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PROGRAM REPORT

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Who is Al Ahli Holding Group?



Al Ahli Holding Group is a multi-diversified international conglomerate with over four decades of successfully dealing with business activities ranging from real estate to turnkey construction, engineering and infrastructure, retail and trading, technology and logistics, lifestyle and fitness, entertainment, hospitality and innovative developments. With around 9,000 employees, AAHG is headquartered in the UAE, with representative offices across 20 countries globally.

About the CSR Division of Al Ahli Holding Group



CSR Al Ahli was founded in 2008 as a special division of Al Ahli Holding with an aim to develop Arab and Global youth, build their skills and widen their horizons and exposure, as well as fostering women empowerment. In its 10 years of activity, the Division expanded its operations from the UAE to 15 other countries and has successfully trained thousands of young people and women in social entrepreneurship, social responsibility and leadership through its renowned national and international programs. Through the power of partnership with different organisations, CSR Al Ahli Group collaborates with governments, other private sector entities, academia and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to create the business and community leaders of tomorrow.

About ESA Business School



Established in 1996 following an intergovernmental agreement between France and Lebanon, ESA is a Business School dedicated to the education of executives and managers in Lebanon and the Middle East. It is managed by the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry Paris Ile-de-France (CCIR).

ESA has become a beacon of academic excellence within Lebanon and a platform for interactions between Europe, Lebanon and the Middle East at large. Its mission is to form the elite of Lebanon and the region into the leaders of tomorrow. Paying attention to the business and their needs, ESA assists them in developing their visions, and helps them to better achieve their objectives by training and coaching their executive managers.

Situated in the centre of Beirut, ESA asserts its reach as an important international school, which combines the talents of high-level learners and professors who rank among the world's preeminent specialists.





The Social Leaders Program

Social Leaders is a practical training program for youth, aged 20 – 35, who will be trained by professionals and advanced speakers to help them harness their energies and channel them to create valuable social change. Participants will be exposed to case studies and experienced trainers who will broaden their horizons to develop their leadership skills and provide guidance on how to develop a social project starting from need assessment to prototyping and impact modelling, through innovative design thinking sessions and concept development.

The program will be divided into 2 phases: a 3-days interactive workshop and a 2-months mentorship and coaching phase. The aim of the training workshop is to develop concrete projects or social initiatives targeting concrete community needs and challenge them towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The training will be followed by a 2-months mentorship and coaching period, where the participants will further develop their ideas and plan for implementation.

Social Leaders was first implemented in Jerash, Jordan, in 2018 involving 300 youth who developed over 40 social projects and social enterprises ideas and has since been implemented also in the UAE and Lebanon.

Social Leaders at ESA Business School

Thanks to the renewed partnership agreement between ESA Business School and the CSR Division of Al Ahli Holding Group, for the first time we included part of our Social Leaders Program as an integral part of the Business Ethics course for the Bachelor's in Business Administration (BBA) students. The workshop was composed by 2 afternoon sessions to design and develop socially responsible projects focusing on social and environmental needs analysis, design thinking and impact modelling. The workshop took place on the 14th and 15th of May followed by a presentation session on May 28th, during which the students presented their social and environmental start-up ideas and received feedback about where to start and how to implement a pilot project for their initiatives. The workshop, as part of the business ethics class, was attended by all 28 students, however only 18 attended the last session.

The Training Workshop

During the first day the students worked with Ms Elsa Abi Khalil, co-founder and project manager of MakeSense Middle East, and with Mr Danny Casprini, communication manager at the CSR Division of Al Ahli Group. The first part of the session was dedicated to identifying challenges that communities face in their everyday life, both social and environmental, and to narrow them down in order to select the need that each project will aim to tackle. Once all the issues were identified the students, divided in 6 teams, did an empathising exercise to define their target audience and scale down the needs at the end users' level. Following this part Ms Elsa Abi Khalil proposed different exercise to brainstorm solutions and project ideas



able to solve the issues addressed. Through series of questions and different analysis techniques all participant where able to understand the steps that need to be taken to address a problem, taking into account the surroundings, all stakeholders, people's mindset and social background, among others, rather than going straight to a solution. In this way the project ideas developed were strongly rooted in needs present in the society and tailored to be effective in addressing them. Thanks to this session, the participants also made an analysis of other projects or social start-ups already active in the field in order to design ideas that are, not only innovative, but also aware of what is the state of the art in the development sector.

