



**Hello
Future_**
TRANSFORMING
THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE



OUR VISION

The majority of refugees worldwide are stuck in limbo with limited economic and educational opportunities. Founded in 2016, Hello Future is a nonprofit organization that bridges the education gap for adolescent refugees. Our mission is to transform the refugee experience from forgotten, alone and stuck to connected and empowered so they can thrive anywhere. We accomplish this by teaching adolescent refugees the essential skills needed to become entrepreneurs and community leaders.

We have designed an innovative curriculum delivered in our students' native language that combines proven solutions in education, entrepreneurship and creativity. Taught by local instructors and teaching assistants, our students learn by doing. As a result, they report increased confidence in their digital skills and feel more positive about their future.

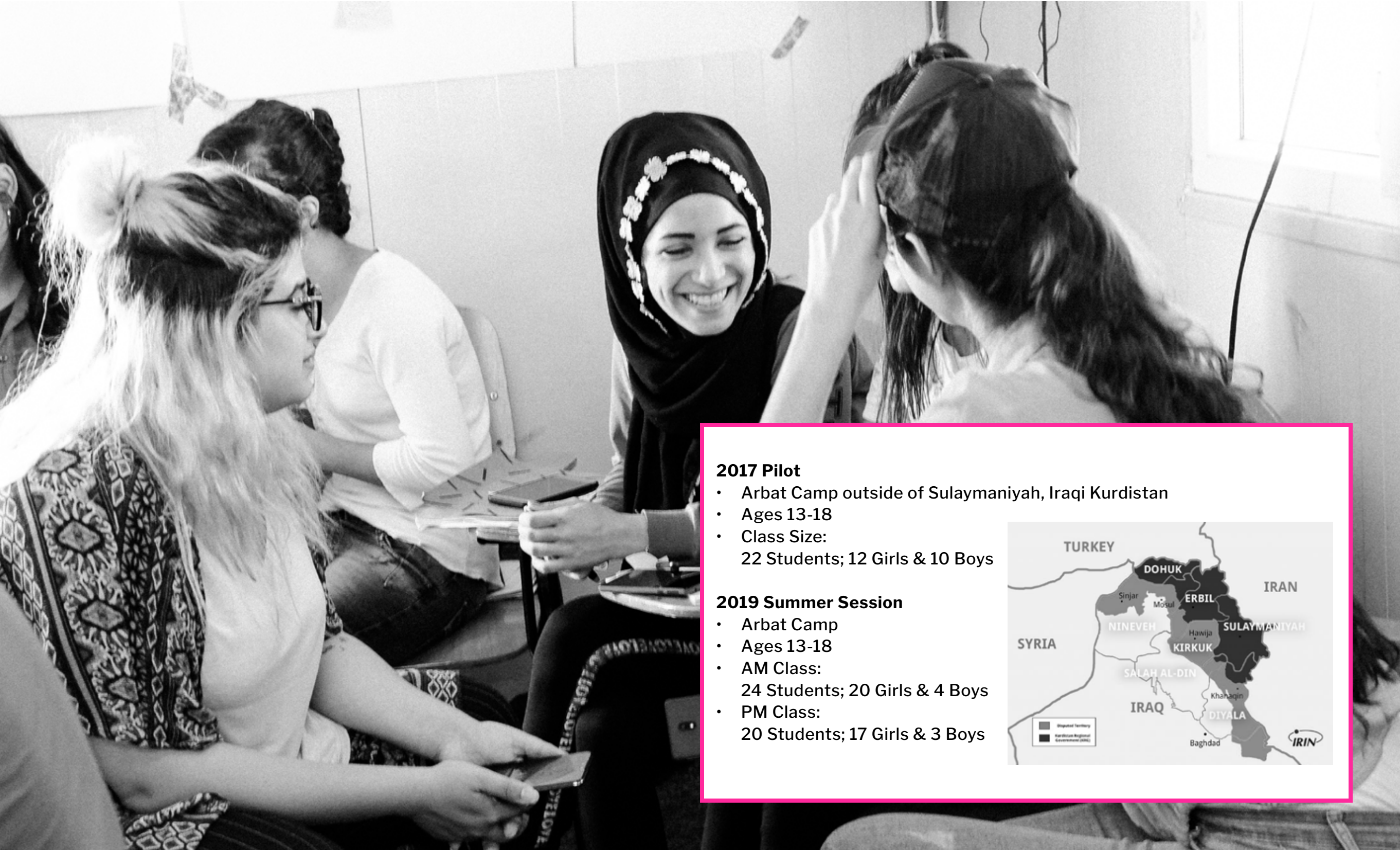
The invention of the printing press in 1439 revolutionized how information was spread and distributed to the masses. It created an instant economic and social divide. Those who could read had an undeniable advantage over those who could not. In the 1990s, the Internet revolutionized the spread of and access to information again. This time, those who are digitally literate have the edge over others.

