- Students reported the ability to pre-empt and mitigate conflicts arising in their schools by talking issues through in a sensitive way. This outcome was linked to an improved ability to deal with the opposite sex, which led to more open and communicative students.



How Taqaddam contributed to the outcome

- Through planning and executing Make it Happen projects, students learned how to deal with opposing opinions, take different ideas on board, and work together to design and achieve a common end goal. They were able to delegate tasks based on different skill levels and talents, finding a common purpose in doing so that brought them closer together.
- Facilitators were an important factor in this outcome through emphasising that all students in a group have the right to speak, mitigating team conflicts and teaching students to keep calm, understand others and work together.
- A student in Oman reflected, “Working in groups gave us confidence in our abilities. Each team member knew what they were good at and we had confidence in presenting. We learned to divide labour, share ideas and solve problems”.

Student Outcome Example: More effective communication skills

Explanation of outcome

- Students exhibited improved communication skills, including being able to form opinions and articulate their ideas more fluently and being more willing to listen to alternative options.
- Students have also strengthened their understanding of non-verbal cues such as body language. One student in Oman noted: “I used to speak like I was frozen. Now I know how to engage my body language with facial expressions and posture”.
- One parent reported that her daughter could now negotiate her opinions with others, was less stubborn in arguments and more accepting of other people’s input.
- Students also noted that now, if they get into arguments with their peers, they are able to solve their disputes amicably, through communication learning from one another



How Taqaddam contributed to the outcome

This outcome was attributed to a number of programme components including:

- Extensive practice of communication skills during weekly sessions;
- Presenting at Make It Happen as well as critiquing of Make it Happen project ideas;
- Having the opportunity to meet and interact with a diverse range of students through Taqaddam’s inter-school component;
- Workshop activities including the ‘mingle, mingle’ exercise, whereby students were encouraged to speak with students from different backgrounds for the first time, which taught them how to introduce themselves to strangers and start and maintain conversations with new people.
- Some students started to interact with people outside of their childhood friendship groups for the first time. One student in UAE noted, ‘I met a lot of people, interacted with a lot of kids. It was a new thing for me – I usually stay in the same bubble and don’t come out much, but it helped me to socialise a lot’.

Student Outcome Example: Increased Confidence

Explanation of outcome

- Students were able to communicate more effectively after taking part in the programme and no longer experienced the same fear and hesitation that they had

experienced before. Students also demonstrated increased levels of independence and self-efficacy, relying less on their parents and families.

- A student in Oman reflected: “It gave me confidence in who I am and how to convey myself to other people”.
- Multiple students who self-identified as shy won awards for their speaking abilities after the programme, with others joining Model UN Clubs, leading school assemblies and feeling more confident in asserting their viewpoint within their friendship groups.



How Taqaddam contributed to the outcome

- Through the inter-school component of the programme and the Make it Happen competition, students were able to communicate more effectively with strangers, friends, the public and professionals, opening up and sharing ideas, demonstrating their achievements to peers and no longer experiencing the same fear and hesitation that they had experienced before.
- Students credited the inclusivity of the facilitator’s approach, in particular the lack of boundaries imparted on topics of conversation, which made everyone feel equally important and increased their self-confidence. Facilitators also played a key role in mitigating conflicts. One student noted, “when they see from afar you are conflicting with someone in the group, they come and try to solve it. This taught me you should keep calm and try to understand others”.
- Many students also experienced less judgement through Taqaddam, being more confident in who they truly are and caring less about what others think of them due to empowering messages reinforced by facilitators, online missions and handbooks.

"I learned that the youth are the true leaders of our world and it is very important to take the opportunity to make them reach their full potential."

Young Person, Student Endline, Qatar, 2019

"I learned to be a better team member, and gain confidence. The process taught me to become more innovative and think critically."