The second day was dedicated to impact assessment and impact modelling under the guidance and supervision of Tracy Achkar, Viridis Project Manager at Fondation Diane, and Lara Blake, operations director at Fondation Diane. In a 2-hour session the students learned the basics about impact measurement from both the entrepreneurs and the investor perspectives. In particular, the trainers presented different methodologies such as the expected social/environmental return of the investment, the theory of change and the alignment to mission based on life-cycle assessment for products and services. Following a brief presentation, the students were challenged in applying different impact measurement techniques to the projects they ideated the day before in a way of enhancing the impact that each idea can have on people and the planet. Following a group exercise each group presented and received feedback on how to better model their project in order to enhance impacts while generating revenue to gain financial sustainability.

During the follow-up session the 6 teams presented their ideas to the CSR Al Ahli Director, Ms Lina Hourani, assisted by Mr Danny Casprini. All participants receive constructive feedbacks about their project/start-up ideas and about how to start to implement a pilot of the initiatives developed. Following the 6 presentation, the class and the CSR Al Ahli team agreed to start the implementation of all project ideas during the summer vacations setting a deadline for interim report on the 31st of July. During this phase we will support them with all available means, and we will build connections with stakeholders that can support each initiative.



The projects

GuideAT aims to include rural women in the workforce by providing them training and skills development workshop to become touristic guides. In particular the team will work in providing presentation and public speaking skills together with English and French classes to groups of women from rural areas of Lebanon in a way of supporting their personal and professional development. The group of women, initially followed by experience tour guides, will assist tourists in discovering the beauty of the less renowned areas of Lebanon, while discovering culture, food and folklore. Thanks to this, women will be able to generate their own income and contribute to the sustenance of the family, whereas tourists will have access to areas of Lebanon typically outside of the mainstream routes.

Team members: Yasmine Hajj, Sami Grossman, Amir Hyggi, Gaëlle Abi Chahine and Megan Khairallah.

The Academy aims to overcome the lack of team spirit and cooperation through sport in a way of reducing individualism both inside and outside the field. Thanks to an innovative training method the Academy will provide workshops and trainings for coaches to learn, beside of the necessary sport skills, leadership, fair-play and the value of team-work. Then the coaches working at the Academy will pass these values to the children that will be enrolled in the various sport practised. Through a sport for development approach, the Academy will be able to impact highly at the social level and to drive transformation towards a more cohesive society.

Team members: Wassim Bejjani, Kossay Yehia, Skandar Naaman, Katia Habib, Mahmoud Hariri.

Blue Ocean aims at mainstreaming volunteering activities in beach and ocean clean-ups through several events and initiatives organised in partnership with private and public organisations. Differently from the other clean-up activities Blue Ocean aims to clean both outside and inside the water, to provide for the sorting and recycling of the collected material, when applicable, and to establish campaigns about the importance of sorting to prevent the beaches and the ocean to be polluted again. Lastly, for the material that cannot be recycled, Blue Ocean will provide up-cycling workshop to teach people how to transform trash in art, furniture and many more.

Team members: Jessica Hamati, Nour Rifaii, Edouard Karam, Eli Zeidan, Ali Diab.



School Gardens is a project for children to discover the importance of the environment, green spaces and to set up productive gardens in schools. The project will have an awareness component, by teaching children the importance of a healthy environment, and a practical one, by involving children directly in the set-up and management of the gardens. In particular the project will spur knowledge about botanical garden, will teach students how to design one in their school and, though the support of expert, will engage the children in gardening classes.

Team members: Paul Antoun, Maria Howayek, Benoit Khayat, Michel Tabet, Cyril Geachan

A generation for a better future aims to solve the issue of social fraction in the workplace to a general extend within the society. The project aims to work with children aged 13 to 17 though awareness sessions, workshops, games, empathising activities in order to know more about different cultures and be more open to deal with people from different backgrounds once they will leave school and enter university or the labour force. Overall the project aims to enhance social cohesion and rediscover common roots rather than dividing factors.

Team members: Saria El Baba, Admar Jad Kablawi, Yara Kesrovani, Tania Saliby.

Team W links together women empowerment and an environmental cause to have cleaner public spaces. In particular the project targets unemployed women above 40 to train them as volunteers for the clean-up of beaches and forests and to spread awareness about the importance of a healthy environment. In particular, the women involved in the program will then be able to operate by themselves by building environmental campaigns and promoting volunteering initiatives all over Lebanon. Further sustainability will come from the provision of services for corporate and public events aiming at cleaning and making the environment safer.

