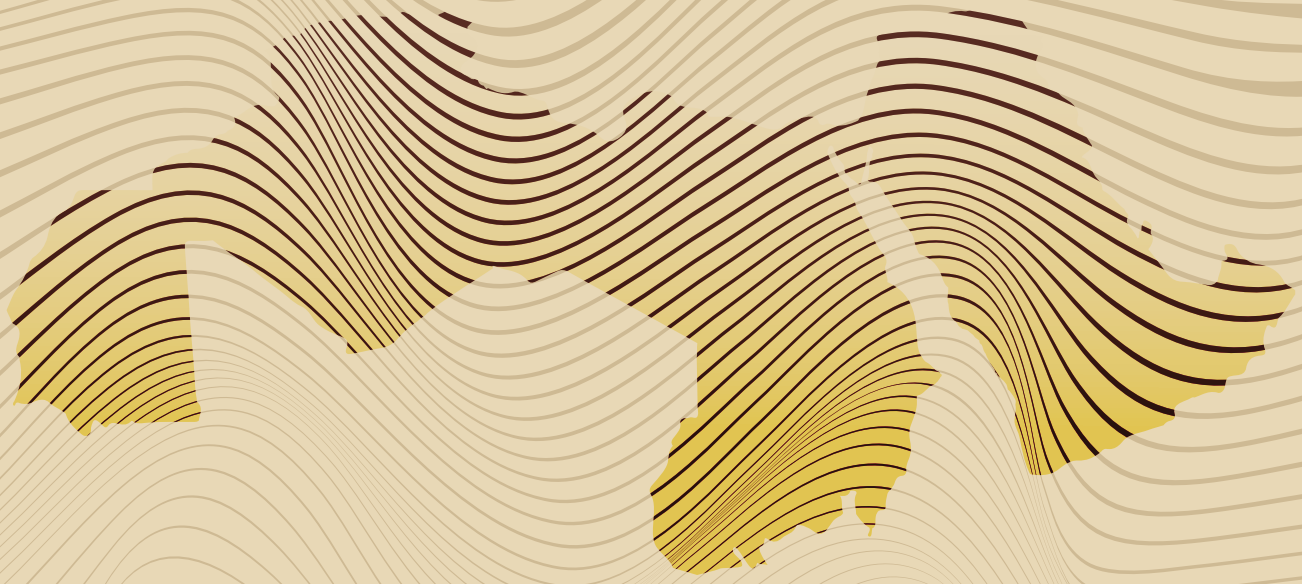
ملتقى المؤسسات العربية الداعمة
Arab Foundations Forum



ADVANCING ARAB PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVES 2024

WORKSHOP REPORT

Synthesis, Outputs, and Lessons Learned

January 2024

In partnership with

SAWIRIS FOUNDATION
مؤسسة ساويرس

ملتقى المؤسسات العربية الداعمة
Arab Foundations Forum

ADVANCING ARAB PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVES

WORKSHOP REPORT

Synthesis, Outputs, and Lessons Learned

January 2024

In partnership with

SAWIRIS FOUNDATION
مؤسسة ساويرس

Arab Foundations Forum
2023
Annual Meeting

Contents

03 01. Background

07 02. Workshop Objectives

09 03. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process

15 04. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies

29 05. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping

35 06. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

ANNEX: Arab Philanthropic and Social Investing Stakeholders

01

Background

1. Background

2. Workshop Objectives

3. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process

4. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies

5. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping

6. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

Known as the cradle of civilization, Ancient Mesopotamia, the region that now spans the Levant, Iraq, Syria, and modern-day Egypt, produced humanity's first recorded communal practices and ethical traditions. The Egyptian ***Teaching of Amen-em-Apt, son of Kanekht*** and the Mesopotamian ***Farmer's Almanac*** are among the earliest surviving ethical and moral texts.[1] Ever since those texts were created, Arabs have enriched communal practices and customs across various tribal, feudal, statutory, and even nomadic traditions throughout the region and around the world.

Inspired by the region's early historic antecedents, the ideas of giving, solidarity, and altruism more broadly have been enshrined in Levantine, Arab, and North African societies across many ages, with diverse practices of solidarity evolving in the traditions of neighborhood, kinship, communal resilience, civic engagement, and simply doing good. Religious frameworks played a huge role in defining concepts such as ***Zakat, Sadaqah, Waqf, and Ashura***, which in part channeled and catalyzed both voluntary and involuntary financial solidarity and social investment practices by families and communities across the region.[2] Beyond individual philanthropy, the culture of philanthropy was institutionalized to support the advancement of Arab societies and to actualize a historical Arab Islamic golden age. A striking example of this is the University of Al-Qarawiyyin, the world's oldest and still operating university founded in 859 AD in Fez, Morocco by Fatima Al-Fihri.[3]

Today, Arab countries and communities face a myriad of challenges that arguably put immense pressures on our society's most vulnerable populations, on top of which is the multidimensional[4] and complex nature of poverty that manifests in high levels of inequality and the exclusion of disadvantaged groups across and within countries. The region also faces steep environmental challenges that threaten the right to live and grow in healthy environments[5] for more than half the population now and for many generations to come. Drastically, the region's state of peace and security is becoming increasingly fraught, making it difficult to sustain development gains as conflict and fragility take a heavy toll on the livelihoods and safety of affected communities.[6]

[1] Thompson, R. C. (1925). *The Teaching of Amen-em-Apt, son of Kanekht.* By Sir EA Wallis Budge, Litt. D., D. Litt. 5 ×½8¼; pp. xv+ 260. London. Hopkinson. 25 .1924s. net. *The Antiquaries Journal*, 89-88 ,(1)5.
Kramer, S. N. (1963). The Sumerians: *Their history, culture, and character*. University of Chicago Press.