Young Person, Endline Survey, UAE 2019



'Taqaaddam has provided a safe and empowering space for young people to gain a heightened sense of self and build crucial skills that equip them to lead fulfilling lives. It is the only programme of its kind in the Arab region to fully adopt a life skills learning approach and favourably intersect with existing educational, social, technological and family channels.'

Ecorys Evaluation

Overview of Teacher Outcomes

Teachers also benefited from the programme. 5 Teacher Outcomes were identified:

- New teaching techniques;
- Professional advancement;
- Personal development;
- Lasting relationships between teachers and students; and
- Influence in school environments



Teacher Outcome Example: New Teaching Techniques

Explanation of Outcome

- Teachers developed a **‘toolbox’** of skills and activities and gained an increased **understanding of the value and power of life skills** on the lives of young people, applying Taqaddam’s core principles in their own classes.
- In Egypt, teachers used their own initiative to incorporate **character building activities** within wider classes across all age groups, whereas previously this subject had been taught as part of a ‘free’ curriculum with insufficient resources and fluctuating impact.
- One teacher started to **encourage students to express themselves through drawing and writing**, assimilating techniques she learnt through Taqaddam to benefit students with a range of abilities and personality traits.

How Taqaddam contributed to the outcome

- Many teachers shared tips and content from **trainings** with one another through online communities, and some developed their own new methodologies based on adapting **Taqaddam lesson plans**.
- Teachers’ personal openness to experiential teaching approaches was an influential factor. Those in the UAE and Egypt were enthusiastic to pilot new approaches, but in Oman they tended to feel these were imposed on them and were less comfortable/

Teacher Outcome Example: New Teaching Techniques

Explanation of Outcome

- ▶ Teachers developed professionally, including through **more effective communication skills, leadership abilities and promotional opportunities**.
- ▶ They discovered skills they were unaware they possessed through interacting with other teachers and learning more about themselves and ‘new systems of education.’
- ▶ A teacher in the UAE reported that she was **promoted to Head of Department** as a result of the **increased confidence and team leadership abilities** she was able to demonstrate and reference to her manager following her participation in Taqaddam.

How Taqaddam contributed to the outcome

- ▶ Taqaddam provided an **environment for teachers to explore their potential, consider new options and develop career goals**.
- ▶ “Taqaddam is a way to explore yourself... you get to know your potential, what you’re good at, what you need to work on. You eventually end up in a better place” - Teacher in UAE.

Year 4 Data

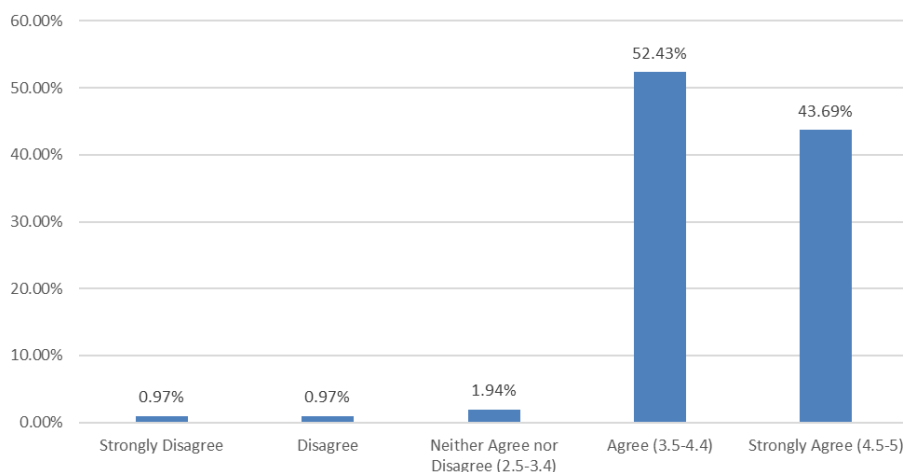
Year 4 Engagement

	Schools / colleges	Students	Teachers	Student Ambassadors
Bahrain	37	337	76	42
Egypt	23	480	41	55
Kuwait	37	527	37	4
Morocco	1	370	22	12
Oman	2	627	30	19
Qatar	14	286	26	7
UAE	19	372	38	29
TOTAL	133	2999	270	168

