

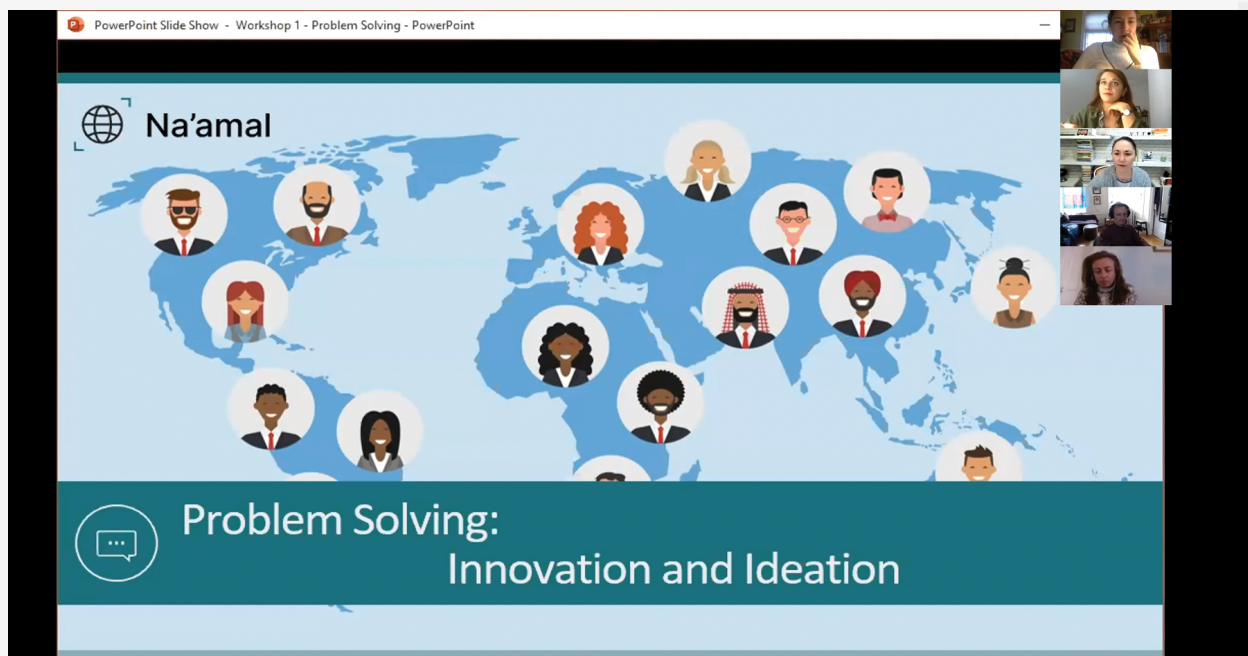


ReACT
Refugee Action Hub

2020-2021 Impact Report



Photo by Gretchen Ertl



Julieta of MIT ReACT collaborator Na'amal leads the ReACT cohort in a remote session on examining problem solving through the lens of the innovation cycle, idea generation and evaluation tools.

The core mission of the Institute-wide MIT Refugee Action Hub (ReACT) is to identify, bring together, and cultivate ideas, solutions, and best practices that allow talented refugees and displaced populations worldwide to access relevant learning resources and professional development opportunities. This year that was more true than ever. MIT ReACT, like the world, faced a year of pivotal change.

Traditionally, ReACT offers a blended learning program with an onsite bootcamp experience in Amman, Jordan. Due to the current pandemic and recognizing a need to reach refugee learners around the world, the program shifted to an entirely online program in 2020-2021. This change allowed ReACT to reach a more global cohort—especially in a time when the need to provide free learning opportunities to displaced and vulnerable populations wherever they are is stronger than ever.

Thanks to the generous financial support from individuals, the Western Union Foundation, and MIT Open Learning, ReACT has been able to open up education-to-employment pathways for talented refugees, displaced populations, and underserved communities worldwide—both through direct service through the MIT recognized Computer and Data Science (CDS) certificate program and capacity building to effect systems change by building global partnerships to support ReACT learners where they are. As the world begins to recover from the pandemic, ReACT seeks to expand the CDS program in scale and deepen the relationships within its established global hubs to provide free and accessible STEM education and tech employment solutions to more learners.