[2] El-Daly, M., & Khalil, M. (2017). *Philanthropy in the Arab world*. AFD Research Papers Series, 59.

[3] Farouky, N. (2022). *Building a stronger infrastructure for effective Arab philanthropy*. The American University in Cairo, John D. Gerhart Center.
https://arabfoundationsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/03/2023/Building-a-Stronger-Infrastructure-for-Effective-Arab-Philanthropy-v.5.pdf

[4] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and UNDP (2023). *Second Arab multidimensional poverty report*. E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/4/2022. Beirut.
https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/second-arab-multidimensional-poverty-report

[5] UNDP-UNEP-UNHCHR. "What is the Right to a Healthy Environment?" Information Note.
https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/01-2023/UNDP-UNEP-UNHCHR-What-is-the-Right-to-a-Healthy-Environment.pdf

[6] Abu-Ismail, K. (2020). *Note on poverty and conflict in Arab States*. UNESCWA Report.
https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/03/2020/22/Abu-Ismail-paper.pdf

2023 AFF Annual Meeting, Cairo, 11-13 September 2023

These issues provoke an urgent need to fill in the vacuum with more impactful systematic institutional philanthropic responses that necessitates collaboration and the collective engagement of the sector for the co-creation of a brighter future for the Arab region and our respective communities.

Meeting these grave challenges are Arab philanthropic organizations and their strategic partners, who have witnessed a visible growth in intra- and inter-sector philanthropic partnerships and collaboratives —with the literature pointing to a surge in interest in building partnerships that can deepen impact and achieve scale. The diversity and scope of partnerships in the sector is expanding. A recent scan of philanthropic partnerships in the GCC foundation sector indicated the prevalence of grantee-and-grantor partnership modalities, inter-philanthropy partnerships, and growing partnerships and collaboration with government. In contrast, partnerships with government are not considered a strong feature in the rest of the Arab region. With some trust-based philanthropic practices, multi-stakeholder, and multi-year strategic partnerships emerging, the room to spread and strengthen the impact of philanthropic partnerships is immense.

During its 2023 Annual Meeting held in Cairo on 11-13 September 2023, the Arab Foundations Forum (AFF) organized the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Workshop on Advancing Arab Philanthropic Partnerships and Collaboratives with the goal of deepening knowledge sharing on Arab philanthropic partnerships practices and how to advance their effectiveness and impact. The workshop design followed a knowledge co-creation approach that engaged participants from the outset in a process-oriented and value-driven framework which is described fully in section 3 of this report.

02

Workshop Objectives

1. Background
2. **Workshop Objectives**
3. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process
4. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies
5. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping
6. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

The Advancing Arab Philanthropic Partnerships and Collaboratives workshop brought together 40 philanthropic and non-profit organizations and actors and other key stakeholders to work together to understand the current realities and opportunities for partnerships and collaboratives in the sector, while strategizing for more effective partnerships and an enabling ecosystem for sustainable partnerships driven by the integration of environmental, social, economic, and governance goals.

More specifically, the workshop was guided by the following objectives:

- Sharing experience of and showcasing good practices of philanthropic partnerships and collaboratives
- Mapping the ecosystem of partnerships to identify enablers for effective partnerships and collaboratives in the sector, as well as areas for strengthening
- Identifying strategic entry points and opportunities for strengthened and more effective and sustainable partnerships and collaboratives in the sector

The workshop was structured into three key components:

01 Knowledge dissemination session

Based on a World Café format, this session showcased the different types of philanthropic partnerships practiced, with a focus on elements of success, processes, and challenges.

02 Mapping session

This session engaged participants in a collective exercise to map the ecosystem and landscape of philanthropic partnerships and collaboratives, with the aim of identifying opportunities and areas for strengthening.

03 Way forward session

This session built on the results of the first two sessions to envision pathways and proposed actions for stronger and more effective partnerships in the sector.

The contributions and the flow of this workshop initially focused efforts on unpacking and learning from existing practices in philanthropic partnerships and collaboratives, and eventually moved into an ideation process around the strengthening of collaborative platforms and the partnerships ecosystem. The discussions mainly focused on strengthening existing structures and platforms and addressing gaps, with the purpose of building and enhancing connectivity between the various actors and organizations in the ecosystem by leveraging complementarities and comparative advantages.

03

Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process

1. Background
2. Workshop Objectives
3. **Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process**
4. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies
5. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping
6. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

From the outset, this project was guided by a participatory co-design process.

