



CIRCLE سيركل

Grounded in Tradition, Looking to the Future: Understanding Next-Generation Philanthropy in the Middle East

Research Launch Event

In partnership with The Zovighian Partnership

Thursday, 25th April 2024

4 pm to 7 pm

Dubai, UAE

Event Brief:

In November 2023, the Pearl Initiative partnered with the Zovighian Partnership to conduct pioneering research on discovering next-generation philanthropy in the Middle East. Over the prior 6 months, we have worked meticulously to consolidate the qualitative and quantitative data that we have compiled on the topic to demonstrate the trends, values, practices, challenges, and opportunities in next-generation philanthropy across the Middle East. By hearing about the unique experiences and perspectives of philanthropists from our combined networks, the insights we have received have proven to be a powerful ode and a significant milestone in understanding the evolving landscape of regional philanthropy, as well as the aspirations and endeavors of the next wave of change-makers and humanitarians.

On 25th April 2024, we jointly hosted the official launch event of the *Grounded in Tradition, Looking to the Future: Understanding Next-Generation Philanthropy in the Middle East* Research Report to publicly share the invaluable insights and themes into the priorities, obstacles, and incentives that we believe will shape the future of philanthropy.

The launch event had the primary objective of presenting and discussing the findings of the research project, as well as encouraging active participation and dialogue among attendees, to deepen understanding and exchange perspectives on the research findings. Our goal was to inspire actors in the sector to translate the research insights into actionable strategies and initiatives that can advance and drive positive change and innovation in the philanthropic sector. We hope that this research can raise more awareness about the evolving landscape of regional next-generation philanthropy and shed light on the unique cultural, social, and economic factors influencing philanthropy in the Middle East, highlighting the diversity of approaches and perspectives within the region.

Event Highlights:

The event was successfully held, comprising of philanthropists, institutional donors, thought leaders, and representatives of the Gates Foundation. It demonstrated the results of the research report and officially launched the report, which can be found [here](#) in English, and [here](#) in Arabic.



In addition to the results, the convening hosted three fireside chats, each representing a core theme that emerged from the findings. Key speakers on these chats included **Dr Basma Al Zamil** on *The Philanthropic Ecosystem & the Future of Philanthropy*, **Sarah El Battouty** on *Community Engagement in Philanthropy*, and **Sarina Vaswani** on *Family Philanthropy & Personal Giving*. The event wrapped up with an immersive live Q&A session, where attendees were invited to ask speakers questions, followed by a networking coffee break.

Key Takeaways from the Fireside Chats:

- **Community Engagement and Decision Making:** Despite acknowledging the importance of community input, there seems to be a gap in involving community leaders and beneficiaries in decision-making processes. This disconnect might stem from a lack of awareness, dissonance, or reliance on consultants rather than direct engagement with the community.
- **Need for Authentic Engagement:** Authentic community engagement requires a deeper understanding of community needs and active involvement of beneficiaries and local leaders. Philanthropic efforts should prioritize listening to these voices and making them equal partners in decision-making processes.
- **Importance of Data and Consultation:** While data and consultancy can provide valuable insights, they should complement direct engagement with communities rather than substitute it. Relying solely on reports and consultants may lead to a skewed understanding of community needs.
- **Community-Centric Approach to Projects:** Successful projects are those that prioritize the needs and perspectives of the community they serve. Co-designing initiatives with the community ensures relevance, cultural appropriateness, and effectiveness.
- **Challenges in Traditional Approaches:** Traditional project planning often overlooks community consultation, leading to failed initiatives. Quantifying projects purely in financial terms without considering human factors can result in projects that don't meet community needs or expectations.
- **Mediating Between Stakeholders:** Mediating between the language of ESG reporting and the needs of communities is crucial for successful project implementation. Bridging this gap requires understanding both sides and finding common ground that benefits all stakeholders.
- **Building Credibility Through Honest Evaluation:** Transparent evaluation of project outcomes, including acknowledging failures, builds credibility and trust with communities. Learning from mistakes and adapting strategies based on real-world feedback is essential for long-term success.
- **Empowering Marginalized Voices:** Community engagement efforts can challenge traditional norms and empower marginalized groups, including women, by addressing infrastructural barriers and providing safe spaces for participation and recreation.



CIRCLE سيركل

Key Takeaways from the Research Report:

As conducted by the Pearl Initiative and Circle, in partnership with The Zovighian Partnership and with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- **Values and Motivations:** Next-generation philanthropists prioritize values such as integrity, empowerment, compassion, sustainability, and transparency in their philanthropic practices. Community need emerges as the most influential factor for giving, while legacy building and religious beliefs rank low but show complex correlations with other motivations.
- **Giving Strategies and Methods:** The majority of regional next-generation philanthropists prefer individual-driven giving over family-centric approaches, indicating a shift in philanthropic practices. Diversification of giving strategies is evident, with a significant openness to non-traditional methods like impact investing and microlending, alongside traditional approaches. However, direct funding remains the most favoured strategy.
- **Geographic Focus Areas:** While the study was conducted amongst donors predominantly located in the Middle East, next-generation philanthropists demonstrate a global outlook in their giving, with fewer focusing on local causes. This global perspective reflects a commitment to addressing societal challenges beyond regional boundaries.
- **Philanthropic Budgets and Financial Contributions:** Next-generation philanthropists exhibit a wide range of giving budgets, with higher budgets correlating strongly with contributions towards education, healthcare, and initiatives benefiting women and girls. The involvement of family in philanthropy often corresponds with higher budgets and diversified giving strategies.
- **Decision-Making Influences and Sources of Information:** Family remains a significant decision-making influence, despite the preference for individual-driven philanthropy. While community need drives giving decisions, consultation with community leaders and beneficiaries is comparatively low. However, reliance on information from beneficiaries, community needs reports, and fellow philanthropists underscores a commitment to informed giving.