BECOMING “CEOS OF THEIR OWN LIVES” CLASS OF 2020



The MIT ReACT Computer and Data Science cohort gathered with MIT Open Learning faculty and staff in Amman, Jordan in 2019.

In January 2020, the second cohort of the ReACT program celebrated completing the Certificate in Computer and Data Science (CDS) program through a virtual commencement ceremony.

The 28 students from 8 different countries tuned into the online celebration from around the world from locations including Jordan, Rwanda, Syria, Kenya, Lebanon and Palestine.

In the ceremony, Vice President for MIT Open Learning Sanjay Sarma congratulated the cohort. He admired these resilient and pioneering learners for shaping their own educational journeys. By learning through these non-traditional pathways, they effectively become the chief executive officers of their own lives and the futures of their communities.

[> Read more about the celebration](#) [> Watch the graduation](#)

“

**REACT GAVE ME NOT JUST THE KNOWLEDGE,
IT GAVE ME ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES I
NEVER DREAMED OF.**

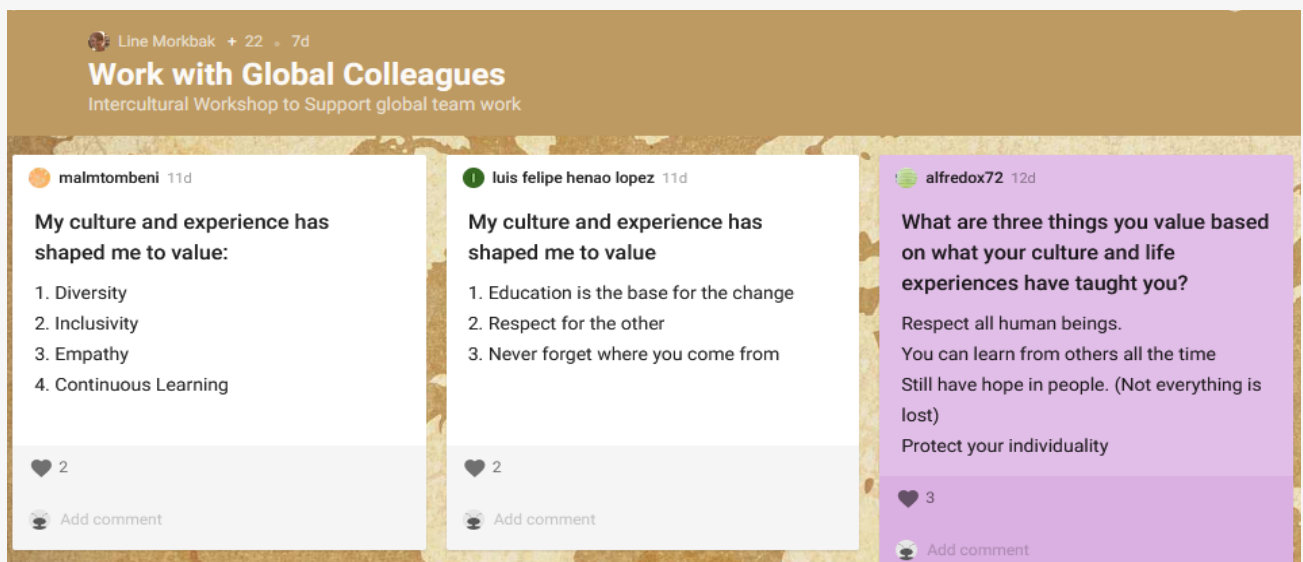
—Mohammad Hizzani, a member of the 2020 graduating class



Over the summer of 2020, we launched the third cohort of the Certificate in Computer and Data Science program, receiving more than 700 applications. With a 7% admission rate, the 50 new talented and motivated learners selected for ReACT's 2021 class come from 22 countries. They represent almost every continent in the world and, together, make up our largest and most global class to date bringing a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and talents to the program.

