Landscape of Impact Capital

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

In Partnership With

About

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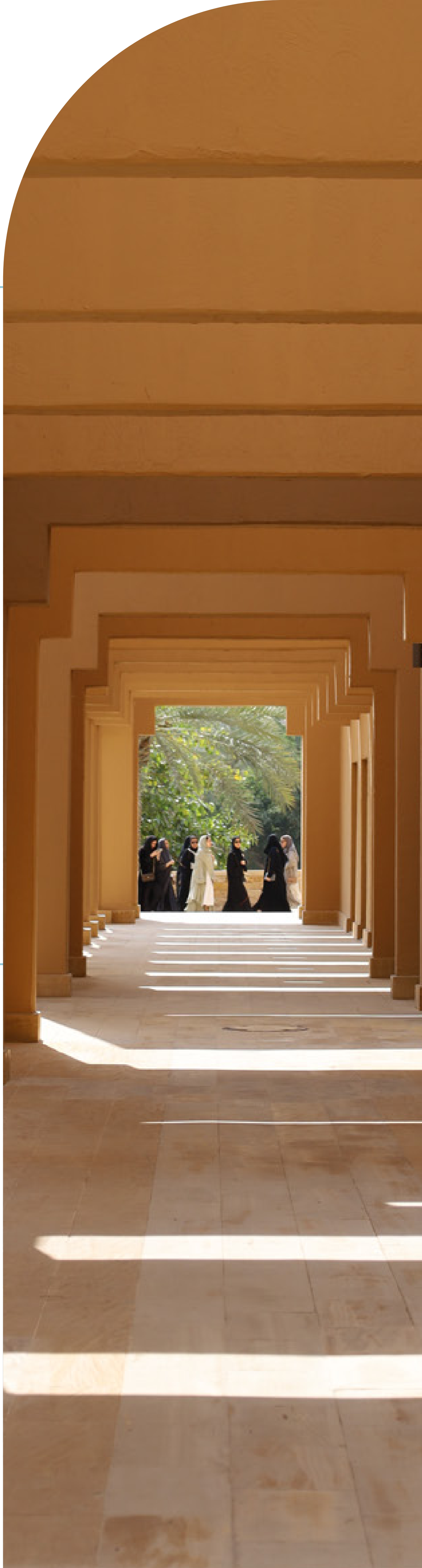

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Note from the CEO

To the AVPN Community,

While we were working on this report, tensions reached an all-time high in West Asia, and the conflict between the United States of America and Iran had caused significant disruption across the region. On a macro level, political and economic volatility were felt realities. Closer to the ground, funding delays and overstretched programmes were more than administrative hurdles, they represented the challenging decision-making scenarios that funders and resource providers were confronted with. These were difficult decisions that would affect real lives and communities. We were forced to confront a new world order and to consider how to reorganise ourselves to stay on track even whilst systems were threatened.

One thing was absolutely clear, which is that it was a time to align on the fundamental values that unite us, particularly our shared commitment to human dignity, resilience, and the belief that capital, when deployed with intention, can be a force for peace and stability.

The stories of innovation and collaboration, between public, private and philanthropic actors in Saudi Arabia, as detailed in the pages of this review, are not just an invitation to observe but a call to engage. To truly address Saudi Arabia and the region's most pressing challenges, we must move towards authentic partnerships. These are not just transactional exchanges but deep, cross-border collaborations that leverage our unique Asian perspectives to create lasting and systems-level impact both domestically and beyond.

The challenges are undeniably vast, and at times they can feel insurmountable. However, leadership is not found in the absence of challenge. It is found in the decision to act despite it.

The time to bridge these worlds and redefine the impact ecosystem is not in some distant and stabilised future. The time is now.

With best wishes,
Naina Subberwal Batra
CEO, AVPN

About the Report

This report is designed as a practical tool for philanthropic foundations, corporate and family offices, public-sector entities, and international partners seeking to understand, navigate, and collaborate within Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem. It provides a structured analysis of how the ecosystem is evolving in alignment with Vision 2030, mapping key actors, institutions, and capital flows that shape social outcomes in the Kingdom. The report identifies systemic gaps, emerging opportunities, and viable collaboration pathways across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors, while highlighting local organisations and intermediaries driving innovation in priority areas such as health, education, livelihoods, and climate.

Acknowledgements

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- Itmam
- King Khalid Foundation (KKF)
- King Salman Foundation (KSF)
- Ministry of Investment (MISA)
- Misk Foundation (Mohammed Bin Salman Foundation)
- National Centre for Family Business (NCFB)
- Noura Al-Millahi Foundation
- Olayan Group
- Pilgrim Experience Programme (PEP)
- Saudi Venture Capital Company (SVC)

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Blended Finance	Blended finance is the use of catalytic capital from public or philanthropic sources to increase private sector investment in sustainable development.[1]
Catalytic Capital	Capital that accepts disproportionate risk and/or concessionary return to generate positive impact and enable third-party investments that otherwise would not be possible.[2]
Impact	Measurable, attributable, and meaningful improvements in social, economic, or environmental outcomes, particularly for underserved or vulnerable communities.
Impact Ecosystem	A network of capital providers, intermediaries, enterprises, policymakers, and knowledge institutions that actively collaborate, deploy capital effectively, share learning, and measurably contribute to development outcomes.
Impact Investing	Impact investments are investments made with the intention to generate positive, measurable social or environmental impact alongside a financial return.[3]
Impact Capital	Financial or non-financial resources intentionally deployed to achieve measurable social or environmental outcomes alongside financial or strategic returns.
Non-Profit Companies	Introduced under the new Saudi Companies Law, these entities operate without the primary goal of profit generation. They can engage in commercial activities, but any profits must be reinvested into their social objectives. This model allows for greater flexibility and sustainability in addressing social issues.

[1] Convergence Blended Finance. 2026. Definition
[2] Catalytic Capital Consortium, FSG, Courageous Capital Advisors. 2022. Advancing Practice in Catalytic Capital
[3] Global Impact Investing Network. 2025. What you need to know about impact investing

Term	Definition
Non-Profit Organisation	A non-profit organisation (NPO) is an entity established for public or mutual benefit purposes that does not distribute profits to owners or shareholders, instead reinvesting any surplus into its mission and activities.[4] Globally, non-profits typically include charities, foundations, associations, and civil society organisations operating across social, environmental, cultural, or humanitarian fields. They are generally governed by national regulatory frameworks but share common characteristics of mission-driven activity, non-distribution of profits, and independent governance.
Patient Capital	Patient capital refers to a long-term investment strategy wherein investors are willing to wait for a considerable period before expecting any financial returns. It focuses on sustained growth over time rather than immediate returns, often tolerating short-term losses for the sake of long-term impact. Patient capital allows social entrepreneurs for greater control over their businesses and relieves pressure to prioritise rapid growth or exits, enabling them to maximise the positive social or environmental impact of an investment.[5]
Philanthropy	Referred to transactions from the private or non-profit sector that promote the economic development and welfare of communities and countries as their main objective, and that originate from foundations' own sources, notably endowment, donations from companies and individuals, legacies and income from royalties, investments, dividends and lotteries.[6]
Shariah compliant (also Shari'ah compliant)	Term used in Islamic finance to denote that a financial product or activity that complies with the requirements of the Shari'ah, for example Shari'ah compliant financing or Shari'ah compliant investment.[7] Islamic finance derives its principles from the Shari'ah, which is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The key defining characteristics in the application of Shari'ah to financing structures are that transactions should be based on tangible assets, and should not bear interest (riba). The generation of profit is very much encouraged, and many commentators also identify risk sharing as being one of the quintessential features of any Islamic financing. Shari'ah principles also forbid uncertainty (gharar), speculation or excessive uncertainty (maysir) and gambling (qimar), and activities in certain prohibited areas.

[4] OECD. 2026. Development co-operation
[5] Impact Europe. 2026. Impact Glossary vancing Practice in Catalytic Capital
[6] OECD. 2021. Private Philanthropy for Development – Second Edition: Data for Action
[7] Institute of Islamic Banking and Insurance. 2026. Glossary of Financial Terms: Shari'ah Compliant

Term	Definition
Sukuk (Islamic Bonds)	Shariah-compliant investment certificates that represent partial ownership in tangible assets, property, projects, or business ventures, rather than debt obligations. Returns are generated from profits or revenues of the underlying assets, avoiding interest.[8][9]
Waqf / Awqaf (Islamic Endowment)	A waqf (plural: awqaf) is a permanent charitable endowment, where an asset such as land, property, or money is dedicated to religious, educational, or social purposes. The principal is preserved while the benefits (income or use) support the community. Waqf assets cannot normally be sold, inherited, or transferred.[10] Modern regulations in the Kingdom have expanded this model to include diversified investment funds that provide sustainable and liquid returns for social impact. [11]
Zakat (Obligatory Almsgiving)	One of the five pillars of Islam, requiring Muslims who meet certain conditions to donate a fixed portion of their qualifying wealth (commonly 2.5%) to specified categories of beneficiaries.[12] This applies when wealth exceeds a threshold (nisab) and has been held for a lunar year.
Sadaqah (Voluntary Charity)	A voluntary act of giving aimed at benefiting others. Unlike zakat, which is obligatory, sadaqah is given freely at any time and in any amount, driven purely by the desire to help those in need. It encompasses any act of kindness, whether through financial contributions, time, or resources.

[8] Akhilesh Ganti. 2025. Understanding Sukuk: Sharia-Compliant Financial Instruments Explained
[9] Marc L. Ross. 2025. Working With Islamic Finance
[10] Islamic Social Development Bank (IsDB). Awqaf.
[11] Dr. Adfer Shah. 2026. Will Saudi Arabia’s Waqf Renaissance Bring Tangible Results? – Analysis
[12] Daniel Liberto. 2024. Understanding Zakat: Rules, Obligations, and Benefits for Muslims

Methodology

This report was developed using a mixed-methods approach designed to capture both the breadth and depth of the Kingdom’s evolving impact ecosystem.

Phase 1 | Desk Research

We began by mapping the breadth of publicly available resources from local entities such as the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Khalid Foundation and international organisations like the International Centre for Non-for-Profit Law, Pearl Initiative, United Nations Development Programme and World Bank to establish a baseline understanding of the sector. This included reviewing policy frameworks, investment dashboards, and official documents related to Vision 2030. Additional sources included annual reports, sectoral studies, media articles, and research by multilateral and regional organisations. This desk research provided a foundation to identify priority themes, gaps, and emerging trends that would inform the second phase.

Phase 2 | In-depth Interviews

Guided by the findings of Phase 1, we conducted in-depth conversations with a diverse set of local actors across the Saudi ecosystem, including foundations and philanthropic organisations, government and public sector entities, intermediaries and ecosystem enablers, and the Private Sector.

