



مركز الشارقة لريادة الأعمال
Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center

THE RISE OF AN ECOSYSTEM:

5 YEARS OF

CREATING CHANGE

Impact Report 2016 - 2020

66



His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi
Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah

صاحب السمو الشيخ الدكتور سلطان بن محمد القاسمي
عضو المجلس الأعلى حاكم الشارقة

فأنتم أمل هذا الشعب
والشعوب العربية لحياة
أفضل ومستقبل مشرق

**You are the hope of this
nation, and all Arab
nations, for a better life
and a brighter future**

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Creating an Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Fit for the Times



Our experience building the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa) over the past five years emphasizes how important collaboration and interconnectedness are to large-scale change and community resilience. Since Sheraa was launched in 2016, we have come a very long way as an entrepreneurship ecosystem, institution, and community.

Reflecting on Sheraa's progress, 2020 was a particularly difficult year in which our community's capacity to work together and embrace change was tested. I was inspired to see our entrepreneurship ecosystem step up to the challenge: Sharjah's government provided nearly 1 billion Dirhams in stimulus funds, government and business leaders gave their time generously to support startups, and founders innovated through adversity to support recovery.

We now face another challenge – adapting our ecosystem to be fit for the times. The pandemic has shown entrepreneurs can build companies anywhere with teams distributed around the world. As the map of global entrepreneurship and innovation hubs is being redrawn, emerging, globally-networked startup and innovation hubs like Sharjah now offer startups and small and medium-sized businesses a compelling alternative.

With remote work and distributed teams becoming the norm, digital connectivity and partnerships that integrate Sharjah into the global entrepreneurship ecosystem are more critical than ever. Since 2016, Sheraa has made significant progress in building a world-class inclusive, collaborative, and globally-connected entrepreneurship ecosystem. In this short time, Sharjah has become a preferred landing pad for startups at the crossroads of some of the fastest growing digital economies in the world.

Sheraa has a lot to celebrate, but we also face a lot of uncertainties. It is an adaptable, cohesive, and globally connected ecosystem that will thrive as the world recovers from the global pandemic. In Sharjah, we are pioneering an ecosystem built for the times which will solidify the progress we have made and reinforce our growing prominence as a leading global entrepreneurship and innovation hub.

Her Excellency Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi
Chairperson, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa)

Future-Proofing Sharjah's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in an Era of Change



Sheraa was born in January 2016, out of a need to harness the potential of the region's exceptional talent and to empower them with the resources to create a brighter future through entrepreneurship. Five years on, Sheraa has built a community of over 17,000 changemakers and has graduated 114 startups. These startups have generated \$130MM in revenue, raised \$87MM in capital, and have created over 1300 jobs.

A core tenet at Sheraa is that entrepreneurs are a force for lasting impact and positive change. 2020 tested this belief more than ever, and proved that our faith in our entrepreneurs was not misplaced. Even as the Covid-19 pandemic posed an existential threat to their businesses, the resilience and determination of these founders did not waver. Not only did they adapt to survive but, with their spirit of innovation, they helped fuel the post-Covid recovery by reimagining a digital-first world.

Against the backdrop of this tumultuous disruption, we were reminded of our interconnectedness and interdependence. The pandemic was a defining moment for Sheraa, and was an opportunity for us to expand beyond borders to focus on our shared destiny. The \$1MM Startup Solidarity Fund, mobilized in response to Covid-19, played a critical role in enabling founders from across Africa and the Middle East to develop novel products and solutions to help build a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Sheraa's progress is increasingly being recognized by global authorities on entrepreneurship ecosystem development like the Global Entrepreneurship Network and Startup Genome – but our greatest sense of pride comes from watching our growing family of founders change the world, and knowing that we had a role to play.

This report is a celebration of Sheraa's impact over five years, and is a glimpse of what is possible when a founder-first ethos is encoded in an ecosystem's DNA. Most importantly, this report is a salute to YOU – our community of changemakers, partners, and supporters. I am incredibly grateful to each and every one of you for sharing in our mission to transform Sharjah into a leading destination for entrepreneurs.

While we are proud to celebrate this important milestone, we are keenly aware that the journey is far from over. Now is the time for the next chapter in Sharjah's entrepreneurial narrative. The future beckons, and we will continue to do our part in shaping it.

Najla Ahmed Al Midfa

Chief Executive Officer, Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa)

Contents

10

**Sharjah's Rise:
Building a World-Class
Entrepreneurship
Ecosystem in 5 Years**

14

**Transforming Sharjah's
Ecosystem: 5 Years Of
Impact**

16

The Sheraa Model
I. Inspiring Changemakers
II. Educating the Ecosystem
III. Incubating Ideas and Ventures
IV. Growing Global Businesses

10 |

| 11

56

**Sheraa's Response
to Covid-19:
Building Community
Resilience**

60

**#UnitedForBeirut:
A Time for Solidarity,
Unity, and Hope**

62

Our Partners

64

**Sheraa's Board
Of Advisors**

Sharjah's Rise: Building a World-Class Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in 5 Years

In five short years, Sheraa has become a pillar of the UAE's entrepreneurship ecosystem, and it has positioned Sharjah as a global startup and innovation destination.

Because there is no one-size-fits-all way to build an entrepreneurship ecosystem, Sheraa's approach emphasizes stakeholder consultation and participation. It engages policymakers, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders in an inclusive, participatory dialogue around several ecosystem-building objectives. As a result, Sheraa has been particularly effective in gaining private sector support for ecosystem development and acceleration initiatives.

Sheraa's success was recently recognized in the Global Startup Ecosystem Report, which ranked Sharjah as a top high-growth entrepreneurship ecosystem due to its growing global prominence and increasing attractiveness to founders, talent, and investors.

