

# BOLD GIVING INITIATIVES: HOW PHILANTHROPY IS CREATING IMPACT IN THE ARAB WORLD

PART OF THE BOLD GIVING INITIATIVE SERIES

## Overview

Across the Arab region, philanthropy is supporting millions of people to build better lives for themselves and their children. Seven bold philanthropic efforts not only demonstrate what is possible, but deliver insights upon which other enterprising philanthropists can build.

## Inside

- Introduction
- Identifying Bold Giving Initiatives
- Unique Roles for bold philanthropy
- Cross-cutting learnings
- Appendix: References
- Appendix: Additional details on methodology

## Project *Inspired*



# INTRODUCTION

## SUPPORTING DISENFRANCHISED YOUNG PEOPLE TO BUILD A BETTER

future for their struggling communities in Jordan. Developing a food bank model that tackles hunger's causes as well as its symptoms in Egypt. Pooling capital and expertise to concentrate on eradicating diseases that afflict millions of vulnerable families throughout the Arab world.

Across Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere, entrepreneurial private philanthropists are pursuing novel, long-term approaches to confronting the region's social challenges.

Their efforts grow out of a long history of charitable giving, a fundamental part of the region's cultural, religious, and social fabric. Each year, such charity provides vital resources — including food, clothing, and healthcare — for those in need. Fueled by a desire to do even more, this emerging breed of enterprising philanthropists is adding to its traditional charity. Despite the obstacles to greater giving, such as limited information on “what works” and barriers to setting up philanthropic institutions, they are engaging in bold, strategic philanthropy that puts a bigger emphasis on uplifting disadvantaged populations.

“Arab citizens have long held that the government bears sole responsibility for dealing with [society's] challenges,” says Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair, chairman of Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education (AGFE). “This is slowly changing. The private sector and business must be engaged and must contribute to the solutions for these challenges.”

What does bold giving for social causes look like in the Arab region? How are philanthropists identifying promising ideas, what are their strategies for amplifying impact, and what have they learned along the way? Project Inspired, an initiative spearheaded by AGFE and Philanthropy Age, in partnership with The Bridgespan Group and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, embarked on a research effort to answer these questions. With a focus on the journeys of individual philanthropists, and those outside of royal families and government, the study's objective is to spotlight some of these bold philanthropists' experiences and lessons learned, to help inspire and inform greater giving for social impact across the region. ■



# IDENTIFYING BOLD GIVING INITIATIVES

## THE STUDY BEGAN WITH A SCAN OF THE ARAB REGION FOR “BOLD

Giving Initiatives” that meet several criteria (see “What Qualifies as a Bold Giving Initiative?” below and the Appendix for detail). What follows is neither a comprehensive list nor a definitive accounting of all the bold initiatives in the region. Rather, this study profiles a select set of seven initiatives—drawn from various sectors, populations, and geographies—which demonstrate how donors can take different approaches as they address social challenges. The report also highlights a set of learnings that cut across many of the initiatives—insights that point the way for other philanthropists to build on their peers’ efforts and chart their own approaches.

Although there is no single roadmap for forging a Bold Giving Initiative in the region, the philanthropists and platforms in this report have mapped out a set of navigation points that help show the way. ■

### WHAT QUALIFIES AS A BOLD GIVING INITIATIVE?

#### Must be a philanthropic initiative

- Catalyzed by private philanthropy (individuals outside of royal families and government)
- With defined goals or objectives for social impact for a specific sector and/or population
- Implemented over a sustained period of time

#### Must be bold

- Has a clear strategy
- Designed to address a large portion of the need and/or focuses on a model, sector, or population that others have not sufficiently addressed
- Has total philanthropic giving of at least USD 500,000 and/or reach of at least 5,000 people



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY

**PREVIOUS RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THERE ARE SEVERAL UNIQUE ROLES** that bold philanthropy can play in catalyzing social impact<sup>1</sup>. Six of these roles have emerged as so foundational to the global philanthropic ecosystem, they can be thought of as archetypes of bold giving. They are also pertinent in the Arab region, with each of the seven bold giving initiatives in this study illustrating one or more of these archetypes in the Arab context. These initiatives, summarized below, are grouped according to their primary archetype (see the chart "Archetypes of Bold Giving" below). It is important to note that these initiatives can fit multiple archetypes. However, they are categorized below according to their dominant type. ■