The aim was to fully engage philanthropic actors and organizations operating in the region in the shaping and design of the workshop agenda—without predetermined outcomes—in a manner that addresses their understanding and experiencing of the issues and dynamics influencing collaboration and partnerships. To this end, from June to September 2023, AFF organized one-on-one online consultations with eight philanthropic organizations and an intergovernmental body operating in the Arab region, all working across diverse areas such as impact investing, disability inclusion, STEM education, sustainable development, civil society development, youth economic empowerment, media, and more. This process proved instrumental in the development of a more nuanced understanding of the issues and their interconnectivity across countries and sectors and in giving participating organizations ownership of the agenda.

Following the workshop, a task force comprising of Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD), Catalyst 2030, the AFF and two individual consultants was set up with the purpose of documenting the workshop findings and planning next steps to move the exercise of advancing partnerships and collaboratives forward.
The Sawiris Foundation team of Adham Hamdy and Patricia Saman led the development and writing of this report, with the support of task force members Ayman Shehata, Heba Abou Shnief, Ghufran Abudayyeh, Aya Yasser, Ahmed Hamdy and Ahmed Salmon.

The following sections (4,5,6) spotlight the key discussions, takeaways, and recommendations participants made during the workshop, with the purpose of advancing more effective partnership practices and a strengthened collaborative ecosystem.

04

Key Takeaways from the Case Studies

1. Background
2. Workshop Objectives
3. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process
4. **Key Takeaways from the Case Studies**
5. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping
6. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

During the knowledge dissemination session of the workshop, seven case studies of philanthropic organization and social investment partnership models were showcased to underscore the contextual and driving values of partnership, partnership processes, elements of success, and lessons learned.

The seven cases presented were:

- Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Disability Causes: The Case of Ataa Charitable Investment Fund for Persons with Disabilities
- The Experience of The Asfari Foundation in Trust-based Philanthropic Partnerships
- Frameworks for Government-Philanthropy Partnerships: The League of Arab States
- The Culture and Governance of Partnerships: King Khalid Foundation
- Science and Funding: A Symbiosis Story in the Development Ecosystem by Sawiris Foundation for Social Development
- Creating Characters Who Represent and Inspire: Using Research and Collaborative Design to Develop Localized Content by Sesame Workshop
- Venture Philanthropy: Scaling Impact Through Purpose-Driven Business

Key takeaways from the presentations and interventions made during the workshop are:

Trust is the bedrock and a prerequisite of partnerships, without which partnerships can fail or achieve sub-optimal results.

All the examples showcased in the workshop underscored trust as a precondition for partnerships to develop and flourish, as well as the role of trust building in sustaining them. Trust is manifested in equal footing partnerships with non-profit organizations (NPOs), funding models that support innovation and risk-taking, and knowledge co-creation processes with communities. Trust building is also perceived as a process involving institutionalized mechanisms and platforms. Presentations emphasized the role of trust-based philanthropic grant-making practices that support multi-year and core funding and the investment in institutional capabilities.

The Asfari Foundation's Tabadol fellowship program, in partnership with Makesense Lebanon, is premised on the role of trust and exchange in bridging social impact models with communities they seek to serve. The Tabadol fellowship model provides tailored incubation support to social entrepreneurs and matches them with a hosting civil society organization (CSO) for the period of their fellowship. Assessment of programmatic outcomes has shown that an increased level of trust and community between CSOs and entrepreneurs fosters more community-inspired social impact models.

Dedicated collaborative platforms that enhance connectivity and enable dialogue are critical for partnerships and their sustainability.