These ventures at the cutting-edge of technology and the region's rapidly developing digital economy drive Sharjah's economic diversification, promote socio-economic development, and create jobs.

12



stronger. Some of these initiatives provided all the recovery enablers for the sector, helping it restore growth and competitiveness and foster a more flexible and sustainable model during the coming stages.

According to 2019 reports, Startups and SMEs makeup 94% of UAE businesses and employ 86% of the private sector workforce. To increase the sector's share in economic growth, many programs were launched to support the UAE entrepreneurs, including the general economic recovery plan led by the Ministry of Economy with the participation of many concerned authorities in the UAE.

As part of its efforts to address the economic repercussions of the global pandemic that affected many of these business owners, the UAE government established cooperative platforms to enhance the viability of SMEs and help them restore their growth and competitiveness in a record time.

—
His Excellency Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi,
Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Thanks to the wise leadership's vision, the UAE was ranked first in the region and fourth globally in the Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI) 2020. This achievement is a testament to the significant gains the UAE has made on the national and local level policies, which aim to support the entrepreneurial community and establish national institutions like Sheraa that support emerging startups and SMEs.

The UAE was also ranked second in the National Governments' Response to the COVID-19 lockdown and its impact on the entrepreneurial sector. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the total value of the economic stimulus packages and initiatives launched by the federal and local governments amounted to more than AED 388 billion. Many of these initiatives were introduced to support SMEs and help them recover and rebuild even

13



5 Years in Pictures



Sheraa Hub Launch at the American University of Sharjah, 2016



Startup Sharjah Pitches, 2019



Ramadan Majlis, 2017



Sheraa Alumni Reunion, 2019



Sheraa Hub Launch at the University of Sharjah, 2018



Ramada Majlis Showcase Day, 2018



The Arab Supply Chain Impact Initiative, 2018



Badr Jafar at the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival, 2017



Startup Sharjah Finalists, 2019



Seed Program Group Session, 2019



Magnus Olsson at the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival, 2017

Transforming Sharjah's Ecosystem: 5 Years of Impact



ENABLING IMPACT

114

startups supported

\$130MM revenue generated by Sheraa supported startups

\$87MM in capital raised by Sheraa supported startups

1,300+ jobs created by Sheraa supported startups

65% survival rate of Sheraa supported startups



COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

48% of Sheraa supported startups are women-led

15% of Sheraa supported startups have Emirati founders

Age range of **21 - 50** years old

40 Nationalities

UNPARALLELED SUPPORT

\$1.3MM total grants and prizes awarded to startups – sponsored by the government and private sectors

3,000+ hours of mentoring provided to Sheraa supported startups

70% reduction in business startup costs through Sheraa free zone partnerships

\$600,000+ in incremental revenue generated by Sheraa supported startups through introductions



The Sheraa Model

I. Inspiring Changemakers

Cultivating a community of changemakers to learn, collaborate and grow.

II. Educating the Ecosystem

Fostering a culture of experimentation and innovation to solve big problems.

III. Incubating Ideas and Ventures

Incubating innovative, impact-driven businesses, contributing to socio economic development.

IV. Growing Global Businesses

Establishing Sharjah as a regional expansion hub for high-potential startups.

18 |

| 19

At Sheraa, entrepreneurs are at the heart of everything we do. We INSPIRE changemaking, EDUCATE the ecosystem, INCUBATE high-impact ventures, and GROW them into global businesses that can change the world.

An entrepreneur's path is rarely linear, and the Sheraa model ensures that we are able to consistently support founders along their unique journeys.

I. Inspiring Changemakers



Building for the Future

Even just a few years ago, conversations about entrepreneurship ecosystem development in Sharjah were often focused on cultural change. The prevailing sentiment was that low interest in entrepreneurship reflected the stigmatization of business failure and the social value of public sector employment. However, Sheraa has gradually shifted conversations about ecosystem development away from a cultural change towards a narrative of empowerment through its programs and partnerships.

Sheraa believes everyone – from a student with an idea to a public sector employee who wants to turn their part-time passion into a business, to a social entrepreneur seeking positive impact, or a small and medium-sized business looking to scale the next level – has the capacity to create change. **This belief that anyone is capable of becoming a changemaker is instilled in all of Sheraa's ecosystem-building efforts and programs.**

Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival (SEF)

To make its mark in the UAE's dynamic, growing entrepreneurship ecosystem, Sharjah had to do something big – the answer was Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival (SEF).

Held annually since 2017, SEF is an opportunity to strengthen cooperation in Sharjah's entrepreneurship ecosystem. Routinely attracting a lineup of world-class speakers and thousands of participants, SEF is now the country's largest entrepreneurship event.

The Festival has energized Sharjah's entrepreneurs at the grassroots level while gradually shaping cultural attitudes and norms critical to building an entrepreneurial culture.

22 | **200+**
inspirational speakers



10,000+
changemakers

94% of SEF attendees inspired to start their entrepreneurial journey



“Through our support for the Sharjah Entrepreneurship Festival, we are promoting innovation and growth opportunities for Sharjah’s aspiring entrepreneurs. Sheraa is graduating a number of home-grown companies in the e-commerce sector which are reinforcing the UAE’s role as an emerging global technology hub and are future partners for Emaar and our broader portfolio of companies.”

—
Mohamed Alabbar,
Founder and Managing Director, Emaar Properties, SEF 2017-2019 Sponsor



“Initiatives like SEF are instrumental in attracting the best talent to Sharjah. Success stories are given a stage to showcase their story, enticing attendees to network and step up as the next generation of changemakers, which is of key importance to a family-run business like ours.”

—
Haleema Al Owais,
Chief Executive Officer, Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Real Estate, SEF 2020 Sponsor



“What I’ve seen here at SEF in the last two days is magnificent. It’s very powerful, very impactful. I think it’s changing lives.”