Phase 3 | Synthesis

These interviews were systematically coded, analysed, and synthesised to surface common themes and validate insights from Phase 1. By triangulating desk research with local stakeholder perspectives, we sought to ensure accuracy, contextual relevance, and a balanced view of both opportunities and challenges.

The analysis was guided by three framing questions:

1. *What are the regulatory, institutional, and financial dynamics driving economic, social, and environmental progress in Saudi Arabia?*
2. *Who are the key actors and what roles do they play?*
3. *Where do the most promising opportunities for collaboration, learning, and engagement lie?*

This phased approach ensures that the report not only documents the current landscape but also provides forward-looking insights aligned with the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 aspirations.

Fact File

Data and statistics in this table were primarily extracted from data published by the General Authority of Statistics[13], the World Bank World Development Indicators[14], the Charities Aid Foundation World Giving Index 2024[15], the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Annual Sustainability Report 2024 and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network SDG Index and Dashboards for Saudi Arabia.[16] [17]

Establishment	System of Government	Absolute Monarchy
	Head of State	King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
	Crown Prince	Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud
Demographics	Population	35.3M (2024)
	Immigrant Population	40% (2024)
	Urban Population	84% (2024)
	Youth Population (under 25 years old)	71% (2022)
Economy	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	USD 1.24T (2024)[18]
	Gross Domestic Product Growth (Annual)	2% (2024)[19]
	Per Capita GDP	USD 37,810 (2024)[20]
	Labour Force	17.2M (2024)
	Unemployment (in Saudi Citizens)	7.5% (2024)
SDG Progress	SDG 2 Prevalence of Obesity (BMI > 30)	40.6% (2022)
	SDG 4 Adult Literacy Rate	97.5% (2024)
	SDG 5 Female Labour Force Participation	36% (2024)
	SDG 7 CO_2 Emissions per Capita	18.4 tons (2023)
	SDG 11 Population with convenient access to public transport in cities	25.23% (2020)
	SDG 14 Ocean Health Index: Clean Waters score	65.27/100 (2024)
Other	World Giving Index Rank	33 (2024) *71% helped a stranger* *43% donated money* *24% volunteering time*

[13] General Authority for Statistics. 2026. Home
[14] World Bank. 2026. World Bank Open Data: Saudi Arabia
[15] Charities Aid Foundation. 2024. World Giving Index: Donor Insights
[16] Ministry of Economy and Planning. 2024. Sustainable Development Goals Annual Report 2024
[17] SDG Transformation Center. 2024. Sustainable Development Report: Saudi Arabia Country Profile
[18] 19th-20th position globally for nominal GDP
[19] Non-Oil Activities within GDP grew by 4.3% from 2023, with wholesale/retail trade, hotels, and financial services leading.
[20] World Ranking 34

Introduction

Over the last decade, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has pursued one of the most ambitious national transformation agendas in recent history. It is a nation uniquely characterised by a powerful convergence of deep-rooted cultural values, strategic geographical location, and a dynamic, youth-led economy, presenting immense natural and human resources that can be leveraged for both financial and impact outcomes at scale. By leveraging financial and non-financial collaboration, exploring innovative solutions to complex challenges, and moving from measuring outputs to outcomes, the Kingdom is turning its immense potential into a tangible reality, with both local and global partners.

In parallel, a dynamic and increasingly interconnected impact ecosystem is taking shape in Saudi Arabia. Long-standing traditions of family philanthropy are becoming more structured and institutionalised, with greater emphasis on governance, collaboration, and long-term impact. Waqf structures, historically centred on fixed assets, are increasingly being transformed into professionally managed endowment funds designed to generate sustainable returns. At the same time, interest is growing at the intersection of Shariah compliance and Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) investing. Saudi Arabia's Green Financing Framework, published by the Ministry of Finance in March 2024, enables the issuance of green sukuk, Shariah-compliant instruments that mobilise capital for sustainability projects under Vision 2030.[21] In the private sector, companies are redefining their social roles by integrating commercial discipline with broader social objectives, while specialised venture capital firms are directing capital toward sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, and biotechnology to address long-term social and environmental challenges. While diverse, this is an ecosystem underpinned by a shared understanding of why giving matters and a growing commitment to giving more, giving better, and achieving greater impact.

[21] Ministry of Finance. 2024. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Green Financing Framework.

Collective action is enabled by the governance structure articulated in Vision 2030. Within this framework the government has positioned itself as a strategic regulator and enabler, establishing the common standards and transparent frameworks that strengthen the broader enabling environment, allowing actors with vastly different financial and impact goals to work towards a unified national vision. This vision builds on the Kingdom's underlying strengths to diversify the economy, empower citizens, and strengthen the Kingdom's role on the global stage. By embedding social priorities, such as human capability development, expanded healthcare access, and improved quality of life into the broader economic transformation agenda, the framework ensures that progress is anchored in measurable performance indicators.[22] In turn, this institutional focus on social outcomes and accountability has contributed to the expansion of the non-profit sector and increased civic participation across the Kingdom.

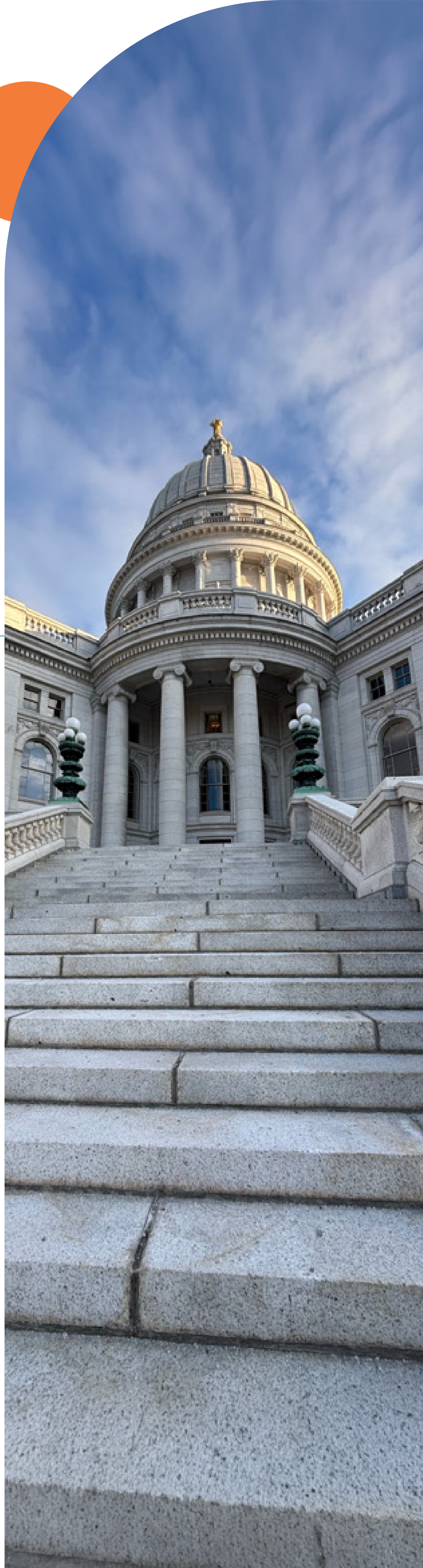
It is against this backdrop that this report examines Saudi Arabia's evolving impact ecosystem, providing a comprehensive analysis of a sector in transition. Specifically, it outlines the regulatory and institutional environment currently professionalising the sector, presents the growing diversity of actors and approaches ranging from modernised awqaf to impact investing, and highlights emerging opportunities for collaboration that can bridge the gap between the private, public, and philanthropic sectors. Through this exploration, the report identifies the strategic pathways necessary to deepen economic, social, and environmental progress both within the Kingdom, while establishing its role as a catalytic partner for the broader global community.

[22] Vision 2030. 2026. Key Performance Indicators

CHAPTER 1

Enabling Policy Environment & National Priorities

With Vision 2030, the Saudi government has moved away from direct provision of social services to take on a more regulatory and enabling function. By building the institutional and regulatory foundations of the non-profit sector and impact ecosystem; mobilising citizens as active contributors to national development; and embedding digital systems that enable transparent, data driven allocation of resources and impact measurement, the state has reshaped the institutions, incentives and capital flows that make impact sustainable.



Today, public institutions, private capital, non-profit organisations (NPOs), and citizens collaborate through these mechanisms to deliver social outcomes aligned with national priorities. The following sections examine how the institutional changes, citizen-driven initiatives, and digital infrastructures collectively support the growth and credibility of Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem.

Saudi Vision 2030 Governance Model

Figure 1: Vision 2030 Proposed Hierarchical Governance Structure & Crisis of Control[23]

Strengthening The Institutional and Regulatory Foundations of the Non-Profit Sector And Impact Ecosystem

Vision 2030 strengthens Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem by formalising the role of philanthropy and the non-profit sector within national development. It sets an ambitious target for the sector to contribute 5% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030, signalling a clear policy commitment to expanding its economic and social role. This mandate is supported by a multisectoral governance framework, led by the National Center for Non-Profit Sector (NCNP), which provides the dedicated regulatory architecture for the sector.

Working alongside the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD), the General Authority for Awqaf (GAA), and the Ministries of Commerce (MoC), Investment (MISA) and Finance (MoF), the NCNP oversees the professionalisation of the non-profit sector.[23 24] NCNP also works towards standardising non-profit accounting and disclosure in collaboration with the Saudi Organisation for Chartered and Professional Accountants (SOCPA).[26] These reforms align sector reporting more closely with international standards, including principles informed by the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), as a way to strengthen transparency and credibility across the sector. This institutional push for transparency is reflected in Saudi Arabia's performance in the World Bank's 2024 Statistical Performance Index, where it ranked first in the Arab world with a data use score of 83.3%.[27] These efforts reinforce the national commitment to ensuring the growth and viability of the non-profit sector.

[23] Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA). 2016. Governance Model for Achieving Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

[24] Vison 2030. 2026. An Ambitious Nation

[25] National Center for Non-Profit Sector. 2026. About NCNP

[26] SOCPA. 2023. SOCPA Adopts IFRS 19 for Implementation in Saudi Arabia The announcement by SOCPA notes that workshops and consultations for the amended standard were conducted in consultation with key entities, including the National Center for Non-Profit Sector (NCNP) and General Authority of Awqaf (GAA), and that the revisions draw on international best practices while accounting for local regulatory and sectoral context.

