



Saudi Arabia's next-generation philanthropists are setting new standards for impact and excellence

March 6, 2025

- Pearl Initiative begins the year with a strong commitment to the Saudi market, hosting two business and impact leaders' roundtables.
- Next-generation leaders in Saudi Arabia assume immediate responsibility to ensure their giving is actioned with high standards, inclusivity, and good governance.
- First-time region-wide research published by Pearl Initiative, in collaboration with the Zovighian Partnership and Gates Foundation, recommends immediate action to enable next-generation philanthropy.

Riyadh, KSA: March 6, 2025 – Saudi private sector leaders and impact pioneers debated groundbreaking research on next-generation philanthropy in the Middle East during two exclusive roundtables in Riyadh, ahead of the month of Ramadan. At the top of the agenda was how to urgently equip next-generation leaders with research and tools to strengthen their giving, as some embark on personal and entrepreneurial philanthropic journeys, opting out of participating in their family's institutions. Intentionally and strategically investing in women and girls in the Middle East to close a significant funding gap was also a key priority on the agenda.

In 2024, the [Pearl Initiative](#), a business-led non-profit organization focused on promoting corporate governance and accountability in the Gulf region, joined forces with the [Zovighian Partnership](#), a regional family-owned research and social investment platform, the Gates Foundation, and the Circle MENA Network, a wide community network of principal and corporate donors from across the region, to launch first-time research on next-generation philanthropists in the Middle East.

[The report](#), titled "Grounded in Tradition, Looking to the Future: Understanding Next-Generation Philanthropy in the Middle East" was published with detailed quantitative research insights. Over 80 emerging and established next-generation philanthropists from the region participated in the inaugural quantitative survey, aimed at empowering the giving community in the Middle East. The research continues in 2025, bringing together philanthropists at different stages of their giving journeys.

With 80 percent of next-generation philanthropists choosing more personal entrepreneurial giving avenues and moving away from their family foundations and businesses, giving has the potential to become more strategic but also face more risks due to the fragmentation of impact and reduced giving budgets. The research found that there is a significant positive relationship between managing one's family philanthropy and assigning higher budgets for giving activities. Calls for action to mitigate succession risks and help family organizations better embrace next-generation leaders were amongst the strategic conclusions of one of this week's Riyadh-based roundtables.

"The next generation in Saudi Arabia is taking on significant business and philanthropic responsibilities and must be set up for success. To achieve long-lasting impact requires access to high quality data and a community we can count on," said HRH Princess Nourah bint Mohammed Alfaisal, who holds many titles, including Founder of Adhlal, CEO of Art of Heritage and Board member of Al Nahda Foundation.

"There is notable enthusiasm for strategic philanthropy amongst next-generation leaders in Saudi Arabia. There is a strong desire to connect, collaborate, and shape a thriving philanthropic ecosystem in the country with strategic intentionality." Ashwin Iyer, Senior Manager - Philanthropic Partnerships, Asia & Middle East, Gates Foundation