—
Arlan Hamilton,
Founder, Managing Partner, Backstage Capital, SEF 2019 Speaker

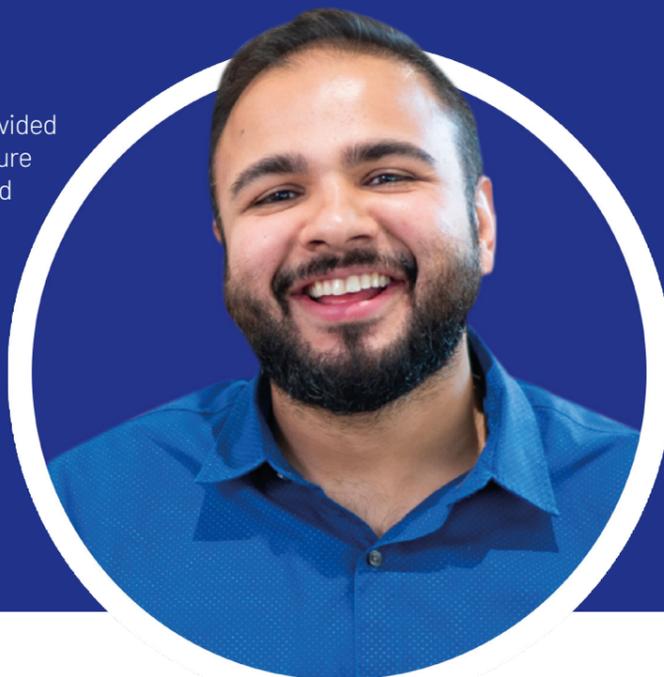




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"Our participation in the first SEF provided Smart Crowd with validation and exposure that attracted the attention of VC's and potential partners. Sheraa's \$100,000 grant, as well as the programs we took part in, made our entrepreneurship journey possible. We have found Sharjah's entrepreneurship ecosystem to be the most supportive in the UAE."

Siddiq Farid,
Co-Founder, Smart Crowd



SEF Pitch Competition Winners

"In some ways, Sheraa is also a startup on a journey similar to us. It is founder-friendly, agile, and always open to incorporating feedback from its community. We receive significant value from being a member of the Sheraa community and connecting to Sharjah's world-renowned publishing ecosystem."

Leila Hamadeh,
Co-Founder, Finyal Media



Founders: Siddiq Farid, Musfique Ahmed

Sheraa Participation: SEF Award Winner 2018, Pre-Seed & Seed Program 2018

Industry: Proptech

Smart Crowd is the region's first regulated digital platform for fractional real estate investment. Users can invest as little as \$1,350 to make micro-investment in real estate.

It raised \$600,000 in financing from prominent global and regional institutional investors partially due to SEF's exposure and participation in the Seed program.

It achieved 400% growth in under two years, with plans for international expansion in 2022.



Founders: Leilah Hamadeh, Mshari Alonaizy, Majid Al Qassimi

Sheraa Participation: SEF Award Winner 2019, Seed Program 2020

Industry: Publishingtech

Finyal Media is a podcast network providing immersive audio experiences for young Arab listeners. Finyal was born out of the strong belief that the current media landscape is not championing our local culture. The network has recently hit 5 million downloads.

Its content is distributed on all major podcasting platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, Deezer, Anghami and many more.

Finyal Media has ranked #1 on the Apple Podcasts charts five times, and has raised \$950,000 in funds.

II. Educating the Ecosystem



Developing Changemakers Through Partnerships

Sheraa believes changemaking and entrepreneurship skills are complementary, and the earlier they are developed, the better. This education must include the entire ecosystem - from youth to entrepreneurs, to investors and other allies.

A community equipped with these skills is better able to work together to solve complex problems, innovate, and navigate uncertainty.

Sheraa has worked closely with its partners over the past five years to continuously provide lifelong learning opportunities to our community of changemakers.

Building a Community of Highly Skilled Talent

In partnership with the American University of Sharjah and the University of Sharjah, Sheraa has developed award-winning startup hubs in the heart of the universities. These hubs celebrate community, diversity, and inclusion.

Sheraa's hubs are built around collaborative, supportive communities offering facilities, programs, and access to intelligent, passionate people ready to share lessons learned on the road to building great companies.

These hubs bring students, entrepreneurs, startups, and industry leaders together around a range of skill-building opportunities, and provide the resources they need to make progress on big ideas.



Sheraa Hub, American University of Sharjah

Sheraa Hub, University of Sharjah

Educating the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Enterprising Youth

Sheraa partnered with Sharjah Girl Guides and Sajaya Young Ladies of Sharjah to train 200 girls on business planning, product branding, effective leadership, and pitching ideas. Held over eight sessions, the program introduced entrepreneurship as a viable future career track while also building employability skills.



“Our cooperation with Sheraa on the Online School was avidly supported by parents and educators. Integrating youth entrepreneurship programs into the educational experience is critical to develop the skills of young people in navigating change, taking risks, and applying critical thinking to problem solving – all of which are essential competencies required to navigate these unprecedented times.”

—
Her Excellency Dr. Muhadditha Al Hashimi,
Chairperson, Sharjah Private Education Authority

Sheraa Online School

Sheraa partnered with Sharjah Private Education Authority and Kalimat Group on a 5-week online program that introduced students to the fundamentals of entrepreneurship. Drawing participation from 240 secondary and high school students, the program was designed to instill critical thinking skills, creativity, and an entrepreneurial mindset.

In 2020, as schools transitioned online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a two-week iteration of the program was introduced, enabling students to compete on developing tech-enabled businesses to address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Selected from 60 participating students, 20 finalists pitched their businesses to a panel of ecosystem leaders competing for monetary prizes and mentorship to take their businesses forward.