MIT ReACT learners continue to undergo an intensive and collaborative digital program, working in globally diverse teams to find innovative solutions to real world problems. In addition to their academic and skills training in valuable computer and data science topics, learners participate in workshops on goal setting and visioning, success in remote work, and English language to prepare them to enter hi-tech careers.

Selected learners are admitted based on completion of an online application through an open global call for applicants, English and math examinations, and video interview. Reviewed by an admissions committee of MIT faculty, staff, ReACT program alumni, and representatives from refugee-serving NGOs, learners are selected based on aptitude, interest in computer and data science, and diversity of participants. Once admitted, ReACT CDS begins with an immersive online orientation workshop, where learners participate in visioning and goal-setting exercises, strengthen their skills in virtual networking and interactive digital skills, and learn of extracurricular opportunities, including English language tutoring and professional mentoring.



Students offer their insights in an intercultural workshop to support global team work.



82%
are refugee or internally displaced

18%
from local host communities in
Jordan, Colombia and Uganda

35%
are women

65%
are male

50
learners in all

22
countries are represented

FOSTERING AN ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

The class recently completed the intensive, 10-week online MIT Innovation Leadership Bootcamp, collaborating across cultures and time zones to build new entrepreneurial ventures. Integrated within the Bootcamp's larger class of 300 aspiring global entrepreneurs, ReACT learners were meaningfully immersed in wider networks while developing their leadership capacities.

In the final pitch presentations of the MIT Innovation Leadership Bootcamp, two ReACT learners, Zeinab Jammoul and Rund Wadi, young women from Lebanon and Jordan, were on the winning team, earning top honors for their proposed venture for HR solutions to address multi-cultural conflicts and challenges in the workplace.

How Does the CURE Work?

Current State

- Complete Questionnaire
- Get Personal Assessment Result

Future State with The CURE

- Play with your teammates
- Get personalized cultural assessment result

0:24:41 / 01:39:03

Zeinab Jammoul pitches their entrepreneurial venture, CURE.

By leveraging MIT's first-in-class STEM education through MITx massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open education resources like MIT OpenCourseWare (OCW), MIT ReACT offers talented and bright learners training in advanced STEM subjects, the ability to earn globally-recognized credentials, and gain access to opportunity networks that open up their ability to compete in the global labor market, and thus improve their circumstances and livelihood.

In the year-long program, learners complete a sequence of online MIT undergraduate level courses in programming using Python, computational thinking, and data science. These academic experiences are stitched together by the crucial element of skills development woven throughout the program. This online Human Skills series consists of personal development workshops and cohort-building; an eleven-week Workplace Readiness program with Na'amal featuring thematic modules covering topics like problem solving and ideation, goal setting, communication, productivity and self-management; Careers in Tech guest speakers; and drawing from resources across MIT's rich content libraries from the MIT Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab (J-WEL) to MIT OCW's highly popular educational YouTube channel.

A key innovation to ReACT's approach is the holistic support it brings to online learning. We believe relationships are essential to creating the positive conditions for learning. ReACT is built on a cohort-based model that provides learners with additional connection and assistance by hosting peer study sessions and office hours with community TAs of MIT students and ReACT program alumni. This community coaches those needing to improve their academic skills and directs advanced learners to supplemental opportunities. Learners connect through digital platforms with one another, alumni, MIT community and our growing global networks.



ReACT is powered by MIT Open Learning, the **institutional catalyst** for online learning and education innovation, sparked by the bold founding of **MIT OpenCourseWare** in 2001, **now celebrating 20 years**, with over 500 million visits and counting. With over 2,500 courses, videos, problem sets, articles and podcasts shared under a Creative Commons license, OCW offers a free knowledge treasure trove for curious learners around the world. ReACT is working to ensure such resources **reach our globe's most vulnerable**.