[27] Saudi Gazette. 2025. Saudi Arabia tops Arab countries in World Bank's Statistical Performance Indicator 2024

Beyond regulatory oversight, Vision 2030 has also introduced financial mechanisms to strengthen the operational capacity of the non-profit sector. In particular, the Associations Support Fund (ASF) acts as a key financial enabler. Established by a decision of the Council of Ministers, the ASF serves as the primary financial and investment arm supporting NPOs across the Kingdom. While the NCNP sets standards for transparency and accountability, the ASF provides targeted capital and capacity-building grants that enable local associations to meet these benchmarks. By supporting the professionalisation of smaller organisations, the fund also allows place-based associations in remote provinces to compete for and deliver programmes aligned with national development priorities.

Vision 2030 further links institutional reform with large-scale capital mobilisation through the Vision Realisation Programmes (VRPs). Established in 2017 by the Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA) under the chairmanship of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the VRPs translate the Kingdom's strategic objectives into coordinated programmes that track spending, enforce accountability, and encourage cross-sector collaboration. For example, the Saudi Green Initiative (SGI) coordinates more than 85 initiatives aimed at expanding nature-based solutions and renewable energy, mobilising an estimated USD 187 billion in investment by 2030.[28] Similarly, the Health Sector Transformation Programme (HSTP) seeks to restructure the Kingdom's healthcare system by improving service quality, expanding access, and fostering public-private partnerships across areas such as healthcare technology, pharmaceuticals, insurance, and specialised medical services. It also provides global businesses with access to investment opportunities across the healthcare system.[29]

While the VRPs set the strategic direction and programme objectives, public development funds mobilise and deploy the large-scale capital required to deliver these initiatives. Operating under the oversight of the National Development Fund (NDF), institutions such as the Public Investment Fund (PIF) and the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) channel large-scale capital into priority sectors, supporting infrastructure development, economic diversification, and job creation.[30] [31] [32] [33] [34] Together, these institutions ensure that the Kingdom's social and economic transformation is supported by substantial investment flows.

These measures strengthen the legitimacy of the non-profit sector, expand access to financial resources, and create clearer pathways for cross-sector collaboration. In doing so, they establish the institutional credibility and financial scale necessary for impact initiatives to contribute meaningfully to the Kingdom's national development agenda.

[28] CARE by Trescon. 2025. Saudi Green Initiative 2025–2030: Policy Analysis, Roadmap & Vision 2030 Goals
[29] Vision 2030. 2026. Health Sector Transformation Programme
[30] National Development Fund. 2026. Home
[31] Public Investment Fund. 2026. Strategy & Impact
[32] Saudi Industrial Development Fund. 2026. About Us
[33] Public Investment Fund. 2026. Funding New Human Futures
[34] Public Investment Fund. 2026. Giga-Projects

Mobilising Citizens and Entrepreneurs as Active Contributors to National Development

Vision 2030 positions the citizenry as an important pillar of Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem by investing in human capability, fostering entrepreneurial innovation, and expanding pathways for civic participation.

A key component of this shift is the Human Capability Development Programme (HCDP), a VRP designed to align educational outcomes with the evolving needs of the labor market.[35] By strengthening innovation capacity and upgrading skills across the workforce through the HCDP, the kingdom aims to equip citizens with the capabilities required to participate in new and emerging industries and contribute to the country's economic diversification.

In addition, Vision 2030 has expanded institutional pathways for entrepreneurship and innovation. Organisations such as Monsha'at, The Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority in the Kingdom, and the Misk Foundation provide mentorship, training, and ecosystem support that enable new ventures to emerge.[36][37] These initiatives create opportunities for individuals to translate their ideas into viable enterprises that contribute to economic and social progress.

The entrepreneurial and social entrepreneurial community has been further strengthened through platforms such as the Startup Saudi, launched by the Ministry of Investment (MISA).[38] Introduced in September 2025, the platform streamlines the process through which entrepreneurs can transform a business idea into a legally recognised operating entity. Complementing these efforts are regulatory sandboxes established by institutions such as the Saudi Central Bank (SAMA) for fintech, the Capital Market Authority (CMA), and the Saudi Data and AI Authority (SDAIA).[39][40][41] These platforms allow emerging ventures to test innovative solutions within regulated frameworks. Together, this integrated infrastructure creates favourable conditions for the growth of social entrepreneurship, where market-based enterprises can address societal challenges such as financial inclusion and digital equity.

Beyond social entrepreneurship, Vision 2030 also expands opportunities for citizens to participate directly in impact initiatives. Platforms such as the National Volunteer Portal enable individuals to contribute their time and expertise to national programmes, while digital giving platforms such as Ehsan facilitate philanthropic participation.[42][43] These digital mechanisms ensure that civic engagement, volunteerism, and charitable giving can be mobilised at scale to support national development priorities.

[35] Vision 2030. 2026. Human Capability Development Program
[36] Strategy&. 2020. Unleashing the power of the social enterprise sector in Saudi Arabia
[37] Misk Foundation. 2026. Misk Entrepreneurship
[38] Ministry of Investment: Invest Saudi. 2026. Startup Saudi
[39] Saudi Central Bank. 2026. Regulatory Sandbox
[40] Setup in Saudi. 2026. Key Authorities in Saudi Arabia's FinTech Sector: SAMA, CMA, SDAIA & More
[41] Onetrust DataGuidance. 2023. Saudi Arabia: SDAIA launches data and privacy regulatory sandbox
[42] Vision 2030. 2026. National Volunteer Portal
[43] Saudipedia. 2026. Ehsan Platform

A Heritage of Individual Generosity Driven by Zakat, Waqf, and Sadaqah

It is important to note that this level of individual philanthropic participation would not be possible without a tradition of charitable giving rooted in deep-seated value driven practices such as zakat, waqf, and sadaqah.[44] [45] Historically, these instruments served as the foundation of informal social welfare systems, uplifting communities through waqf-funded provision of health services and education or zakat and sadaqah-funded distribution of essential services like food and water, for example. In this way, giving was embedded in the community well before modern public services were established. This cultural foundation continues to shape behaviour today, creating a pipeline from individual charitable giving to institutional scale, further enabled by digital platforms like Ehsan.

Through investments in human capability, entrepreneurship, and civic participation, Vision 2030 not only strengthens the Kingdom's workforce and innovation capacity but also expands the range of actors contributing to the country's maturing impact ecosystem. The momentum behind this shift is increasingly visible. Saudi Arabia's entrepreneurs are not only growing in number but also in their commitment to impact. According to the 2024 GEM National Report, 80% of new entrepreneurs and 84% of established business owners indicated a prioritisation of social or environmental impact alongside profit.[46] [47]

Embedding Digital Systems that Enable Transparent, Data-Driven Allocation Of Resources And Measurement Of Impact

To meet Vision 2030 goals for the impact sector, digital infrastructure has been increasingly embedded within national governance systems to facilitate transparent, data-driven allocation of resources and measurement of impact. By integrating performance-linked indicators, participation metrics, and programme-level data into national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, a governance model has been established in which progress towards development objectives is tracked in real time. This ensures that capital allocation, programme expansion, and policy adjustments are increasingly guided by measurable outcomes rather than administrative inputs.[48]

[44] Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, requiring Muslims who meet certain conditions to donate a fixed portion of their qualifying wealth (commonly 2.5%) to specified categories of beneficiaries. This is an obligatory practice and is applied when wealth exceeds a threshold (nisab) and has been held for a lunar year.

[45] Sadaqah, meaning "charity" in Arabic, is a voluntary act of giving aimed at benefiting others. Unlike Zakat, which is obligatory, Sadaqah is given freely at any time and in any amount, driven purely by the desire to help those in need. It encompasses any act of kindness, whether through financial contributions, time, or resources.

[46] Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. 2024. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia GEM National Report.

[47] Zawya. 2024. Saudi Arabia's entrepreneurial spirit soars to eight-year high: GEM National Report 2023-2024.

[48] Anis Ben Brik. 2024. Authority and Accountability: Policy Innovation through Evaluation Institutionalization in Gulf States.

A key component of this model is the development of digital platforms such as the National Volunteer Portal and Ehsan that consolidate data across civic participation and philanthropic activity. By virtue of their activities, these platforms house large datasets, providing policymakers with a clearer understanding of where resources are flowing and which communities remain underserved.[49] The Ehsan Platform, for example, has processed more than 223 million transactions and mobilised over SAR 11 billion (USD 2.9 billion) towards social outcomes as of early 2026, just five years since its launch in 2021.[50] By digitally tagging contributions to sector-specific outcomes in areas such as health, education, and social protection, the platform provides a transparent account of how philanthropic capital contributes to national development priorities.

Spotlight: Ehsan | Revolutionising Philanthropy through Tech-Transparency

Ehsan serves as the National Platform for Charitable Work in Saudi Arabia, shifting the philanthropic landscape from traditional giving to a data-driven ecosystem.[51] By integrating advanced technology with social welfare, Ehsan ensures that Saudi Arabia's culture of generosity is supported by world-class digital infrastructure, making giving seamless, secure, and highly targeted.

Core Strategic Pillars

Proprietary Technology: All technology used by the organisation is currently developed in-house rather than imported. This technical autonomy allows for rapid iteration and ensures that the platform is perfectly tailored to the specific regulatory and cultural needs of the Kingdom.

Driving Inclusion through Data: Since its inception in 2021, the platform has accrued large datasets, enabling the mapping and identification of unreached communities, which can in turn be surfaced to service delivery organisations for programme inclusion.

Verifiable impact: Ehsan is able to cross-check and tag every riyal to verifiable outcomes in health and education, giving donors real-time confidence that their capital is reaching the intended beneficiary without leakage.

Learning and Development: Constantly striving to improve, Ehsan is now training AI solutions to automate donor reporting. This aim is to reduce administrative overhead and provide donors with instant and personalised updates on the impact of their contributions.

[49] Vision 2030. 2026. National Volunteer Portal

[50] Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence. 2026. Statistics

[51] Insights were gathered through primary research and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the market from June 2025 to January 2026.

Digital systems are also transforming the management of long-term philanthropic assets. The National Waqf Registry, managed by the GAA, has digitised the administration of endowment assets across the Kingdom.[52] By standardising information on waqf assets and their beneficiaries, the registry enables endowments to be managed with the transparency, scalability, and asset-preservation discipline associated with modern financial institutions.

In turn, these digital infrastructures feed directly into the Kingdom's development planning. National programmes such as the National Transformation Programme (NTP) and the Quality of Life Programme utilise real-time dashboards to guide co-funding decisions and determine which initiatives should be expanded.[53] In doing so, they create an ecosystem in which organisations are incentivised to demonstrate measurable outcomes in order to access funding and scale their work.

Through these integrated digital systems, Vision 2030 strengthens transparency, accountability, and performance monitoring. In this regard, digital infrastructure plays a central role in sustaining the credibility and effectiveness of Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem.

[52] General Authority for Awqaf. 2026. Services

[53] The Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. 2026. Digital Government Strategy

CHAPTER 2

The Impact Ecosystem

What was once a fragmented landscape of giving is increasingly coalescing into a coordinated ecosystem, facilitated by the shared framework and strategic direction of Vision 2030.

