



## Pearl Initiative's engagement with 300 philanthropists highlights the accelerated shift to strategic giving in the Gulf region

- *The webinar series was hosted by the Pearl Initiative, in partnership with The Philanthropy Network and with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.*

09 October, 2021- The Pearl Initiative, in partnership with the Philanthropy Network, has concluded a year-long virtual webinar series that highlighted the capabilities philanthropy has in driving new and innovative solutions to address unprecedented global concerns, such as COVID-19, and the relief efforts to mitigate their impact.

Key featured international speakers included Dr Lawrence H. Summers, former US Treasury Secretary and President Emeritus at Harvard University; Patrick Chalhoub President of Chalhoub Group; Fadi Ghandour, Executive Chairman at Wamda Group and Founder of Aramex; and Clare Woodcraft, Executive Director at Cambridge Centre for Strategic Philanthropy.

Under the Governance in Philanthropy programme, more than 300 Gulf-based philanthropists, philanthropic advisors, private wealth owners and CSR professionals from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the greater Arab world convened to share knowledge, experiences and best practices to improve their giving practices and optimise the impact of their philanthropic giving, particularly in times of crisis, such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The discussions shed light on the philanthropic responses to the pandemic in the United States, MENA, Africa and Southeast Asia. This included the people and organisations involved, as well as their strategies and methods in aiding communities in the short-term but also in long-term and sustainable ways. Other discussions focused on how to better structure their giving strategy and how to connect to others working in similar spaces to reduce duplication of efforts. Decision-makers of leading foundations and corporations, including the Big Heart Foundation, Chalhoub Group, CCC, Al Handal Group, World Food Programme, Kanoo Group, and a number of local nonprofit organisations contributed and benefited from these regular convenings as they reshaped their giving strategies and approaches in the midst of the pandemic.



Ranya Saadawi, Executive Director of the Pearl Initiative, said: “The philanthropic landscape in the Gulf region is evolving with the increasing role of the private sector in addressing social and environmental challenges. This comes with an increasing demand for knowledge, tools, and resources to devise strategic philanthropic and corporate responsibility plans. That is what the Pearl Initiative’s Governance in Philanthropy Programme aimed to achieve with this series of webinars along with its collaborator, the Philanthropy Network, and with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.”

Rob Rosen, Director at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation added: “The virtual webinar series provided participants with the platform to showcase how to improve philanthropic activities and optimise the impact of their CSR and investments. Over the course of the pandemic, it has been important for philanthropists to support communities, resourcing long-term change that leads to sustainable solutions for regional development. This successful year-long project promotes the regional transition away from traditional methods of philanthropy, CSR and corporate giving, towards a more strategic understanding to drive greater impacts.”

Since the launch of its Governance in Philanthropy programme in 2017, the Pearl Initiative has been actively raising awareness, creating networks, and inspiring action, providing over 700 professionals and leaders working in the philanthropic and corporate philanthropy sector with the knowledge and know-how to improve their giving practices and optimise the impact of their investments. Through over 40 roundtables, workshops and virtual seminars and 30 bespoke bilingual resources, guides and toolkits made available on the Circle online platform, the programme is promoting the transition away from the traditional way of thinking about philanthropy, CSR, and corporate giving, to a more strategic understanding of the vehicles to drive greater impact.

The Pearl Initiative hosts regular convenings, webinars and bespoke workshops on strategies for effective giving, impact evaluation, and creating shared value for individual and institutional donors in the Gulf region. The panel discussions can be viewed on the Pearl Initiative’s on-demand [Youtube channel](#). To register for and attend any upcoming events under the Governance in Philanthropy Programme, click [here](#) or reach out directly on [enquiries@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:enquiries@pearlinitiative.org).

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### **About the Pearl Initiative**

Business leaders from across the Gulf Region formed the Pearl Initiative in 2010 to create a non-profit organisation for the Private Sector to collectively embrace the business case in adopting higher



standards in corporate governance, accountability, and transparency to enhance business innovation, opportunity and value creation.

With over 40 regional and international partners, the Pearl Initiative brings together business, policy and social sector decision-makers to share best practice and help maximise sustainable and inclusive growth across the region. The Pearl Initiative also supports Gulf-based university students to identify and embrace strong ethics and integrity as they embark on their future careers.

Current programmes run by the Pearl Initiative include Anti-Corruption Best Practices, Diversity in Business Leadership, Governance in MSMEs, Governance in Family Firms, The Business Pledge, and Governance in Philanthropy.



## Media Coverage:

The press release was featured in numerous new outlets across the Gulf Region, and Middle East, including:

- Gulf News:



- Khaleej Times:





- Zawya:



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Fadi Ghandour and Petrick Chalhouh

#### Press Release

Shariah: The Pearl Initiative, in partnership with the Philanthropy Network, has concluded