Awaken the Entrepreneur Workshops

In 2019, Sheraa partnered with Sharjah Youth Council and Emirates Youth to host a series of nine workshops that equipped 100 young entrepreneurs with the tools to validate their ideas, and provided exposure to entrepreneurship as a future career track. These workshop challenged them to come up with tech-enabled solutions for pressing real-world problems.

A post-workshop survey found that 93% of attendees expressed an interest in starting a business.



“Sheraa hosted several gatherings of the Sharjah Youth Council in which young entrepreneur’s community came together to suggest proactive solutions to the challenges young Emirati entrepreneurs face.”

—
Her Excellency Shamma bint Suhail Faris Al Mazrui
Minister of State for Youth Affairs



Empowering the Next Generation of Mission-Driven Investors

Conscious Investor Fellowship

In partnership with StartAD and VentureSouq, Sheraa launched the region's first conscious investor training program. The Fellowship provided training and mentorship for 25 investors on investing in impact-driven technology startups.



"It was vital to collaborate with entities that share our vision, such as Sheraa, on the Conscious Investor Fellowship in order to break down the silos between conventional venture investors and impact investors. The Fellowship empowers the next generation of mission-driven investors who will fund tech-enabled ventures tackling today's immediate societal, economic and environmental challenges."

— **Sonia Weymuller,**
Founding Partner, VentureSouq

Convening for Impact: Connecting Entrepreneurs and Investors

Startup Sharjah

Every year, Sheraa hosts Startup Sharjah to bring together designers, developers, entrepreneurs, and experts to go from idea to business pitch over a short period. Teams form concepts, go through a rapid business model creation, and market validation process that culminates in a pitch competition judged by ecosystem leaders.

To date, Startup Sharjah has drawn participation from over 500 participants.



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"Startup Sharjah was a great way for us to quickly validate our idea and really understand how best to bring the solution to the market. The guidance that we received not just during the bootcamp but continuously helped us navigate the tricky early days and reach product-market fit. Sheraa provides an excellent platform for startups and immense opportunities to network and mentorship."

Somia Anwar,
Founder, Bookends



Startup Sharjah Winners

"The Startup Sharjah competition really cemented how I could take my vision of Storically forward. In addition, the talent pool that I met during those three days helped me develop my MVP and launch."

Sadia Anwar,
Founder, Storically



Founder: Somia Anwar

Sheraa Participation: Community member since 2019, Startup Sharjah Winner 2019

Industry: Creative Economy

Bookends is a book-sharing app that enables users to read and trade their books, purchase and sell used books, and ship them around the UAE through an easy and cost-effective platform.

The platform has generated over 60,000 AED in revenue since launch in 2019. Their preloved books library contains over 10,000 books to date and has over 3000 users across the UAE.



Founder: Sadia Anwar

Sheraa Participation: Community member since 2019, Startup Sharjah Winner 2019

Industry: Creative Economy

Storically.com is a website that allows users to personalize books and share their own stories, backgrounds, and identity with others by creating customized children's books and e-books.

The startup has raised \$150,000 in funding since launch in 2020 and has over 50 series published so far on their platform.

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Community Startups

"In just a few short years, Sheraa has built an incredible reputation for shaping top-notch entrepreneurs. Its founder-first approach to supporting community members is unique in the UAE. As a result, I was able to access mentors who supported the commercialization of my ideas and pushed me to take my business to the next level."

Amna Al Jarwan,
Founder, KnackLab



Founders: Amna Al Jarwan, Divesh Lachhwani

Sheraa Participation: Community member since 2019

Industry: Edutech and future of work technology

Knack is a talent development app that helps companies develop modern leaders at scale. It enables companies to run personalized coaching and learning programs to build personal and professional skills. In addition, knack's platform provides on-demand learning solutions and internal mentoring tools.

Active in two cities in the UAE and Oman with plans to expand to Saudi Arabia and Egypt within 2022.

Delivered over 150+ coaching sessions during the Covid-19 pandemic to healthcare professionals in the UAE, resulting in:

8% growth in their mental health and wellbeing.

10% overall growth in their professional's ability to manage teams and patients.

8% overall growth in their problem-solving skills, adaptability, and future-readiness.



III. Incubating Ideas and Ventures



A Founder-Focused, Evolving Ecosystem

In nature, ecosystem-based adaptation is a term used to describe the ongoing adjustments ecosystems undergo to reduce vulnerability and build resilience. As Sheraa celebrates its fifth year in existence, it has followed a similar ongoing process of institutional testing, recalibration, and adaptation as a natural ecosystem.

Remaining founder-focused, ecosystem responsive, and impact-driven have led to several changes in Sheraa's programs over the years. Sheraa piloted various programs to support early-stage startups over the past five years, all of which included assistance in business idea generation, access to mentors and experts, go-to-market support, and investor readiness.

Sheraa's impact data shows that startups that received its support from the very beginning had higher survivability rates, generated more jobs, and received more funding.

Programs That Cater to Each Stage of the Startup Lifecycle

Idea Lab

The Idea Lab program focuses on finding problem-solution fit by studying competitors and validating the business idea through market research.

Pre-Seed

Major milestones of the Pre-Seed program include achieving product-market fit by building and launching a minimum viable product and acquiring the first customers.

Seed

The Seed program helps startups get seed investment ready by optimizing the marketing and sales funnels, and achieving product-channel fit.

Series A

The Series A program helps develop the business growth drivers: strategy, cash, processes and people, impact and getting investment ready.



“As Sahab Smart Solutions spearheads the digital transformation of Sharjah, we are always on the hunt for local startups who share our vision of creating innovative, future-centric, digital solutions to partner with. The kind of tech-focused and sustainable ventures that are coming out of Sheraa now are high on our radar.”

