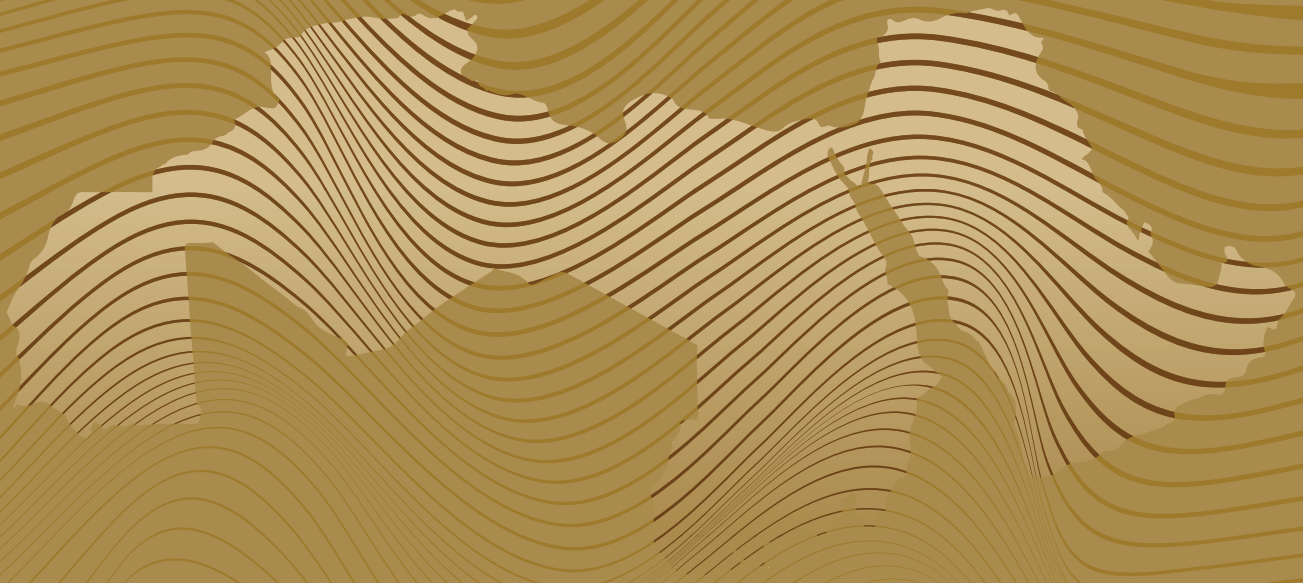
ملتقى المؤسسات العربية الداعمة
Arab Foundations Forum



ANNUAL MEETING 2023

OUTCOMES REPORT AND ONE YEAR ON

September 11 - 13, 2023
Cairo, Egypt

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From our CEO

At the heart of everything we do at the **Arab Foundations Forum** is the enduring conviction that by working together, foundations can make greater impact, drive longer-lasting change and improve more lives around the Arab region and beyond. We have been vocal in our call for those in all parts of the philanthropy sector to join forces on today's big issues — such as climate change and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza — because we believe that together we can make giving better.

That belief was in full force at AFF's 2023 Annual Meeting, held a year ago this month at the **American University in Cairo**. Along with our co-convening partner, the **John D. Gerhart Center**, we were honored to host funders, nonprofit leaders, advisors, entrepreneurs and others from all over the Arab philanthropy ecosystem.

Over three days, we held talks, panels and workshops that served as spaces for discussion and debate, motivation and cooperation. Our guests learned from and about each other, discovered shared priorities and passions, encouraged each other to have innovative ideas and make bold moves. The energy and enthusiasm was incredible!

To mark the anniversary of that phenomenal gathering, we present this report as a way to both look back at the Annual Meeting and move forward with that same sense of impactful collaboration. We highlight the outcomes from many of the sessions — which covered topics that are still just as relevant today — and hear about the positive experiences of our esteemed attendees, in their own words. Then we show you the meeting's lasting impact, how we've carried the issues and inspiration from those three days into much of AFF's work over the year since.

We want to thank everyone who made the 2023 Annual Meeting such an amazing success. It was a privilege to engage with so many of Arab philanthropy's leaders, thinkers and changemakers.

And if you missed last year's meeting, we look forward to seeing you at the next one in 2025!