Refugee youth are at a particular disadvantage.

Few humanitarian aid programs are specifically designed for youth, especially teenagers. As a result, they enter the formative years of their lives with little guidance or support. They are literate in the traditional sense, curious and hungry to learn. Yet they do not possess basic digital literacy, a fundamental 21st century skill that has the potential to open up an entirely new world for them.

That's where Hello Future comes in. We have designed an educational program teaching basic digital literacy to refugee youth with the goal of giving them the skills needed to improve their educational and employment opportunities.

In addition to essential digital literacy, we help our students channel their energy and emotion into creative outlets. We teach them how to start their own business, how to learn and how to think and problem solve. Essentially, we sneak the vegetables in with the treats.



2017 Pilot

- Arbat Camp outside of Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan
- Ages 13-18
- Class Size:
22 Students; 12 Girls & 10 Boys

2019 Summer Session

- Arbat Camp
- Ages 13-18
- AM Class:
24 Students; 20 Girls & 4 Boys
- PM Class:
20 Students; 17 Girls & 3 Boys



Program Requirements:

- Good, reliable Internet connection
- A room equipped with a projector and screen
- One laptop
- Low-cost smart phones for each student

Upon Completion of Hello Future:

Students receive the smart phone and a certificate of completion.

Program Scope:

- Target Student Age:
13-18 years old
- Class Size:
20-25 students
- Main Program:
3 hours per day; 5 days per week for 4 weeks.
Sixty hours of overall instruction.
- Personnel for Main Program:
1 lead instructor per class + 4 teaching assistants (one for each breakout group of students)
- Follow-Up Program:
2-2.5 hours per day; 2 days per week for 8 weeks.
Total overall instruction time of 32-40 hours.
- Personnel for Follow-Up:
1 lead instructor or 2 teaching assistants



ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS

“How do you Google?”

- Salih, Age 16

Like many teenagers, our students are on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, but they are unfamiliar with the basic productivity tools that can help them create a better future. Most of them do not have an email account nor do they know how to perform a Google search. While UNHCR’s “Connecting Refugees” report estimates refugees spend upwards of 20% of their limited resources on connectivity, they experience the Internet as observers and not creators.

Modern work is built around email communications, productivity tools and collaborative work. Remote work, a growing worldwide trend, relies even more on these skills. But the majority of refugee youth have never been exposed to these fundamental tools. Mastering these basic digital tools can mean the difference between inconsistent manual labor and an entry-level office job that could make moving out of refugee camps a reality.



During our course, our students create projects using basic productivity tools. They create presentations in Google Slides and practice presentation skills by sharing their projects with the class. They learn how to search and verify their results.

Our students are accustomed to a lecture-based, rote-memorization style of education. Our program is the first time they work in a group with their peers on projects where they can exercise their creativity. One group used Google Hangouts to chat with members and their teaching assistant (TA) as they worked on their project. Their excitement carried them late into the night as they messaged one other and their TA in an attempt to perfect their project.

“I loved making presentations because it was fun and it gave me confidence to speak in front of an audience about what I want and think without shame.” - Helin, Age 17



PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

“We want to be seen as smart, talented and kind. We are more than refugees.”

– Arwa, Age 16

Our first lesson starts with Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story.” We ask our students for their thoughts and reflections. How do they feel about others’ perception of them as a refugee, as a Syrian, as a teenage boy, a teenage girl? More importantly, how do they want to be seen? This has proven to be a lively conversation in every class. The students have answers at the ready, as if they were just waiting to be asked.

Students learn the basics of storytelling and recast themselves as a hero on a journey. One with a destination that they control -- thereby regaining the sense of agency they lost when their lives were upended.

It’s hard to be what you cannot see. In a refugee camp, role models are limited. The Triumphant Hero lesson is a photoshoot where we costume each student as the future selves they imagine themselves to be: doctors, lawyers, teachers, body builders, detectives and much more.