Today, Saudi Arabia’s impact ecosystem comprises a diverse network of family-led philanthropies, corporate foundations, impact funds, financial institutions, royal philanthropies, and ecosystem enablers, all aligned toward national development priorities.

Figure 2: A snapshot of Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem comprising a diverse network of family-led philanthropies, corporate foundations, impact funds, financial institutions, royal philanthropies, and ecosystem enablers.

Family-led Philanthropies

In Saudi Arabia, family-led philanthropy is moving beyond traditional, private acts of charity to become a more institutionalised pillar of the national economy. While it shares global hallmarks, such as a commitment to multi-generational legacy and place-based impact, it is uniquely defined by the modernised waqf structure. The Kingdom's family foundations also often partner with local public sector partners, aligning their giving with national priorities to achieve scale and sustainability.

Family-led philanthropic activities are commonly delivered through dedicated foundations or NPOs, frequently supported by awqaf.[54] One such example is AlMuhaidib Social Foundation (AMSF), which was formally established in 2014 by the AlMuhaidib family to institutionalise its long-term impact.[55] The Foundation's work focuses on early childhood development, inclusive education, and community wellbeing. Its programmes are recognised for being developed from the ground up and implemented in partnership with local practitioners and service providers. One example is its "We Play Together" initiative, which creates inclusive public play spaces where children of all abilities can interact and learn together.[56] Beyond early childhood initiatives, AMSF supports specialised services such as centres for children with Down syndrome, with a goal of improving quality of life.

[54] A waqf (plural: awqaf) is a permanent charitable endowment, where an asset such as land, property, or money is dedicated to religious, educational, or social purposes. The principal is preserved while the benefits (income or use) support the community. Waqf assets cannot normally be sold, inherited, or transferred

[55] Abdulkadir AlMuhaidib Social Foundation. 2026. About us

[56] Abdulkadir AlMuhaidib Social Foundation. 2018. AlMuhaidib Park Opening Under the Patronage of Prince Saud bin Naif

Spotlight: AlMuhaidib Social Foundation
A Legacy of Generational Empowerment

" The giving needs to be inherited. We are not just giving on their (the next generation) behalf; we are empowering them so that this becomes a part of their DNA."

The Philosophy of Giving

AlMuhaidib Social Foundation (AMSF) views philanthropy as a multigenerational responsibility, not as a series of transactions.[57] By embedding social impact into the family's values and engaging the sixth generation in its philanthropic work, giving becomes a sustained mindset, rather than an occasional endeavour. Building on a family endowment established back in 1923, AMSF advances this legacy through a modern, impact-driven approach, including the establishment of a dedicated social endowment in 2018 to ensure long-term sustainability. With a focus on early childhood development, health, and quality of life, the foundation addresses evolving local and global needs while preserving its legacy.

Core Strategic Pillars

The Enabling Model: AMSF focuses on enabling impact rather than direct service delivery, working with partners to co-design initiatives and strengthen systems to deliver sustainable outcomes.

The Social Endowment: Established in 2018, AMSF's social endowment is managed with the same precision as the family business. A portion of group investments is directed toward this fund, ensuring that business growth is continuously translated into long-term social impact.

Collaborative Philanthropy: AMSF partners with government entities such as the Ministry of Education and other national institutions, alongside non-profit and private sector partners, to expand impact through aligned priorities and shared outcomes.

Global Relief & Community Development: Through partnerships with entities such as the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief), AMSF supports international relief and community development initiatives spanning housing, healthcare, and education. One example is the Village Model. Rooted in a philosophy that links charitable giving to generational responsibility and one's life milestones, it is the family-driven commitment in which members of the family rebuild a village during their wedding period. This first shared act of giving is a way of beginning their new life with the blessing of creating happiness for others. Each village is then continuously followed and cared for by the couple, and later passed on to their children as amanah, a sacred trust that carries with it the responsibility to sustain and care for the community across generations. Today, this tradition is carried forward by the fifth generation of the AlMuhaidib family, ensuring that the Village Model remains a living commitment rather than a standalone project.

[57] Insights were gathered through primary research and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the market from June 2025 to January 2026.

The Jameel family provides another example of family-led philanthropy, carrying forward a legacy of service first established by the late Abdul Latif Jameel. The family channels its philanthropic efforts through Community Jameel Saudi and Community Jameel. The former primarily focuses on domestic, place-based livelihood and employability programmes.[58] Community Jameel, on the other hand, tackles global challenges such as climate change and health through partnerships with institutions like Imperial College London and The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and supporting the growth of Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), a leading global research centre.[59] Bridging these two philanthropic entities is the Bab Rizq Jameel initiative, which executes domestic mandates in vocational training and microfinance, whilst simultaneously exporting these job-creation methodologies to the broader region.

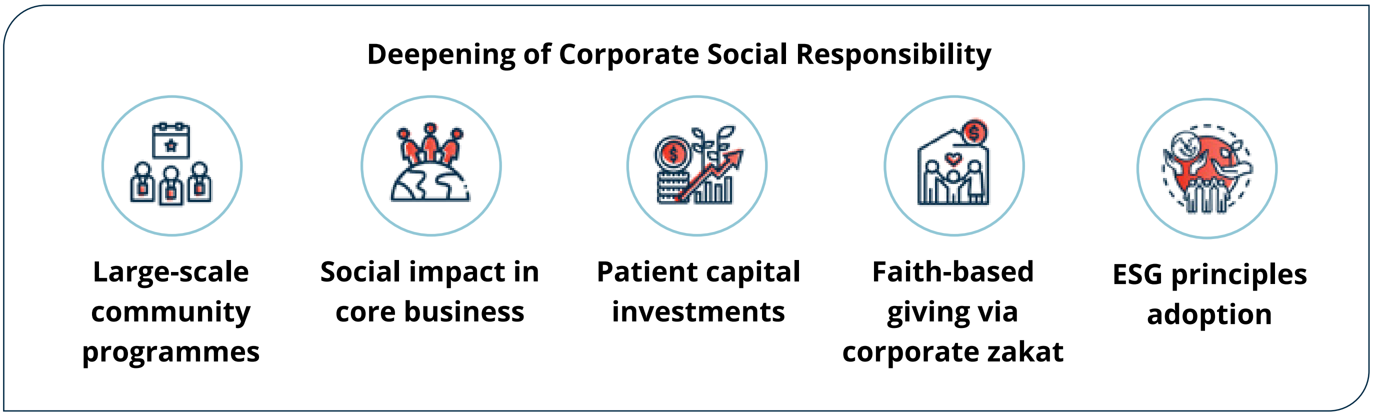
As such, the initiative, established in 2003, has supported the creation of more than 490,000 jobs in Saudi Arabia, around 70% of which have benefited local women, and a further 220,000 jobs across Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey.[60] Today, the programme also supports entrepreneurs and small businesses through interest-free loans, training, and provides remote and home-based work programmes.

Another prominent example of family-led philanthropy is the Olayan family, for whom philanthropy complements their commercial activities as a core responsibility. While the Olayan Foundation serves as the primary vehicle for impact within Saudi Arabia, the family also operates philanthropic offices in Europe and America to support its international mandate. This global footprint allows the Foundation to explore impact opportunities everywhere its business arm operates. What originally began with a focus on improving employee welfare has since extended into wider community and development efforts. Today, the Foundation concentrates on a range of priority areas across education, healthcare, the environment, and culture.[61] This includes diverse initiatives such as funding university scholarships for underprivileged students across the Kingdom; establishing the Suliman S. Olayan Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship at The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) to support young entrepreneurs; strengthening neonatal eye screening by donating advanced diagnostic equipment; and supporting environmental restoration through the planting of one million mangrove trees off the coast of Jizan, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture.[62]

[58] Community Jameel Saudi. 2026. Home
[59] Community Jameel. 2026. Overview
[60] Strategy&. 2017. From traditional to impact philanthropy: Creating a legacy for GCC family businesses
[61] Olayan Financing Company. 2025. Philanthropy
[62] Eye of Riyadh. 2022. Olayan Marks 75-year Milestone Through Impactful Initiatives that Honor the Altruistic Vision of Founder

Corporate Actors

Corporate actors in Saudi Arabia are moving beyond ad-hoc charity and adopting more diversified and strategic approaches towards creating impact. As the examples below demonstrate, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practice now includes large-scale corporate programmes addressing community needs; integration of impact into the core business; patient capital investments for economic empowerment and sector development; faith-based giving through corporate zakat; and continued adoption of ESG principles.



Bank Aljazira exemplifies a strategic approach to CSR through its Khair Aljazira Le Ahl Aljazira programme. Launched in 2006, with a budget of SAR 100 million (USD 26.7 million), the programme focuses on direct-service delivery in impact areas such as youth empowerment, healthcare, and the environment.[63] The programme's scale is significant, having supported over 100 community development projects and reaching more than 23,000 beneficiaries annually.[64] Over time, Bank AlJazira's approach to social responsibility has extended beyond such programmes to include system-level interventions that align commercial banking infrastructure with national social protection mechanisms. For example, by leveraging the Musaned platform for electronic salary transfers, Bank AlJazira helps ensure that domestic workers are paid regularly and transparently, strengthening wage protection and financial inclusion through everyday financial operations.[65]

Aramco provides an example of a business that is creating long-term change by investing in economic empowerment and sector development. Since 2016, the company has seeded patient capital, or funding that accommodates a longer investment time horizon, to high-potential enterprises in micro-industries like honey and coffee production.[66] Additionally, it has provided the infrastructure and specialised training necessary for local communities to scale their business initiatives.[67] As of the start of 2026, Aramco had supported approximately 2,600 beekeepers with the necessary tools and expertise to expand their honey production.[68] Similarly, Aramco's coffee initiative in Jazan has enabled over 1,043 farmers to produce more than 900 tonnes of Khawlani beans annually using water-saving smart irrigation.[69] While Aramco continues to deliver short term community grants and disaster relief, their approach to developing micro-industries prioritises long-term financial independence of communities over ad hoc charity.

[63] Bank Aljazira. 2026. Sustainability & Social Responsibility
[64] Nabil Al-Hoshan / World Finance. 2013. Bank Aljazira: embracing sharia banking principles
[65] Bank Aljazira. Bank Aljazira. 2024. Bank Aljazira Sustainability Report 2024. Jeddah: Bank Aljazira, 2025.
[66] BGF. 2024. What is patient capital?
[67] Aramco. 2024. Micro-industries
[68] ibid.
[69] ibid.