Naila Farouky
CEO

September 2024

Introduction

For three days, more than 150 specialists and leaders from philanthropy, civil society and the private sector gathered at the **American University in Cairo** to share their deep knowledge and impassioned opinions on the most pressing issues facing the Arab region.

Expertly led by emcee **Joy Morozov**, CEO of **PhilanthroPower**, the event's 18 panels and workshops featured 70 eminent speakers discussing topics ranging from climate change and the power of data to youth empowerment and the race to achieve the SDGs.

Collaboration and partnerships were among the dominant themes, not only in the sessions but also in the creation and running of the Annual Meeting itself. We are deeply grateful to our generous supporters, the **Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation (SAKHF)**, the **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development**, **Crescent Enterprises**, the **Ford Foundation** and the **King Khalid Foundation**. Our co-host, the **John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy**, **Civic Engagement and Responsible Business** at AUC provided invaluable support, and insightful coverage from our media partners **Alliance**, **Philanthropy Age** and **afikra** helped spread the word about the meeting far and wide.

Connections were formed, research projects were launched, and everyone came away with a renewed optimism and determination to transform Arab philanthropy for the better.

Looking Ahead: Advocacy & Evidence

The plenary session on Day One entitled **The Future of Philanthropy — How Will the Sector Look in 2040?** set the tone for the meeting, as the speakers shared big dreams and collective aspirations for Arab philanthropy. These were not simply optimistic visions of what the sector would look like in an ideal scenario, but candid discussions anchored in current realities. The speakers dared to ask hard questions and admit their mistakes, while also sharing course corrections.

Equally important was charting the trajectories and steps that Arab philanthropy would need to take to evolve into a thriving sector by 2040. The panelists discussed the need for more investment in civil society institutional capabilities. They wanted to see the sector move from a strictly service delivery focus to investment in advocacy for systemic change. They also highlighted the importance of breaking out of the silos of funding projects to become catalysts for larger, networked funding, and called on the sector to adopt more evidence-driven practices. Some philanthropic organizations have already taken these steps, the panelists noted, before saying more organizations should follow suit.

Shifting the Power Dynamic

Another major theme at the Annual Meeting was that of trust-based philanthropic giving. The **Ford Foundation's MENA Director Saba Almubaslat** stressed the importance of tapping into trust-based philanthropic practices and principles that have been "entrenched in religious giving for centuries".

Central to the discussions was the need to shift the power dynamics away from grantors and towards grantees, through more core and multi-year funding, capacity building and co-creation. **Jouja Maamri of Save the Children International** said it can be very empowering as an NGO to be able to say "no" if the funder is going in a direction that does not align with your organization's vision.

Data as a Weapon in the Climate Fight

Dr. Hala Mohammed Al-Hoshan, Advisor to SAKHF, said it is essential to give grantees the autonomy to decide how they spend funds and to simplify reporting systems to make it easier to see where and how money is being spent and where it is still needed.

The **Asfari Foundation's CEO Muna Abbas** suggested that philanthropy can play an intermediary role between local organizations and institutional donors to shift the power dynamic towards the former.

Recognizing the dire reality that the MENA region is heating up almost twice as fast as the global average, climate solutions ran through many of the sessions over the three-day meeting. One clear message was that philanthropy needs to step up its efforts to address the climate crisis.

Speakers highlighted the intersectionality of climate change impacts, noting that all of the sector's work to advance equity in education, health, employability and other social causes will get harder if not addressed through a climate lens.

Speakers showcased practical experiences of philanthropic organizations tackling the climate crisis. For example, the **King Khalid Foundation's (KKF) Sustainability Award**, which encourages companies to disclose non-financial and climate-related data to show how their core business is meeting social, environmental and economic challenges. At the same time, it equips shareholders, boards, employees and consumers with the information they need to make sure companies are held accountable for their environmental impact.

Dubai Cares also shared its experience of addressing the climate-education nexus at its RewirEd Summit. By convening diverse partners, the high-level forum creates a platform to discuss education transformation solutions, align commitments and finance investments to drive a shared agenda on climate education.

No discussion about climate change is complete without addressing the health impacts of rising temperatures and intensifying climate events. Speakers and delegates at the meeting discussed the significant impact that the climate crisis has on neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and public health, including the emergence of new parasites and vectors associated with climate migration.