The Triumphant Hero

The Hero's Journey is a classic narrative framework. We added it to our curriculum for both its storytelling value and to potentially help students deal with their trauma. Each student charted their own journey, listing the trials and tribulations they've experienced, but more importantly, how they would like to rise up and overcome. They directed their own happy endings and told us what they would like to be in the future, helping to restore a sense of hope that's been lost for many of them.

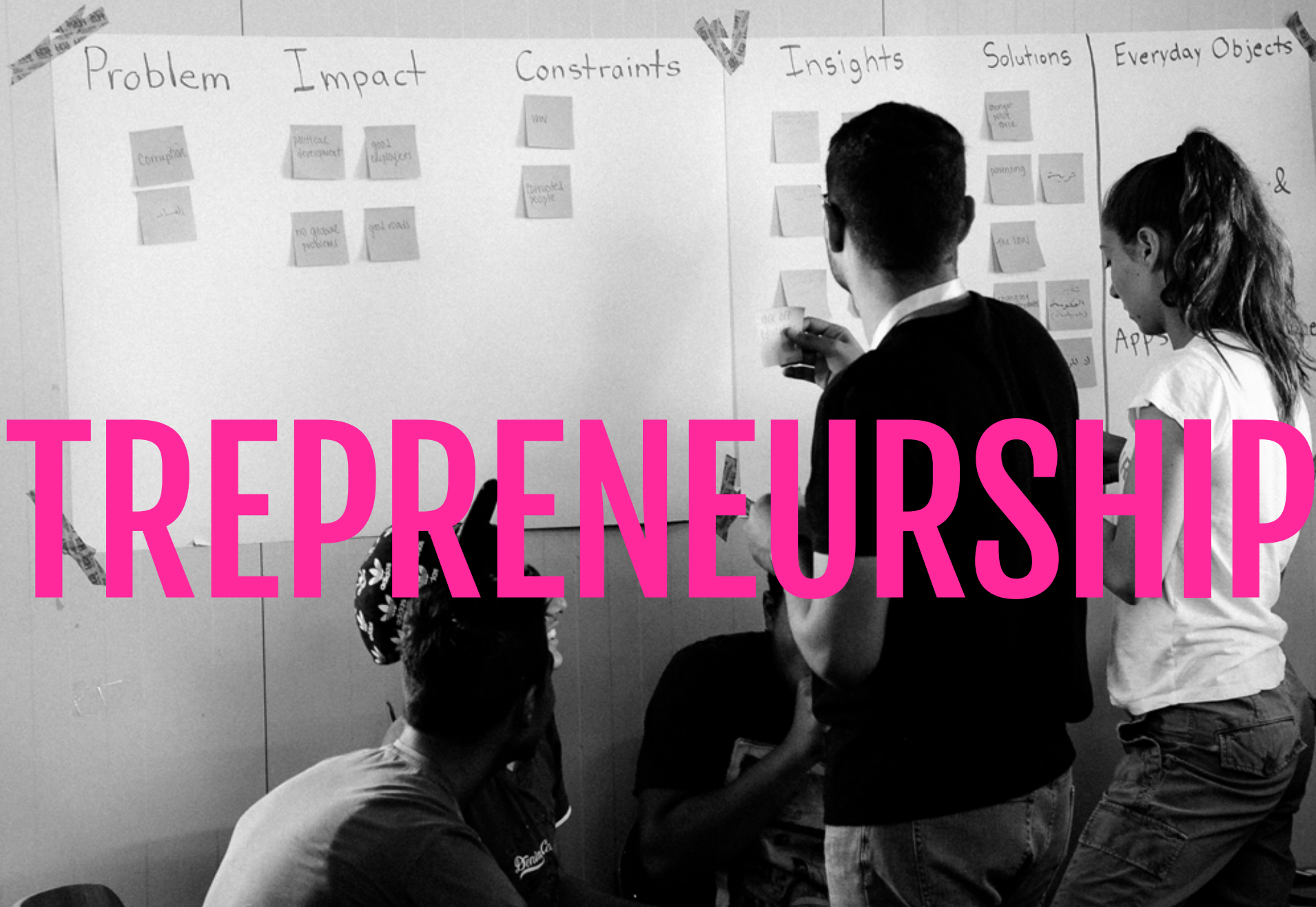
Then, through a simple act of costuming, we transformed each student into the future selves they would like to be. We photographed each student dressed as doctors, lawyers, teachers, translators, engineers and more. On a simple white background, devoid of the context of a refugee camp, we get to see each of them as they are. Not as refugees, but youth full of hope and dignity.

