June 2020

‘Raidat’ Women's Leadership Program

Annual Report for the Matanel Foundation

Program Outline

Women in the Bedouin sector are disadvantaged members of a disadvantaged society: they belong to a weak, patriarchal minority group which socially sidelines women. Most young Bedouin women grow up in abject poverty and are conditioned to pursue the only path a woman is expected to follow. Marriages are arranged and are often polygamous, with women belonging to their husbands. As young Bedouin women best understand their own culture and customs, the optimum solutions for change will come from women themselves within the Bedouin society, once they possess the tools. Out of this understanding, the Raidat program was established.

Raidat is a groundbreaking program that locates and empowers talented young Bedouin women with leadership potential. Raidat develops pro-active social awareness among the women and helps them apply their skills to a life of social entrepreneurship.
The 10-month program comprises courses for academic preparation, mediation and life skills workshops; field trips to meet different communities that make up the societal tapestry of Israel; short courses about governance and civil rights in Israel; outdoor pursuits and more. *Raidat* is unique in that it not only prepares each young woman for her own individual academic path and future employment, but also for collective social entrepreneurship within communities, for the benefit of Bedouin society as a whole. Program participants will complete the year with an array of skills needed to be leaders and pioneers of social change.

**Beneficiaries**

*Raidat* opened for the first time this year as a pilot program, with 22 participants. After an intensive admissions process where applicants were tested in a number of areas (such as aptitude, academic subjects and group dynamics) there is also an ongoing assessment process throughout the year. The young women continually need to demonstrate the required qualities and fulfill mandatory assignments to maintain their spot in the program. The ongoing sorting process keeps program participants very productive and motivated to succeed, while they are gently forced out of their 'comfort zones' and need to complete tasks that we set for them.

Of the 22 participants that started the program, 8 are graduates of the Desert Stars High School and 14 from high schools around the Negev. We have a very broad representation of all Bedouin cities, towns and villages (some of which are still unrecognized): Rahat, Tel-Sheva, Arara Banegev, Laqiya, Abu-Tlul and Molada. Apart from the Desert Stars graduates, the young women did not know each other before joining *Raidat*, so our program was the very first opportunity for them to meet with young women outside of their family and tribe. Bedouin society is entrenched in a tribal system which dictates community life. Neighborhoods and schools are segregated by tribe, while tribal forces control administrative appointments, the distribution of resources, and children's education. Nowadays it is still highly unlikely that Bedouin youth will meet peers from other families and tribes. *Raidat* (and all of Desert Stars' programs) helps to overcome the tribal obstacles as the young people get to know one another in depth and become a unified group with shared aspirations and goals.
Program Goals and Objectives

*Raidat* empowers young Bedouin women personally, academically and in preparation for meaningful employment, equips them with the tools they need to succeed with spearheading change for the Bedouin society.

The program **goals** are:

- To identify, recruit and empower talented young Bedouin women to realize their individual and collective potential as change-making leaders.
- To create the platform that enables participants to solidify a personal identity, learn about the Bedouin community and Israeli society in-depth through meetings with diverse Israelis.
- To prepare female high school graduates for higher education and ambitious careers.
- To foster participants’ managerial and leadership skills.
- To teach the life skills participants need in order to succeed in a modern world.
Our objectives are:

1. To create a strong, cross-tribal group of Bedouin women capable of promoting development and change: women who assume leadership positions in local councils and establishments, promote a better future for the Bedouin community from within and encourage integration into Israeli society while respecting Bedouin culture and traditions.

2. To model shared-society in the Negev: by running our program with Jewish and Bedouin staff, working shoulder-to-shoulder to make meaningful and long-lasting improvements in quality of life among Negev Bedouin and all residents of the Negev, and encouraging open dialogue between the neighboring communities.

3. To strengthen the sense of belonging to Israeli society and awareness of civil rights across the Bedouin community: by encouraging a personal, individual development process for program participants to discover their complex identities; by encouraging healthy debate, informing young women of their democratic rights, helping them to discover their aspirations and facilitating a plan to realize their career dreams.

4. To develop capabilities and motivation for future quality employment: By enabling young Bedouin women to excel as individuals, professionals, and community leaders and to take responsibility for their success.

5. To reduce the stereotypes and negative attitudes the Bedouin and Jewish communities hold about one another: through interaction between communities as well as several joint events.
Activities That Took Place This Year

The program opened in early October 2019 and will run until the last week of July 2020. *Raidat* is managed by Ms Khitam Bader from Laqiya town and she has one deputy manager and a part-time counselor on her staff. **Until the Coronavirus outbreak, our young participants had already achieved approximately 80% of all their content and course tasks. Between March 17th—May 31st the program went online and all content was delivered virtually. We returned to full activity on May 31st.**

*Raidat* activities are organized into 4 main modules:

**1. The Identity, Values and Community Module** creates a platform on which young participants can firstly explore personal identities before taking on bigger communal challenges. Many Bedouin youth experience identity crises stemming from the conflicts in their lives and the Identity Module challenges participants to develop a personal and a shared vision, critical thinking and the ability to cope and contain different conflicts. The content deals with personal and group identity, Bedouin, Arabic and Israeli, from a wide range of perspectives on the theoretical level, both on the emotional level and on the practical level through direct encounters with different groups and populations throughout Israeli society. This module consisted of several programs, meetings and volunteer activities, including:

- **Volunteering in the community:** participants volunteer every week at several regular posts: in the Bedouin branches of *Krembo Wings* (youth movement for children with and without physical disabilities) in Hura and Rahat; The bilingual (Arabic and Hebrew) school in Be’er Sheva; an after-school club in Laqiya for children from disadvantaged families, and a club for special needs children in Rahat. A total of 180 volunteering hours is expected from each participant annually.

- **Outdoor Challenges:** three full days of ODT challenges took place. Group dynamics is a cornerstone for the entire program: these activities challenge and train the young women in group dynamics and cultivate the basic understanding that a group of young women who are not used to opening up to one another should become like family and support each other throughout the year and later on in life. The second stratum is personal: The young women have been given a new opportunity to get to know peers from other tribes, develop a sense of self-esteem and confidence, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and learn how to harness their strengths and improve their weaknesses so as not to let them become a barrier en route to achieving their goals.
**Turning Point:** is the platform on which participants explore their personal identities (in cooperation with the Beit Morasha of Jerusalem institute). Each week, discourse circles are held on current events, values, society and the tensions between the individual and Israeli society, as well as the place of the individual as part of one human fabric. 'Turning Point' also includes full-day field trips on which participants get to know the different communities that make up Israel's societal tapestry.

Topics are built in the form of seminars around a central theme. Three seminars have been held: **The Bedouin Society Seminar** – where they explore core issues that concern the Bedouin society such as polygamy, land rights and more; Meet key people from their community; Recognize different types of communities, families and tribes; process and develop personal identity from within the various circles of belonging (family, tribe, community, society). **Jerusalem Seminar** – Familiarity with national heritage sites and the history of the three great religions; familiarity with other minority groups (Haredi Jews from various streams, Arabs from East Jerusalem and more), introducing the government institutions (the Knesset, Supreme Court etc.) and civil issues arising from the unique complexity of Jerusalem. **Social Periphery Seminar** – including a tour in Tel Aviv and familiarity with minority groups in the center of Israel & key figures in current events, familiarity with the social periphery up north, including the northern Bedouin, Arab and Druze communities; Haredi societies in Bnei Brak, and various groups in Lod – and all their roles in social mobility.

**Art as a tool for change:** art constitutes an alternative expression that breaks language barriers and enables direct and personal expression in the form of opinions, thoughts and emotions. All participants took part in a theater or film course of their choice. The film group is in the process of producing a short video about forbidden love in the Bedouin society (which was slightly delayed due to the COVID crisis). The theater group is in the midst of rehearsing their short play which will be performed for their parents (if allowed by MOH directives).

### 2. Life Skills and Entrepreneurial Leadership Module

This module is groundbreaking and enables our young participants to research their community's most pressing needs, then design social-entrepreneurial solutions around those needs and finally, implement them in their communities. In this module we focus on teaching skills that will enhance participants' life skills and empower them to be better leaders:

**Public Speaking course:** All participants learned how to build a presentation, communicate their message in a concise way, practiced with their program peers and staff; they also learned how to mediate an open discussion.
Entrepreneurship Course: Hands-on entrepreneurial learning culminating in student-led projects that address vital community needs. At the end of the course, all the ideas are presented to a panel of judges and the best idea wins a full sponsorship for rolling out the project in the community. Participants were divided into focus-groups and some examples of their project ideas are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Problem to be Solved</th>
<th>Project Ideas</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students dropping out of high school (the Bedouin community has the highest national drop-out rate)</td>
<td>An advocacy program which raises awareness among middle-school students, tells them about the future implications of not completing high school and &quot;sells” them the idea of finishing high school in a fun way.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of basic tech access for Bedouin women</td>
<td>An interactive program (particularly for the older generation of women) which teaches them the use of digital apps that could assist them in day-to-day life, such as Moovit (for public transport) and using the different apps to schedule a doctor’s appointment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lack of vocational training for Bedouin women</td>
<td>Expose female high school students to varied and ‘new’ career choices as well as raise awareness of jobs that are typically perceived as male-dominated jobs.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Poor coexistence between Jewish and Arab students</td>
<td>A platform on which Jewish and Arab students may interact to find common interests, get to know each other’s cultures and bring them together in a shared setting.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of Israeli academic opportunities</td>
<td>An academic preparation program for high school students: teaching them about the different array of academic degrees that are not usually favored by Bedouin students as well as familiarizing them with the different academic institutions.</td>
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Computer Skills course: Participants had five days of IT skills classes and continued throughout the year with the help of our staff and a student volunteer, helping the young women with all their computer and office software operation needs.

Mediation and conflict resolution: 10 meetings were held for a complete mediation course, after which the participants received certificates.