Laura Parrotta, Senior Director at the END Fund, stressed the need for more funding for research on disease elimination, as well as adaptability to uncertainty, sustainable financing solutions and collaboration from the philanthropic sector.

Financing, Governance & Building Trust

The Arab philanthropy and governance nexus was another key topic at the Annual Meeting. **HH Princess Nouf bint Muhammad bin Abdullah, CEO of KKF**, called for a change in the global financial architecture to direct more funding toward social development justice.

Speakers also discussed how conflict, fragility and climate change add contextual complexities to development. They tried to answer the question of how philanthropy and the private sector can foster sustainable and transformative change in fragile countries. **Rania Fazah, Lead Consultant with Elephas Consultants**, said she wanted to see philanthropy factoring in fragility and complexity through the continual re-thinking of programmatic interventions, while ensuring that the voices of those affected by conflict are heard.

At the same time, building trust in philanthropy and the nonprofit sector is considered key to unleashing private sector resources in fragile contexts. Stronger governance and transparency in nonprofits is crucial, suggested **Majdi Abuarja, Chief of Party of the Egypt Loan Guarantee Facility**, a $250 million project led by USAID to facilitate private sector growth.

Digital Education & Green Jobs

There was plenty of discussion at the meeting around technology and philanthropic giving in priority sectors such as education and youth employability. During the session entitled **Bridging the Digital Divide: Lessons Learned from Digital Education Initiatives**, panelists focused on how the sector can advance sustainable and low-tech digital education solutions to bridge the gap between communities who have access to digital infrastructure and skill-building opportunities and those who do not.

Speakers offered up concrete and grounded insights, such as pairing digital tools with real-world human interaction and meeting people where they are in terms of level of tech uptake — two factors that are considered essential to the success of any digital education initiative.

The session **Can Green Jobs Drive Employment and Youth Empowerment?** focused on the opportunities for job creation through green jobs and the green transition. When the discussion turned to job loss due to the skills gap, **Sarah Hani of Arcenciel** asked: “How can we achieve balance as the greener we get with technology, the more unemployment there is?”

Cherine El Hakim, Regional Philanthropy Lead at HSBC-MENAT, shared evidence that shows upskilling opportunities in climate and green jobs can offset that loss. **Ghada Barsoum, Labor Economist and Associate Professor at AUC**, underscored the sizable job creation effect in the waste management sector across the region, and the opportunities this would create for philanthropic investments.

The Power of Partnerships

Whether the topic was advancing digital education initiatives or achieving more data transparency, collaboration, evidence-building and infrastructure support were often referenced as vital elements for achieving scale and sustainable impact. The session on **Unlocking the Power of Data for Philanthropic Impact** addressed the lack of comprehensive data in the sector, leaving a hole where key information about funding should be — where it's being spent, how and how much.

The session looked at the data-gathering and analyzing opportunities created by artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools and put out a call to action for more data sharing. That included encouraging delegates to participate in AFF's **Arab Philanthropy Survey**, which aims to create a comprehensive baseline view of the priorities, programs and approaches of philanthropies in the region.

On the final day, the **Advancing Arab Philanthropic Partnerships and Collaboratives Workshop** dove into the issue of philanthropic sector partnerships to try to answer several questions: How can we advance partnerships both within and outside the sector? What lessons have we learned from failure in partnership building? What are the elements of a successful partnership?

One key outcome of the workshop was the importance of building community around partnerships. Participants were invited to showcase the different types of partnership models their organizations currently practice, emphasizing the power of knowledge sharing in creating sustainable, equitable and impactful collaborations.

In the Media

Several outlets covered the Annual Meeting, offering insight, analysis and discussions of the main themes within the wider context of philanthropy as a whole.

Mobilising Arab Philanthropy

Philanthropy Age

Leaders from regional foundations and nonprofits joined local and global experts and academics to discuss the challenges and opportunities for the sector and share best practice and solutions at the 2023 annual meeting of the Arab Foundations Forum (AFF)...

"It was fantastic to have everyone together to discuss the important challenges facing our sector regionally and to look at ways we can collaborate for a better future," Naila Farouky, AFF CEO, told Philanthropy Age. "I was encouraged by the depth and focus during the meeting."