—
Amin Al Zarouni,
Chief Executive Officer, Sahab Smart Solutions, SEF 2020 Sponsor

“Startups provide the innovations and jobs that are going to empower all of our cities as we increasingly move into the 21st century. Sheraa is on the forefront of creating and empowering startups in the MENA, and I continue to be so impressed by all they are doing to support startups, especially in the areas of education and business.”

—
Pat Riley,
CEO of Global Accelerators Network (GAN)



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"Sheraa has been instrumental in our journey from the start. We joined the Sheraa community as university seniors as participants in the Pre-Seed program. Our business grew to a point where we also joined the Seed program. Sheraa has always been there to support us, and its hands on approach to working with startups is very unique to the UAE and region."

Yadhushan Mahendran,
Co-Founder: The Concept



Sheraa Programs Graduates

"Having a support system such as Sheraa is crucial for founders especially when the path to entrepreneurship is not linear. As a graduate of the Series A program, I had the opportunity to collaborate with a number of mentors and industry specialists which had a significant impact on the work that I have done afterwards. Being an alum of Sheraa is a lifelong advantage to founders."

Rami El Malak,
Founder, spiderSilk



Founders: Yadhushan Mahendran, Maria Sobh, Muhammad Rijal Hikmatullah

Sheraa Participation: Pre-seed, Seed Programs 2017

Industry: Aviation technology

The Concept was formed with the mission to deliver sustainable products using hardware and technology innovation. The Concept has partnered with Etihad Airways to develop NEOS Fly+, the world's first smart IoT in-flight food tray. Designed to be 30% lighter in weight, the tray helps airlines save up to \$1.5MM in fuel.

The team has two current patents pending, one for utility and the other for product design, and is looking to continue innovating in different industries such as space, hospitality, and pharmaceuticals.

>spiderSilk;

Founder: Rami El Malak

Sheraa Participation: Series A Program 2018

Industry: Cyber Security

Rami has graduated from the Sheraa Program to start his second startup - spiderSilk - , a cybersecurity startup specializing in simulating the most advanced cyber offenses on existing enterprise technology to enhance security defences using their proprietary machine-driven technology.

The startup generated \$200,000+ in revenue since launch in 2019 and has successfully raised \$2.5M in investment as of 2021 to support expansion in North American & MENA.

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"The Seed Program has helped me as a founder understand the business fundamentals of Jebra. It allowed us to realize the importance of focusing on our core value proposition and developing a strong Go-To-Market to deliver it. The customized journey in the Seed Program helped us identify and address gaps that are specific to our startup and that's what led to our enhanced value proposition as Jebra."

Tufool Alnuaimi,
Founder, Jebra



48

Sheraa Programs Graduates

"Sheraa's early support for elGrocer has been critical to our journey. Its accelerator program led to an introduction to Sharjah Coop which crystallized into a strategic partnership. We also benefited tremendously from the media and public relations support Sheraa provided which enabled us to create a deeper connection with our customers and the communities we serve. We are very proud to be part of the Sheraa community - it is a badge of honor for us."

Nader Amiri,
Founder, elGrocer



49



Founder: Tufool Alnuaimi

Sheraa Participation: Seed Program 2019

Industry: Business Analytics

Jebra provides a flexible interface to communicate, analyze and view data, and provide small companies with AI-driven insights customized to their individual needs in the market and optimize decision-making.

The startup has secured 5 paid contracts from corporates across the UAE, UK & Netherlands, generating revenue of over \$90,000 since 2020



Founder: Nader Amiri

Sheraa Participation: Series A Program 2019

Industry: E-commerce

ElGrocer is the UAE's leading grocery delivery service offering same-day delivery in two hours. With the UAE's embrace of online shopping, elGrocer has grown significantly, with the pandemic providing a tailwind, leading to a 400% increase in demand from March to May 2020.

ElGrocer is one of the UAE's leading grocery delivery services offering same-day delivery in two hours. With the UAE's embrace of online shopping, elGrocer has grown significantly, with the pandemic providing a tailwind, leading to a 400% increase in demand from March to May 2020.

The first e-commerce startup to serve all the Emirates, El Grocer also holds the distinction of being the biggest crowdfunding company in the MENA region.

Winner of the Gold Publicis90 award and featured on Forbes Middle East Top 100 Startups multiple times

66

Sheraa Programs Graduates

"Sheraa has been part of my startup journey before I even knew what exactly it was that I wanted to do. Foloosi was born in Sheraa and has grown through the mentorship and guidance I have received over the years. Being part of the Sheraa startup family has meant that I always had someone to call whenever I had doubts, needed a sounding board, or wanted to celebrate a milestone."



Omar Bin Brek,
Founder, Foloosi



Founder: Omar Bin Brek

Sheraa Participation: Community member since 2017, Seed Program 2018

Industry: Fintech

Foloosi is a technology company that develops economic infrastructure online to assist businesses in undergoing a quick, easy, and advanced digital transition, as well as innovating and driving business growth.

Its Merchant Payment Solution has 5,000 merchants in the United Arab Emirates and facilitates C2B payments via multiple channels, online and offline

The solution has over 150,000 users and is available on the Web, Android (Google Play), and iOS (Apple) app stores, and is currently processing 35M AED in annual transaction value.

Raised over \$2.5 in follow-on funding as a pre-series A round



IV. Growing Global Businesses



Sheraa has leveraged Sharjah's historically strong trade ties and competitive industrial advantages to forge cross-ecosystem partnerships at the heart of a rapidly developing entrepreneurship ecosystem with global ambitions.

These partnerships enable Sheraa to develop mutual synergies with other fast-growing ecosystems to support community members in scaling to global markets, accessing top-tier VCs, and obtaining international expertise.

