

## OVERVIEW

**DELOITTE RESPONDS TO SDGs IN THE MIDDLE EAST****Rana Ghandour Salhab**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched in 2015 after the success of the Millennium Development Goals, set out the framework for businesses to drive growth and productivity, ultimately contributing to a better world envisioned by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. While the SDGs are an opportunity for businesses to galvanise on the promise of sustainable and inclusive development and attend to social and environmental challenges, there is a gap between the level of interest and the delivery, and between the opportunity and the actions.

As a leading global professional services firm, Deloitte has long been a contributor to addressing complex global development challenges and reaching thousands of community members through its social work. In line with this tradition, Deloitte Middle East's programs, whether they are employability and leadership skills-building programs or pro bono work supporting NGOs, non-profit, and other community organizations, have been driving societal reform and effecting positive change around the Middle East.

In view of the 2030 Agenda, Deloitte has launched a number of initiatives to help finance these goals and offer concrete results. Foremost among these are Deloitte Accelerator for Social Innovation in the Middle East (DASI) which aims to help address the region's most pressing social and environmental challenges by empowering and supporting innovative social enterprises that operate with a social or environmental purpose; and WorldClass, which aims to empower 50 million future lives by 2030 through education, skills development, and access to various opportunities, in addition to other programs delivered through our partners and select NGOs.

**Innovation and the SDGs**

The DASI program in the Middle East, launched in early 2018, is tailored to innovative social enterprises that are at the early growth level and in need of longer-term acceleration and support programs that will allow them to scale their impact. DASI attends to a need in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem, where support for

social enterprises in the Middle East is still embryonic, limited to incubation initiatives that are short-term in nature and targeting social enterprises that are still at the idea stage.

DASI aims to help address the region's most pressing social and environmental challenges by empowering and supporting small and medium social enterprises that operate with a social or environmental purpose. These companies or NGOs should have a viable business model and sustainable revenue stream. DASI captures key SDG themes, including education and skills-building, gender equality, health and well-being, environmental sustainability and humanitarian goals. It is designed as an accelerator platform whose components include a regional competition across 14 countries in the Middle East to identify two winning innovative social enterprises that will receive customized Deloitte support packs of advisory services, mentorship, networking opportunities, and skills-development valued at over USD 100,000.

Criteria include scalability, economic viability, sound business strategies and plans as well as inclusion and diversity in ownership and management teams. The program further supports gender parity by encouraging applications from social enterprises that are fully or partially owned by women. The aim is to positively impact the greatest number of people in Middle East communities through Deloitte's core expertise.

**WorldClass - 50 million lives prepared for a world of opportunity**

Deloitte's global WorldClass initiative aims to empower 50 million future lives by 2030, in line with the time frame for achieving the SDGs. Through WorldClass, Deloitte is applying its core skills, experience, and global reach to empower more people through education, skills development, and access to various opportunities.

WorldClass supports the goals focused on inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning (SDG 4), as well as sustained economic growth and decent work for all (SDG 8). In the Middle East, Deloitte is delivering programs and initiatives that support the WorldClass ambition. The Digital Youth Program (DYP), launched

**DASI: The four stages****1. Competition**

A competition targeting Middle East-based social enterprises at the early-stage level.

**2. Advisory services**

Winning organizations will be eligible to receive customized acceleration advisory Deloitte services

**3. Mentorship**

Winning organizations will be matched with Deloitte and/or Ashoka mentors for the duration of the program

**4. Networking, regional and international exposure.**

The winning organizations will get access to networking opportunities/ events and access to Deloitte's wide network as relevant and appropriate.

in 2012, is part of Deloitte's commitment to bridging the digital divide, together with non-profit organizations and educational institutions. The program has donated hundreds of pre-owned computers between 2014 and 2017 and has impacted over 4,000 children in the Middle East. More than 400 Deloitte professionals have engaged in the digital training process and volunteered over 650 hours of skills-based teaching and training. The program's mission is to supplement the school curriculum (ages 5-12) and help less-privileged children master the basics of reading, science, personal health, math, technology and foreign languages by providing Deloitte computers and access to quality online best-in-class courseware that can support and reinforce these essential skills.

Other than the DYP, Deloitte volunteers across the region have also reached thousands of students through delivering leadership, entrepreneurial, employability and general skill-building courses in schools, colleges, NGOs, orphanages and refugee camps. One such course is the financial accounting and employability skills-building program, delivered to 17-25-year-old refugees by Deloitte volunteers in refugee camps. The program aims at equipping refugees with the basic bookkeeping skills to improve their work opportunities. The course material was developed and delivered by Deloitte's own audit team, aiming to make the content as relevant as possible for the students, 50 percent of whom were women.

**Together for a better world: Public-private partnerships and SDGs**

In line with SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) Deloitte collaborates with, and supports, select NGOs whose goals align with the SDGs. One such NGO is a regional non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring a culture of entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and business innovation among Arab youth through a range of programs.

To provide the e-learning software for its Digital Youth Program, Deloitte partnered with E-Learning for Kids, a global, non-profit foundation dedicated to learning on the Internet for children aged 5 to 12 years.

Similarly, for DASI, Deloitte is collaborating with Ashoka Arab World, a platform for social entrepreneurship across the Middle East and North Africa with over 3,600 leading social entrepreneurs in over 90 countries.

## **Conclusion**

The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for the world to work together to create a better future by 2030. Businesses can make a huge impact towards the achievement of these goals. But despite many organizations' interest and commitment to the SDGs,

most in the Middle East have yet to embrace this new purpose.

Deloitte's corporate responsibility and sustainability begins with its core business strategy and extends to the way it interacts with clients, its people and the communities it connects with. It is committed to creating opportunities for those less fortunate through collaborations with businesses, governments and educators to transform learning and enable individuals to access the skills they need to meet future job demands.