Read more...

Confronting shrinking civic space in localisation agendas: Creating an 'enabling environment' for Arab philanthropy

Alliance

Creating an 'enabling environment' for civil society organisations (CSOs) to grow and thrive is integral to creating appropriate, meaningful, and impactful localisation approaches.

As a result, many speakers at the Arab Foundations Forum (AFF) highlighted that before genuine approaches to localisation can take place, there is an urgent need to create a safe, supportive, and coordinated space for civil society organisations, and other local actors, such as activists and social movement makers, to conduct their work free from excessive regulation, fear, or hostility. **Read more...**

Encountering Discomfort at the Arab Foundations Forum

Alliance

It is said that philanthropy evolved from the Arab region. The practice of 'Waqf', under Sharia Law, for example, has existed for centuries, supporting social justice in education, healthcare, and beyond. The Arab Foundations Forum (AFF), held in Cairo in early September set out to revive and reclaim this longstanding reputation and tradition.

Alongside re-thinking philanthropy as a 'western' concept came a sobering acknowledgement of the many challenges facing philanthropy in the region. With youth and women's unemployment at an all-time high, poverty continues to grow. Political unrest threatens to undo the many wins and civil rights struggles of the Arab Springs, and despite being the richest region in the world for natural resources, the MENA region (Middle East and Northern Africa) is set to be one of the hardest hit by the looming climate crisis. **Read more...**

Global GDP could gain estimated $7 trillion annually by investing in women and closing the gender gap in the workforce

Khaleej Times

The Arab Foundations Forum, a platform dedicated to advancing the practice and impact of philanthropy in the region, convened its annual meeting which was attended by leading organisations, including Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development, King Khalid Foundation, Crescent Enterprises, Pearl Initiative, King Hussein Foundation MENA, Ford Foundation, Alfanar, and Save the Children.

In his opening keynote, Badr Jafar, CEO of Crescent Enterprises and COP28 special representative for business and philanthropy, underscored the tremendous potential of Arab philanthropy to drive large-scale economic and social innovation, saying "We are on the cusp of converting the enormous potential of Arab philanthropy into a driver of large-scale social innovation." **Read more...**

Voices from the Annual Meeting

In publications and on social media, the guests, speakers and panelists looked back on their uplifting and hopeful experiences at the event.

The rooms were full of philanthropic foundations, nonprofit leaders, advisors and others who are shaping philanthropy in the Arab region and are willing to collaborate, share insights, connect and learn from one another. This engagement shows the need for such events. **Read more...**

—Rani Halloun, Auura

Panel discussions and workshops during the AFF seem to have one key insight in common; philanthropy is not charity and we should stop treating it as such. In fact, philanthropy seems to be moving beyond traditional charity and modes of social change towards a data-driven culture. **Read more...**

—Patricia Samman, Sawiris Foundation for Social Development

Discussions at the meeting were insightful and validated what needs to be done in the Arab world when it comes to philanthropy.
Here are key components that were highlighted to drive the future of Arab philanthropy and strengthen the sector... **Read more...**

—Noura AlMulla, Nama Women Advancement (NAMA)

My understanding of the ways in which this sector works and how heavily it is regulated was lacking before this annual meeting. In so many ways it helped me to understand what role this sector plays in creating a sustainable development ecosystem in the region but also its limitations and why some of those attempts might be hindered. **Read more...**

—Ghufran Abudayyeh, Catalyst 2030

As someone who's been deeply engaged in community engagement and localization work, I couldn't help but be drawn to the discussions on locally led development during the Annual Arab Foundations Forum (AFF) Meeting. The buzz around this concept was palpable.... **Read more...**

—Sarah Moharram, Bridging Peoples

It is promising to see funders from the region engage in conversations around the legacies of philanthropy, power dynamics, trust and ways to yield power.

—Walid Hedidar, Boldly Go Philanthropy

Very rich, constructive and bold discussions regarding the role of the philanthropists in the Arab Region towards the SDGs — or, in other words, human basic rights.

—Yasmine El-Hagry, Sanad for Alternative Parental Care

Honored to share the stage with formidable women Arab leaders charting the course for social change in our region.

—Myrna Atalla, Alfanar Venture Philanthropy

I was deeply inspired by the amazing lineup of speakers and visionary leaders (particularly women) working to create lasting impact and truly make this world a better place for all.