Sheraa's global partnerships also diversify Sharjah's growing tech scene while reinforcing its position as a globally networked startup and innovation hub.

Access Sharjah Challenge: Attracting High-Potential Startups to Sharjah

The Access Sharjah Challenge is an annual competition aimed at bringing innovative startups and SMEs into Sharjah to work with the public and private sector.

PUBLISHING AND DIGITAL CONTENT

The first iteration of the program, which focused on digital content and publishing due to Sharjah's vibrant publishing industry and designation as the UNESCO World Book Capital 2019, was implemented in partnership with Sharjah Publishing City and Emirates Publishers Association.

250 applications received, 14 global digital content and publishing startups shortlisted, \$160,000 prize purse, 4 winners



"Sheraa has built a thriving ecosystem with rich talent pool to empower innovative startups to solve local and global problems and drive Sharjah's economic growth."

—
JF Gauthier,
Founder & CEO, Startup Genome



54 |

HEALTHTECH AND FOODTECH

The second iteration of the Access Sharjah Challenge attracted more than 600 entries from healthtech and foodtech startups globally, which competed for \$250,000 in equity-free grants and market entry and expansion support. The winners included startups from Kenya, Egypt, Jordan, and South Africa.

600 applications, \$250,000 prize purse, 4 winners



"Our partnership with Sheraa's Access Sharjah Challenge surfaced world-leading agri-food tech technologies which can be deployed in the UAE, and throughout the region, to increase food security and self-sufficiency, and improve agricultural yields in water-scarce, desert ecosystems. Initiatives like Access Sharjah Challenge reinforce the UAE's emerging role as a global testbed for validating and scaling cutting-edge agri-food tech technologies."

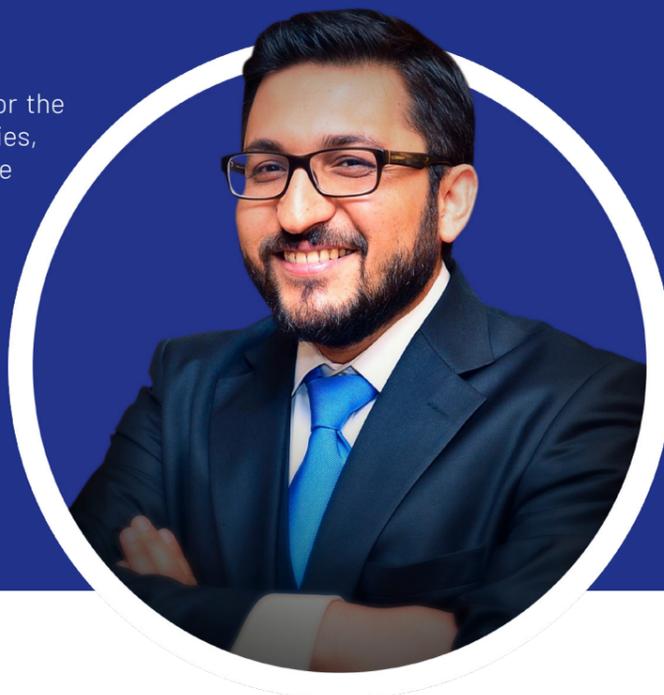
—
Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Saeed Hareb Almheiri,
Minister of State for Food and Water Security



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"Sharjah is emerging as a global hub for the publishing and the creative industries, and we are very excited to explore market opportunities in the Arab World leveraging Sharih Publishing City, the World's first free zone dedicated to the publishing industry, as a base for expansion. Of course, we could not have done this without the Access Sharjah Challenge initiative."

Izzet Bogazliyanlioglu,
Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer,
Bobu



56

Access Sharjah Challenge Winners

"We are excited to expand our business to the UAE to support families in accessing quality healthcare. Being part of the Sheraa family is going to help us improve our business as well as get the support we need in this critical time."

Ra'ad Kalha,
Founder, Chief Executive Officer,
Carers



57



Founders: Izzet Bogazliyanlioglu, Muhammet Özmen

Sheraa Participation: Access Sharjah Challenge Winner 2020

Industry: Publishingtech

Bobu provides software solutions designed for book and magazine publishers to create mobile apps and games for children without coding. Bobu's aim is for children across markets to access high-quality, educational, and entertaining content.

Available in Istanbul, UAE, Eastern Europe, with plans to expand to the US.

Over 16,000 books and magazines were created with Bobu in the last 18 months, with users reporting 90% time and cost savings.



Founders: Ra'ad Kalha

Sheraa Participation: Access Sharjah Challenge Winner 2020

Industry: Healthtech

Carers app is a dynamic in-home care marketplace that connects households with professional short and long-term caregivers (in-home nurses, physiotherapists, and child care specialists).

Throughout the global pandemic, Carers has utilized its digital platform to provide the best services for ill, disabled, or older adults. Carers have also been pouring efforts into preserving citizens' health and wellness despite the situation, and providing working opportunities for the nurses and caregivers

Available in Jordan, with plans to expand in the MENA region starting with UAE via Sharjah.



Access Sharjah Challenge Winners

"In an emergency, it is often a matter of seconds that determine the outcome of whether you survive or not, and, at Flare, we believe that no matter who you are or where you are, you deserve access to emergency care in minutes. Thanks to Sheraa's support, we will be continuing to develop our solutions to further our mission."

Caitlin F. Dolkart,
Co-Founder and Managing Director,
Flare



Founders: Caitlin F. Dolkart, Maria Rabinovich

Sheraa Participation: Access Sharjah Challenge Winner 2020

Industry: Healthtech

Flare is a cloud and mobile-based 911 system explicitly designed for areas that lack existing emergency response infrastructure. It combines both public and private ambulances on a real-time platform for 1% of the cost of traditional 911.

7,000+ lives saved.