While voluntary CSR remains a vital driver of impact, the landscape is fundamentally reinforced by the mandatory administration of corporate zakat.[70] Centrally administered by the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority (ZATCA), corporate zakat is assessed at a rate of 2.5% on a company's zakat base. These funds are channelled into the Social Security Account, overseen by the MHRSD, ensuring alignment with national welfare goals. This capital is in turn disbursed to eligible beneficiaries, including low-income households, orphans, widows, and other vulnerable segments of society, as defined by Islamic law.[71] By integrating religious obligations into state-led administrative and social welfare frameworks, the Kingdom ensures that corporate zakat acts as a formalised and reliable pillar of the national social protection system.[72] [73]

Saudi Arabian businesses are also increasingly embedding ESG principles into their operations, integrating them into the national development model as drivers of long-term growth, resilience, and responsible corporate conduct[74] ESG adherence is supported by the Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul) disclosure guidelines and the PIF, which encourages its portfolio companies to lead on sustainability.

This trend is reflected in both environmental and social initiatives across major Saudi Arabian companies. For example, the Saudi Electricity Company (SEC) issued USD 1.3 billion (SAR 4.87 billion) in green bonds under its Green Sukuk Framework to modernise the national grid and support renewable energy integration.[75] In the financial sector, Riyad Bank launched its Sustainable Finance Framework in 2021, offering green finance products that help small and medium-sized enterprises fund environmentally sustainable projects.[76] On the social dimension of ESG, stc Group's (formerly Saudi Telecom Company) 'SmartTruck' initiative serves as a benchmark for bridging the digital divide. Launched in 2023, the programme delivered awareness sessions to nearly 10,000 elderly individuals across the Kingdom by 2024, ensuring that the nation's digital transformation remains inclusive of its most senior citizens.[77] In the retail sector, Almarai has institutionalised its social impact efforts through its "Better Every Day" strategy, including initiatives to train and employ persons with disabilities in partnership with the Authority for People with Disabilities.[78] [79]

Impact Investors and Financial Institutions

Impact investing is emerging as a core component of the Kingdom's impact ecosystem by mobilising public and private capital toward sectors with strong social and developmental impact. Through the use of de-risking mechanisms, patient capital, and blended finance structures, a range of institutional investors are helping channel funding into high impact areas such as healthcare, education, sustainable infrastructure, and innovation.

[70] Rosemont Partners. 2024. Corporate Tax & Zakat in KSA: A Comprehensive Guide Corporate Zakat refers to the payment of Zakat by a business entity, typically calculated as 2.5% of a company's zakatable assets or net Zakat base (such as cash, receivables, and inventory after deducting short-term liabilities) in accordance with Islamic financial principles.

[71] Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority. 2024. Guideline For the Frequently Asked Questions

[72] Rosemont Partners. 2024. Corporate Tax & Zakat in KSA: A Comprehensive Guide Saudi Arabia operates a dual fiscal framework in which Saudi-owned entities are subject to corporate zakat, foreign-owned entities are subject to corporate income tax. Corporate income tax revenues support general government expenditure and economic development, while zakat revenues are ringfenced for social welfare purposes in accordance with Islamic law.

[73] SSC (Strategic Saudi Consultants). 2024. Corporate Income Tax in Saudi Arabia

[74] Prakash Dolsak. 2024. The Rise and Fall of ESG

[75] PIF (Public Investment Fund). 2022. How Saudi businesses' stance on ESG is securing a better future for all.

[76] Riyad Bank. 2024. Sustainable Finance Framework

[77] stc (Saudi Telecommunication Company). 2024. stc Sustainability Report 2024

[78] Almarai. 2024. Authority of People with Disabilities

[79] Almarai. 2024. Caring for People

Government-supported institutions such as Saudi Venture Capital (SVC), and PIF deploy catalytic financing tools designed to reduce investment risk and attract private capital.[80] [81] SVC, for instance, has catalysed approximately USD 3.70 in private investment for every USD 1 of government capital committed, supporting the growth of ventures while monitoring impact indicators such as job creation and female workforce participation.[82] Similarly, the PIF's National Development Division utilises instruments such as guarantees and co-investment structures to mobilise third-party investment into priority development sectors.[83] Jada, established by the PIF as a Fund of Funds (FoF) in 2018, has deployed more than USD 933 million (SAR 3.5 billion) across over 47 venture capital, private equity, and private credit funds focused on SME development since its founding.[84]

Complementing these state-backed catalytic capital approaches is the rapid expansion of the waqf investment sector. The GAA alone has licensed 34 waqf investment funds with total net assets surpassing USD 454 million (SAR 1.7 billion) as of 2025, which is more than triple what was under management in 2023.[85] This growth is supported by Awqaf Investment, the investment arm of GAA, which works to enhance the sustainability of the non-profit sector by developing innovative and shariah-compliant investment structures and professionalising asset management.[86] An example of this is the Ehsan Waqf Fund, managed by SNB Capital, which enables broad societal participation in developmental investments. By investing in a diversified portfolio of shariah-compliant assets, the fund aims to provide sustainable financial returns for charitable causes while targeting an annual dividend of at least 3% to maximise social impact.[87]

While these licensed public waqf funds are growing, they represent only one part of the landscape. A significant portion of the Kingdom's social capital remains held within private family endowment funds. These are typically managed by family offices in strict accordance with the wishes and values of their ancestors. An example of such funds is Ra'ed Ventures, a Riyadh-based early-stage investment firm established by Almajdouie Holding, a longstanding Saudi conglomerate. Ra'ed Ventures backs founders building scalable tech-enabled startups in sectors such as fintech, enterprise software, and e-commerce across Middle East and North Africa that also contribute to the Kingdom's broader economic development goals such as employment growth.[88] By maintaining these private structures, families ensure that their philanthropic legacy remains both professionally managed and deeply personal, providing a stable, multi-generational source of capital that operates alongside newer public investment vehicles.[89]

A growing number of private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) firms are integrating impact outcomes and ESG considerations into their investment mandates. Wa'ed Ventures, the venture capital arm of Aramco, manages a USD 500 million fund dedicated to fostering the startup ecosystem through investments in five core pillars, namely, sustainability, manufacturing, social innovation, digitalisation, and industrial technology.[90] Qadr Financial activates dormant capital through Shariah-compliant credit and equity structures, supporting impact-driven SMEs and asset-backed investments that generate both

[80] United Nations. 2024. Financing for Sustainable Development
[81] Arab News. 2023. Saudi Arabia's PIF steps up ESG commitment with new green finance framework
[82] European Investment Bank. 2023. 2023 Venture Capital Report: Impact Metrics and Private Capital Mobilisation
[83] Public Investment Fund. 2024. Allocation and Impact Report 2024: National Development and Catalytic Finance
[84] Jada Fund of Funds Company. 2026. Jada Fund of Funds commits to Stride Ventures Debt Fund V to diversify funding channels for Saudi enterprises
[85] Saudi Press Agency. 2024. HRH Crown Prince Announces National Charter for Social Responsibility
[86] Awqaf Investment. 2026. About the Company
[87] SNB Capital. 2024. Ehsan Waqf Fund
[88] Ra'ed Ventures.
[89] Insights were gathered through primary research and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the market from June 2025 to January 2026.
[90] Start Easy. 2024. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the Rise of Social Entrepreneurship

financial returns and community benefit.[91] Meanwhile, 3i Holding (3i), where 3i stands for Invest in Impact, builds the ecosystem by forming investment partnerships and founding companies designed to address social challenges while delivering economic returns.[92]

Additionally, public and private actors alike are directing resources toward enterprises at the earliest stage of their growth via accelerators and incubators. Al Garage, a joint initiative of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), operates as the largest innovation and startup hub in the Middle East. It has supported over 300 deep-tech startups since its inception, offering a combination of grants, acceleration programmes, and direct investment, and reports having created over 7,500 direct and indirect jobs across its portfolio companies.[93] [94] InspireU, the Kingdom's first corporate incubator launched by stc Group in 2015, similarly anchors its mandate in measurable impact outcomes. For instance, its portfolio of over 130 startups has generated more than 600,000 direct and indirect job opportunities across the region, also benefiting tens of millions of users.[95] [96]

Royal Philanthropies

Royal philanthropies have a dual purpose of continuing the legacies of members of the royal family, and translating personal philanthropic visions into targeted and long-term social progress. Often predating formal public sector institutions and ministries, these entities are a unique and important component of the Saudi impact ecosystem. For example, the King Faisal Foundation (KFF), established in 1976, pioneered higher education and research decades before the expansion of the public university system.[97] Similarly, the King Salman Center for Disability Research and the Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud Foundation led the way in human-centric technology and disability services long before the Ministry of Health developed its own extensive specialised branches.[98]

Today, this influence, though enduring, has taken on new forms. This section highlights how the Kingdom's royal foundations act as strategic architects of the social sector, respectively motivated by the preservation of legacy, the pursuit of innovation, and the strengthening of institutional infrastructure.

The recently established King Salman Foundation (KSF) (2024) was announced by royal order issued by His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. KSF is a personal foundation that reflects King Salman's legacy and continues his footsteps in the nonprofit sector.[99] The foundation builds on his work, addressing sustainable urbanisation, and through its cultural arm, showcases his interest in knowledge, history, and culture through the King Salman Cultural Centres, which include the King Salman Museum and King Salman Library. The foundation drives human-centric impact through innovative knowledge, advocacy, partnerships, and programme design that foster sustainable and flourishing communities across the Kingdom and beyond.[100]

[91] Our Mission | Qadr Financial
[92] Invest In Impact. 2024. Home
[93] El Garage
[94] International Trade Administration. 2023. Market Intelligence Report, Saudi Arabia Information Technology "The Garage" – A New Player in Saudi Arabia's Startup Ecosystem.
[95] Economy Middle East. 2023. stc's inspireU helps 90+ startups secure over SAR 700 million investments.
[96] Telecom Review, 2022. stc's InspireU program supports KSA's innovation and digital economy.
[97] King Faisal Foundation. 2024. King Faisal Foundation: Established to Serve Islam and The People of Peace.
[98] King Salman Center for Disability Research. 2024. Historical Events
[99] King Salman Foundation. 2024. King Salman Foundation Homepage
[100] Insights were gathered through primary research and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the market from June 2025 to January 2026.

