

The World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum 2019
11-13 November 2019
Manama, Bahrain

“Achieving the SDGs: Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Investing in the 4th Industrial Revolution in a Digital Economy”

Event in Brief

Under the auspices of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, the World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum 2019 (WEIF 2019) will be held in the Kingdom of Bahrain concurrently with the 18th Arab Annual Investors Summit on the 11th to the 13th of November 2019. The event is organized by UNIDO ITPO Bahrain, in partnership with the Union of Arab Chambers and the support of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

In line with the success achieved during the previous versions of WEIF; this year’s main theme is “Achieving the SDGs through Entrepreneurship & Innovation” but with special focus on “Investing in the 4th Industrial Revolution in a Digital Economy”. Hence, we intend to emphasize the pressing need to promote domestic investment for leveraging foreign direct investment, thus leading to job creation, but in the context of the challenges and opportunities laid out by the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR).

WEIF 2019 will promote and highlight the role of impactful investment and innovation towards economic development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, while showcasing the current challenges and opportunities towards sustainable economic development in developing countries, **particularly in the Middle East, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa**. Challenges include the stability of these regions and the underlying economic and social factors that are poised to address them.

Themes covered include the digital revolution and Industry 4.0, entrepreneurship & innovation, and the financial inclusion of entrepreneurs.

We strongly believe that WEIF 2019 coupled with the Arab Annual Investors Summit will serve as a unique platform for governments, investors, private sector, academia, financial institutions, civil society and entrepreneurs from the Arab region, Africa and

eventually the world to explore possibilities of sharing best practices and experiences, cooperation, joint investments and business partnerships with potential counterparts.

WEIF 2019 Major Sub - Themes

1. The Role of Entrepreneurship Towards Addressing Challenges in the Arab Region & Africa:

Unemployment is currently one of the greatest development challenges facing countries globally, and especially those in Arab countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population is under the age of 30, representing about 743 million of the 1.061 billion people in this region. In the Arab Region some 400 million people, nearly 65 percent of the population is younger than age 30.

It has been recognized that the answer to employment generation lies in the promotion of the private sector – notably the entrepreneur – through the promotion of investments, both foreign and domestic. The private sector/entrepreneurs are a key partner for economic development, with micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) contributing to high employment rates, poverty reduction, bottom-up economic growth, structural change, and innovation. Entrepreneurship also has a positive role in bridging the technology gap, and provide opportunities for the unemployed to exhibit their potential by being job creators. Economic development ensures the increase in job creation; provided that support is rendered to entrepreneurs in order to facilitate enterprise creation which in turn stimulates innovation and creativity. Moreover; the need to put in place and maintain a conducive business environment that stimulates enterprise creation and growth, especially for the micro, small and medium enterprises; which will in turn play a positive role in bridging the technology gap and render more competitive MSMEs.

However, entrepreneurs require support to facilitate enterprise creation and their sustainability, and addressing several challenges: the educational system does not provide the skills required, with difficulty to accessing capital and business development services that are particularly geared to new entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs tend to be perceived as high-risk, and are often less knowledgeable about networks, markets and investment opportunities and sources of information than older players.

Challenges faced by Arab & African Countries are global concerns; with 70 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's population is under the age of 30, representing about 743 million of the 1.061 billion people in this region. In the Middle East, a region of some 400 million people, nearly 65 percent of the population is younger than age 30.

Tapping the potential of the massive youth populations worldwide could be the opportunity of the century. To change the trajectory of living in challenging

circumstances around the world, young people need economic opportunities, civic engagement, and justice as well as opportunities to positively change their communities. The central challenge for the region is to boost growth and create political conditions and economic opportunities to engage its young working-age residents.¹

If the raised expectations of masses of young people are left unmet, the absence of justice and dignity will foster frustrations, despair, and maltreatment of others. Further contributing to social protest, religious radicalization, often in tandem with the rise of secularism. Such social and political instability also contributes to mass immigration fleeing violence, poverty, or simply a lack of opportunity.

2. Financial Inclusion 4.0 for entrepreneurs

The 2017 Global Findex database defines account ownership as “having an individual or jointly owned account”, and it is used by the World Bank and others, to measure financial inclusion. The Global Findex database 2017 reports that 1.7 billion adults lack an account globally.