Seeing is believing. The students are given a tangible tool to remind themselves that they can achieve a future beyond the confines of their current environment.

As an important side effect, we are able to add a little narrative diversity into the public's perception of refugees.

	<p>Neroz, Age 16 Future Self: Lawyer</p> <p>منذ أن كنت صغيرة كنت أرتعب بأن أصبح محامية مع شخصية قوية و واثقة من نفسها لإدافع عن حقوق النساء والبنات لأن في مجتمعنا ليس لهم أهمية. ومن الجانب الآخر كنت أريد أن أصبح رسامة تشكيلية، لأعبر عن أوجاع العالم عن طريق الرسم أريد أن أصبح مثل الفنان فان جوج .</p> <p>Since I was little, I wanted to become a strong, confident lawyer to defend the rights of women and girls because our society sees them as unimportant. On the other hand, I also want to become a painter, to express the pain of the world with my paintings. I want to become an artist just like Van Gogh.</p>
	<p>Eman, Age 14 Future Self: Engineer</p> <p>عندما كنت صغيرة كنت أحب تصميم المنازل وكنت أحب مع أصدقائي و أعمى البيوت الصغيرة والألعاب . وبعد مرور سنين قررت أن أصبح مهندسة معمارية لأنني أحب هذا العمل البحر - ١٤ أنا في المستقبل مهندسة معمارية</p> <p>When I was little, I loved designing homes. I used to play with my friends, and I designed small houses and games. A few years later, I decided to become an architect in the future because I love their work.</p>

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



“We did the math and it wouldn’t have been a good business, so we came up with a different idea.” - Jiman, Age 14

The \$5 Business Challenge is frequently taught in MBA programs. We added it to the 2019 curriculum for our refugee students. Working in groups, students are given \$5 USD/ 6,000 Iraqi Dinar as seed money to start a business of their choosing. They have five days to plan and two hours to execute on their ideas. The goal is to make as much money as possible within those two hours of activation.

During the planning process, the students are asked to survey their community for unfilled needs, as well as strengths and weaknesses of potential competitors. They document each step of the process, their findings and the final business outcomes in a Google Slide presentation and calculate their business profit and loss in Google Sheets.

Through the successes and failures of each group, we highlighted the noteworthy ideas for the class. They saw risk rewarded and sure-bet businesses return a steady, but modest profit. Some students demonstrated advanced entrepreneurial notions such as letting the customers set the price point and reinvesting profits to purchase additional inventory.

The \$5 Business challenge opened up our students imaginations on what is possible on a meager sum, boosted their confidence to try new ideas, and allowed them to engage with their community in a deeper way.



The winner was very happy and we think that is important for our project. At 4 pm we drew the winning number. It was 96. Joan had number 96 and was the winner. He received a \$4 prize.

What did you learn?

It was unique. It taught us how to run a business and gave us the courage to deal with people.

Hello Future
Group Girls Power

The \$5 Business – Team Girl Power

Team Girl Power created their own lottery for their \$5 Business Challenge. Lottery was common in Syria, but there is no such entertainment in the refugee camp. The girls wanted to bring joy and fun to their community.

They created 100 lottery tickets from existing materials, thereby reserving all of their seed money. They let each person pay what they wished for each ticket.

They sold 67 lottery tickets and brought in 28,000 IRQ. Their earnings plus the seed money brought their total profit to 34,000 IQD (\$28.70 USD).



CRITICAL THINKING

“We feel empowered to take on problems in our community and not wait for NGOs to come and help us.” - Neroz, Age 16

The education system in the Middle East is based on rote memorization. Students are not encouraged to speak up in class and critical thinking is simply not taught. They know the answer to “what is 4 times 4?” but they could not explain why the answer is 16.

We first introduce critical thinking in our lessons through photography. By understanding how every detail holds meaning, our students’ perspectives evolve to see a picture they first interpret as “a woman sitting in a chair” to one that represents “power.”

Design Thinking is a process that is used frequently by technology start-ups, social impact ventures and legacy corporations in need of innovation. We bring Design Thinking to our refugee students. It is by far the hardest lesson for them and also the one they find the most useful.