Alwaleed Philanthropies, founded by Prince Alwaleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, supports large programmes within Saudi Arabia as well as across Asia and Africa. Operating across health, humanitarian response, empowerment, and cultural initiatives, the foundation was the first Saudi organisation to contribute to the United Nations Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund.[101] [102] This demonstrated the impact and potential of aligning Saudi philanthropic capital with multilateral humanitarian and development initiatives for greater regional impact.[103]

The Misk Foundation illustrates how royal philanthropy can serve as a catalyst for social innovation by focusing on the Kingdom's most imminent priority, its youth.[104] The foundation, established by HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, focuses on translating the demographic potential of youth into actual social and economic participation by working across the continuum of education, skills development, leadership development, and civic engagement. One key programme is the Misk Social Impact Accelerator, which identifies and scales youth-led solutions in addressing social issues across the kingdom, including outside of urban centres.[105]

The King Khalid Foundation (KKF), established by the family of the late King Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, demonstrates how royal foundations can build the rigorous infrastructure necessary for a professionalised non-profit sector.[106] The foundation has been recognised for leading from the frontlines in tackling issues such as domestic violence and poverty by influencing social spending and acting as a catalyst for measurable social change.[107] Further, through sustained investment in research, data, and policymaking, KKF has contributed to a clearer and more credible evidence base on the state of the non-profit sector in the Kingdom.[108] The foundation's work has strengthened the practice of local organisations, while at the same time developing a strong data-backed narrative of Saudi Arabia's evolving non-profit sector.

[101] Alwaleed Philanthropies. 2024. Alwaleed Philanthropies: Global Initiatives
[102] UNDP MPTF Office. 2020. Alwaleed Philanthropies First Philanthropic Organisation to Contribute to UN Human Security Fund
[103] United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. 2018. The Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region
[104] Misk Foundation. 2026. Mohammed bin Salman Foundation
[105] Misk Foundation. 2026. Impact Accelerator
[106] King Khalid Foundation. 2026. King Khalid Foundation Homepage
[107] Leanord Stall and Joanne Bladd. 2018. Royal philanthropy
[108] King Khalid Foundation. 2025. Nonprofit Sector Trends in Saudi Arabia 2025

Ecosystem Building Actors

Beyond the role of capital providers, the impact ecosystem also relies on specialised institutions that strengthen its technical, knowledge, and coordination infrastructure. Often referred to as ecosystem builders, these organisations help align stakeholders, develop professional standards, generate evidence, and implement effective programmes.

One example is Aeon Collective, an interdisciplinary NPO that bridges diverse fields, including science, technology, policy, and arts, to foster regenerative systems for people and the planet.[109] Supported by waqf funding, the organisation focuses on systems-level change through advocacy, research, and the development of evidence-based insights that inform policy and institutional decision-making. Through initiatives such as the Tree Library, Aeon Collective promotes ecosystem restoration practices that link environmental outcomes with broader social and institutional transformation.[110] Its work spans Saudi Arabia and several international territories, including Italy, Jamaica, Kuwait, Liberia, and the United States, allowing ideas and models to be tested across diverse ecological and policy contexts.

While organisations such as Aeon Collective focus on advancing systems thinking and policy engagement, others concentrate on strengthening the operational capacity of the social impact sector. Tasamy for Impact exemplifies this field-building model, focusing on supporting professionalisation of the social impact sector in Saudi Arabia. By offering specialised advisory services to actors who possess capital but face constraints in design or implementation, Tasamy strengthens the execution capacity and programme readiness of the wider ecosystem.[111] This is demonstrated through its high-level advisory function for major philanthropic foundations, where Tasamy provides the strategic frameworks and technical expertise necessary to institutionalise social goals and refine operational standards.

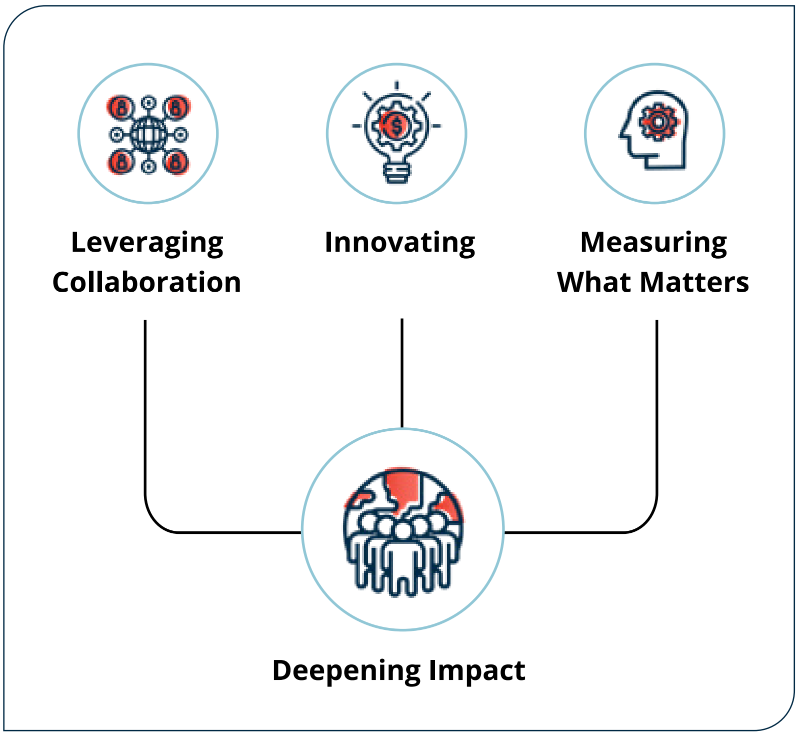
Organisations such as Aeon Collective and Tasamy illustrate how ecosystem builders complement capital providers within the impact landscape. By supplying technical expertise, fostering cross-sector collaboration, and strengthening professional standards, these actors play a critical role in ensuring that financial resources are deployed effectively and generate sustainable social impact.

[109] Aeon Collective. 2026. About Aeon Collective
[110] Aeon Collective. 2026. Tree Digital Library
[111] Tasamy. 2026. Tasamy for Social Entrepreneurship

CHAPTER 3

Emerging Opportunities to Deepen Impact

Building on the preceding overview of key actors, this section shifts focus from understanding who drives impact to how this impact is being pursued. It identifies three cross-cutting areas, namely, collaboration, innovation, and a transition from output-focused to an outcomes-focused approach. These are areas where existing momentum, if effectively coordinated and resourced, could materially deepen impact.



Leveraging Collaboration for Amplified Impact

Collaboration in Saudi Arabia is increasingly defined by three distinct yet reinforcing pillars designed to maximise economic, social and environmental outcomes. First, achieving scale is prioritised through cross-sector partnerships, with the public sector and other actors. Second, partnerships leverage unique organisational skills and intellectual capital to co-create novel solutions for complex social challenges. Finally, collaborations bridge technical gaps by bringing global best practices and niche knowledge into the domestic ecosystem. By aligning the three pillars of scale, innovation, and capability, actors ensure that public and private capital do more than just fund projects; they build a sustainable impact landscape.

Achieving systemic scale through robust partnerships with the public sector and multi-stakeholder coalitions

Philanthropic and corporate actors regularly partner with ministries and public sector agencies to expand the reach of their programmes, embed practices within public systems, or support nationally prioritised outcomes. For example, the Olayan Foundation collaborated with the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture to pursue its aim of planting one million mangrove trees off the coast of Jizan.[112] In early 2025, KKF and the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to establish a framework for activating bilateral partnerships in research, studies, and initiatives that build the capabilities of NPOs within the non-profit sector.[113] Public-private partnerships such as these have the impact of providing scale and legitimacy and are a familiar and trusted mode of collaboration within the ecosystem.

Organisations such as Aeon Collective are also worth noting here, given their demonstrated ability to leverage domestic and international collaboration to drive climate action at scale. An example is their partnership with KAUST to advance education, awareness, and research on sustainable development.[114] This partnership is reinforced through the co-appointment of KAUST professors to work directly with Aeon Collective, enabling closer integration between academic research and applied environmental practice. Internationally, Aeon Collective has partnered with NOW Partners, a network of over 100 members including business owners, leaders, entrepreneurs, to build and share knowledge on regenerative agriculture and forestry at COP16. Beyond participation in such global summits, this partnership also enables an ongoing exploration on how carbon credits can be leveraged as part of broader climate action strategies.[115]

[112] Olayan Financing Company. 2022. The Suliman S. Olayan Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

[113] GCC Business News. 2025. Ministry of Economy and King Khalid Foundation Partnership.

[114] KAUST. 2022. KAUST and Aeon Collective Align Goals in Sustainable-focused Collaboration

[115] NOW Partners. 2024. NOW Partners and Aeon Collective at COP16

Pooling unique organisational skills and intellectual capital to co-create novel solutions for complex social challenges

One example is the collaboration between the AMSF and the Olayan Foundation to improve child mental health outcomes in Saudi Arabia, a challenging and complex issue that otherwise was not receiving necessary attention. The partnership aimed to address a clear service gap where schools often lack trained professionals capable of identifying early signs of mental health challenges and making appropriate referrals, while teachers and school leaders frequently have limited awareness or tools to respond effectively.

The solution was a specialised diploma programme designed to equip frontline education professionals with practical screening and referral skills.[116] It combined complementary institutional strengths, AMSF's focus on early childhood development and evidence-informed programme design, and Olayan Foundation's experience in developing solutions grounded in operational realities. The collaboration also incorporated international and domestic academic expertise, engaging partners such as Harvard Medical School and Alfaisal University. The programme has now been institutionalised into Alfaisal University's offerings and is a demonstration of how structured collaboration can support more robust, contextually grounded, and scalable interventions.

Importing and adapting specialised expertise to bridge technical gaps

One example is Noura Al-Millahi Foundation's collaboration with TechSoup USA to enhance non-profit digital infrastructure.[117] The foundation recognised a persistent gap in the sector that while non-profits are increasingly expected to operate professionally and at scale, many lack access to affordable digital tools, software, and technical support.[118] Through the partnership with TechSoup USA, the Noura Al-Millahi Foundation enabled the introduction and localisation of a global digital support platform for non-profits in Saudi Arabia. This expanded access to discounted software, technology tools, and digital capacity-building support for organisations across the Kingdom addresses a constraint that cuts across sectors and issue areas. By pairing local leadership and convening power with a proven international platform, the Foundation was able to deliver a solution that is scalable, practical, and responsive to sector needs.

While collaboration in Saudi Arabia is undoubtedly increasing, there remains significant potential to expand these opportunities further. Establishing more shared platforms, incentives, and surfacing success stories will encourage the cross-sector cooperation essential for addressing complex, cross-cutting challenges.[119] The real breakthrough will come from surfacing robust case studies where entities maintain their clearly defined impact mandates while simultaneously exploring partnerships.[120] These case examples will showcase how by working with peers, these organisations can minimise duplication, scale proven programmes, and drive innovation by leveraging their collective expertise.[121]

[116] AlMuhaidib Social Foundation. 2026. Child Mental Health Initiative

[117] Insights were gathered through primary research and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in the market from June 2025 to January 2026

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

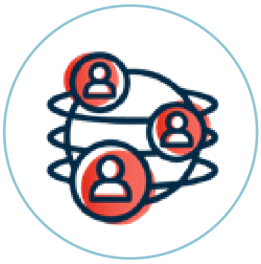
[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid.

