

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS WHO INSPIRE US

we-fi
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
FINANCE INITIATIVE



IN PARTNERSHIP:



WELCOME



At the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), everything we do is to help women in developing countries take control of their economic destiny through entrepreneurship. We are inspired every day by the women we meet who have taken risks, overcome obstacles and faced down sceptics in pursuit of their dreams. In the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA), the risks, obstacles and sceptics can be daunting. Even so, there are many brave, resilient, ingenious women who rise to the challenge every day. They are scientists, innovators, manufacturers, technologists, visionaries, pragmatists and dreamers. And they strive every day to deliver – for their clients, for their investors, for their employees and for their families. And so often, they are also delivering broader development impact for their communities, their countries and their planet.

These are the women who inspire us at We-Fi to do more: to break down barriers, unleash capital and help develop ecosystems that can support the multifaceted needs of women like them.

We have invited a number of inspirational women entrepreneurs from around MENA to join us for We-Fi's MENA Regional Summit, February 16th and 17th in Dubai, with generous support from the Government of UAE. These women have been nominated by We-Fi's Implementing Partners and their clients in MENA as promising or successful entrepreneurs that demonstrate the best of what it means to be an entrepreneur in MENA.

It is an honor to have such an inspiring and talented group of women entrepreneurs joining us. We are sharing their stories in hopes that they will inspire you too.

Wendy Teleki,
Head, We-Fi Secretariat



OVERVIEW

The following group of entrepreneurs* have been invited to participate in the We-Fi MENA Regional Summit. These entrepreneurs have been selected for their exceptional work, innovative ideas, and achievements at various stages of their businesses. Each entrepreneur was nominated by We-Fi Implementing Partners, African Development Bank (AfDB), International Finance Corporation (IFC), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and the World Bank (WB), and ecosystem players they partner with in the MENA region (Endeavor, Flat6Labs, Ibtikar, and Souk At-Tanmeya).

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Nationalities:

Algerian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, Moroccan, Palestinian, Syrian, Tunisian, and Yemeni

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Sectors:

Agribusiness, Crafts, Data Analytics / AI, E-Commerce, Education, Energy, Fintech, Fashion, Health, and Tourism

*Not all the entrepreneurs have received We-Fi funding or support.



Almouneer Medical Service

Noha Khater & Rania Kadry, Co-founders (Egyptian)

Providing Egypt's first specialized diabetic eye care service

www.almouneer.com

Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness worldwide for people aged 15 to 64. Almouneer is the first specialized diabetic eye care service in Egypt, providing patients screening, specialized diagnostics and eye treatment services, utilizing the latest technology and digital infrastructure through its network of clinics. Almouneer's mission is to have a medical and social impact on the health industry in the region, by reducing the percentage of vision loss caused by diabetes (Diabetic Retinopathy). Almouneer was chosen as a case study at INSEAD business school, for its innovative business model and social impact, and has been an Endeavor entrepreneur since 2017. Noha Khater was one of seven entrepreneurs chosen to represent Egypt at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at The Hague in 2019, and was a Cartier Women's Initiative awards finalist in 2018.



AwA

Samia Ben Abdallah, Founder (Tunisian)

Building a strong, ethical brand through timeless fashion

www.awaworld.com



AwA is a Tunisian brand of traditional and innovative leather goods and jewelry. With the support of Souk Attanmia, Samia Ben Abdallah launched her company while drawing inspiration from the local heritage and architecture, specifically from the Medina of Tunis. AwA uses exclusively high-quality leather to create chic and timeless stylish bags and accessories. AwA debuted its very first collection of geometric bags with simple shapes for ambitious, openminded and independent women seeking authentic and savvy products illustrating autonomy, elegance and pride. AwA aims to build and sustain a strong, ethical and aesthetic brand of high-quality leather goods as well as savvy and unique jewelry and accessories. As part of AwA international markets access strategy, Samia has started strengthening her business network in Europe.



AYA Animations

Sara Sawaf, CEO (Syrian)

Inspiring children to lead exemplary lives

www.ayaanimations.com

Aya Animations is a mission-driven production company bringing values-based content in Arabic and English to children across the MENA region and beyond. Launched in 2015 by founder Sara Sawaf, Aya Animations aims to inspire children to lead exemplary lives and leave a lasting, positive impact on their futures, peers and environments. AYA Animations deliver across a variety of media including apps, books, educational material, merchandise and have developed a hero series Aya and Yusuf. Through enriching and enjoyable experiences, Aya strives to seamlessly integrate moral education into the curriculum of life for young audiences everywhere. AYA Animations aims to make Aya and Yusuf a leading brand, by creating characters that will be role models for good manners and performing good deeds.



Carina Wear

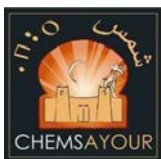
Halla Al Kassam, Founder & Chair (Egyptian)

Growing Egypt's #1 brand for fashionable comfort

www.carinawear.com



Carina founder Hala Kassem was determined to find a solution for women in Egypt, who were facing limited wardrobe choices. The revolutionary brand that is both comfortable and fashionable. Carina Wear brand has grown to become the leading company in its market segment and owns the largest market share in seamless women wear in Egypt. Manufactured in Egypt, Carina provides smart clothing solutions with a product range for women of all ages. In addition to their 140+ retail outlets, the company distributes to more than 2,000 independent stores specializing in casual wear and Lingerie. Carina employs a massive workforce creating over 1,800 direct jobs and growing.