87% reduction in emergency response times in Nairobi, Kenya, to between 2-4 minutes.

35,000 emergency calls have been dispatched with Flare's technology.



Sheraa's Response to Covid-19: Building Community Resilience

In times of crisis, startups need an anchor of stability, and Sheraa was proud to stand alongside its community as it weathered the pandemic and began the process of rebuilding.

To support its community, Sheraa offered several initiatives including webinars attracting over 1,300 attendees and featuring over 44 industry leaders and entrepreneurs as speakers.



\$1 Million Startup Solidarity Fund

In partnership with CE-Ventures, Sheraa capitalized a \$1 million fund in May 2020 to assist startups through equity-free grants and commissioned projects. The fund was used to support startups experiencing temporary financial difficulties during the pandemic.



“As a corporate venture capital investor, we know the entrepreneurial path is rarely smooth. Founders need guidance to cope with the good and bad of building a business. The pandemic has tested the resilience of many start-ups, and it is important for founders to know that key ecosystems stakeholders, like Sheraa and CE-Ventures are there to support them.”

—
Tushar Singhvi,
Deputy Chief Executive Officer,
Head of Investments, CE-Ventures

AED 1 Million Motivate Media Advertising Support

Sheraa partnered with Motivate Media Group to offer community members AED 1 million in-kind support, including discounted advertising, digital marketing, and copywriting assistance.



“Motivate media helped 20 SMEs, including five from Sheraa’s portfolio with the setup and execution of multi-media marketing campaigns to assist them through this tough period. Sheraa has been a driving force for such initiatives, helping to enable and grow entrepreneurship in the region.”

—
Ian Fairservice,
Managing Partner, Motivate Media Group

66

"Sheraa was critical to our UAE market entry, and we truly appreciate the continued support over the years; Sheraa and Motivate Media's support contributed significantly to GCC user acquisition. We have tried to repay the favor by being as helpful to our fellow Sheraa community members during these unprecedented times."

Ihab Fikry,
Co-Founder, Chief Executive Officer,
Almentor



Founders: Ihab Fikry, Abdelrhman Fahmy, Hesham Heikal, Husni Khuffash, Ibrahim Kamel

Sheraa Participation: Series A Program 2018

Industry: Edtech

Almentor.net is a cutting-edge online video marketplace for e-learning and professional business development. Offering video courses in Arabic and English, it curates top-rated training programs of expert-created content and guided curriculum with interactive delivery.

Raised over \$8MM in external funding.

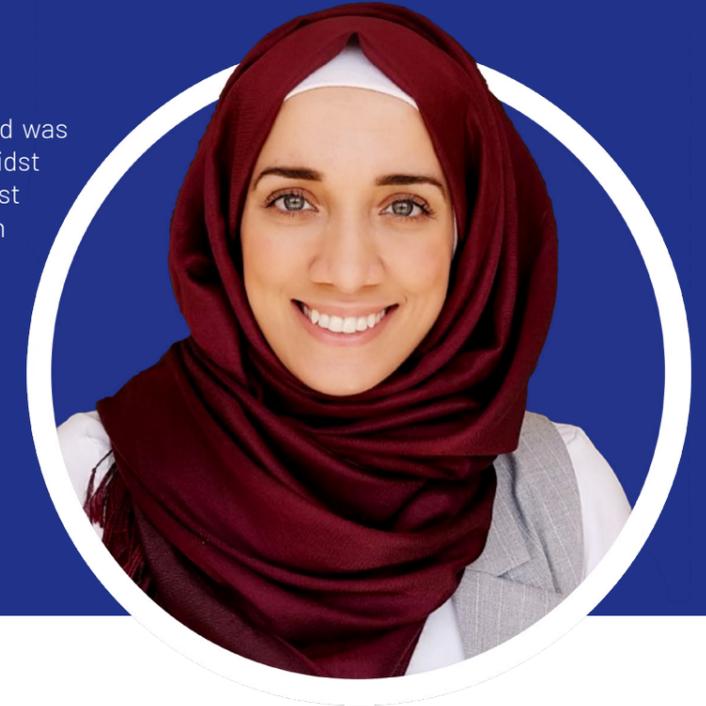
The platform offers over 10,000 educational videos.

Over 1MM registered learners have completed more than 2MM learning experiences.

Startup Solidarity Fund Grant Recipients

"Receiving the Startup Solidarity Fund was the turning point for 3Dinova in the midst of the pandemic. It allowed us to not just push through the difficult year, but in turn support the first responders and front line staff with crucial protective equipment. It also helped us explore further 3D printing opportunities and areas that we couldn't fund ourselves."

Ruba Al Nashash,
Founder, 3Dinova



Founder: Ruba Al Nashash

Sheraa Participation: Pre-seed Program

Industry: Education

3Dinova is an online platform that provides lesson plans and activities to incorporate Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and 3D printing into education, printers, and products.

The platform provides Arabic and English 3D design and printing guides.

The startup has generated over \$150,000 in revenue through education programs, product design & manufacturing for over a 120 clients spread across the GCC region.

#UnitedForBeirut: A Time for Solidarity, Unity, and Hope

The devastating Beirut port explosion in August 2020 dealt a major blow to an already battered economy facing unrest and uncertainty due to the global pandemic.

The involvement of entrepreneurs and social impact innovators in post-disaster recovery is critical to enabling communities hit by the disaster to come together and creatively solve problems.

Sheraa's #UnitedForBeirut initiative offered \$100,000 in equity-free funding, \$100,000 in cloud hosting credit, and other support to 10 high-impact startups.

The initiative, supported by Amazon Web Services (AWS) and MIT Enterprise Forum Pan Arab, targeted entrepreneurs on the frontlines of recovery efforts with pioneering businesses that offer innovative solutions to enable disaster-affected communities to support themselves.