Innovating for More Effective and Sustainable Impact

In Saudi Arabia, innovation for impact is seen in the strategic application of technology and modern governance to solve systemic challenges. This innovation is driven by both state-affiliated entities and philanthropic actors who prioritise three distinct lines of innovation, adopting new technologies for more effective service delivery, building the tools and talent pipelines the social sector needs and reimagining traditional tools and mechanisms for new and evolving social needs.

Adopting new technologies



Building tools and talent pipelines

Re-imagining traditional tools

Adopting new technologies for more effective service delivery

Innovation in service delivery is increasingly defined by the integration of digital systems and AI to bridge coordination gaps and enhance precision. In the healthcare sector, digital platforms such as the Ruhs Foundation's blood donation application address critical supply-and-demand mismatches by connecting donors with hospitals in real-time.[122] Providers like Zadar leverage AI-enabled diagnostic tools to accelerate early detection, significantly reducing costs and the reliance on specialist-intensive models.[123] Collectively, these digital interventions demonstrate how technology can streamline logistics and lower the cost of delivering high-quality, life-saving outcomes.

Building tools and talent pipelines for the social sector

Beyond immediate service delivery, organisations like the Noura Al-Millahi Foundation are also looking at building the underlying infrastructure for future innovation by investing in a robust pipeline of tech-driven solutions.[124] The foundation has a multi-year strategy which focuses on scaling the training and programming support necessary to equip the social sector with a high-tech workforce.[125] This enabling approach ensures that the Kingdom's social sector has access to the technical resilience and specialised skills required to sustain long-term digital transformation and self-driven innovation.

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Noura Al-Millahi Foundation. 2026. About the Foundation
[125] Ibid.

Reimagining traditional tools and mechanisms for new and evolving social needs

A vital frontier of innovation involves the modernisation of traditional social finance mechanisms such as awqaf to address complex social issues. Under the governance of the GAA, these legacy structures are being reimagined as active sources of long-term and large-scale financing for contemporary social causes. This sees the focus shift from simple charitable acts to high-impact infrastructure. The Sulaiman Bin Abdulaziz Al Rajhi Charitable Foundation is one example of this shift in action. It does so by evolving its original mandate of providing food for the needy into Al-Watania Poultry, one of the world's largest environmentally sustainable poultry projects.[126] The initiative has transformed a simple charitable act into an industrial-scale endowment that prioritises ecological health through advanced waste-to-energy systems and water conservation technologies.[127] The foundation is now able to re-deploy commercial profits to provide long-term food security and self-sustaining funding for social programmes across the Kingdom.

The sustained growth of licensed waqf investment funds presents a significant and expanding pool of impact capital.[128] By updating the governance and application of these endowments, Saudi Arabia is positioning ancient institutional models to address 21st-century challenges with greater scale.

[126] Tazij Halal Meat. 2025. Saudi Arabia Poultry: Al Watania and Halal Devco Partnership
[127] OGN News. 2024. Al-Watania Poultry and HPDC Strategic Partnership
[128] Saudi Press Agency. 2024. HRH Crown Prince Announces National Charter for Social Responsibility

The Modernisation of Awqaf in Saudi Arabia

Historically, waqf assets were strictly tied to real estate, but this instrument has transformed significantly. Under the Kingdom's regulatory framework there are various evolving forms of Awqaf which may take the structure of companies, investment portfolios, endowment investment funds, equity holdings in firms, and other innovative models. The only requirements are that these investments remain Shariah-compliant, are appropriately managed to ensure the preservation of the waqf's principal, and ensure the continuity of distributions in accordance with the founders' conditions across generations.

A Shift to High-Level Financial Governance

The endowment sector is now being seen as having both a financial and a social mandate. This shift is governed by the General Authority of Awqaf (GAA), which regulates and manages public awqaf. The GAA's new focus on finance and strategy is reflected in its highest levels of leadership, with the GAA board being chaired by the Minister of Finance, and its executive committee chaired by the head of the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Innovative and integrated use of waqf

a. **Corporate waqfs:** Corporations are increasingly utilising waqf structures for their social initiatives. For example, a school can be established as a waqf while maintaining a corporate learning and development arm that generates profits to sustain the endowment. In some advanced models, up to 20% of a publicly listed company's shares are owned by a non-profit or waqf entity.

b. **Funding State Infrastructure:** Awqaf are increasingly contributing to the financing of public projects, including infrastructure and other initiatives that deliver public benefit while ensuring long-term financial sustainability. For instance, the King Faisal Specialist Hospital is now funded by an endowment designed to ensure its long-term financial independence from the Ministry of Health.

c. **Family Business Endowments:** Many family businesses are establishing diverse waqf structures that help organise charitable activities and enhance their sustainability. For example, the Ruhs Foundation established an endowment company called Jana specifically focused on financial literacy in partnership with the central bank.

The Global Waqf Mechanism

There is growing interest among Muslim families worldwide in establishing Awqaf in Makkah and Madinah, contributing to the service of pilgrims arriving from across the globe. There is an opportunity to create mechanisms that allow philanthropists to invest in these local awqaf. This model effectively allows the Kingdom's awqaf system to support global health and development priorities.

All insights in this call out were extracted from interviews with organisations such as the General Awqaf Authority.

Measuring What Matters: From Activities to Results

The conversation in Saudi Arabia is moving beyond tracking immediate activities to prioritising the long-term results they produce. This shift evidences a maturing of the ecosystem and presents an opportunity for all actors, from ancient endowments to newly established foundations, to coalesce around a single vision for social impact and progress.

Organisations in Saudi Arabia primarily do this through two lenses. Firstly, by investing in pilot projects to assess the viability of these solutions before they are scaled, and secondly, by allocating dedicated project capital to monitoring and evaluation (M&E), ensuring that success is not just assumed, but proven through data.

Organisations in Saudi Arabia primarily do this through two lenses

From Pilot to Scale

Investing in Monitoring and Evaluation

From Pilot to Scale

The expansion of the Early Detection of Language Disorders (Faseeh) project by AMSF serves as an example of how a successful pilot can achieve national systemic change.[129] The initiative aims to detect language disorders in over 10,000 children aged eight months to three years across the Kingdom, providing a digital protocol that includes initial examinations via the Ynmo Tifli app, followed by comprehensive assessments and four remote treatment sessions with speech pathologists. By establishing strategic partnerships with over 15 governmental and non-governmental organisations, the project has shifted from direct service delivery to embedding early detection training for caregivers and staff in nurseries and children's centres. This exemplifies the multiplier effect found when philanthropic actors provide the initial risk capital for innovation, while public sector institutions provide the pathway to scale.

[129] AlMuhaidib Social Foundation. 2026. Early Detection of Language Disorders.

Investing in Monitoring & Evaluation

To ensure that these scaled interventions deliver on their promise, there is a growing trend of institutionalising M&E within the Kingdom's foundations. KKF has distinguished itself in this field by moving beyond simple compliance to an evidence-led approach. The Foundation has made significant investments in internal M&E capabilities, regularly publishing detailed impact reports that examine the effectiveness of their grantmaking.[130] By dedicating project capital specifically to data collection and longitudinal impact assessment, they ensure that their programmes, ranging from youth employment to social protection, are refined based on proven outcomes rather than assumed success, setting a benchmark for the Kingdom's philanthropic ecosystem.

In summary, these trends in collaboration, innovation, impact measurement and management and international impact represent a dynamic ecosystem that is moving rapidly toward global best practices. Whilst they do not capture the full spectrum of change and opportunity currently unfolding in Saudi Arabia, they present a snapshot of pathways that both local and international stakeholders can engage in and contribute to drive economic, social, and environmental progress in the Kingdom.

Global Engagement and Cross-Border Collaboration

Saudi Arabia is increasingly positioning itself as a pivotal stakeholder in the global impact ecosystem. This international engagement is primarily channelled through state-led mechanisms, most notably King Salman Humanitarian Relief Centre (KSRelief). Since 1975, the Kingdom has provided more than USD 130 billion in humanitarian and development assistance to 169 countries. This includes nearly 3,500 projects implemented by KSRelief since its inception in May 2015.[131] In addition to government initiatives, select royal foundations and global corporations are expanding Saudi Arabia's philanthropic and developmental impact beyond national borders.

There is a clear appetite for innovative models of collaboration, especially models rooted in shared values and anchored by credible public or multilateral institutions. This is best illustrated by the USD 2.5 billion Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF) launched in 2016 by the Saudi Arabian government, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (now known as the Gates Foundation), and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).[132] As of 2024, the LLF has mobilised USD 219 million in donor support to finance 37 projects across 22 IsDB member countries.[133] While such initiatives are primarily oriented toward international development, they serve as a critical proof of concept for the types of cross-border collaboration that are currently feasible through government-led and multilateral platforms. For international partners, this represents a unique opportunity to engage with the Kingdom in addressing systemic challenges on the global stage.

[130] King Khalid Foundation. 2023. King Khalid Award Impact Report

[131] Arab News. 2024. Lives and Livelihoods Fund Receives New USD 219 Million Pledge

[132] Islamic Development Bank. 2024. Partners Pledge New Support of US USD 219 Million to LLF

[133] Islamic Development Bank. 2026. IsDB Member Countries Islamic Development Bank (ISDB) member countries are the 57 nations that are part of the Islamic Development Bank, primarily across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

Key Principles for International Partners Entering Saudi Arabia's Impact Ecosystem

As interest in cross-border collaboration grows, international actors increasingly seek pathways to engage in Saudi Arabia's impact ecosystem. The principles below highlight practical considerations for contributing in ways that are credible, collaborative, and aligned with national priorities.

1. Align Impact Thesis with Vision 2030
Successful engagement typically begins with clear alignment with Vision 2030 and its Vision Realisation Programmes (VRPs). International organisations that position their initiatives within priority sectors such as healthcare, climate resilience, human capability development, and youth empowerment are more likely to demonstrate relevance to local stakeholders and contribute meaningfully to national development objectives.

2. Establish Institutional Legitimacy
Operating effectively in the Kingdom requires navigating a structured regulatory environment. International organisations often establish a local presence and engage with institutions such as the Ministry of Investment (MISA) and the National Centre for Non-Profit Sector (NCNP) to ensure compliance with licensing frameworks and maintain long-term operational credibility.

3. Contribute Through Knowledge and Technical Expertise
Partnerships in the Kingdom frequently emphasise the transfer of expertise rather than standalone service delivery. International organisations that bring global best practices in areas such as impact measurement, innovative financing models, social enterprise development, or programme design are well positioned to strengthen local capacity and contribute to long-term sector resilience.