## ARCHETYPES OF BOLD GIVING

### INNOVATE



Break with traditional approaches to develop a novel initiative and demonstrate potential for impact at scale

**Relevant Bold Giving Initiatives:**

- Alfamar
- Egyptian Food Bank (EFB)\*

### SCALE PROVEN APPROACHES



Identify an intervention that works and help scale its impact to wider geographic frontiers or target groups

**Relevant Bold Giving Initiative:**

- Sustainable Agricultural Development Program (SADP)

### SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS



Deeply understand the needs of a community and work with it to collectively solve a social problem

**Relevant bold giving initiative:**

- Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya

### STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS



Influence the underlying structures, relationships, beliefs, and stakeholders that characterize a social system, to bring about lasting change

**Relevant Bold Giving Initiative:**

- Hikmat Road Safety (HRS) initiative

### BUILD A FIELD



Galvanize disparate players working to achieve a shared social goal or fill a gap in a field, through mechanisms such as building leaders' capabilities or developing a knowledge base

**Relevant Bold Giving Initiative:**

- Shefa Fund

### INFORM POLICY



Provide evidence and input to inform efforts to reform laws, policies, and regulations

**Relevant Bold Giving Initiative:**

- Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)\*

\*EFB and J-PAL are both also strong examples of the "scale proven approaches" archetype.

# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: INNOVATE



## Primary philanthropists:

Tarek Ben Halim and Lubna  
S. Olayan

## Established:

2004

## Primary geography:

Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and  
refugee communities

## Primary focus:

Education, youth  
employment, and women's  
economic empowerment



**Alfanar's** venture philanthropy model departs from status quo approaches, providing flexible funding and management supports to promising social enterprises

## WHEN HE LOOKED ACROSS THE ARAB REGION'S SOCIAL SECTOR, TAREK

Ben Halim, a London-based investment banker of Palestinian and Libyan descent, saw many promising social enterprises that were on the cusp of growing, but lacked the capital and capabilities to do so. In 2004, borrowing from venture capital approaches in the for-profit sector, Ben Halim launched Alfanar, one of the region's first "venture philanthropy" organizations, which provides financial and capacity-building support to social enterprises.

Alfanar departs from the region's well-worn pathways of providing short-term capital for either early-stage or mature organizations. Alfanar spotlighted the "missing middle" — growth-stage organizations that have demonstrated some success but need help in becoming sustainable and extending their reach.

Alfanar also uses multiple funding approaches. For example, it does not require investees to deliver a financial return, so they have an option to invest in themselves and focus on impact and professional development. At the same time, Alfanar offers partially repayable grants, so investees gain sufficient experience to prepare for future debt and equity investments after Alfanar exits.

Breaking further from standard practice, Alfanar contributes not only capital to its investees, but also the tools and training they need. This includes business planning and execution, management assistance, and impact measurement, as well as customized supports to meet each investee's specific needs.

To date, Alfanar has supported 35 investees. These social enterprises have provided employment for low-income women and youth, microloans to widows and female breadwinners, and an online and in-person education platform for children and youth — among other efforts — and together have reached more than 68,000 people in Egypt and Lebanon. ■

# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: INNOVATE



## Primary philanthropist:

Moez El Shohdi

## Established:

EFB was established in 2006; FBRN was established in 2013

## Primary geography:

Egypt and the Arab region

## Primary focus:

Food security

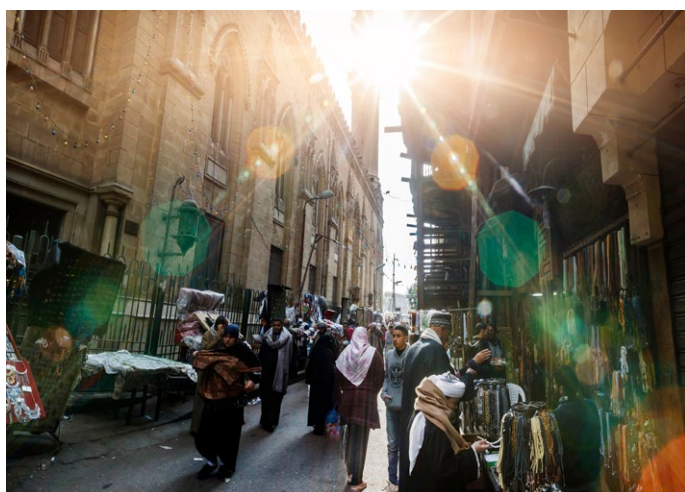
The **Egyptian Food Bank** reimagines the traditional food bank approach, using an innovative, “six-pillar” model to feed the hungry as well as tackle hunger’s root cause

## THE CAIRO-BASED PHILANTHROPIST DR. MOEZ EL SHOHD, PRESIDENT

of the Middle East & Africa division of Style Hotels International, was troubled over the millions of Egyptians who go hungry, even as so much uneaten restaurant food goes to waste. In 2005, the country was in the throes of a widespread food security crisis,<sup>2</sup> but it lacked effective food banks to meet the needs of the millions of people who were too poor to access sufficient and nutritious food. Against that backdrop, El Shohdi and co-founders launched the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), which reimagines the traditional approach to addressing hunger.

EFB has innovated a model that eases hunger’s symptoms by providing meals, even as it tackles hunger’s root cause — poverty. EFB collects excess food from hotels and restaurants and, through partner NGOs, delivers it to families in need. Since this novel approach depends on reducing food waste and distributing untouched leftovers, EFB builds awareness of the problem and practices that help address it, including decreasing the sizes of hotel plates. In parallel, EFB helps individuals build employment skills and matches them to job opportunities, so they can become self-sufficient economically and free themselves from depending on food banks for meals. EFB now partners with 9,000 NGOs to reach 12 million individuals across Egypt annually.

Seeking to reach even more people, in 2013 EFB launched an umbrella organization, the Food Banking Regional Network (FBRN), which has exported its innovative model to a total of 30 countries across the region and beyond. ■



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: SCALE PROVEN APPROACHES



## Primary philanthropist:

The Sawiris family

## Established:

2012 (SADP partnered with the Sawiris family)

## Primary geography:

Qena governorate, Egypt

## Primary focus:

Agriculture and livelihoods

## The Sustainable Agricultural Development Program

partners with local NGOs and governments to identify, pilot, and scale effective agricultural practices that can address poverty across Upper Egypt

### THE SAWIRIS FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS ONE OF

Egypt's first family grantmaking foundations. With its founding family originally from Upper Egypt, the Foundation is committed to economic empowerment in this region, where half the population lives on less than USD 1 per day.<sup>3</sup> In 2012, the Foundation's leadership learned of a compelling new program in Upper Egypt: the Sustainable Agricultural Development Program (SADP), which sought to reduce hunger and improve farming families' incomes. This combination inspired the Foundation to support the first phase of SADP's work in the region.

SADP is part of the Egypt Network for Integrated Development (ENID), a multi-stakeholder partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other local and international donors, under the umbrella of the Egyptian Ministry of International Cooperation. It focuses on studying local needs in Upper Egypt and identifying best agricultural practices from other geographies to meet those needs. SADP then pilots these practices in Upper Egypt, to determine what works in the local context, and scales the effective practices through partnerships and advocacy.

Case in point: SADP brought an agricultural recycling practice, used in several locations around the world, to Upper Egypt. In this model, farmers generate income by selling their agricultural waste for processing into compost. They can also reap savings, by purchasing the compost at a lower price than fertilizer. SADP trained over 1,700 Upper Egypt farmers and government staff in the process, leading to a significant increase in recycling. Seeing the pilot's success, SADP engaged the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation, which is now implementing a composting component in its own work — thereby ensuring that other communities in Egypt take up the approach.