—Alya Hegazy, Philanthropy & Nonprofit Researcher

Sessions & Speakers

We had the privilege of hosting experts, leaders and thinkers from across the philanthropic, private and political sectors to discuss and debate the big issues impacting philanthropy today.

Below is a list of all the sessions held over the course of the 2023 Annual Meeting and the organizations that took part.

All of the plenary sessions were livestreamed and recorded, and are now available on our **YouTube channel**.

DAY 1

Opening Remarks and Welcome Keynote Addresses

- Dr. Ahmad Dallal, President, American University in Cairo
- Mr. Abdullah Saleh Kamel, Chairman, Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation (Keynote Address)
- Naila Farouky, CEO, Arab Foundations Forum
- Mr. Badr Jafar, CEO, Crescent Enterprises
- Dr. Ali Awni, Director, John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy, Civic Engagement and Responsible Business

The Future of Philanthropy – How Will the Sector Look in 2040?

In an ideal world, what will the region's philanthropic sector look like in two decades? And what about in a worst-case scenario? The panelists looked ahead to the two possible futures for Arab philanthropy: a thriving sector that can achieve optimal impact and a sector stifled by a lack of concrete reforms and missed opportunities — and what we can do to avoid it.

- Alfanar
- King Hussein Foundation
- King Khalid Foundation
- Sawiris Foundation for Social Development
- School of Global Affairs and Public Policy at AUC

Can Green Jobs Drive Employment and Youth Empowerment?

Green jobs are often touted as the solution to advancing responsible environmental practices and curbing high unemployment, which particularly affects young people in the Arab region. But there is little comprehensive evidence of whether green jobs can boost employment and livelihoods. This session addressed this key question by drawing on preliminary research, insights and on-the-ground experiences.

- Arcenciel
- Department of Public Policy and Administration at AUC
- GIZ
- HSBC Middle East and Turkey
- PhilanthroPower

Unlocking the Power of Data for Philanthropic Impact

The lack of comprehensive data collection and transparency in data sharing is holding back Arab philanthropy, limiting the sector's potential for widespread impact because nobody knows who is investing in what and, crucially, where the gaps remain. This session looked at existing models and interventions for data collection that could be replicated and scaled up to make the entire sector more efficient and effective.

- afikra
- Alwaleed Philanthropies
- Arab Foundations Forum
- Auura
- Sesame Workshop
- Whyise

Catalyst 2030 Panel: Catalyzing Community-led Collaborations to Achieve the SDGs

Catalyst 2030 is a network of people and organizations trying to achieve the SDGs by 2030 through unprecedented mobilization of collaborations across sectors. In this session, three members from Catalyst 2030 MENA showcased powerful and successful examples of collaborations and initiatives within the network and shared recommendations for funders on how best they can support systems change.

- Catalyst 2030
- DiaLeb
- John D. Gerhart Center at AUC
- Together Association for Development and Environment

Sawiris Foundation Panel: Advancing Science and Policy Toward the Resilience and Adaptability of the Most Vulnerable

Vulnerable and peripheral communities depend heavily on available natural resources for livelihood subsistence and are more vulnerable to multidimensional poverty as they are deprived of access to basic services and adequate environments. This panel discussed the ways in which Arab philanthropic strategies can build programs and funding to support vulnerable communities within this commitment of catalyzing change among donors and funders towards the “climateXpoverty” nexus in the Arab region.

- Egyptian Food Bank
- IFPRI Egypt
- J-PAL Middle East and North Africa
- Sawiris Foundation for Social Development

Philanthropy, Fragility and the Role of the Private Sector

As the MENA region navigates a host of wicked problems, this panel shed light on how to foster sustainable and transformative change in fragile countries by delving into the intersection of philanthropy, fragility and the usually understated role of the private sector.

- Egypt Loan Guarantee Facility
- Elephas Consultants
- Independent Expert
- UNHCR

DAY 2

Keynote Address

- Dr. Ali Eldin Hillal Dessouki

Lasting Impact Through Trust-Based Philanthropy

Unrestricted and multi-year funding, capacity building, and equal footing partnerships between grant-makers and grantees — the rise in the adoption of these practices is a sign that trust-based philanthropy could be gaining hold in the Arab region, helping to rebalance power and decision-making in the sector. The panelists took a realistic look at both the opportunities and challenges for expanding trust-based philanthropy in the region.