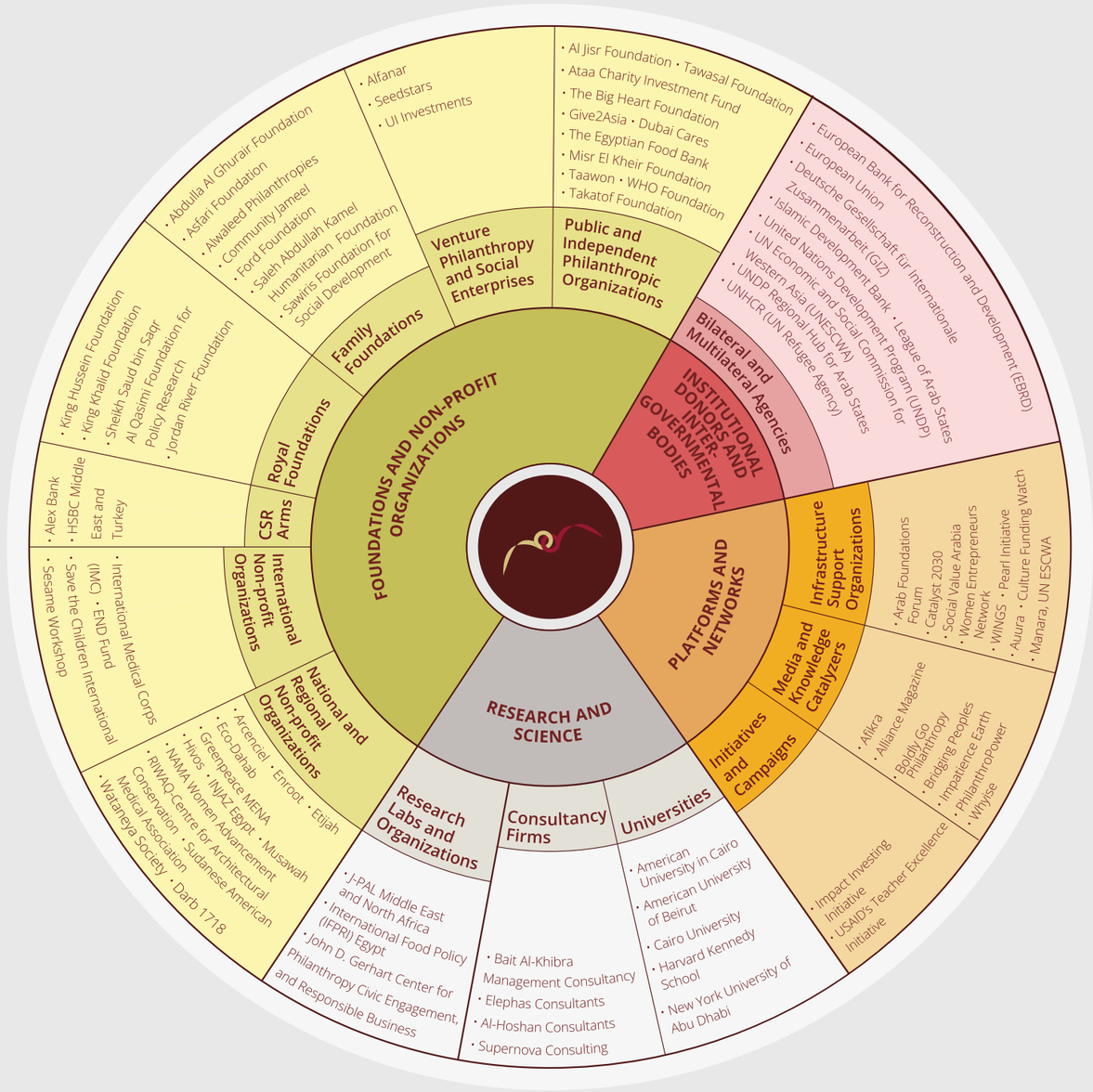
Enhancing connectivity between the various actors in the philanthropic ecosystem and enabling regular dialogue was perceived as key to the alignment of interests, coordination, advancing programmatic objectives, and the sustenance of partnerships. This is especially true for overcoming fragmentation and supporting collaboration given the diverse range of actors and their roles in the philanthropic ecosystem.

Figure 1 shows the different typology of actors and organizations in the philanthropy and social investing ecosystem.

The presentation by the Sustainable Development and International Cooperation Unit of the League of Arab States (LAS) illustrated this point through the League's role in convening regular dialogue between philanthropy and government.

Institutionalized platforms for government and philanthropy engagement, such as the Ma'an Alliance and the Arab Sustainable Development Week Forum, were given as examples. The LAS also pointed to its two-year Ford Foundation-funded project to convene Arab philanthropic organizations and member states to understand their respective roles in the achievement of the SDGs. By creating a space for open dialogue, the project succeeded in building trust between actors and creating awareness of the complementarities of government and philanthropy efforts in advancing development. The project culminated in the Guiding Principles for Government Philanthropy Partnerships in the Arab Region—a set of six voluntary, non-binding principles that aim to facilitate stronger partnerships between government and philanthropy, as well as to propose necessary institutional mechanisms and channels to enable them.

FIGURE 1. Typology of the Philanthropy Ecosystem Actors



Knowledge co-creation with communities is an effective partnership strategy for context relevant and responsive programmatic interventions.

Sesame Workshop's Ahlan Simsim is a partnership model whose cornerstone is the engagement of disadvantaged communities in knowledge co-creation for digital media production. The project targeting Iraqi and Syrian refugee children, and host communities in Lebanon and Jordan, was designed to engage refugee children traumatized by war, their families, and caregivers from design to production. By proactively involving communities through needs assessments of their educational goals, convening discussions, and testing content with families, the project succeeded in capturing the diverse learning needs across communities and cultures, and enabled the production of community-inspired programs. For more about this model, ***see Box 1.***

BOX 1.

Advancing Context-Relevant Education for Levantine Child Refugees: the Case of Ahlan Simsim's Knowledge Co-Creation Model

Sesame Workshop collaborated with beneficiaries of their program to ensure that the characters they created resonated with local children and, therefore, the message was context relevant.

Under a humanitarian partnership initiative, the International Rescue Committee and Sesame Workshop—the non-profit educational organization behind the TV show Sesame Street—joined forces in 2018 to support learning in conflict zones in the Middle East.

In collaboration with Jordan Pioneers, a local children's media non-profit based in Amman, the result was the production of an Arabic localized version of Sesame Street called Ahlan Simsim to support the learning needs of refugee children from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

Given the vast socio-cultural and geographic scope of the target audience, Sesame Workshop had to make two-thirds of the characters relevant for the entirety of these very diverse communities. So, they brought refugee communities to the table to discuss who Ahlan Simsim should reach and how each community wanted to be represented in the program.

Why do they do it?