4. Partner with Established Local Institutions
Collaboration with trusted institutions in the Kingdom, across public, private and philanthropic sectors, can help international organisations navigate local contexts and build on existing delivery infrastructure. These partnerships enable initiatives to leverage local relationships, operational knowledge, and community trust.

5. Pilot Innovations and Enable National Scale
The Kingdom increasingly functions as a testing ground for social innovation. Many initiatives begin as pilot programmes implemented through philanthropic foundations or institutional platforms before being refined and scaled through government systems. International organisations that design interventions with this pilot-to-scale pathway in mind are more likely to achieve sustained impact.

CHAPTER 4

Growth Areas for Impact

Looking ahead, the need for impact capital is becoming increasingly evident in certain fields in the Kingdom. While established priorities such as healthcare and urban development remain foundational, new opportunities are taking shape in areas such as climate adaptation, AI workforce development, and the professionalisation of the non-profit sector. Each of these fields reflects a combination of growing social need and the institutional momentum of Vision 2030. By focusing on these targeted areas, impact capital providers can ensure their resources, both financial and non-financial, address specific challenges while supporting broader, inclusive development across the Kingdom.

Preventive & Community-Based Healthcare

Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods

Affordable and Inclusive Urban Development

Youth Employment and Workforce Transition

Domestic AI Capability and Applied Solutions

Professionalisation of the Non-Profit Sector

Preventive and Community-Based Healthcare

The primary challenge facing the Saudi Arabian healthcare system is a rising prevalence of chronic lifestyle-related and non-communicable conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, which account for over 70% of all deaths in the kingdom.[134] Furthermore, despite substantial public investment in this field, healthcare delivery in the Kingdom remains heavily reliant on hospitals, with around 80% of health system resources directed toward hospital services, rather than early intervention or preventive care.[135] [136] Additionally, structural constraints, such as shortage in healthcare professionals (particularly in specialised fields) and uneven service delivery in rural and remote regions persist.[137]

This creates a clear entry point for impact capital providers to support primary care models such as technology-enabled diagnostic tools, screening programmes, specialised professional training, and community-based care. This could contribute to early detection, strengthening domestic clinical expertise, and reducing long-term system costs. For example, the Ruhs Foundation's blood donation application and Zadar's AI-enabled early detection tools (detailed above in Section 4) demonstrate how technology can help address uneven service delivery in rural and remote regions and reduce reliance on specialist-intensive care models.

Climate Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods

As one of the hottest and driest nations on earth, Saudi Arabia faces acute environmental pressures, including a projected 88% increase in agricultural drought frequency by 2050 and rising sea levels that threaten coastal populations.[138] [139]

The establishment of the Regional Voluntary Carbon Market Company by the PIF and Saudi Tadawul Group has provided the institutional infrastructure necessary for carbon trading across West Asia and North Africa.[140] This development of market-based mechanisms creates a clear pathway for impact capital providers to support early-stage climate projects capable of generating verified environmental outcomes. Catalytic funding is particularly vital for pilot initiatives in land restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and energy efficiency, all of which can later transition to carbon finance and private investment at scale. Furthermore, by ensuring that emerging extractive industries, such as the mining sector, adhere to environmental stewardship principles while delivering local community benefits, impact capital providers can safeguard against economic growth occurring at the expense of the environment.[141] Efforts like these have the potential to position the Kingdom as a regional leader in sustainable finance, balancing industrial expansion with long-term ecological and community resilience.

[134] Noncommunicable diseases and health system responses in Saudi Arabia: focus on policies and strategies. A qualitative study 222. Ahmed Hazazi, Andrew Wilson. y

[135] Awwad, S. M., et al. 2025. Health risks of climate change in Saudi Arabia: A systematic review

[136] Ibid

[137] Almazroui, M., et al. 2023. Climate Change in Saudi Arabia: A Review of Past and Future Trends

[138] G20 Climate Risk Atlas. 2021. Climate risk profile: Saudi Arabia

[139] Atlantic Council. 2024. Climate Profile: Saudi Arabia.

[140] Public Investment Fund. 2022. PIF and Tadawul Group Announce the Establishment of the Regional Voluntary Carbon Market Company

[141] Ibid.

Affordable and Inclusive Urban Development

With 85% of the population concentrated in urban areas like Riyadh and Jeddah, the property prices in urban areas have risen by 25% since 2021.[142][143] For many younger families and lower-income households, the cost of a mortgage now consumes nearly 38% of their income, well above the traditional 30% affordability limit. In line with Vision 2030, integrated urban development means more than just affordable housing, it requires providing access to essential amenities such as clinics, schools, and parks that support residents' well-being.

Impact capital can play an important role in supporting subsidised rental schemes and shared-equity programmes. An example of a philanthropic initiative already in play is Al Fozan Social Foundation's housing initiative, launched in 2009 and later integrated with the Developmental Housing Foundation (Sakan). The programme has provided 178 housing units across 10 buildings, offering low-income families secure and sustainable living environments as of 2026.[144] Expanding similar models can ensure that vulnerable socioeconomic groups are not left behind as the Kingdom works toward its Vision 2030 goal of achieving 70% homeownership.

Youth Employment and Workforce Transition

Saudi Arabia possesses a significant demographic advantage, with approximately 70% of its population under the age of 35 as of 2024.[145] To fully realise the potential of its young workforce, the Kingdom is refining the transition from education to employment within an increasingly diversifying economy. This shift involves preparing the next generation for high-growth, innovation-driven roles in emerging sectors such as AI and electric vehicle manufacturing. Entrepreneurship has also emerged as a complementary pathway into employment, with Global Entrepreneurship Monitor data indicating that Total Early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) rose to around 25% in 2024, a 30% increase from 2022, meaning that a growing share of adults are engaged in starting or running new businesses.

This surge in entrepreneurial energy presents a unique opportunity for impact capital providers to cultivate a new generation of social entrepreneurs. They have an opportunity to provide the mentorship, seed capital, and specialised incubators needed to turn these new businesses into impact-minded enterprises that solve local challenges. Initiatives such as the Misk Social Impact Accelerator programme, a structured three-week mentorship programme for early-stage startups, demonstrate the value of philanthropic support for emerging founders.[146] By backing these young innovators, impact capital providers are not just supporting individual businesses but are de-risking the broader transition to a knowledge-based economy, ensuring that the Kingdom's demographic advantage translates into long-term social and economic impact.

[142] World Bank. 2024. Urban population - Saudi Arabia

[143] Knight Frank. 2024. The Saudi Report 2025

[144] Al Fozan Social Foundation. 2024. Al Fozan Social Foundation wins Real Estate Excellence Award for Affordable Housing

[145] Zawya. 2022. Nearly 70% of Saudis under age of 35

[146] Misk Foundation. 2026. Misk Accelerator

Building Domestic AI Capability and Applied Solutions

As Saudi Arabia's National Strategy for Data and AI enters its second phase in 2026, the challenge has shifted from building world-class infrastructure to developing domestic technical expertise.[147] Without a workforce capable of deploying these digital tools to solve real-world problems, the benefits of technology may remain concentrated among a small group of specialists, rather than elevating the broader workforce in priority sectors such as healthcare, education, and energy.

The national mandate to embed AI across the national curriculum and a USD 20 billion investment in infrastructure presents an opportunity for impact capital providers to support pilot programmes and workforce development initiatives, particularly in emerging application areas where AI is being deployed to address concrete and contextual social and economic challenges.[148] [149] For example, while commercial capital often focuses on pure profit, impact capital can bridge the gap by funding pilot programmes for Arabic-language processing to improve digital inclusion or AI-enabled tools for early disease diagnosis in rural areas. By backing these initiatives, investors help ensure that technology serves as a tool for social equity, improving public services and urban systems to enhance the overall quality of life for all citizens.

Professionalisation of the Non-profit Sector

The non-profit sector in Saudi Arabia has grown by 73% in just two years between 2022 and 2024.[150] Now the sector must transition from a season of rapid growth to institutional maturity. Large-scale initiatives like Misk City, the world's first shared space where non-profit organisations, social innovators, and knowledge institutions can converge, engage in knowledge exchange and explore collaborations signal the Kingdom's long-term investment in building permanent infrastructure for a more institutionalised non-profit sector.[151]

Impact capital proivders can support this national commitment by investing in the capacity-building of local entities so that they can navigate complex governance standards and move beyond informal funding models towards sustainable, large-scale grant absorption. Other important areas for investment include supporting the integration of digital data systems and Impact Measurement and Management (IMM) into core operations. Digital data systems enable improved transparency and service delivery. IMM tools can support NPOs in detecting community needs early in the funding cycle, ensuring data-collected is translated directly into programmatic improvements and resources are prioritised more effectively to maximise social outcomes. These improvements will be particularly valuable as the Kingdom's non-profits increasingly engage with larger institutional funders, including corporate foundations and government-linked entities, which require stronger financial management and reporting systems.

[147] Saudi Data & AI Authority. 2020. National Strategy for Data & AI

[148] Arab News. 2025. Misk Foundation's mentorship program to empower 500 young Saudi leaders

[149] The Economic Times. 2020. Saudi Arabia to invest USD 20 billion in artificial intelligence by 2030

[150] King Khalid Foundation. 2025. Nonprofit Sector Trends in Saudi Arabia 2025

[151] Misk City. 2026. Prince Mohammed Bin Salman Non-Profit City

Looking Ahead

Saudi Arabia's approach to impact is distinguished by a remarkable scale of ambition. This is an approach marked by a multi-layered transition — including traditional giving to innovation-led impact, from isolated efforts to collaborative models, and from measuring outputs to outcomes. It is a shift driven by a diverse array of actors, from family-led philanthropy and royal foundations, to corporate entities, impact investors, and ecosystem enablers. Together, the ecosystem is redefining how capital, capability, and purpose intersect to drive significant progress in healthcare, climate, housing, youth employment, and AI skilling, while further professionalising the sector.

Saudi Arabia's journey demonstrates that when innovation is guided by values, and when openness is matched with intentional partnership, it is possible to build a more prosperous and inclusive economy, one where shared challenges are met with shared solutions. Especially in a global context marked by shifts in development finance and declining Western aid, Saudi Arabia's efforts towards institutional reorganisation, capital allocation, and deeply embedded moral frameworks position the Kingdom as an ideal partner to scale existing solutions and to co-create new solutions for accelerating impact across Asia.

For stakeholders within the Kingdom, Vision 2030 has provided a powerful catalyst, but the continued maturation of the ecosystem will depend on sustained commitment to execution, collaboration, and accountability. For international actors, Saudi Arabia represents an increasingly important space for engagement and partnership. As the ecosystem evolves, it offers a dynamic platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and capital deployment, with the potential to shape not only Asian, but also broader global approaches to impact.

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