- Al-Hoshan Consultants
- The Asfari Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Greenpeace MENA
- Save the Children International
- WHO Foundation

Leveraging Climate Solutions for Sustainable Development

It’s clear that leveraging climate solutions and the pursuit of SDG 13 are imperative for sustainable development practice and development in the Arab region. But we know less about the practical and varied ways that the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors can more meaningfully address climate change as they work toward sustainable development. By focusing on the “how”, this session unpacked the key issues that come up when climate change, philanthropy and sustainable development meet.

- Dubai Cares
- EBRD
- The END Fund
- Impatience Earth
- King Khalid Foundation
- UNDP Regional Hub for Arab States
- WINGS

Bridging the Digital Divide: Lessons Learned from Digital Education Initiatives

Digital tools and online platforms play an increasingly vital role in advancing access to educational opportunities. But there is still a yawning gap between communities and social groups who have access to digital tools and skill-building opportunities and those who do not. This session examined how the philanthropic sector can advance sustainable and low-tech digital education solutions to make sure no one is left behind.

- Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation
- afikra
- Alwaleed Philanthropies
- INJAZ Egypt
- Sesame Workshop
- Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research
- Independent Sustainability Expert

AFF Members' Presentations

The Asfari Foundation shared the findings of a research paper that aims to address a recently observed trend of the migration of civil society organizations from the Levant region to the Global North, juxtaposed by the trend of international organizations from the GN registering in the Levant and wider Global South.

- The Asfari Foundation

Sanad's session explored social and economic inclusion for youth without parental care and the role of philanthropic organizations, looking at key priorities for alternative care reform, the challenges facing care leavers in achieving self-reliance and socio-economic integration, and the role of philanthropic entities, civil society organizations, private sector and educational institutions in the development and integration of youth without parental care.

- Sanad for Alternative Parental Care

Closing Remarks

- Arab Foundations Forum
- PhilanthroPower

DAY 3

SDG Impact Standards Workshop led by Social Value Arabia

This session was built around the SDG Impact Standards, a global UNDP initiative that aims to catalyze efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030. By focusing on four interconnected themes — strategy, management, transparency and governance — the Standards create a shared language and approach for integrating impact management across the SDGs and into decision-making, fill in the gaps in current practices, and connect actors across the ecosystem to create an enabling environment for greater collaboration and innovation.

- Social Value Arabia

What Kind of Climate Funder Do You Want to Be? hosted by King Khalid Foundation & led by Impatience Earth

The objective of this workshop was to give participants an opportunity to design their dream foundation and philanthropy strategy which is in line with a hopeful future, working through a series of questions about what they would do if they were given a hypothetical $10 million grant to start a new foundation today.

- Impatience Earth

Advancing Arab Philanthropic Partnerships and Collaboratives: Knowledge Co-Creation and Community Building Workshop

With the support of the Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation, in collaboration with Sawiris Foundation for Social Development

The diversity and scope of partnerships in Arab philanthropy is expanding, with emerging grantee-and-grantor partnership modalities, inter-philanthropy partnerships, growing partnerships and collaboration with government, and trust-based philanthropic practices. This workshop brought together philanthropic and nonprofit actors, socially responsible businesses and key stakeholders to understand the realities and opportunities for partnerships and collaboratives in the sector.

- Arab Foundations Forum
- The Asfari Foundation
- Ataa Charity Investment Fund
- Impact Investing Initiative
- Independent Strategy Advisor
- King Khalid Foundation
- League of Arab States
- Sawiris Foundation for Social Development
- Sesame Workshop

Climate Roundtable: Exploring a MENA Regional Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change

We gathered a group of organizations dedicated to promoting and catalyzing climate action to discuss developing an Arab Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change as part of the global **#PhilanthropyForClimate** movement led by **WINGS**.

- Arab Foundations Forum
- The Asfari Foundation
- Dubai Cares
- The END Fund
- Ford Foundation
- Greenpeace-MENA
- Impatience Earth
- International Medical Corps
- Jordan River Foundation
- King Hussein Foundation
- King Khalid Foundation
- Save the Children
- WINGS
- WHO Foundation

The huge success of the AFF Annual Meeting 2023 would not have been possible without our generous supporters, partners & co-hosts.