Impact

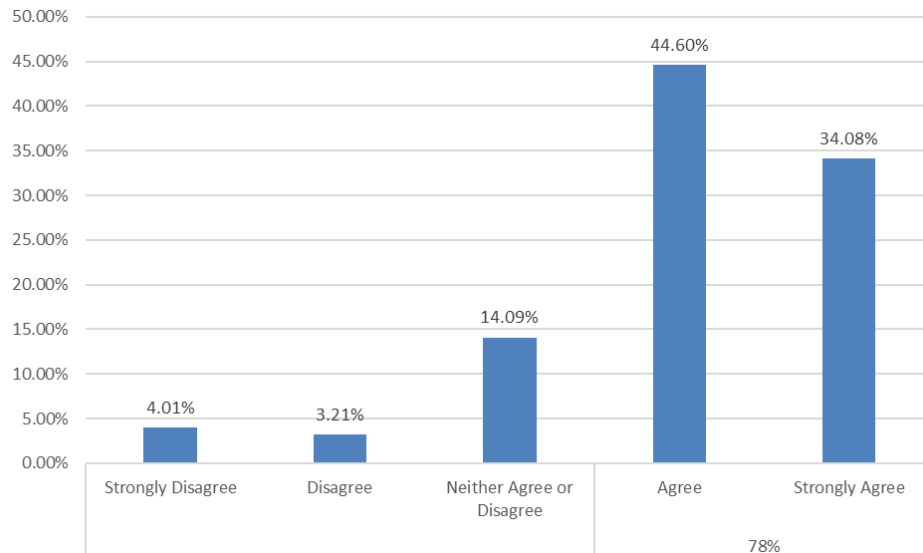
- 80.8% felt they knew themselves more than at the beginning of the programme.
- 81% of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I know more about what my strengths are”.
- 85% of young people felt they had more control over their lives.

Impact: Greater control over my life



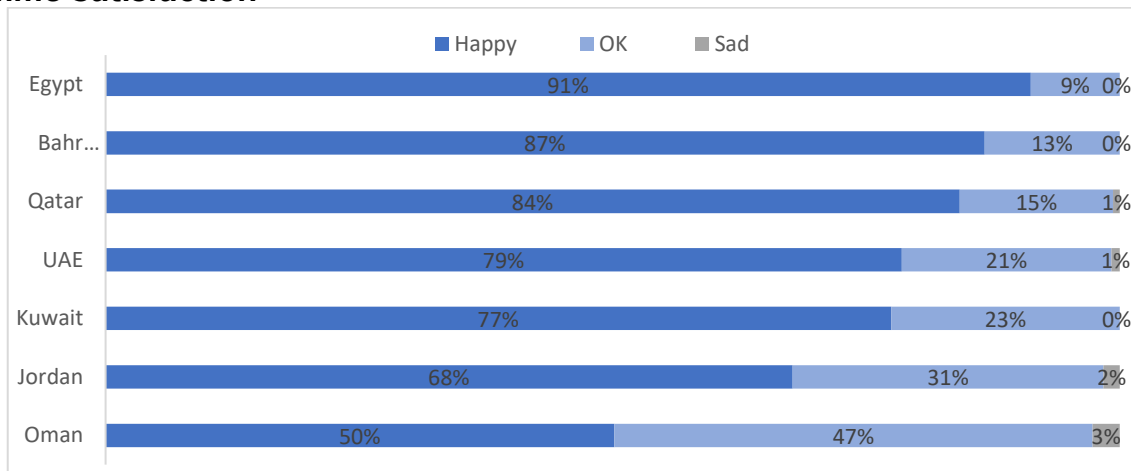
On average, the school score was 4.27, suggesting that students on average agreed that they had gained a greater sense of control over their life.