For its part, the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development evaluates selected agricultural practices, supports SADP with measurement and evaluation, and uses its network and reputation to connect SADP with local stakeholders. By sharing its expertise and knowledge with SADP, the Foundation increases the odds that its programs will grow. ■



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

**Primary philanthropist:**

Fadi Ghandour

**Established:**

2005

**Primary geography:**

Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and  
Palestine

**Primary focus:**

Youth and development

**Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya** supports a citizen-led model that uses civic engagement, youth activism, and education to identify needs and create positive change in their marginalized communities

**IN 2005, JORDANIAN FADI GHANDOUR, A FOUNDER OF GLOBAL**

logistics company Aramex International, was working to engage his company more deeply in social development efforts when he lost a close friend in the Amman terror attacks. That tragic event pushed Ghandour to confront one of terrorism's triggers: the high rates of unemployment<sup>4</sup> and sense of hopelessness in marginalized communities, which can push young people to radicalize.<sup>5</sup> With his own wealth as well as funding from Aramex and businessmen such as Khaled Al Masri, he founded Ruwwad Al-Tanmeya, which avoids top-down interventions and instead enlists young people and other citizens in disenfranchised communities, as the experts of their own locales, in the effort to build better futures for themselves and their neighbors.

Ruwwad's citizen-led model for community engagement is founded on the notion that people have the knowledge and desire to make positive changes in their communities. The organization helps put community members in a position to do so, by deeply engaging them to understand their needs, as well as by soliciting their input in designing programs and their help in implementing them.

Recognizing that young people have an inherent (though often untapped) ability to help lead change efforts, Ruwwad creates opportunities for them to advance, such as by awarding over 2,127 scholarships to date for higher education. In return, youth invest volunteer hours in Ruwwad's community programs, including mentoring younger children. In this way, Ruwwad fosters civic engagement, as well as the sense that youth can take agency in their lives—as long as they have a chance. ■



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: STRENGTHEN SYSTEMS



## Primary philanthropist:

Maher Kaddoura

## Established:

2008

## Primary geography:

Jordan

## Primary focus:

Road safety

The **Hikmat Road Safety** initiative works to create lasting improvements in Jordan's road safety system by focusing on infrastructure, public awareness, and stakeholder engagement

## IN 2008, MAHER KADDOURA, A JORDANIAN MANAGEMENT

consultant, could no longer tolerate the mayhem on Jordan's roads. Reckless driving behavior and poor law enforcement were resulting in nearly 1,000 traffic fatalities annually<sup>6</sup> — a toll that included Kaddoura's teenage son, Hikmat, who was killed by a hit-and-run driver. Having concluded that Jordan's public and private sectors were not prioritizing road safety as much as other nation-spanning challenges, Kaddoura invested his own money to launch the Hikmat Road Safety (HRS) initiative, whose overarching goal is to dramatically reduce the country's traffic-related deaths and injuries.

HRS aimed to strengthen the existing road safety system with a three-pronged approach. It bolsters road safety infrastructure, by adding speed bumps and building playgrounds to keep children off the streets. It also focuses public attention on the problem, through road safety awareness campaigns that target the highest risk populations: schoolchildren and young adults.

Finally, HRS engages stakeholders, such as government, automobile clubs, and private sector actors, to collaborate on implementing programs and advocate for improvements at the national level. The result: HRS and its allies have helped to catalyze change, bolster the country's road safety system, and save lives. By 2016, due to the efforts of HRS and others, Jordan had witnessed a 50 percent reduction in its traffic fatality rate. ■



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: BUILD A FIELD

**Primary philanthropists:**

Khaled and Olfat Juffali, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

**Established:**

2013

**Primary geography:**

Middle East and Africa

**Primary focus:**

Health and emergency relief

The **Shefa Fund** pools donors' contributions and fosters learning and collaboration among them, to address gaps in health funding and improve the lives of vulnerable children and families

**PROMINENT SAUDI BUSINESSMAN KHALED JUFFALI AND HIS WIFE,**

Olfat Al Mutlaq-Juffali, were eager to build on their long history of giving, particularly in the area of health. They understood that by acting alone, they could not do enough to address the critical health needs of the Arab region's most vulnerable people. In 2013, resolving to act collectively instead of individually, the Juffalis launched the Shefa Fund, one of the region's first donor collaboratives. To do so, the Juffalis engaged their adult children, friends, and broader network, and built on the expertise of partners in the global health and development fields.