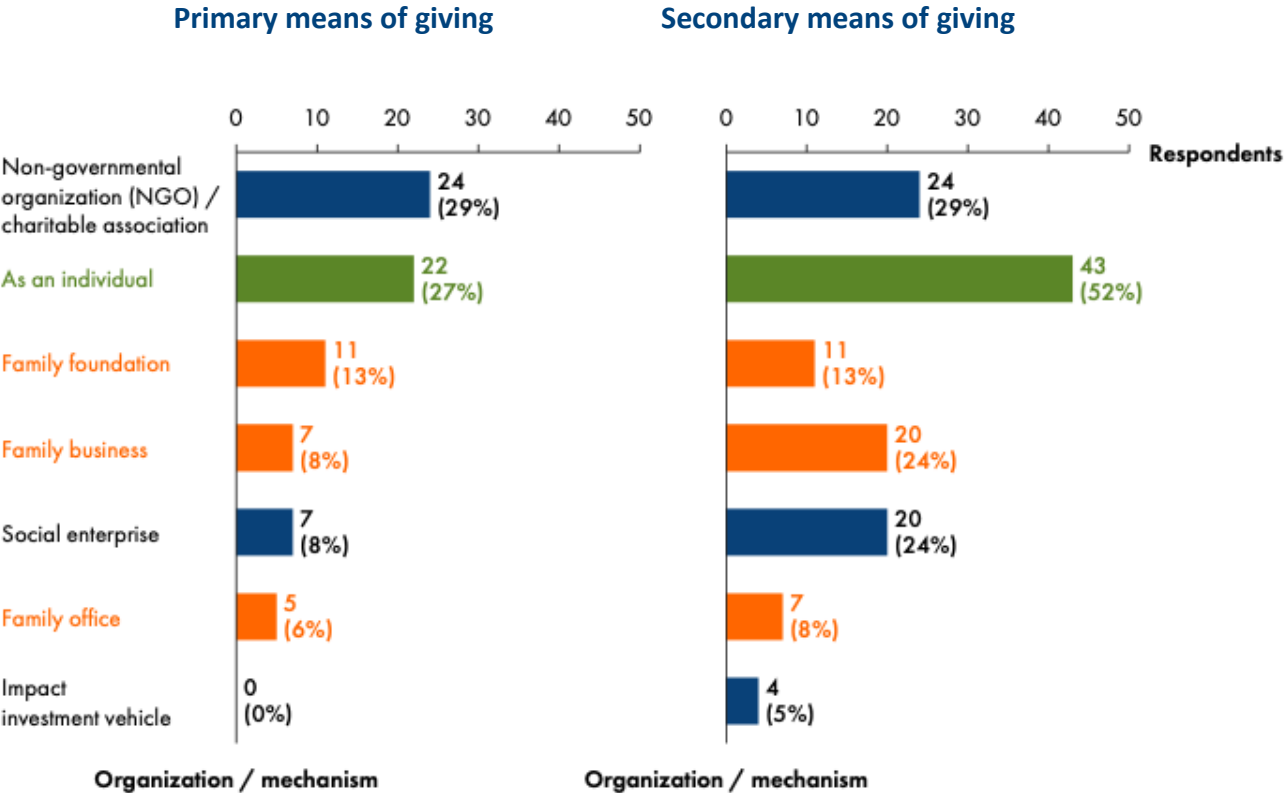
To meet the needs and demands of the next-generation community, the Pearl Initiative continued to strengthen its presence in the Saudi market this year, to bolster good governance and impactful giving as the Kingdom continues to lead socio-economic growth in the GCC region.

"With Saudi's next-generation leaders and philanthropists grappling with critical issues, it is perfect timing to see Pearl Initiative engaging with the market with such commitment and dedication," explained Dr. Basma Alzamil, Family Business Advisor at LGA and Former Head of CSR at AlZamil Group.

Pearl Initiative's new Executive Director, Ralph Choueri, explained: "Saudi Arabia is shaping the future of philanthropy in the Middle East, and the next-generation is harnessing homegrown social innovation and investing in high-impact research. The stakes are high to achieve impact with excellence, and Pearl Initiative is ready to serve."

Exhibit:

The primary and secondary means through which next-generation philanthropists surveyed manage their giving activities (2023-2024)



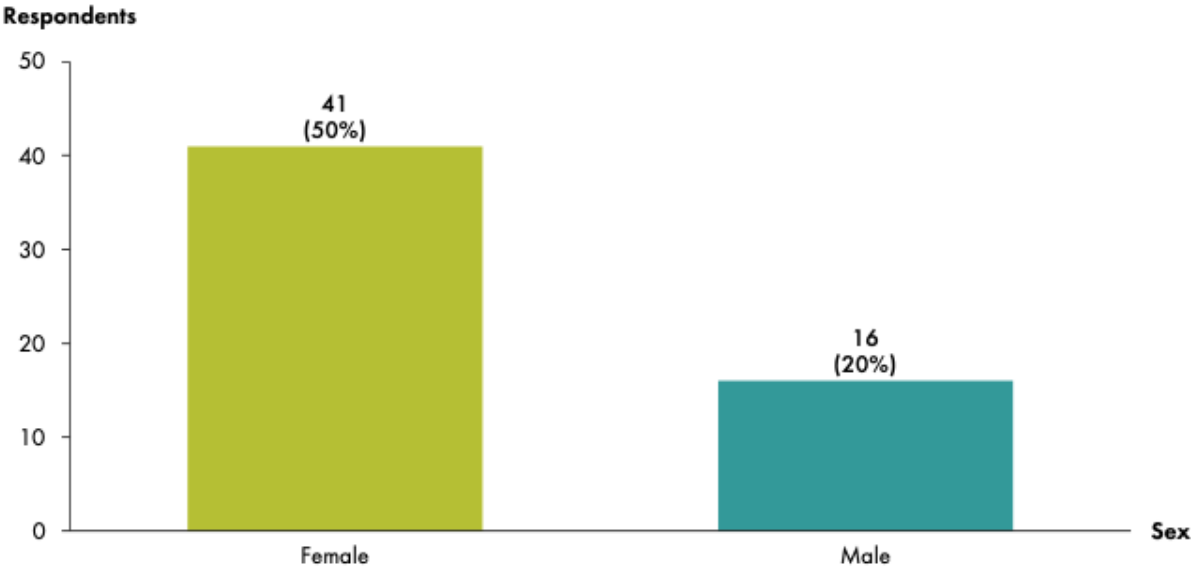
This multi-year research initiative is responding to the region’s chronic dearth of data, contributing to the literature and equipping decision-makers with much-needed evidence to make more ethical and strategic giving decisions.