Impact: Feeling more connected to different people



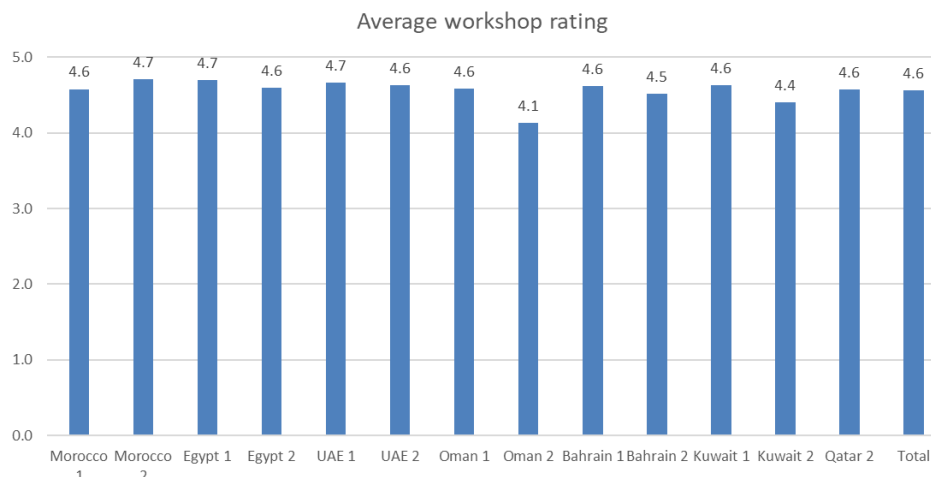
78% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more connected to different people

Programme Satisfaction



Programme satisfaction was less in Oman where the programme was mandatory. Overall programme satisfaction was 86% excluding Oman, and 78% including Oman

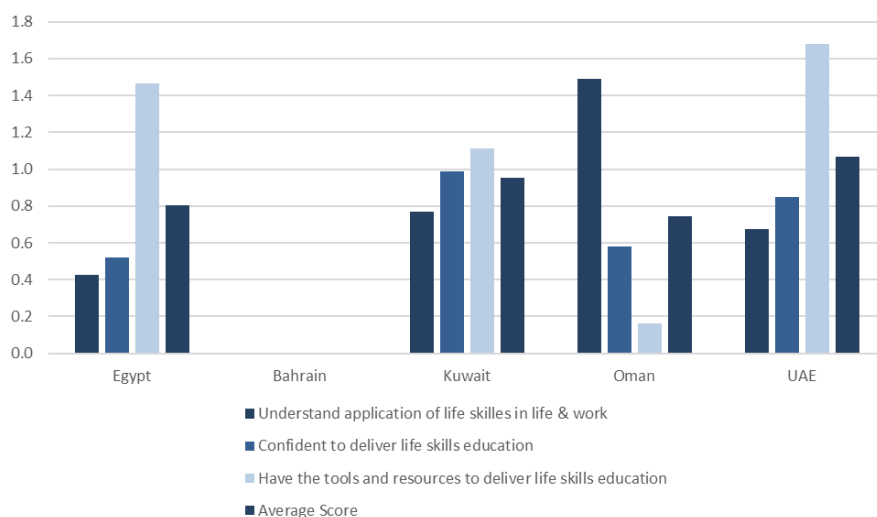
Workshop Satisfaction



94% of young people rated the workshops good or awesome

Teacher Outcomes

Change in teacher scores between baseline and endline for the three questions and average (Missing data for Bahrain)



Total engagement to date (September 2020)

**Numbers reached so far in Year 5*

Students						
Country	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5*	Total
Egypt	233	284	449	480	594	2040
Bahrain	200	300	366	337	286	1489
Qatar	156	260	291	286	301	1294
Kuwait	215	343	410	527	480	1975
Oman	-	262	445	627	125	1459
UAE	240	253	402	372	416	1683
Lebanon	190	161	0	0	0	351
Morocco	-	-	-	370	300	670
Jordan	-	-	250	-	-	250
Total Reach	1234	1863	2613	2999	2502	11,211



Examples of Sustainable Impact

Taqaddam has been embedded into formal systems across a number of countries thereby extending impact to wider teachers and students while building local ownership and sustainability.