**ReACT is offered
free of cost to our
learners thanks to
generous
supporters like you.**

Learners further advance employable skills in 3-6 month industry internships and experiential learning capstone projects, synthesizing their academic and skills education, while gaining financial earnings to help subsidize the opportunity cost of the year-long program. The employment component, which students begin after their online coursework, continues to motivate students to learn, demonstrate, and mature technical, analytical, and workplace competencies. For those without the right to work, learners complete experiential learning capstone projects and are mentored and advised by industry.

ReACT connects learners with a network of companies that are committed to hiring refugees remotely by leveraging its formal and informal networks. These internship and experiential learning project sites are crucial experiences for our learners and we seek to expand our network of companies and organizations working with us to host these life-changing opportunities.

ReACT develops computational thinkers with program alumni entering or transitioning into high-skill careers as full-stack engineers, software developers, business planning analysts, and data and information managers at companies like Intel, Microsoft, Hikma, Bank-al-Etihad, Madfoatcom, and Orcas.



Gloria Carrascal • 1st

Physics Student, Computer and Data Science Student.

2h • 

Despite of the nervous, finally today is one of the best days for me. I got an Internship at Wolfram Research.

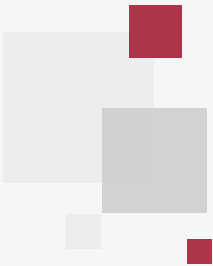
Thank you [MIT ReACT](#) , I got it thanks to the opportunity at ReACT program... I haven't enough words for to express my gratitude for the skills and knowledge that I am learning here.

[#WolframResearch](#) [#learningeveryday](#)

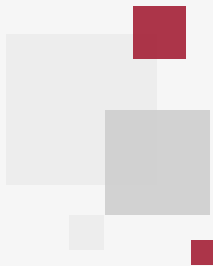
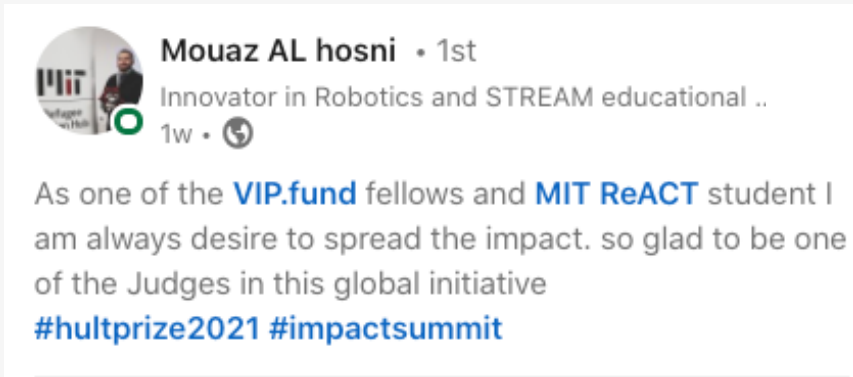
MIT ReACT accelerates pioneers through agile continuous education, opening up opportunity for rising stars to become agents of **positive change** in their careers and communities.



74% of alumni, according to survey and LinkedIn data, are currently employed.



Several alumni are pursuing graduate degrees including Masters in Computer Science, Data Science Global Health, and Business Administration at universities like Princess Sumaya University for Technology and German Jordanian University, with one program alumnae pursuing her Ph.D. in Electrical and Computer Engineering at Rice University.



BUILDING A “DROP-IN ECOSYSTEM” OF SUPPORT

Supporting refugee learners in their adopted homelands is critical in ensuring they are able to thrive personally and professionally while enriching and contributing to their communities. ReACT is developing strategic global hubs, networks of formal and informal collaborations with local networks of organizations, philanthropic supporters, companies, universities, alumni and mentors in these regions. These hubs serve as a “drop-in ecosystem” of support for learners wherever they are—in terms of location, language, ability or motivation—and are fueled by our academic program content, training, and infrastructure.

ReACT partners help provide localized training, instruction, and connections that complement the MIT online coursework and bolster the innovation and entrepreneurship among the learners.

ReACT’s model of regional hubs is supported through mentorship and support within the Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab, its global community of members, and the Western Union Foundation (WUF).