3. Career and Academic Readiness Module

This module provides the full gamut of managerial, technological, and financial training to ready students for success in the modern workplace. Preparation for career paths is focused on fields in line with students’ individual abilities and interests. Classes in Math, English, and Hebrew complemented by months of academic and professional counselling. All participants attend campus tours to learn more about higher education opportunities. As part of this module, young women fulfill a summer internship* at a regional council or global company – job shadowing and learning from department managers in a local council and local businesses. (*altered due to Coronavirus restrictions):
○ **Academic Exposure and Guidance:** Raidat participants toured three academic campuses and places of employment as well as taking part in academic "open days". Our participants took part in 3 "exposure days" in faculties for medical subjects, engineering faculties and various humanities tracks. Each participant receives group and individual consultations with our Academic Coordinator who helps them to build a 'personal achievement plan' to help them to reach their academic goals.

○ **Hebrew course:** Took place in 2 groups. The young women had big gaps to close in Hebrew language skills. We understand that a good command of Hebrew is vital for young Bedouin women's future success with higher education and integration into the workforce and therefore increased the number of hours for the weaker group (following their request, once they recognized the importance themselves).

○ **Research:** The academic research course took place in Hebrew and taught the young women how to conduct research in an organized, thorough manner. The main aims were for the participants to develop independent research methods, investigative skills and critical thinking. Participants had a number of workshops including economics, psychology, engineering, law and public policy. The young women were very inquisitive: one focus group even realized the importance of exposing women in their society to different fields and they therefore used that concept for their entrepreneurship project. Each workshop included reading materials, lectures by lecturers of Ben Gurion University, a visit to a high-tech hub, practice giving presentations to an audience and receiving feedback on them, as well as reflection on the process.

○ **English course:** Intended to improve the English levels of the participants, they embarked on this language course with an emphasis on academic English. The English course also took place in 2 groups, divided by competence.

○ **Psychometric/Math:** We offered these courses according to the 'personal achievement plan' for each participant, some young women required the psychometric exam for their intended academic path. Some required a higher grade in math for the particular field of study they intend to follow.

4. **Preparation for 'the real world':** In this module we emphasized

○ **Exposure to the Public Sector:** Raidat participants visited Israel's government and judicial body – the Knesset and the Supreme Court [as specified above under 'Turning Point'].

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Civics & Public Policy workshops: Every week participants discussed current events and politics, while cultivating amongst the young women a sense of belonging to Israel and Israeli society.

Community

The support of the community was imperative to the success of Raidat. The most important circle of support for the young women are their mothers. Five joint activities with all mothers of program participants were planned and only two could take place due to Covid-19 restrictions. The turnout was most impressive and the meetings extremely positive.

Team

Raidat is managed by a joint Bedouin-Jewish team of a manager, a deputy and a part-time counselor. Most of the content is delivered by our staff, and some by outsourced lecturers and content providers. On an organizational level, Raidat operates under the Chief of Graduate Programs & Educational Development and as such, receives ongoing pedagogical support from Desert Stars’ Educational Development department.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The organization’s Monitoring and Evaluation department conducts ongoing evaluation for all Desert Stars programs. Evaluation of the Raidat program and participants will be conducted via questionnaires. The final assessment will be given after the participants fill out the final questionnaires for the year. Assessment criteria include attitudes and viewpoints, quality of the program and performance. The results are measured against our ‘Graduates Profile’ that is used by all programs and comprises 5 categories (motivation, values, personal strengths, personal skills and knowledge) and 28 characteristics broken down into sub-characteristics.

Activities During Covid-19

The new reality we were faced with required quick and significant changes. Raidat continued to operate online from March 17th until we returned to full operation on May 31st. During the time that Raidat was virtual, almost all group sessions, meetings, academic guidance, Hebrew and English classes, and all leadership assignments – took place using Zoom and Whatsapp. The assignments that the girls received during that time included implementation within their family, so that everyone could benefit: the young women got practical experience with critical thinking and taking the lead, and their families received support and a source of strength in these challenging times. Raidat participants also took it upon themselves to join our volunteer drives in which
they helped to prepare food packages, activity packs and hygiene packs for thousands of needy families before the Ramadan holiday. They also took it upon themselves to call lonely senior citizens on a weekly basis to ensure they had all their needs met and also just to talk to them to alleviate loneliness. One of our talented participants decided to offer free online art classes for children and they also offered free spoken Arabic lessons, over the phone. Approximately 30 people signed up and it was a great opportunity for young people from Jewish and Bedouin communities to interact and get to know one another – even if only over the phone. The young women showed incredible compassion by creating a short video of encouragement for "Mashan" facility for Seniors, as they were experiencing a devastating outbreak of Covid-19.

"We will get through this together.... We are with you always... Be strong... We pray for you... From us at Desert Stars 'Raidat' Program"

Thank you Matanel Foundation for your partnership!

Your generosity is enabling us to develop a new generation of Bedouin leaders for a stronger, egalitarian Israeli society.