The guiding objectives of Ahlan Simsim's character design process is:

- To find out from the communities what their educational goals are in order to design a community-inspired intervention
- To help bring education alive through proactive and timely feedback from the communities
- To make their product relatable so that children can identify with the characters

What does the community really need?

Ahlan Simsim's needs assessment focused on working with trauma-affected children and communities to develop character biographies that are culturally relevant while emphasizing diversity and representation. For instance, Basma, one of the lead characters, doesn't like to plan and is very spontaneous, which breaks the cultural stereotype that says girls cannot make mistakes and should be perfect. In contrast, Jad, another lead character, is exactly the opposite—a thinker and planner, he is a natural organizer. Another character, Ameera, was introduced in 2022 with the purpose of advancing inclusive learning for children with disabilities. Characters were tested with families, children, and caregivers with guiding questions such as: Would you want to be friends with Basma? What do you want to ask her? Do you know anyone named Jad? What is he like?

Achievements:

Performance surveys given on caregivers showed that children really responded to Ahlan Simsim's learning strategies. To date, over 23 million children in the MENA region have watched Ahlan Simsim (including 57% of displaced Syrians across Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq) with evidence showing that the TV show has positively impacted their emotional development.[7]

[7] New York University. (2023). *Lessons and impact of Ahlan Simsim's TV program in pre-primary classrooms in Jordan on children's emotional development: A randomized controlled trial.* https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/ASRsrchBrief_MassMediaFindings_En_vF_0_20230516.pdf

Transparency is one of the determinants of successful partnerships that can often be overlooked.

Transparency is not limited to the process of decision-making on the partnership framework and rules. Equally important is transparency to the public regarding the expenditure of funds and their impact. Ataa Fund is an example of how to apply transparency and accountability values to multi-stakeholder endowment building. Funded by both private and public sectors, the Fund supports economic empowerment, education, and community development for the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs).

At the same time, it is open to investment by any individuals who buy shares/certificates. A key practice is the transparent reporting on the expenditure of funds through different mediums while also granting the right to individual investors to attend the yearly reporting meeting, where they can question how their money was spent and stay closely connected to the cause. For more about this model, *see Box 2*.

The presence of a shared governance framework, or the lack thereof, is a make-or-break factor in the success or failure of partnerships.

Governance frameworks that clearly spell out the responsibilities and rights of partners are regarded as critical to the success of any partnership. This can only be achieved through shared leadership and co-design of the rules and frameworks setting. The King Khalid Foundation attests to this point, noting its experience catalyzing and participating in partnership frameworks on the local, regional, and global level. Their experience shows that when partners in any given setting are assigned specific tasks and have shared ownership, the partnership will most likely grow and sustain, and vice versa. On the other hand, when leadership is concentrated in the hands of one or a few partners at the expense of the collective, partnerships are not sustainable.

BOX 2. Ataa Fund: A Blended Finance Model for Disability Inclusion

The Ataa Fund allows for multi-stakeholder collaboration for endowment building to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PwDs).

The Ataa Charitable Investment Fund for Persons with Disabilities (ACIF) is a private non-governmental investment fund that directs all of its profit to serving the disability sector. The Ataa Fund serves people with various disabilities, such as physical, visual, hearing, intellectual, autism, and learning difficulties. It runs on an endowment and adopts a blended finance model drawing on public and private sector funding—the first of its kind in Egypt. ACIF is open to investment by the public (individuals or companies) with no collection of interest, to be able to serve its charitable purpose. It was launched to the public in January 2020 by Nasser Bank and is subjected to the monitoring and supervision of the Financial Regulatory Authority. With a budget of 290 million EGP earmarked for the disability cause, the role of the fund is to use investment revenues to support projects related to serving and empowering PwDs. Investors in the fund include Tahya Masr, the Ministry of Endowment, Nasser Bank, individuals, and several private sector entities (e.g. Bank Misr). All entities who buy shares/certificates have the right to attend the yearly meeting to question how their money is being spent.

The Ataa Fund's support for the inclusion of PwDs is achieved through three pillars:

Pillar 1: Economic empowerment for PwDs through initiatives such as MSMEs.

Pillar 2: Equal education opportunities: providing equal access to education for PwDs as well as training services

Pillar 3: Community-based inclusive development, through the provision of services for PwDs in deprived villages

Achievements to date:

Since its inception, the Ataa Fund has successfully funded 20 projects aimed at serving PwDs. These projects were implemented in collaboration with 15 key partners, including CSOs and government. Through partnerships with 130 local NGOs, the Ataa Fund's services have reached 23 governorates so far, with services reaching students in 27 Egyptian universities and institutes in addition to 134 schools in three Egyptian governorates (Cairo, Giza, and Assiut). As a result, more than 8,180 individuals/children with disabilities and 4,730 families have benefited from ACIF-funded projects. Over 2,730 service providers (including specialists, teachers, and administrators) have benefited through training. Additionally, the projects have indirectly extended their impact to students and community members through awareness raising, while improving the lives of 4,053 family members by alleviating the burden of caregiving for families with a PwD.

Data is a key enabler of partnerships and a collaborative ecosystem.