مؤسسة صالح عبدالله كامل الإنسانية
Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation

SAWIRIS FOUNDATION مؤسسة ساويرس

الهلال للمشاريع CRESCENT ENTERPRISES

Ford Foundation

مؤسسة الملك خالد KING KHALID FOUNDATION

The American University in Cairo School of Business
John D. Gerhart Center for Philanthropy, Civic Engagement and Responsible Business

Alliance For philanthropy and social investment worldwide

عفكرة afikra

PHILANTHROPY AGE

One Year On...

The 2023 Annual Meeting may have lasted three days, but its impact has influenced and shaped much of our work over the year since. Many of the main themes addressed over the course of the meeting — such as collaboration, knowledge sharing and philanthropy's role in addressing crises — have sparked new AFF projects and initiatives, bringing added benefits to AFF members and our wider network.

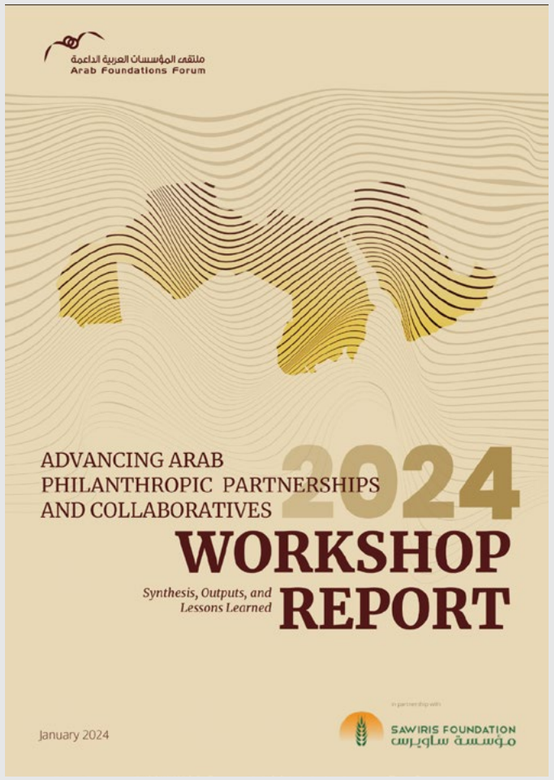
Collaboratives Workshop Report

Organized in partnership with the **Sawiris Foundation for Social Development** and the **Saleh Abdullah Kamel Humanitarian Foundation**, the **Advancing Arab Philanthropic Partnerships and Collaboratives** workshop at the 2023 Annual Meeting brought together over 40 organizations to share insights on philanthropic partnerships practices and to highlight ways to advance the effectiveness and impact of those practices.

Seven case studies of philanthropic organization and social investment partnership models were showcased during the workshop, and the participants mapped some of the key initiatives and opportunities they see in the philanthropic ecosystem.

We pulled together their various ideas and recommendations for next steps into an in-depth report covering key takeaways from the workshop, including:

- Trust is the bedrock and a prerequisite of partnerships, without which partnerships can fail or achieve sub-optimal results.
- Knowledge co-creation with communities is an effective partnership strategy for context relevant and responsive programmatic interventions.
- The presence of a shared governance framework, or the lack thereof, is a make-or-break factor in the success or failure of partnerships.



Read the report in **English** and **Arabic**.

Member-Led Sessions

One thing that became clear over the course of the Annual Meeting was the massive benefit of creating spaces for organizations to share their expertise with others in the sector and beyond. In the wake of the meeting, we launched our new online Member-Led Sessions to give our members another opportunity to learn from each other and shine a light on their good work.

Members come up with the topic, the speaker list and the format — anything from information sessions to panel discussions to workshops. We coordinate the preparation for the session, build and implement a far-reaching communications campaign, and host the session via Zoom.

All our Member-Led Sessions are also recorded and later made available to a wider audience through the AFF website and our YouTube channel.