The Shefa Fund seeks to build the field of health in three important ways, in an effort to improve the lives of individuals across the region. First, the Shefa Fund brings together independent donors, providing opportunities for them to both learn about health projects and contribute to them. The fund also pools capital, leading to larger investments that can accelerate progress against critical health challenges. Finally, the fund helps fill gaps in the field by focusing on early-stage projects, research efforts, and in particular, health issues that are often under-funded in the region, such as meningitis A and neglected tropical diseases.

Across all of its efforts, the Shefa Fund is deeply committed to learning. This includes learning trips to help members advance their understanding of conditions on the ground. Additionally, they have evolved their grantmaking by learning from what works. For instance, through funding the END Fund, the Shefa Fund learned how to effectively invest in large-scale, high-impact opportunities, such as by targeting areas that have a high-density disease prevalence. Based on the success it saw in this particular investment, this approach has become a building block for future grantmaking decisions that focus on high-impact interventions.

Thus far, by working collectively to build its chosen field, the Shefa Fund has helped improve the health of 16 million people. ■



# UNIQUE ROLES FOR BOLD PHILANTHROPY: INFORM POLICY

**J-PAL** develops rigorous evidence that gauges the efficacy of social impact programs and guides stakeholders in using this data to inform their decisions and shape public policy



**Primary philanthropist:**  
The Jameel family, through  
Community Jameel

**Established:**  
2003; J-PAL MENA  
established in 2020

**Primary geography:**  
Conducts research globally  
in more than 80 countries

**Primary focus:**  
Cross-sectoral

**IN 2003, MOHAMMED ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL, THE FOUNDER OF** Community Jameel, the Jameel family philanthropy, realized that governments and donors were contributing vast sums of money to programs that addressed critical needs in the fields of health, education, and livelihoods. However, there was a lack of rigorous evidence or data to inform decisionmaking and determine whether programs were effective, which was particularly troubling given the scale of the need. For example, the Arab region’s next generation faced an especially bleak future: they endured the world’s highest youth unemployment rate. That and other dispiriting realities led Jameel to make a catalytic investment in the Poverty Action Lab (PAL), started by three Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professors. PAL was one of the world’s first research centers to use randomized evaluations (a rigorous approach to isolating the impact of an intervention) to test the efficacy of antipoverty programs.

Renamed the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), in honor of the late father of Mohammed Jameel, the founder of Community Jameel, J-PAL acts indirectly to combat poverty across the world. It both expands stakeholders’ understanding of which poverty-alleviation programs work (and which do not) and aims to ensure this knowledge then informs decision-makers.

Anchored by a network of more than 190 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL distills results from rigorous impact evaluations into relevant insights for policy makers, practitioners, and donors. It also builds partnerships with governments, NGOs, and others, to support the use of evidence to drive policy reform and share frameworks for applying global evidence to local contexts. For example, J-PAL is partnering with the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development to adapt BRAC’s Graduation Approach, a globally successful antipoverty program, for implementation in Upper Egypt.

As a result, J-PAL is helping to shift the culture of governments, NGOs, and philanthropists globally and in the Arab region from betting on “good intentions” to investing in what works. ■



# CROSS-CUTTING LEARNINGS

## LOOKING ACROSS THE BOLD GIVING INITIATIVES, FIVE LEARNINGS

about how the donors are approaching their work surface repeatedly. These learnings certainly apply globally, but their prominence in this set of Bold Giving Initiatives underlines their importance in the Arab region.

### 1. Monitor to learn and evolve over time

These philanthropists believe that learning is part of doing. They begin by testing ideas through pilot projects, learning from setbacks, and adjusting their approach so they are better positioned to achieve their ultimate goals.

This is especially relevant in the Arab region, since cultural, socio-political, and economic contexts vary across and even within countries and can change very quickly. Also, because there is limited documented knowledge about what works in the region, testing and evolving is particularly important.

For example, the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB) tracks the progress of its model across multiple countries and uses this data to shape programming. Where some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, require greater focus on the model's job training and building pathways out of poverty, others have a higher need for initiatives that alleviate hunger. In Jordan and Lebanon, the organization has increasingly focused on feeding programs in recent years, in response to the needs of an influx of refugees.