Team members: Karen Hayek, Jamie Khayat, Jad Sassine, Tracy Takchi,



The trainers



Elsa Abi Khalil – Design Thinking

Elsa Abi Khalil is a founding member of the Makesense Lebanon Office and the current manager for social innovation programs in Lebanon (Pedagogy and Entrepreneurs). Since 2015 she is active with makesense Lebanon for which she developed an outstanding network of collaborations and partnership.

Furthermore, Elsa is the coordinator of strategy and activities with Makesense volunteer ambassadors in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region. Holding a degree in business administration she is passionate about social mobility and access to education for all.



Tracy El Achkar – Impact Assessment

Tracy El Achkar, is the project manager at Viridis Investment Fund / Fondation Diane since February 2016. When investing, Tracy's role is to identify, evaluate and select start-ups based on their sustainable business models and positive environmental impact. She also organizes coaching activities for green entrepreneurs to help them develop a green business model and pitching skills. Tracy holds a master's degree in Environmental Science and Management from the Université Saint-Joseph de Beirut and has proven over the years to have a good experience in implementing specifications documents for environmental projects.



Lara Blake – Impact assessment

Operations Director at Fondation Diane, a management professional and a marketing strategist with 15 years of diversified, regional experience in spearheading projects in the field of services marketing, communication and business development; successfully establishing and managing companies in the MENA region.

Operates with a clear vision and applies strong strategic planning and analytical skills, researching and implementing new directives for the organization's growth.

Observations and recommendations

This workshop was the first of its kind for our CSR Division as normally we select the participants in our programs based on interests and commitments trying to have a diversity of background. This time the participants were individuated by ESA Business School and the workshop was tailored for second year BBA students. Overall, the students have a good background as about corporate social responsibility and business ethics thanks to a course they were undertaking throughout the semester. In this regard the workshop provided them with practical tools to design CSR activities similar to the ones they researched and studied throughout the course.

Overall, we highly appreciated the engagement of the students in this workshop and, talking to many of them, it seems that they also appreciated its design, purpose and outcomes. For many of them was the first time in a design-thinking and impact-modelling workshop and all of them understood the importance of linking business with a social cause as it came from the projects presented at the end. Thus, the workshop reached its educational purpose of promoting social entrepreneurship as a way to start a business while creating value for the entire society. Furthermore, from the presentations it came that all the students understood the process needed when designing a CSR initiative or a social enterprise idea as coming from the in-depth analysis of the social/environmental challenges and the target groups, the innovative solution proposed and the impact assessment.

The main issue faced with the students is the commitment in the workshop of a share of them, who only attended the first session. This might be caused by a general lack of interest in the topics of CSR and social entrepreneurship or might be due to the fact that the workshop, despite been mandatory, was not graded nor attributes any credits, or to the fact that it was organized at the end of the semester, with exams upcoming. In the first case, there are few actions to be taken except than inserting a preliminary session about social entrepreneurship in order to raise awareness and try to capture interest. As regard the latter, it is true that the workshop could have been organized earlier, but it is also true that the students in order to understand the reason of it need to have some insight and basic knowledge about CSR. Thus, we could anticipate the course a little for next year, but it will still need to happen in the second part of the semester. Lastly, grades or credits can form a good motivation for the students and can stimulate them in participating in the workshop and get the best out of it. In this light, in case of organization of the same workshop next year, we advise to assign some credits to the workshop or to include the projects developed through it as part of the graded assignment for the business ethics course.

On the other hand, another main challenge was the commitment of the students in implementing a pilot project during the summer vacation. Despite continuous follow-up and the organization of small group sessions all the students dropped out of the program during this phase. The main reason for this was the fact that all of them already had plans for

internship and other summer courses and little time to dedicate to the implementation of the projects developed. In this light, we believe that next year we shall find a rewarding strategy for the students to engage fully in the program and the implementation of the projects they developed in a way of giving them both sides of theoretical and practical experience related to CSR and development projects in general. We are sure that with a better strategy the program can be even more successful and could bring benefit to several people through pilot initiatives as well as helping the students in developing interpersonal skills that will be beneficial in any future jobs they might get.

We truly believe that this workshop was also a learning experience for our CSR Division as well as for ESA and based on the results achieved, we can build an even stronger program for next year in a way of taking our cooperation a step forward.

Gallery











Conclusions

The Social leaders workshop organized with ESA Business School has been a good mean to reinforce the cooperation between the university and our CSR Division. Overall, despite some minor issues highlighted above, it has been successful in reaching its objective and providing a hands-on experience on how to ideate and develop an impact-oriented initiative or a social business idea. We hope that during the implementation phase some preliminary practical results will come and that the students will engage even more in the program and bring to life the excellent initiatives that they presented.

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