For obvious reasons, account ownership is prevalent in high-income economies, where 94% of adults have an account whereas in developing economies, only 63% of adults have an account. Some economies who have achieved considerable gains in account ownership over the years lost out on opportunities for greater progress has due to the insufficient inclusion of women, as well as age restrictions. 30% of unbanked adults (globally) are between the ages of 15 to 24 years old.

Sub-Saharan Africa had some positive moves in this area; In 2011 the level of financial inclusion in Sub-Saharan Africa was just over 23 percent. In 2017, it was almost 43 percent, with a significant increase coming from digital financial services. According to Findex, the share of adults in Sub-Saharan Africa with a mobile money account almost doubled to 21 percent. In every other region of the world, mobile money use is lower than 10 percent.

This has resulted in a reliance on the growing micro-financing industry (Booz & Company, 2013). Although access to microfinance can support entrepreneur’s economic security it should not be a substitute to other financial institutions and measures need to be taken to ensure these financial institutions are able to respond to the needs of entrepreneurs. Bearing in mind that micro-finance limits entrepreneurs capabilities to grow and migrate from micro to small to medium enterprises, especially that it mainly focuses on financial services and not equipped or do not provide effective added value non-financial services.

¹ Global Trends, Office of the Director of National Intelligence: “Paradox of Progress”

3. Institutionalizing Innovation

The developing countries much like the Arab Region and Africa are generally considered to be a major source of untapped potential. In addition to being well educated, they are reported to have ambitious intentions; 2016 studies reveal that the females in the MENA region have the second highest entrepreneurial intentions, but only few of them translate those intentions into entrepreneurial actions.

Reports show that MENA female entrepreneurs have second highest ambitious intentions, and have higher innovation levels, possibly bringing new solutions to the market. They also tend to hire more employees thus create income for themselves, their families and create jobs for others. Africa is the only region in the world where more women than men choose to become entrepreneurs and nearly half of millennial entrepreneurs (47 percent) are women. African entrepreneurship appears to be undergoing a transformation and is referred to as “feminisation” of entrepreneurship.

According to UN Women, there is also gender gap in innovation and technology-meaning innovation does not benefit women and men on an equal level. Moreover, according to WIPO, there is also “There is plenty of evidence that increased participation by women improves the innovation performance of organizations and societies.” Trillions of dollars will continue be lost in the global economy and digital revolution if innovations are not gender responsive.

It is important to understand reasons behind this to be able to capitalize on these high rates of intent to start a business. In 2007, a survey in MENA countries reported that most women identified work/family balance as the most challenging issue (CATWAR & IFC, 2007). The 2017 Mastercard Index of Women’s Entrepreneurship (MIWE) results also revealed what drives female entrepreneurs in developing countries: resilience, determination and the desire to provide for their families and communities. The findings reinforce that women entrepreneurs are the backbone of economic growth and powerful engines of development and financial inclusion, especially in Africa.

4. Industry 4.0

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. The speed of technological development is increasing and eroding advantages of market proximity and low wages in the manufacturing and service sectors in favour of innovation and effective absorption of new technologies. The Arab world still needs to address some of the basic issues that will allow it to navigate through these developments. With half of the population not connected to the Internet, connectivity remains problematic for large parts of the region, especially in rural areas. In addition, the education systems

need to train students to have a flexible, creative, and critical mind-set, as well as the capacity to learn continuously and adapt to the challenges that the production and economic systems created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution will impose on them. Next generation technologies such as Robotics Process Automation (RPA), artificial intelligence (AI), and the internet of things (IoT) is driving the next industrial revolution – also referred to as industry 4.0.

The Internet of Things allows autonomous thought in everything from the simplest household appliance to the advanced machinery of heavy industry. And leaps forward in robotics and machine learning herald a new era of non-human labour in society's most monotonous and hazardous fields of endeavour. In manufacturing across the region, for instance, Industry 4.0 will open new avenues further down the value chain. On the digital side, cloud-based traffic in MENA is set to grow exponentially faster than any other region in the world through 2021. Thus, development of secure, scalable cloud solutions across the GCC is paramount to efficient, productive operations in public and private sectors sooner than we might think.

