



## NEIGHBORS

Pearl Initiative engages with 300 philanthropists

# Shift to strategic giving in the Gulf region accelerated

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

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

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

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

profit organisations contributed and benefited from these regular convenings as they reshaped their giving strategies and approaches in the midst of the pandemic.

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

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

Since the launch of its Governance in Philanthropy programme in 2017, the Pearl Initiative has been actively raising awareness, creating networks, and inspiring action, providing over 700 professionals and leaders working in the philanthropic and corporate philanthropy sector with the knowledge and know-how to improve their giving practices and optimise the impact of their investments. Through over 40 roundtables, workshops and virtual seminars

and 30 bespoke bilingual resources, guides and toolkits made available on the Circle online platform, the programme is promoting the transition away from the traditional way of thinking about philanthropy, CSR, and corporate giving, to a more strategic understanding of the vehicles to drive greater impact.

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

### About the Pearl Initiative

Business leaders from across the Gulf Region formed the Pearl Initiative in 2010 to create a non-profit organisation for the Private Sector to collectively embrace the business case in adopting higher standards in corporate governance, accountability, and transparency to enhance business innovation, opportunity and value creation.

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

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



UAE campaign to help end river blindness and lymphatic filariasis in vulnerable communities.

### Support sought for elimination of neglected tropical diseases

# Fifty days to transform 5 million lives

People across the UAE will carry on the commitment of the UAE's founding father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, to end neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) with a major fundraising effort.

The '50 Days to Transform 5 Million Lives' campaign will begin on 14 October as the countdown begins to the UAE's 50th anniversary on the 2nd of December.

The effort is led by The Reach Campaign, an awareness and fundraising initiative which aims to end two NTDs – river blindness and lymphatic filariasis – in partnership with Emirates Red Crescent and some of the UAE's biggest organisations and companies.

All proceeds will benefit the Reaching the Last Mile Fund (RLMF), which offers a proof of concept for the elimination of the two diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa. Hosted by the END Fund – the leading philanthropic vehicle dedicated to ending NTDs – RLMF is a 10-year, \$100 million USD initiative launched in 2017 by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, with support from several organisations including The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The ELMA Philanthropies.

RLMF delivers preventative treatment for NTDs and focuses on ways to accelerate progress towards elimination – from investing in disease mapping efforts, to supporting advanced lab facilities and cross-border collaborations. The 50 day campaign aims to raise funds to support these activities and ultimately help protect at least five million people from river blindness and lymphatic filariasis.

Organisations that will work with Reach to achieve its fundraising goal include strategic partner, Emirates Red Crescent; founding partners, ADNOC,

Etihad Airways, Lulu Group International and National Health Insurance Company – Daman; and marketing partners, ADCB and Rivoli Group, as well as 18 other major organisations.

A series of fundraising initiatives will be announced over the next 50 days and include personal fundraising challenges, employee giving campaigns, culinary and retail promotions, text-to-give campaigns, a global sweepstakes and an auction of once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

River blindness and lymphatic filariasis disproportionately affect the world's poorest people. Over 200 million people globally require treatment for river blindness, one of the leading causes of preventable blindness, while over 850 million people are at risk of lymphatic filariasis.

H.E. Mohamed Ateeq Al Falahi, Secretary General of Emirates Red Crescent, says: "We are incredibly proud to be supporting the 50 Days to Transform 5 Million Lives campaign in partnership with Reach. This campaign aligns with ERC's values of mobilising human power to support the vulnerable, and as we look to eradicate these preventable diseases, it is crucial for governments, donors, NGOs and the private sector to come together to work toward a more equal future for some of the world's most vulnerable communities."

Nassar Al Mubarak, Managing Director of The Reach Campaign, says: "The UAE has been committed to eliminating these preventable NTDs for over 30 years. In 1990, the UAE's late founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, made a personal donation to The Carter Center's efforts to eradicate the NTD Guinea worm disease and began a decades-long commitment by Abu Dhabi's ruling family to disease eradication, which continues

today through the philanthropic commitments of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed. We are incredibly proud to be honouring this commitment by launching the '50 Days to Transform 5 Million Lives' campaign in the lead up to the UAE's 50th anniversary, as we uphold our deeply embedded values of giving and collective sense of responsibility to help those in need.

"The impact of these two diseases goes well beyond the individual. When adults suffer from river blindness or lymphatic filariasis, children are often taken out of school to support their care, with girls disproportionately bearing the caretaking burden. Countries that eliminate river blindness and lymphatic filariasis can secure a brighter future for their people, while also realising significant economic benefits that catalyse growth.

"Just AED2 can protect someone from these diseases for an entire year and as we celebrate our good fortune during our Golden Jubilee, it is crucial to remember those less fortunate."

Ellen Agler, CEO of The END Fund, says: "Although the end of NTDs is possible within our lifetime, reaching the last mile will only happen with the support of a wide range of partners and innovative new collaborations, like those forged by the Reach Campaign. We are excited to partner with Reach on the 50 Days to Transform 5 Million Lives campaign to deliver even more impact through the Reaching the Last Mile Fund, and we remain incredibly grateful to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed and the leadership of the UAE for their unwavering commitment to eliminating NTDs."

The community is encouraged to take part and donate by texting the word GIVE to 2424. Alternatively, donation is possible through the website <https://www.reachtheend.org/>

editor's choice