Each group starts by identifying a problem in their community they would like to solve. As they go through the Design Thinking process, they solicit insights and feedback from the community, they break complex problems down to something smaller and more tangible, and iterate until they reach an actionable solution.

The question was

How to increase the awareness of parents to prevent discrimination between girls and boys??

The second way:

The Imam will give a sermon about gender discrimination for the parents in the mosques on Friday instead of the regular sermon. In order to convince the Imam, 5 girls as community representatives will explain to the Imam how they are suffering from gender discrimination. If the Imam does not listen to them, they will gather all the women from the camp and go to the Imam in order to convince him to explain the issue to the parents.

Design Thinking – Team Nutella

Team Nutella identified gender discrimination as the issue they wanted to tackle for their Design Thinking Challenge. Through the iteration process, they were able to narrow the scope of this deeply entrenched issue. Team Nutella wanted to focus on discriminatory behavior between parent and child.

They identified the Imam as an influencer for the fathers. Their proposed solution is to elect five girls from the community to have a talk with the Imam and ask him to deliver a different lecture. If the Imam refuses the girls' request, Team Nutella will mobilize all the girls in Arbat Camp to persuade the Imam.

“Design Thinking was very difficult. It challenged us and we enjoyed it. We want to be challenged more often. It helped us break large problems into small parts and that’s very helpful.” - Neroz, age 16.



LEARNING TO LEARN

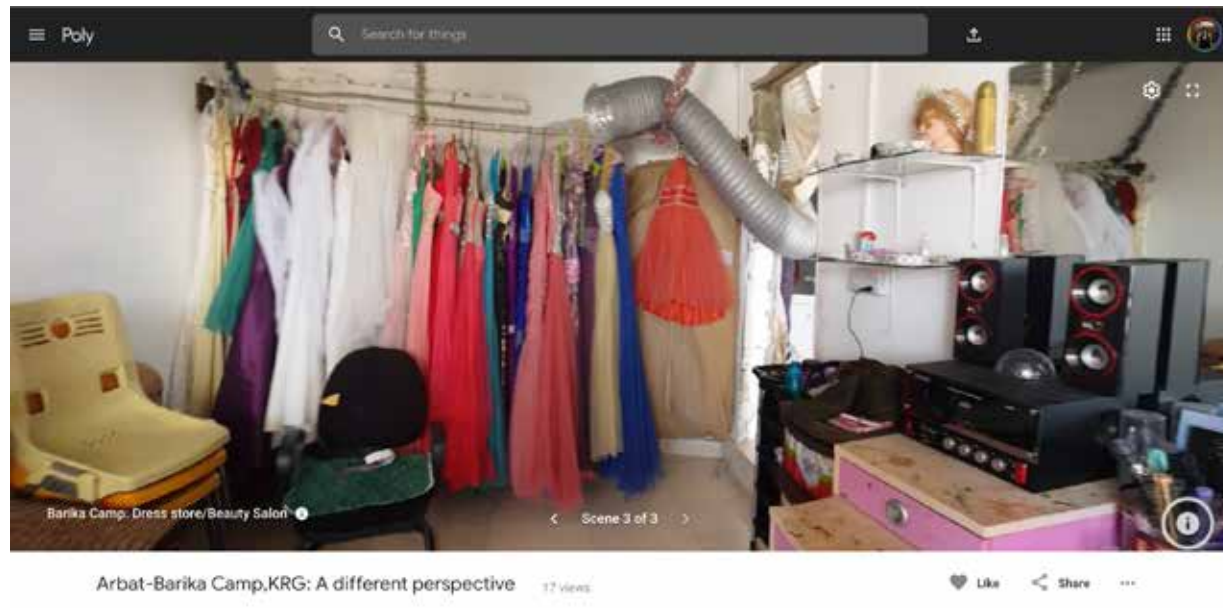
“Duolingo is great. I like learning in these small doses everyday.” - Helin, Age 17

Online learning platforms are flourishing. The potential for these portals to close the world’s largest education gaps, including for refugee youth, is immense. So, why don’t underserved youth take advantage of the wide variety of formal and informal learning opportunities available online?

The answer is simple: they don’t know what they don’t know. How can one take advantage of something one does not know exists? If our students are not aware of the existence of language learning applications, then they would never think to look for them.