Alfanar also measures its own progress and provides the necessary tools and supports to investees for tracking their impact. The venture philanthropy organization equips its investees with software that helps them collect and analyze data on an ongoing basis.

"We want investees to experience [data and measurement] as a source of power and information to make decisions," says Myrna Atalla, Alfanar's executive director. ▶



# CROSS-CUTTING LEARNINGS (CONTINUED)

Alfanar also scrutinizes its investment process and makes design changes when necessary. For example, after gathering constructive feedback from investees, Alfanar streamlined its due diligence process.

## 2. Engage with the target population to understand the community's needs and build trust

This study's philanthropists and their partners believe that to design the most effective solutions, they must venture into communities, engage with the people, and listen to what they say. They then turn these observations into insights and develop Bold Giving Initiatives that will improve lives. By devoting time up front to understanding the community's social dynamics and very specific needs, philanthropists are in a better position to invest in relevant, high-impact solutions.

This approach is especially important in the Arab region, where many experts observe how people widely believe that government, not private wealth, is responsible for confronting social challenges. Private, institutional philanthropy is still relatively novel, and constituents might question a donor's intentions and suspect a hidden agenda.

Recalls Ruwwad founder Fadi Ghandour, upon first approaching the community of Jabal Al Natheef in East Amman: "For them, it was inconceivable that any institution from the private sector wanted to do more than simple charity." Knowing that trust is the antidote to skepticism, Ghandour earned Jabal Al Natheef's confidence by first working to bring a much-needed police station and health clinic to the neighborhood, even though that work fell outside the scope of the organization's program model.

Deep engagement is particularly critical for young people, who comprise a massive percentage of the region's population. Youth have rapidly evolving and unique needs, owing to globalization's escalation, the influx of new technologies, and a youth unemployment rate that is among the highest in the world.

Maheer Kaddoura, founder of the Hikmat Road Safety (HRS) initiative, understood the importance of engaging youth. Having identified young people as a high-risk population, Kaddoura reached out to them, learned from them, and refused to view them as "beneficiaries." Instead, he enlisted them as active agents in the campaign to improve road safety in Jordan. By meeting young people where they were and seeing a rapidly changing world through their eyes, Kaddoura helped convert their insights into approaches that are saving pedestrians' lives.

## 3. Challenge status quo thinking to change mindsets and behaviors

The philanthropists who lead these bold giving initiatives understand that to break through seemingly intractable social problems, NGOs, governments, constituents, and other stakeholders must often shift from a "this is how we do things" mindset to "this is what can be." These philanthropists think carefully about how to help people climb out of deeply embedded mental models and behaviors, explore fresh approaches, and thereby cross the tipping point to lasting social change.

The founders of Ruwwad, J-PAL, and EFB have each endeavored to help different stakeholder groups challenge old patterns of thinking and accomplish more. Ruwwad enables young people, through its scholarships and its citizen engagement model, to overcome the sense of hopelessness that pervades their communities and realize their full potential. As Fadi Ghandour put it, the organization supports people as they "shift the community discourse from 'we need' to 'we want to do something about it,' and actually work towards solving their own challenges." ▶



## CROSS-CUTTING LEARNINGS (CONTINUED)

By demonstrating how rigorous evidence is the cornerstone for building cost-effective solutions, J-PAL helps donors, NGOs, and government agencies evolve from supporting “good intentions” to identifying effective solutions and deploying what has proven to work. “Working with J-PAL has helped us move beyond monitoring processes to measuring outcomes and impact in order to assess which programs are truly successful, and more importantly, which programs sustain beyond the grant period,” says Noura Selim, executive director of the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development. “It has deeply influenced the way we invest.”

For its part, EFB focuses on consumers as well as institutions, by targeting two behaviors to change: discouraging customers from serving themselves more than they can eat at restaurant buffets, and encouraging Egypt’s hotels and restaurants to donate uneaten food instead of throwing it away. “At first, we were paying hotel workers for the overtime they spent packaging and delivering food to NGOs,” recalls EFB founder Moez El Shohdi. “Within a few months, the hotels said, ‘Send us the invoice for the containers, and let us cover their overtime.’ We began changing the mentality. It became part of their CSR.”