Female philanthropists are 2.5 times more likely than male philanthropists to invest in women and girls, a clear case to have empowered female decision-makers on philanthropic boards and funding committees. Without them, women and girls are significantly less likely to receive support.

"High quality research has the potential to disrupt the landscape of philanthropy. The next-generation philanthropic community in Saudi Arabia is redefining excellence, led by evidence and governance," explained Lynn Zovighian, the Co-founder of Zovighian Partnership and Founder of Zovighian Public Office.

Exhibit:

Philanthropists giving to women and girls surveyed by sex (2023-2024)



“Empowering the next generation is key to building a sustainable and equitable future for our region. The Pearl Initiative’s research emphasises that it’s vital to back emerging leaders as they pioneer innovative, entrepreneurial approaches in philanthropy, all while upholding solid governance and making strategic investments” Florence Bulte, Chief Sustainability Officer at Chalhoub Group, a corporate partner of the Pearl Initiative since 2015. The Chalhoub Group has actively supported programmes at the Pearl Initiative, focused on good governance and philanthropy, including the most recent research effort on next-generation philanthropy in the Middle East.

Survey respondents predominantly hail from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Levant and Egypt. Over 80 percent of the participants hold leadership positions, around 50 percent are between the ages of 35-44, and 65 percent are women. The Pearl Initiative and Zovighian Partnership will continue to translate key research insights into actionable strategies and initiatives to drive positive change and innovation in the region.

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About the Pearl Initiative

The Pearl Initiative is the Gulf region's leading independent, non-profit organisation working to promote the business case for a corporate culture of accountability and transparency. Established in 2010 by regional business leaders in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Partnerships, the Pearl Initiative is the only private, non-profit Gulf business network to receive special consultative status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The Pearl Initiative runs a series of corporate governance related programmes, including Anti-Corruption Best Practices, Diversity in Business Leadership, Governance in MSMEs, Governance in Family Firms, Governance in Tech, and Governance in Philanthropy. The organisation also conducts locally relevant research, hosts workshops and executive education training sessions, and convenes business leaders, policymakers, students, and non-profit executives to encourage a proactive approach to implementing best practices in the workplace across the Gulf region.

For more information, please visit www.pearlinitiative.org.

About Zovighian Partnership

Established by a father-daughter duo in 2013, the Zovighian Partnership is a family-owned social investment platform enabling public and private philanthropy and impact through community-led research, strategy and policy innovation, and governance in the Middle East. Their clients are philanthropists, social investors, and peace builders who are deeply grounded in humanity and have a true appreciation for high quality and ethical research and social innovation.

www.zovighianpartnership.com

About the 'Circle'

The Circle is a peer-to-peer network for institutional and individual donors connected to the Middle East looking to do more with their giving. The Circle network was established by and is jointly powered by the Pearl Initiative and Philanthropy Age. www.circlemena.org provides specialist resources and content to support this network, inform and inspire better giving, and help deepen relationships and catalyse connections among members of the network. Users can register interest in joining the Circle network and community through the site and subscribe to the Circle newsletter. Membership to the Circle is free of cost, and benefits include access to exclusive workshops, roundtables, and networking opportunities, for members to share ideas, ask questions, and find new pathways to action. The network is a vibrant community where funders can learn, connect with peers, and explore synergies for collaboration. This past year, the Circle convened workshops on strategic philanthropy, impact investment, and measurement. Expert facilitators hosted these exclusive events from 21/64, the Mulago Foundation, and the Center for Effective Philanthropy, among others. The events featured a range of international keynote speakers, including Hadi Partovi, Founder of Code.org; Sara Ojeh, Ethos Philanthropy Founder and Director; and Shainoor Khoja, impact investment thought leader.

Visit www.circlemena.org, [here](#).