It was widely acknowledged that data recording the what, where, and who of Arab philanthropy is a key enabler of improved coordination and collaboration that is still missing in our context. The literature and philanthropic specialists both highlight the vacuum of comprehensive information and data on the sector. Organizations working in the same field either do not know each other or, if they do, they find there are few collaborative platforms to exchange information.

Yet, there are emerging data collection and communication efforts that aim to bridge the data gap in the sector, such as Philanthropy Age's Circlemena.org and the AFF's Arab Philanthropy Survey. Participants in the workshop stressed the importance of expanding data production and dissemination efforts. For instance, they want to see periodic reports on trends in Arab philanthropy that would take stock of philanthropic practices, highlight success stories, and underscore limitations and opportunities.

Impact evaluation of interventions is important for learning and strategic change.

Measuring social change needs to happen through the rigorous, systematic, and long-term measurement of not only programmatic execution and its results but also measurable socioeconomic impact. There are many factors that can impede impact evaluation in partnerships, including the costliness of conducting rigorous research and data collection, the resistance of partners to adopting an evidence-driven approach to partnership, and the lack of technical expertise or simply the lack of knowledge of where to start.

The Sawiris Foundation's partnership and scale-up model exemplifies the role of evidence-driven approaches for more effective grant-making practices and shared learning. Partnering with research houses such as the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL MENA)—a leading MIT-based research center specializing in randomized control evaluations—and creating a learning and strategy department within the foundation proved integral to driving SFSD's evidence-based impact investment journey.

Their experience has proven that the alignment of a foundation's funding cycles with innovation and evidence-based objectives can drive more efficient grant-making practices, scalability, and partnerships. Key messages from SFSD's model suggest that partnering with like-minded research centers and academic institutions goes a long way to advancing evidence-based grant-making. Furthermore, incorporating learning within a foundation and across partners is an investment that takes time, change management, and patience, but it is a worthwhile investment that brings long-term benefits. For more about this model, ***see Box 3***.

BOX 3. Informing Funding Cycles and Integrating Learning: The Sawiris Foundation for Social Development (SFSD) Case for Impact Funding and Scientific Symbiosis[8]

The SFSD's collaboration approach is centered on co-designing projects with implementing partners and its partnership with research centers to evaluate the impact of funded projects. This evidence-based process is reflected in the foundation's project cycle and proposal development cycle, illustrated in Figure 2 below.

One of the SFSD's key evidence-based partnerships is its partnership with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL MENA). This partnership has enabled the design and organization of multiple impact evaluations for the SFSD's programmatic interventions, namely: evaluations that follow experimental evaluation methodology (for example, randomized controlled trials or RCTs), quasi-experimental evaluation methodology (for example, difference in difference [Diff-in-Diff], simple difference, or regression analysis), or non-experimental methodology (for example, pre and post).

The partnership has resulted in the development of a scientifically-driven funding system at SFSD geared to funding more cost-effective interventions with ensuing improvements in the design of poverty alleviation programs. Based on the lessons learned from SFSD's experience, below are some key challenges and next steps that are worthy of consideration by the Arab philanthropy and social investing sector in efforts to move towards the adoption of more evidence-driven funding and impact evaluation practices.

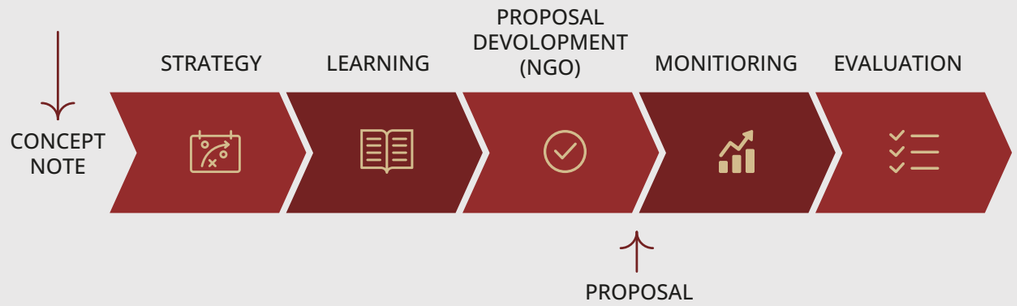
Challenges:

- Dedicating funds to research, as RCTs and impact evaluations tend to be costly.
- Aligning internal funding cycles fully to the 20% innovative / 80% evidential differentiation and optimizing efficiency.
- Failing forward and re-incorporating learning into strategic change.
- Research considerations may cause disruption to project implementation with the risk of implementing partners resisting research findings.

Roads to pave:

- How to better optimize the harmony of science and funding.
- How best to institutionalize unsolicited proposals, rapid interventions, and emergency disaster relief.
- Identifying approaches and means to on-board and mainstream research practices across implementing partners.
- Optimizing communication of evidence into policy by bridging the research and policy divide.
- Unsolicited proposals, rapid interventions, and emergency disaster relief risk shifting the balance towards ad hoc interventions.
- Synergies (symbiosis) between philanthropy, policy, and science need strengthening to face current and looming regional and global challenges.

FIGURE 2. Project Ideation, evidence support, and proposal development



[8] **Symbiosis:** any of several living arrangements between members of two different species, including mutualism, commensalism, and parasitism. Both positive (beneficial) and negative (unfavorable to harmful) associations are therefore included, and the members are called symbionts.