We have hosted three such sessions so far, with more to come! Catch up on them below:

- **Islamic Finance and Climate Change, led by Greenpeace MENA**
- **Transformative Ventures: Exploring Collaborative Social Entrepreneurship Models, led by COSV**
- **Reimagining Orphan Care: A Shift Towards Family-Based Solutions, led by Sanad for Orphans and SOS Children's Villages – Gulf Office**

Speaker Series

After the Annual Meeting, we also focused on building up our Speaker Series, **Leading Philanthropy and Nonprofit Voices**, a space to exchange ideas and share promising developments on the inspiring models being advanced by the region's philanthropic and nonprofit sector. We invited more members to share their insights and examples — such as **HRH Princess Lamia bint Majed AlSaud, Secretary General of Alwaleed Philanthropies.**

The goal of these intimate, one-on-one conversations with leading voices is to spread good practices and understand what we can do better in our own organizations and as a community to make greater impact.

We also expanded the series to include **The Gaza Chronicles**, a collection of sessions focusing on the devastating genocide and humanitarian crisis in Gaza. In conversations with activists, scholars, aid workers, filmmakers and others, we elevate the voices of those living through the assault and those doing everything they can to help from the outside, highlighting personal stories, historical context, and the urgent need for international attention and response.

You can watch all of these sessions on **YouTube**.

Humanitarian Relief & Recovery Task Force

There was a lot of discussion in the Annual Meeting about philanthropy's role in supporting communities through and after humanitarian crises. Less than one month after the event, Israel began its relentless bombing campaign of Gaza in response to the October 7 attacks by Hamas, and the need for cohesive Arab philanthropic humanitarian action came into sharp focus.

We immediately pulled together a donor appeal, supported by **The Asfari Foundation**, to direct contributions toward several organizations who were on the ground in Gaza, providing vital supplies and medical aid. We also launched our **AFF Pooled Fund** to get donations to AFF member **Tawasal**, which is using the funds to buy clothes for displaced families, build much-needed wells for clean water, and support smaller local groups who are helping their communities through Israel's attacks.

We also created the **Humanitarian Relief and Recovery Task Force (HRRTF)**, driven by the belief that the philanthropic sector is uniquely placed to support emergency relief and recovery efforts that both enforce localization and empower communities. With meetings every two months, attended by AFF members and non-member organizations, the HRRTF aims to support coordination and collaboration between Arab foundations and nonprofits operating in

crisis and fragile contexts, including but not limited to the crisis in Gaza.

Different Task Force members are invited to chair each meeting, giving them a platform to highlight and cooperate on specific issues. Actions taken during previous meetings have included cooperation on developing early action recovery plans for Syria and launching the creation of a position paper on advancing localization in humanitarian aid and development.

Climate Commitment Working Group

During the 2023 Annual Meeting, we hosted a gathering of organizations with one thing in common: they all have climate action as one of their top priorities. The side event focused on ideas to catalyze a climate movement among philanthropies in the Arab region. And from that meeting, the **Arab Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change** was born.

Officially announced at the COP28 climate summit in December 2023, the commitment is part of the global **#PhilanthropyForClimate** movement led by **WINGS**. A few months later, we launched a Climate Commitment Working Group to develop a commitment that will consider the impacts of and solutions to climate change from the Arab perspective. The idea is to adapt the **International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change**, along with its implementation guidelines, into a regional framework that can be adopted by AFF's members and wider network, with the goal of establishing a #PhilanthropyForClimate movement across the Arab region.

Comprising about a dozen organizations — both AFF members and non-members — the Working Group meets once a month. The group has so far made great strides in shaping the **Arab Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change**, which is built on seven pillars based

Arab Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change

on the International Commitment pillars but developed with the Arab regional context top of mind.

The Arab Philanthropy Commitment is due to be launched at COP29 in Azerbaijan.

Save the Date!

The AFF Annual Meeting 2023 was filled with inspiration, collaboration and advocacy, and those forces have been driving all of our work in the year since.

After the success of last year's meeting, we're taking this year to reflect and build on everything that happened at the meeting and events that have impacted the Arab region since, so that we can put together yet another brilliant event for 2025.

Planning has begun and we can't wait to share with you the amazing array of speakers, events and themes we have lined up for October 2025!

AFF Annual Meeting 2025

October 2025
Location To Be Announced

Join Us!

Please keep an eye on our social media channels, our website and our quarterly newsletter for more details soon, and be sure to register early!

See you next year!

The AFF Team

Designed 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.

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