Duolingo is one of the online learning platforms we introduce to our students. Each day, as homework, they are asked to practice a language of their choosing on the app. A Hello Future course requirement is for our students to reach 25% proficiency in Level 1 by the end of the four-week course.

With the introduction of online learning platforms and fostering self-directed learning habits, we open the door for our students to further their own education and improve their skills for future employment opportunities.



All Students Reach 25% in Level 1 English

We introduced our students to a variety of online learning platforms. Gamified mobile apps such as Duolingo, Khan Academy, which can serve as additional tutorials for their school work, and new technology such as Virtual Reality (VR) so they can transport themselves beyond the limits of Arbat Camp.

All of our students reached the requirement on Duolingo (English), 25% proficient in Level 1. About 10% completed Level 1 and one of our students, Yousef, completed all of Level 1 and will be taking Duolingo's English Proficiency test.

The students also created their own VR tour. You can experience Arbat Camp [here](#). (No VR headset required)



CRYPTOCURRENCY

“I like knowing something that is unknown to the adults.”

- Yousef, Age 16

The developed world is moving at hyperspeed towards becoming cashless. PayPal, Venmo, Square, Apple Pay and other platforms are part of everyday life. From transactions between businesses and individuals to completely cashless experiences like rideshare apps. Yet, 2.5 billion adults worldwide are unbanked (McKinsey). The situation is even worse for refugees.

Living unbanked limits a person's employment and education opportunities. They couldn't work remotely because there is no easy way to get paid; they wouldn't be able to pay for online courses as they don't have credit cards.

Blockchain technology and cryptocurrency are re-creating the Internet as we know it. Web 3.0 will be based on these new technologies.

In partnership with bitfwd, we added a cryptocurrency lesson to our curriculum. We introduced this new technology to our students to give them an advantage over others who may not have experience in this new frontier. The goal is to plant these early seeds with the hope that when Web 3.0 arrives, our students will be ready to seize the moment and help uplift their community.



Some ideas are easier for youth to grasp than adults. Bitfwd (our partner) led a blockchain workshop for a group of 5-year olds in Australia. The kids quickly understood that there are two different systems: centralized and decentralized.

We had a similar experience with our students on virtual currency. They were excited by the idea that if they were studying abroad, they would be able to send money back home. They were curious about this new technology. The excitement and questions in their eyes were no different than when a kid first learns how to build a robot or writes a computer program and begins to see the limitless potential of technology.



IMPACT

“I loved what I learned in Hello Future because it gave me confidence, boldness and self-reliance at an early age.” – Taza, Age 16

Hello Future’s measurement and evaluation metrics were created in partnership with Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs.

To date, our impact includes a 100% program retention rate and an average 91.5% graduation rate across three classes. Post-session surveys show a 47% increase in positive beliefs about the future, with 50% of the students sharing what they’ve learned with others outside of class. Early results on emotional shifts from despair to hope are also compelling.

81%

of students say Hello Future's program met or exceeded their expectations.

97%

of students say what they learned in our program will be helpful in getting a better job.

90%

of students say what they learned in our program will be helpful in their education.

97%

of students reported an increase in confidence in their own digital skills.

In a self-reported before and after evaluation of the student's own abilities, we saw an increase in essential categories for positive youth development, including:

58% ↑ confidence

47% ↑ positive beliefs about the future

44% ↑ motivation

98% ↑ higher order thinking skills



WORK WITH US

B2C:

In our direct service model, Hello Future partners with existing organizations on the ground to deliver our curriculum. Partner organizations provide the facility and support us in community outreach. The course is taught by Hello Future instructors and it is branded as a Hello Future course. We have been working with STEP in Arbat Camp since 2017 to great success.

B2B:

In this model, we provide our curriculum to partner organizations and train their staff through a tailored train-the-trainer program to deliver our lessons. Additionally, a subscription service includes ongoing support, curriculum updates and professional development for the instructors.

Moonshot Goal:

Our moonshot goal is to solve the lack of basic digital literacy in the Middle East in 10 years. Hello Future's program encourages the spread of knowledge and skills. We empower our students with the agency needed to change their community and their own lives. As our students teach their peers, their siblings, their fathers and mothers, we will reach critical mass in the spread of digital literacy. *Imagine a future where refugees are not segregated into clusters of need, but are driving economies in cities and towns across the world.*



THANK YOU

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