### 4. Apply your financial and nonfinancial assets

Every philanthropic venture is imbued with a core purpose and set of beliefs, which emanate from the initiative’s founders. To bring their sense of purpose to life, these founding philanthropists invest not only their money, but also themselves: their passion and logic, as well as their time, expertise, and networks.

“Your work should match your capacity,” says Kamel Lazaar, president of the Kamel Lazaar Foundation, which supports arts and culture in Tunisia and across the Arab region. “It’s not necessarily about a large amount of money... ideas are more important than the financial capability. However, the two of them working together in harmony is undoubtedly better.”

Many observers have found that Arab philanthropists often have relationships that span multiple sectors — for-profit and public, as well as NGO — which they can tap into.<sup>7</sup> Doing so is often necessary to get things done, particularly as a number of philanthropists have found the region to be operationally challenging, in terms of navigating regulations and norms.<sup>8</sup>

This report’s philanthropists take different pathways to investing their nonfinancial assets. Moez El Shohdi dedicates much of his time to running EFB. He also taps into his network in the hotel industry to identify best practices and help make EFB operationally agile. The Sawiris Foundation for Social Development contributes its local knowledge, reputational capital, and government relationships to support the Sustainable Agricultural Development Program’s (SADP) work in Upper Egypt. “The Foundation’s name carries a lot of weight in Egypt and adds legitimacy to our work in the eyes of other funders and the government,” says Dr. Dyaa Abdou, SADP’s director and initiator.

Then there is Alfano, the region’s first “venture philanthropy” fund, which helps its investees with strategy, operations, and measurement — proof of the importance of offering more than capital. “Tarek [Ben Halim] knew that funding is necessary but not sufficient for change,” says Myrna Atalla, Alfano’s executive director. “The real glue to venture philanthropy is the active management support that we provide to our investees.” ▶



## CROSS-CUTTING LEARNINGS (CONTINUED)

### 5. Partner with others to expand your expertise

The philanthropists who lead these bold giving initiatives are self-aware enough to know the limits of their capabilities in the region. They take deliberate steps to overcome them, by reaching out to others who possess the expertise that they lack. They work with different stakeholders—NGOs, government agencies, and other philanthropists—who have the networks and the resources to bolster promising but wanting programs.

The “strength in numbers” mindset is especially relevant in the Arab region, where actors often adhere to their traditional roles. That is, the government supports health and education through direct-service programs, wealthy families give individually through zakat, and NGOs traditionally have a local focus. Private philanthropy, however, can cross those lines and engage other actors in order to access different capabilities and accelerate impact.

Partnering with others is intrinsic to the Shefa Fund, as the Juffalis reached out to other ambitious donors to pool their capital, networks, and expertise. The Shefa Fund has had over 20 members, all of whom are donors based in the Arab region. As Khaled Juffali put it, “the fundamental idea behind [acting collectively] is not to reinvent the wheel.”

J-PAL believes that strong partnerships are key to making a difference. Host university partnerships, where J-PAL regional offices are based, are central to J-PAL's approach. In addition to its global office at MIT, J-PAL has established seven regional offices at leading universities around the world. In the Arab region, in July 2020 in collaboration with Community Jameel, J-PAL partnered with the American University in Cairo (AUC) to launch the J-PAL Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional office. J-PAL MENA will partner with local governments and NGOs to innovate, pilot, test, and scale effective solutions. Here, Community Jameel's reputation and relationships have been critical. As J-PAL Global executive director Iqbal Dhaliwal explains: “Community Jameel opened up many doors for us, making connections to critical partners, especially in the Arab region.” For example, Community Jameel helped lay the groundwork for J-PAL's relationship with AUC.