05

Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping

1. Background
2. Workshop Objectives
3. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process
4. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies
5. **Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping**
6. Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

During this session participants drew on their experiences and knowledge to unpack some of the key drivers and criteria they deemed important for the strengthening and advancement of the collaboration ecosystem and platforms. They also exchanged their visions and aspirations for platform building and strengthening, as well as ways to bridge identified gaps and channel collaborations and partnerships towards the achievement of national and regional development goals and the SDGs.

Table 1 outlines identified metrics and objectives that should guide the work of collaborative platforms according to participants, while Table 2 presents a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the philanthropic ecosystem and the internal and external forces influencing philanthropic partnerships.

TABLE 1. Mapping Metrics and Objectives of Collaborative Platforms

Mapping Metrics for Collaborative Platforms:	Strengthening Platforms Objectives:
By contribution to the SDGs	Enable collaborations for a sustainable world
By geographical location	Facilitate human connections and trust
By programmatic and thematic focus	Enhance access to data to support coordination, improved decision-making, and the measurement of results
By beneficiaries and target audiences	Promote learning through qualitative and quantitative research (example: case studies, articles, surveys, sectoral and thematic studies, etc.)
By typology of services provided	Facilitate communication in a manner that advances connectivity, networking, and learning
By outputs and impacts	Build knowledge, curate it, and democratize its production and access to it
By approach to localization, and intra-philanthropy and multi-stakeholder partnerships	Create online and offline learning spaces to facilitate knowledge sharing on collaboratives
	Create virtual networking opportunities intra-philanthropy and with diverse stakeholders

TABLE 2. SWOT Analysis of the Philanthropic Ecosystem

S STRENGTHS

- Passion and commitment to the cause needed for long-term investment in social change
- Diversified resources and comparative flexibility (money, influence, knowledge, connectivity, evidence)
- Leveraging wealth, knowledge, and networks to advance social causes
- Extensive outreach to localities and communities
- Advancing community-led and owned initiatives and more sustainable investment for impact

W WEAKNESSES

- Duplication of efforts in the sector
- Competitive attitude that impedes coordination and collaboration
- Differential measurement of impact that obstructs standardization and learning
- Personalized and individualistic nature of partnerships affecting sustainability by holding back the potential for an organizational-wide culture
- Limited investment in capacities and lagging organizational strengthening
- Mismanagement and turnover of talent
- Power struggles and dynamics fostering siloed and individualistic approaches
- Unrealistic donor requirements

O OPPORTUNITIES

- Optimizing impact through catalytic and scalable approaches
- Sharing of resources and building innovative programmatic and grant-making models
- Advancing efficiency and cost-saving opportunities
- Advancing digitalization exacerbated by the COVID pandemic
- Supporting the rigorous and systemic collection of data and its analysis
- Advancing knowledge-building, as well as its dissemination for learning and impact

T THREATS

- Regulatory bottlenecks and blind spots hindering ecosystem vibrancy
- Misallocation of resources due to limited coordination, sharing, and learning agendas
- Mistrust in the civic sector fueled by media
- Limited transparency and suboptimal financial reporting practices
- Political instability, mostly in fragile and conflict-afflicted countries/zones
- Compounded contextual challenges (conflict, social, economic, environmental, and humanitarian crises) at an accelerating rate in the region

06

Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas

1. Background
2. Workshop Objectives
3. Insights into the Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Process
4. Key Takeaways from the Case Studies
5. Strengthened Collaborative Platforms and Philanthropic Ecosystem Mapping
6. **Way Forward: Ideas and Action Areas**

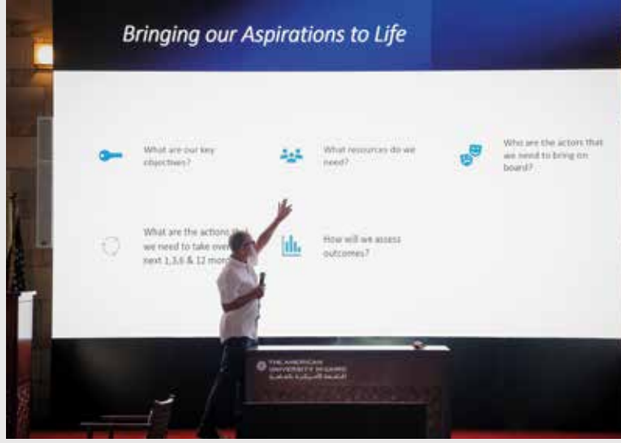
During the workshop, participants engaged in a facilitated discussion about how they see collaboration and partnerships moving forward in the sector. They answered two key questions: What are their expectations and needs from existing platforms? What are the ecosystem gaps that need to be bridged from their viewpoint?

Based on the discussion, the following ideas were expressed as participants sought to pinpoint activities, mechanisms, and alternative pathways for strengthened collaboration and partnership practices and ecosystems. This is a non-exhaustive list that serves as a stepping stone for further dialogue and discussion.