- In Qatar and Kuwait, Ministries of Education have integrated the programme's framework into national curricula.
- In the UAE, the government is working to roll out the programme across all seven Emirates
- In Bahrain, the British Council worked closely with the Directorate of General and Vocational Education to reach all secondary schools in the country.
- Few schools in Egypt has incorporated Taqaddam into the subject of 'character development' across the whole school. Other teachers are developing and sharing content between them and are adapting lesson plans for other subjects according to Taqaddam methodologies

Taqaddam has also influenced school cultures. Multiple stakeholders reported schools becoming more open-minded and inclusive, with decreased peer pressure, new friendships formed and students from Taqaddam socialising outside of their normal groups, thereby setting a healthier precedent for other students.



“Taqaddam has positioned itself as the leading life skills development programme for young people across the MENA region. While a number of governmental and non-governmental initiatives aim to equip young people with skills to improve their lives, these overwhelmingly focus on developing entrepreneurial skills. Taqaddam is responding to a unique window of opportunity, addressing the social and personal needs faced by young people and providing them with an anchor and compass to rely on as they navigate their transition into adulthood.”

What Worked Well?

The following components of the Taqaddam programme were mentioned by stakeholders as working particularly well:

- Inter-school component
- Student handbook
- Synergy between programme strands
- Weekly sessions
- Workshops
- Tailored content for differing country contexts

Inter-School component

- In workshops and during the Make It Happen competition, Taqaddam brings together students from various different schools, coming from different backgrounds, ages and cultures.
- Cited across multiple countries as **improving student's confidence, communication skills, social networks and appreciation for diversity**.
- Students reported that they were more willing to respect each other's opinions after interacting with other schools, and were more forgiving. This was particularly valued in the UAE, where students enjoyed meeting people from other cultures, schools and Emirati states such as Ras al Khaimah, helping them to open up and learn about other cultures and lifestyles.

Student Handbook

- The Student Handbook provides an overview of how soft skills and character strengths work together, and includes case studies with reflection tasks encouraging students to write and draw what they have learned and develop action plans.
- Overall, the handbook was **relevant to local contexts** and **tailored to 'real-life' scenarios**, including stories about leading national figures.
- This encouraged students to think differently about their future and made the content more relatable.
- The handbook also proved to be an **important legacy of Taqaddam**, as students were able to record significant moments and reference these beyond the programme's lifetime.

Synergy between programme strands

- Stakeholders felt that the programme components aligned well with each other.
- Students were able to utilise and directly apply key skills gained through workshops and the handbook when developing Make it Happen ideas, and felt these provided them with motivation and confidence that helped during the competition final.
- While teachers noted that the handbook and online missions were too different in the first year of the programme which made it challenging to instruct, these were ultimately adapted to include the same tasks.

Weekly Sessions

- Weekly sessions structured around the five character strengths help students to understand what they mean, apply these in their everyday lives and reflect with one another on how this has impacted them and how they can continue to apply them in their academic and personal lives.
- Most students appreciated the weekly school sessions, especially when they started with an activity related to one of the core strengths such as confidence and spark which inspired them and helped them to reflect on content from the handbook in a group setting.

- Some teachers mentioned that their schools do not have many extra-curricular activities, and as such students enjoyed dedicating one hour a week to Taqaddam.