POWERED BY A CONNECTED NETWORK OF GLOBAL HUBS, BUILT BY COLLABORATORS LIKE YOU.

Western Union Foundation
MIT Abdul Latif Jameel World Education Lab
Paper Airplanes
Connected Learning in Crisis Consortium
Tent Partnership for Refugees
Refugee Employment Partnership
Whitaker Peace Development Initiative
MIT Enterprise Forum Pan Arab Region
Al Hussein Technical University (HTU)
Oyster HR
Close the Gap

Na’amal
MISTI
UNICEF
UNHCR
Symba
Hikma
CERN
Mindspace
R2Social
Jobs for Humanity
MIT Alumni Association



In four years, the ReACT program, initially envisioned as a hub of learning and action-based in Jordan, has expanded to a robust and growing global community of global hubs that connect talented refugees and displaced learners to internships and employment, startup networks and accelerators, and pathways to formal undergraduate and graduate education.

No longer tethered to physical space, ReACT has been able to expand our reach across the globe, supporting displaced learners in countries new to the ReACT program, including Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Uganda, Colombia and New York City, USA. Through tools and platforms like Zoom, Slack, WhatsApp and MIT Open, the global 2021 cohort is able to stay connected with each other, their mentors, and program alumni. Program alumni have played an important role in offering encouragement and advice based on their own depth of experiences and challenges they've faced.

The ReACT model has also become an exemplar of MIT's Agile Continuous Education (ACE), a sequence of educational experiences designed with consideration for the socioeconomic and psychosocial consequences of sudden crisis, successfully addressing gaps in young people's education and workforce readiness. The effectiveness of ReACT's current Computer and Data Science certificate program speaks to the possibilities of ACE as a fully online learning experience.

As we refine our learning model and mode of engaging with regional hubs, we plan to develop a playbook of best practices to serve as a resource for others looking to create greater impact through networked change. Through these efforts, ReACT is developing solutions to the key challenges facing many available refugee learning solutions, such as access to high-quality courses and professional development, academic support and mentorship, integrated employment pathways, and scalable models and adaptable best practices.



BUILDING CAPACITY FOR SCALE

Continuing to grow ReACT hubs globally is a critical step toward this future. We are presently identifying local networks of supporters, collaborators, institutions, and alumni in areas like Greece and Texas within the United States to establish support hub in these critical regions, while strengthening our presence in our Jordan, Colombia, New York and Uganda hubs.

Another important collaboration that speaks to the multiplying effects of ReACT hubs emerged from connections made through the WUF. In collaboration with the Whitaker Peace Development Initiative (WPDI) and MIT J-WEL, we designed a workshop series to develop strategies for digital learning at the WPDI Community Learning Center (CLC) in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement in Uganda. Over interactive Zoom sessions, educators, technologists and refugee learners collaboratively explored the Kiryandongo CLC's design case to digitize their curriculum and serve more people at the CLC, particularly due to classroom density restrictions under COVID-19 and overwhelming demand for access to open education resources for peace-building and vocational upskilling. This opportunity to iterate and design digital learning solutions for remote and low-bandwidth settings—like refugee settlements—builds the ground conditions for more learners to take advantage of these new pathways.

These emerging directions for ReACT are part of our systemic orientation to build capacity and connected solutions to the urgent need for new pathways for formal and informal learning among refugee communities, amidst the challenges posed by the global pandemic and in preparation for whatever challenges may emerge in the future.

“

MY YEARS LIVING AS A REFUGEE MADE ME REALIZE THAT KNOWLEDGE IS SOMETHING NO ONE CAN EVER TAKE FROM ME. MY LIFE COULD HAVE GONE IN ANY DIRECTION, BUT WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM GENEROUS PEOPLE AND A BELIEF IN MYSELF, I WAS ABLE TO PERSEVERE AND FLOURISH.

—**Admir Masic**, Faculty Founder,
Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering

**“If you want to go fast,
go alone. If you want to
go far, go together.”**

–African Proverb



Open Learning