Recommended Action Areas:

A. Networking and Connectivity:

- Creating democratized platforms where various philanthropic, non-profit actors, and changemakers are represented on an equal footing
- Develop focused network opportunities that would build on the area expertise and comparative advantage of actors and organizations
- Connect existing collaborative platforms and networks for philanthropy professionals and social investors, such as Catalyst 2030, Circle MENA (circle index), the AFF, Manara Portal by UNESCWA, and others through joint initiatives and activities
- Advance community of practices through the wider sharing of announcements on events, grants, and research opportunities by capitalizing on existing networks and creating new ones when needed
- Open evidence-based dialogues with governments, multilateral organizations, and institutional donors on the ways and means to advance sustainable development



B. Data and Research:

- Mainstream data-driven approaches to partnership building and develop evidence on partnership best practices and trends from the region
- Advance monitoring and evaluation practices, more transparency, and reporting efficiency among NGOs and philanthropies by programmatic documentation and the sharing of results
- Develop and archive success stories and case studies from the Arab region that would build a body of knowledge on philanthropic and social investing practices
- Enhance the outreach of existing online tools to collect data and advance the development of joint stakeholder database (who, what, where)
- Unify standards for data collection and impact evaluation, learnings dissemination, and subsequent policy advocacy
- Set up sector- and issue-specific scientific advisory boards to drive vertical research and data collection exercises

C. Knowledge Sharing and Learning:

- Develop a community of practice comprised of philanthropic and social investing actors who can share experiences and learnings specific to partnership building and collaboration through a range of informal, formal, offline, and online convenings
- Encourage thought leadership in the sector that advances new development models and innovative solutions for equitable and sustainable development
- Develop altruistic listening and storytelling (humanized platform) that would spotlight marginalized voices and advance the narrative on Arab philanthropy in a bottom-up and participatory approach
- Develop and share free capacity building opportunities that would allow democratized access
- Revive collaborative approaches and models entrenched in traditional and religiously inspired giving practices
- Deepen understanding on the legal and regulatory framework influencing philanthropy with a focus on advocacy for policies and regulations that need reform to maximize the sector's impact in the region

ANNEX: Arab Philanthropic and Social Investing Stakeholders

This is a list of organizations that participated in the 2023 AFF Annual Meeting to serve as a starting point for a more comprehensive ecosystem mapping exercise.

SECTOR	SUB-SECTOR	ORGANIZATIONS
FOUNDATIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS	Public and Independent Philanthropic Organizations	Al Jisr Foundation
		Ataa Charity Investment Fund
		The Big Heart Foundation
		Dubai Cares
		Give2Asia
		Misr El Kheir Foundation
		Taawon
		Takatof Foundation
		Tawasal Foundation
		The Egyptian Food Bank
		WHO Foundation
	Venture Philanthropy	Alfanar
		Seedstars
		UI Investments
	Family Foundations	Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation
		Asfari Foundation
		Alwaleed Philanthropies
		Community Jameel
		Ford Foundation
		Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation
		Sawiris Foundation for Social Development
	Royal Foundations	King Hussein Foundation
		King Khalid Foundation
		Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research
		Jordan River Foundation
	CSR Arms	Alex Bank
		HSBC Middle East and Turkey
	International Non-profit Organizations	International Medical Corps (IMC)
		Save the Children International
		Sesame Workshop
		END Fund
	National and Regional Non-profit Organizations	Arcenciel - Enroot - Etijah
		Greenpeace MENA
		Hivos - INJAZ Egypt
		Musawah
		NAMA Women Advancement
		RIWAQ-Centre for Architectural Conservation
		Sudanese American Medical Association - Wataneya Society
		Eco-Dahab - Darb 1718

SECTOR	SUB-SECTOR	ORGANIZATIONS
INSTITUTIONAL DONORS AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES	Bilateral and Multilateral Agencies	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
		European Union
		Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
		Islamic Development Bank
		League of Arab States
		United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
		UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA)
		UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States
		UNHCR (UN Refugee Agency)
PLATFORMS AND NETWORKS	Infrastructure Support Organizations	Arab Foundations Forum
		Catalyst 2030
		Social Value Arabia
		Women Entrepreneurs Network
		WINGS
		Pearl Initiative
		Auura
		Culture Funding Watch
		Manara, UN ESCWA
	Media and Knowledge Catalyzers	Afikra - Alliance Magazine
		Boldly Go Philanthropy
		Bridging Peoples
		Impatience Earth
		PhilanthroPower
		Whyise
	Initiatives and Campaigns	Impact Investing Initiative
		USAID's Teacher Excellence Initiative
RESEARCH AND SCIENCE	Research Labs and Organizations	J-PAL Middle East and North Africa
		International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Egypt
		John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy, Civic Engagement, and Responsible Business
	Universities	American University in Cairo
		American University of Beirut
		Cairo University
		Harvard Kennedy School
		New York University of Abu Dhabi
	Consultancy Firms	Bait Al-Khibra Management Consultancy
		Elephas Consultants
		Al-Hoshan Consultants
		Supernova Consulting

Design By toroun

ملتقى المؤسسات العربية الداعمة
Arab Foundations Forum

The Arab Foundations Forum is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization EIN 4966210-84. Donations are tax-deductible.

Contact us:
arabfoundationsforum.org
arabfoundforum
@arab_foundations_forum