Workshops

- The **interactive** nature of the workshops was the most important component, with unusual ice-breaker activities such as ‘name games’ and ‘rhythm games’ helping to relax and break down barriers between students from different backgrounds.
- Overall, workshops brought an **appropriate balance between seriousness and playfulness**, and numerous students rated the approach of bringing different schools together.

Tailored content for differing country contexts

- For the most part, Taqaddam was assessed to be a good fit in the country contexts it operated in.
- It was noted that **in Oman, Taqaddam targets the priority needs of employability skills for University students** as recognised by state, private, and education stakeholders as well as students and parents.
- **In Egypt, Taqaddam responds to the current market needs** and skills sought by young Egyptians who are familiar with Anglophone cultural production.
- The gradual participation of **local facilitators** in the programme also enhanced the cultural translation and acceptability of the content and delivery.



Programme Assets

Over the last five years Taqaddam has put down solid foundations for a sustainable growth and holds some extremely valuable assets, from networks and relationships to resources and materials.

**A strong core curriculum:
the 'student journey'**

**Innovative, participatory learning
methodologies, unique to Taqaddam**

**A 160-page Student Handbook,
containing information, inspiration
and personal learning 'missions'**

**A public Life Skills App. The
first project app released
by the British Council.**

**Delivery models and
resources for face to face,
online and blended delivery**

**A 120-page teacher resource pack,
including step-by-step life skills
classes and supporting materials**

**Life skills resources,
created for the programme
and available publicly**

**A hugely experienced
team of facilitators from
the UK and Egypt**

**British Council country
teams with 5 years of
delivery experience**

**Strong working and personal relationships
with key stakeholders in Government and
education in Programme countries**

**A knowledge base including
commissioned life skills education
research, literature review and research
into blended learning in MENA**

Recommendations and Responses

Recommendation 1: Refine objectives and purpose, and ensure this is clearly shared with all stakeholders

There is a diverse range of understandings of what Taqaddam is. Further clarity on the programme objectives, and the scope of the programme to be provided to all participants, to manage expectations, ensure participants are motivated to engage for the right reasons and support coherence in the way the programme is delivered.

Response

- Simplified project aims, structure and learning programme
- Initiated the first face to face induction and consultation meeting with all country project managers
- Redrafted all Taqaddam materials for dissemination to teachers, students and other stakeholders
- Included Principals / Heads and other stakeholders in teacher workshops

Recommendation 2: Refine target audience and geographical expansion

Taqaddam students generally fall within the upper tier of the educational spectrum. Several stakeholders also noted that there is significant variation between countries across the MENA region. Students from GCC countries enjoy relative privileges compared to their peers in other MENA countries.

In order to expand accessibility of Taqaddam, the programme could consider the feasibility of trialling activities outside of formal school contexts, or adapting and providing online versions of the programme, targeting more disadvantaged and vulnerable youth who cannot be accessed through the main channels such as schools and the Ministries of Education.

Response

- Recognising that target schools and audiences are mostly set by the Ministries, we continue to seek ways to reach out through dialogue with Ministries and through new partnerships.
- We have developed a more flexible model to enable delivery in different settings and with different audiences. For example, we piloted delivery in a single school, adapting to their specific needs.
- We have stepped up our commitment to inclusion, piloting delivery with students with special needs and planning a programme wide inclusion audit to inform developments.
- We commissioned research into blended learning to build our capacity in this area. The Covid pandemic has also accelerated plans to develop and pilot digital delivery

Recommendation 3: Enhance ownership and embed local capacity

The evaluation has highlighted a growing need to ensure local ownership and sustainability mechanisms are in place. Various stakeholders showed keen interest in getting more involved in the process and the post-programme period. This could be through:

- Involving schools more in the co-creation of activities, identifying opportunities to integrate components of the programme into formal classes and establishing an accreditation/award system for schools that integrate components into curricula.
- Strengthening parental participation through holding parental sessions and / or delivering introductory talks
- Training more local facilitators to deliver workshops.