"Despite the tragic event that hit Beirut and its people this year, we have hope for a better future. Our startup ecosystem showed unprecedented solidarity and support to community rebuilding efforts. With Sheraa's support, we were able to support entrepreneurs that helped community members who needed it the most."

Maya Rahal,
Managing Director, MITEF Pan Arab

"It was a pleasure collaborating with Sheraa and MITEF on the important #UnitedForBeirut initiative to support Lebanon's startups. Working with the startups as part of this initiative has been a privilege, as we helped them leverage the power of cloud computing to meet community needs in times of crisis, and innovate solutions for rebuilding their community and accelerating its recovery efforts."

Ned Jaroudi,
Startups and Venture Capital Lead (MENA),
Amazon Web Services



#UnitedForBeirut Grant Recipient



"Our office, homes, and store were all destroyed by the explosion, and our employees sustained serious injuries. Sheraa's generous support allowed us to reopen and start to rebuild. We were able to power through the difficult period without letting go of our employees and make it through both the blast and Covid-19 stronger."

Omar Itani,
Co-founder, FabricAid



FABRIC AID®

Founders: Omar Itani, Hussan Hanouni

Sheraa Participation: #UnitedForBeirut grant recipient

Industry: Social Entrepreneurship

FabricAid is a Lebanese social enterprise that aims to establish a socially and environmentally conscious value-chain for the apparel industry. Enhancing the efficiency of second-hand clothes collection, sorting, and distribution can offer decent clothing at highly affordable prices to marginalized communities.

Currently covering all of Lebanon and Jordan.

Raised \$1,400,000 in funds.

Reduced 540,000 kg carbon emission.

Recycled 33,000 plastic bags per bin.

Collected 525,000 items.

Sold 172,500 items in retail.

Our Partners

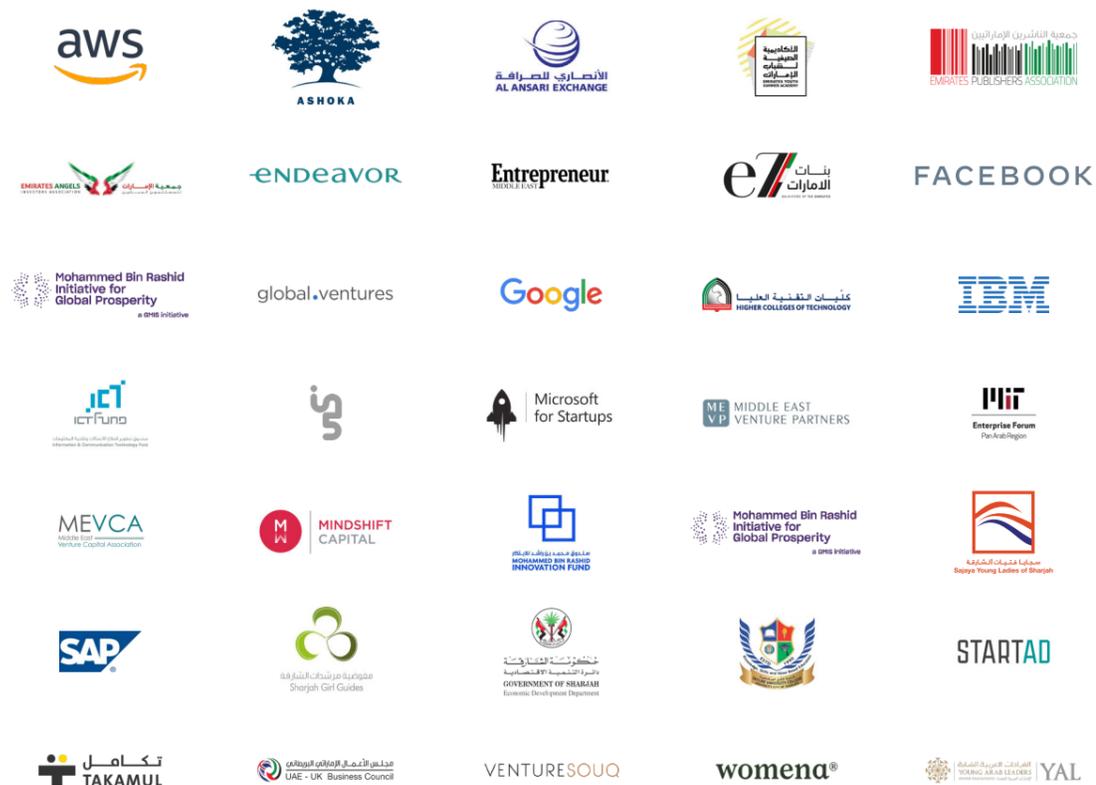
Founding Partners



Strategic Partners



A Selection of our Ecosystem Partners



Global Ecosystem Connectivity Partners



Sheraa's Board of Advisors



Her Excellency Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi
Chairperson of Sharjah Entrepreneurship Center (Sheraa)



H.E. Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi
Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and SMEs



H.E. Shamma bint Suhail Faris Al Mazrui
Minister of State for Youth Affairs



H.E. Hussain AlNowais
Chairman, AlNowais Investments



Mohamed Alabbar
Managing Director, Emaar Properties



Fadi Ghandour
Executive Chairman, Wamda Group



Badr Jafar
Chief Executive Officer, Crescent Enterprises



Adel Ali
Group Chief Executive Officer, Air Arabia



Khalid Al Huraimel
Group Chief Executive Officer, Bee'ah



Hussain Al Mahmoudi
Chief Executive Officer, Sharjah Research Technology and Innovation Park



Dr. Khalid Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Media City (Shams)



Christopher Schroeder
Investor, Entrepreneur, & Author



Najla Al Midfa
Chief Executive Officer, Sheraa

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