For its part, SADP is a multi-layered collaboration, where the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development and the SADP team collaborate with local NGOs and with governments to develop and scale their models for improving agriculture and livelihoods in Upper Egypt. By engaging NGOs and government in the project design stage, SADP builds buy-in and ensures that partners can take what they learn and run the projects themselves. “SADP is largely a learning initiative, with various well-designed pilots and continuous publication of results,” says the Foundation's Noura Selim. ■



 **CONCLUSION**

Ruwwad and the Hikmat Road Safety initiative. J-PAL and the Egyptian Food Bank. Alfamar, SADP, and the Shefa Fund. These Bold Giving Initiatives are among several examples of change in the region's philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. They are still works-in-progress; their efforts are still unfolding. No doubt, their approaches will continue to evolve, as they encounter new obstacles and make course corrections. Nevertheless, they are already charting distinctive pathways and demonstrating how private philanthropy can contribute to the public good. It is up to the region's other aspiring donors to build and improve on what works. ■

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## APPENDIX: REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Hartnell, *Philanthropy in the Arab Region: A Working Paper*, published by "Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace", in association with *Alliance*, Arab Foundations Forum, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy, King Khalid Foundation, *Philanthropy Age*, SAANED and WINGS, March 2018, <http://www.psjp.org/resources/philanthropy-in-the-arab-region/>; Thomas J. Tierney and Joel L. Fleishman, *Give Smart: Philanthropy that Gets Results* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2011); Pritha Venkatachalam, Niloufer Memon, and Donald Yeh, "Bold Philanthropy in India: Insights from Eight Social Change Initiatives", The Bridgespan Group, September 2018

<sup>8</sup> Hartnell, "Philanthropy in the Arab Region," cites the difficulties of registering foundations, particularly in North Africa

<sup>2</sup> Racha Ramadan, "Food Security and its Measurement in Egypt," *International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies Watch Letter* No. 32, April 2015, [https://www.ciheam.org/publications/193/013\\_-\\_Racha\\_Ramadan.pdf](https://www.ciheam.org/publications/193/013_-_Racha_Ramadan.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Compared with approximately 28 percent of Egypt's total population. Data sourced from Egyptian government's Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS) in 2015: <https://www.egyptindependent.com/278-percent-egyptian-population-lives-below-poverty-line-capmas/>

<sup>4</sup> In 2005, Jordan's youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24) was about 33%, according to World Bank data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?end=2017&locations=JO&start=2005>

<sup>5</sup> Kartika Bhatia and Hafez Ghanem, "How do education and unemployment affect support for violent extremism?" The Brookings Institution, March 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-do-education-and-unemployment-affect-support-for-violent-extremism/>

<sup>6</sup> "Global Status Report on Road Safety: Time for Action", World Health Organization, 2009, [https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/road\\_safety\\_status/report/en/](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_safety_status/report/en/)

<sup>7</sup> The Center for Effective Philanthropy notes that navigating close ties between family and philanthropy can be a challenge for philanthropists in the region, as "there are close ties between family business and family philanthropy... there is an ongoing debate in Arab philanthropy about whether or not independent philanthropy should be detached from the family business". Atullah Kuttah, "Philanthropy in the Arab Region: Motivations and Tension Points," The Center for Effective Philanthropy, November 2015, <https://cep.org/philanthropy-in-the-arab-region-motivations-and-tension-points/>

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## APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON METHODOLOGY

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To identify Bold Giving Initiatives the research team went through the following process:

- Spoke with approximately **85 individual experts** on efforts in the Arab region (including regional philanthropists, leaders at foundations and NGOs, and other experts) to learn about prospective initiatives
- Conducted extensive **secondary research**, including regional publications and reports on Arab philanthropy
- Tapped the **collective global experience** of The Bridgespan Group, the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation for Education, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Philanthropy Age
- Through these activities, surfaced and reviewed **over 100 giving initiatives** in the region, and selected seven based on the criteria below:
  - Must be a **philanthropic initiative**
    - Driven by private philanthropy (individuals outside of royal families and government)
    - Has defined goals or objectives for social impact for a specific sector and/or population
    - Implemented over a sustained period of time
  - Must be **bold**
    - Has a clear strategy
    - Designed to address a large portion of the need and/or focuses on a model, sector, or population that others have not sufficiently addressed
    - Has total philanthropic giving of at least USD 500,000 and/or reach of at least 5,000 people

It is worth noting that there were methodological constraints on this study, given that there currently is not an exhaustive list of giving initiatives in the region. The research team used the above process to develop as comprehensive a view as possible. ■

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# IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

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