Response

- Year 5 and future development has included consultations with Student Ambassadors
- The programme has been developed to be more flexible and adaptable to respond to local and national feedback.
- We have initiated a 'National Development Framework' to engage stakeholders in national programming, to connect to national policy priorities and respond to the real needs and concerns of teachers and schools.
- Plans are being developed to further engage parents and to create a cascade model as a future option.

Recommendation 4: Optimise the digital platform in order to fully integrate a blended learning model

Taqaddam's digital component encountered technical issues and was a source of frustration for the majority of participants. Nonetheless, it offers a multipurpose resource, relevant to the technology-savvy participants, and could provide a safe space for them to share experiences and manage their Taqaddam commitments in their own time. Further, technology is key in preparing students for future workforce trends and keeping up with digital expansion in the region.

Response

- Taqaddam no longer requires students to register and complete online missions. There are now more creative and diverse missions in the handbook and shared through workshops and classes.
- As a result teachers do not have to authenticate their students, track their online engagement and field technical enquiries and issues. This has dramatically reduced the demands on administration time within schools and in British Council teams.
- A new Life Skills app has been developed and is available for free on Android and Apple stores – for Taqaddam students and the public. This is a powerful additional tool for our move to new blended models.
- We have developed a complete online delivery model, which includes workshops, classes and MiH, as well as innovative resources and high profile digital events.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the programme's exit strategy by establishing a graduate network, post-completion support and trajectory documentation

There is no formal plan for graduates completing the programme. Many graduates are keen to continue to be involved with Taqaddam after the formal end of the programme and share their experiences with new cohorts. In order to assert Taqaddam's credibility as a long-term

enabler of enduring personal and professional life skills, it is recommended that the British Council develops a stronger vision to support graduates.

Response

- We are continuing to grow the Student Ambassador network and strengthen their role
- A partnership with Tatawwar provided a clear progression opportunity
- A new resource centre is included in the new Taqaddam website, with a specific section for alumni information and resources. This may be curated by Taqaddam graduates.
- Exploring country-based alumni support and specific partnerships to enable this

Recommendation 6: Identify a cohort of student to support longitudinal learning

Taqaddam should consider how it can follow up with graduates post-completion would provide useful insight into how the programme can support long-term change. The outcomes and impact outlined in the programme's theory of change include the successful transition of participants from school into the next stage of their lives and adulthood, including the increase of their life chances and current and future prospects. These outcomes can take years to achieve.

Response

A longitudinal study has been initiated, with a cohort identified from 5 project countries. These students have agreed to be contacted directed each year for the next 3 years.

It is important to us that we are able to track the longer term impact and reflections on involvement in the project.

Very few Taqaddam students are of the age to transition into university or employment following the programme, but this cohort will give us more insight into the role Taqaddam plays in those transitions.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen collaboration with external networks

Taqaddam should seek to build stronger connections to grassroots and institutional networks, and make more effective use of these opportunities. Collaborating with external networks can also help the programme engage with the wider community, and help support pathways that extend beyond participation on the programme, for example, by linking up programme alumni to other projects focusing, and hence supporting the transition from school to work.

Response

Partnerships and collaborations are a central pillar in our sustainability strategy. As well as responding to the issue of alumni and transitions, as recommended, we are also exploring partners to strengthen our digital offer, our reach to new audiences, and our inclusion.

We also plan to further build relationships with education stakeholders and grow our position as a leader in life skills education – in our thinking and through our practice.

Programme Development: Year 5 and into the Future



Effective



Inclusive



Flexible



Sustainable

Priorities

- A simpler, holistic approach to life skills, rather than strengths and skills
- A stronger, narrower core 'learner journey' for all Taqaddam students
- A flexible programme, to adapt to national context and priorities
- An increase in support for teachers and more flexibility around their schedule
- A stronger research and evidence base, and positioning in the sector
- A new public life skills app

A simpler, holistic approach to life skills

It was long recognised that the programme attempted to cover too much ground within the workshops and classes, and in Year 5 we moved from working with 5 strengths and 5 skills to a more holistic approach around 'life skills', as well as a focus on 3 core life skills.