The swiftly spreading Fourth Industrial Revolution—a dramatic change that involves a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital, and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies, and industries—provides new opportunities that can support growth. In this context, entrepreneurship and diversification will be key to enabling Arab societies to thrive and prosper in the coming decades.

The Arab & African world is at a critical juncture. Ambitious economic and social reforms bring great economic promise to the region and at the same time we continue to see fragility and persisting inequalities that can potentially erode social cohesion. Within a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, the world is moving from a unipolar system of governance toward a multipolar and multi-conceptual order grounded in competing sets of values and precarious friction points. In this context, much of the hope in these developing regions rests on the imperative of constructing a social contract between the population and the state that is based on a more competitive and open economy, with a dynamic and entrepreneurial private sector offering employment prospects for the region.

5. Education 4.0

Availability of appropriate talent to address this changing landscape remains an issue. Enrolment in tertiary education still lags behind and places the Arab world among the worst regions in the world in this regard. Africa faces similar challenges; The future success of the African continent lies to a large degree in its ability to hone the skills and talents of its ever-growing population. An estimated 10 million graduates enter the African workforce each year. By 2040, the continent's labor force is expected to surpass that of India and China. Over the past 15 years, the global community has

made a lot of effort in inspiring and engaging women and girls in science. The concern is that they are still under-represented in STEM related fields while they represent more than half the population in Africa.

Studies indicate that many will benefit from more self-employment opportunities through the increase of the integration of inclusive entrepreneurial education into formal education and universities. This has been a growing global trend that is prevalent in developed countries where formal entrepreneurship education is available in more than 30 % of their post-secondary education institutions.

In the recent years, this trend has also made its way into the MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa region. UNIDO ITPO Bahrain has endeavoured to spread entrepreneurial training and curriculums to both university and school levels, while orienting teachers to understand how entrepreneurs can be counselled and enabled. Accordingly, the incorporation of new and relevant skills to formal education or increasing informal education will stimulate an entrepreneurial and innovative mind-set. Entrepreneurial education plays a key role in transforming entrepreneurial intentions into action, and addresses cultural and social beliefs; thus leading to ensuring a clear process from education to innovation to incubation and eventually entrepreneurship.

WEIF Parallel Side Events

- 2nd International Conference on Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Investment: Role of Education and Universities
- Sustainable Investments for Agenda 2030
- Young Business Hub Start-up Investment Summit
- Entrepreneurs Exhibition

Forum Objectives

The major objectives of this Forum are the following:

1. Introducing international best practices and successes on entrepreneurship and innovation in the backdrop of 4IR
2. Facilitating business partnerships and investments for domestic enterprise creation and expansion,
3. Highlighting best practices for governments and key stakeholders towards enhancing and adopting modern educational systems, financial inclusion tools that are effective in ensuring productivity and sustainability
4. Creating a platform for entrepreneurs from around the globe to develop joint investments and trade facilitation.

Expected Outcomes

- The Participation of 1000 consisting of; Entrepreneurs/investors from across the globe with special focus the Arab Region and Africa;
- Participation of major developmental organizations and Funds; Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture; Economic associations and entrepreneur's networks; Specialized entrepreneurship and MSME agencies; Universities and academicians; Major financial institutions and Technology providers and investors.
- The Forum aims to provide a platform for Entrepreneurs to Entrepreneurs bilateral meetings and matching with the aim of developing joint investments, collaboration and trade facilitation.
- Present the UNIDO tools and methodologies towards meeting the SDGs, by utilizing entrepreneurship and innovation.
- Create linkages with financial institutions for entrepreneurs and develop joint programs with developmental financial institutions.
- Allow the participants to deliberate on the challenges, opportunities, threats, and the road forward towards achieving the SDGs in the back drop of the 4IR.

Some Major Organizers:

- Union of Arab Chambers
- Union of Arab Banks
- Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- UNIDO Investment & Technology Promotion Office, Bahrain
- Islamic Development Bank
- Global Entrepreneurship Week (Kauffman Foundation)
- Arab International Center for Entrepreneurship & Investment – Bahrain
- World Business Angels Investment Forum

Forum Events: Conference, Exhibition and Bilateral Meetings

Event Dates & Venue: 12th to 13th November 2019, Ritz Carlton, Manama - Kingdom of Bahrain