Life skills (also referred to as soft skills or 21st Century Skills) are simply: *the skills we need to make the most of life*. However, in Taqaddam we are concerned with the combination of personal and interpersonal attitudes and abilities that play a critical role in our ability to learn, connect with others and adapt to make the most of the opportunities we are presented with. Through greater self-awareness of our life skills, students are able to engage with the world more confidently and in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Life skills have been proven to positively impact young people's personal, professional and community lives. They are both crucial to a person's wellbeing and have had a demonstrated positive effect on education, employability and labour market outcomes. Life skills are also interconnected and mutually reinforcing, making them a cost-effective and sustainable investment in global education.

Life Skills

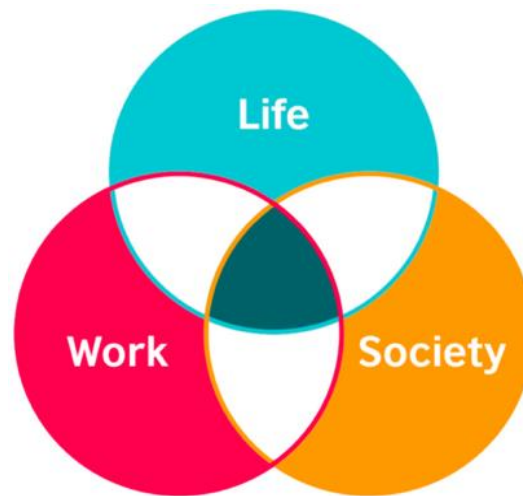
Taqaddam explores three life skills in depth: creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. These '3Cs' have been prioritised because they are recognised as central to personal wellbeing, employability and positive engagement in society. They are also interconnected with, and provide effective entry points into, many other life skills.

- Critical Thinking - the ability to analyse and evaluate the world in order to form judgements, develop ideas and think for yourself.
- Creativity - using the imagination to explore the world in new ways, create something original and express yourself.
- Collaboration – connecting effectively with others and using the skills and abilities of multiple people towards a common purpose.

The core outcomes for Taqaddam are a response to these 3 questions, and sit at the centre of this diagram.

What life skills supports young people's personal development and well-being?

What life skills make young people more employable, now and into the future?



What life skills support young people's social action and leadership?

Life

Strengthening life skills increases young people's personal wellbeing through building their self-awareness, self-esteem and emotional intelligence. It improves community living through providing young people with effective communication and enhancing healthy relationships

Work

Unemployment amongst MENA youth is the highest in the world. Formal education systems, on the whole, still do not provide youth, particularly young women, with the skills needed to enter and succeed in the world of work. Employers rate life skills such as creativity, collaboration and critical thinking among their top priorities, yet report these as widely lacking in the MENA region.

Society

Young people in the region want a voice and want to be active and engaged in the world and view volunteering and community engagement as welcome ways to gain independence and increase their life experience, but they have limited access to relevant opportunities.



The Learner Journey & Programme Structure

The Learner Journey describes the new student learning experience and how we will work towards achieving the overall vision of the programme and the primary outcomes. The

learning is structured into 4 modules to help us plan and communicate a clear path for students.



- My Life:** This module is about gaining greater self-awareness by exploring different aspects of your life and your world.
- My Life Skills:** Which is about exploring and developing your life skills, particularly creativity, critical thinking and collaboration.
- Make it Happen:** Where students can put their life skills into action and learn through experience of working in a team on a social action project.
- Moving Forward:** Through this module students reflect on their learning and experience and how they can take that into their future.

The Programme Structure describes the standard delivery model for the programme. Materials and approach could be adapted to be delivered face to face, digitally or a blended.