Chems Ayour & Alchemist Eco Resort

Meryam El Ouafi, CEO (Moroccan)

Creating authentic tourist experiences

Chems Ayour is a touristic complex which creates an authentic space paying homage to Moroccan and Berber heritage. Located in a rural area of Morocco, it aims to ensure the balance of society and employability of women and local inhabitants by adding value to the local artisanship, cultural heritage, and natural resources. In 2016, Chems Ayour received an Award of Excellence from AICDS Association in recognition of their social and economic contribution. CEO Meryam El Ouafu is a dynamic entrepreneur who has launched several innovative projects and a Vital Voices Global Partnership VV GROW Fellowship alumna. She has been recognized by the US State Department, the International Alliance for Women, and within her community by the Governor of Agadir and the Regional Council of Tourism.



Chitosan-Egypt

Shahira Yahia, Co-Founder and Chief Marketing Officer (Egyptian)

Innovating organic agri-solutions and building a premium brand

www.chitosaneg.com



Chitosan-Egypt is MENA's leading Chitosan solutions company. Powered by an in-house laboratory and an advisory team from Egypt's leading EU & ISO-certified laboratories, Chitosan-Egypt has come to be known for its premium chitosan-based biofertilizers and biopesticides. It delivers high-performance formulas utilizing 100% EU-approved ingredients for a complete organic experience with 0% pesticide residues. Chitosan-Egypt's portfolio boasts 100+ export/organic farms across 15 governorates & 20 crop categories. Chitosan-Egypt were the 1st place winners at the MENA Vested Summit 2019 and received the 1st place prize at the Innovating for Fayoum GESR Social Innovation Challenge. Chitosan is regarded as one of the most versatile, natural polymers and is increasingly used in a wide variety of agricultural products and medical drugs.



Coushies

Yasmine ElMehairy, Founder & CEO (Egyptian)

Collaborating with local artists and NGOs to develop chic home décor

www.coushies.com

Coushies is a contemporary Egyptian design brand, launched in 2017, that produces textile products for the home décor, travel accessories and gifts. Coushies works directly with talented local artists, digitizes their hand-drawn designs, to be printed on fabric and collaborates with community-based NGOs for production. These include underprivileged women who sew printed designs onto cushions, table linens, laptop sleeves and travel accessories. Coushies sells online, retail distribution and its own pop-up shops. Prior to Coushies, Yasmine was the Co-founder and CEO of Supermama.me, a leading parenting portal benefitting over 5 million Arab mothers, which was acquired by Mawdoo3, one of the region's largest digital content providers.



Dabchy

Amani Mansouri, CEO (Tunisian)

Expanding a digital marketplace for secondhand fashion

www.dabchy.com



Dabchy is a peer-to-peer online marketplace for secondhand fashion where women can buy and sell clothing inside a friendly community of Dabchouchas. Their website and mobile app have attracted more than 480,000 registered users across 3 countries Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, who list more than 2,000 new items every day. Dabchy operates as a trusted third-party and from payment and order fulfillment to shipping and delivery, in order to ensure complete customer satisfaction and prevent the sale of counterfeit items. Founded by Amani Mansouri, Ghazi Ketata and Oussama Mahjoub, Dabchy has been celebrated by Seedstars Tunis and Facebook's FBStart program; and has secured funding from Flat6Labs and 500 Startups during its first seed round.



Dar El Ain

Rania Mechergui, Founder (Tunisian)

Empowering rural communities through eco-tourism

darelain.wordpress.com

Dar El Ain is an eco-tourism center, that provides specialized activities which are co-created with the local community in northwest Tunisia. Founder Rania Mechergui has a background in environmental biology, bio resources management and sustainable development. Throughout her studies, Rania continuously sought opportunities to develop her home region. She was inspired to launch a project to help realize the region's potential and began developing eco-tourism trails. Rania also created a social enterprise "Kolna Hirfa" or "All Artisans" to help promote local products. Her mission continues to promote the natural and ecological potential of Tunisia and the creation of a green economy model that respects the environment and contributes to the sustainable development.



Eventtus

Mai Medhat, Co-Founder (Egyptian)

Delivering a one-stop solution for events

www.eventtus.com



Eventtus is the leading event technology company in the MENA region serving more than 11,000 events. The one-stop shop solution includes ticketing, registration, mobile app, engagement platform and real-time analytics. Eventtus not only provides attendees the full event program and speaker bios, but also enables users to interact with the sessions and speakers, start meaningful conversations and exchange contacts with other attendees through the app directly. Co-Founder Mai Medhat has been named "Entrepreneur of the Year" by Arabian Business in 2016; recognized by the Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2016 as one of the most promising entrepreneurs; and named Startup of the year in 2017 by Entrepreneur Middle East Magazine. Mai was also invited to represent Middle East startups in an iconic panel with Former President Barak Obama and Facebook Founder, Mark Zuckerberg.



Geek Express

Manal Hakim, Founder and CEO (Lebanese)

Enabling the next generation of Arab creators and innovators

www.geekexpress.com

Geek Express is an edu-tech hub for kids and teens enabling Arab creators, innovators, and change makers, through an evolving platform of online and offline workshops and DIY kits. Geek Express's mission is to bridge the gap between traditional curriculums taught at schools and the ever-increasing demand for STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) skills related jobs. Led by Founder and CEO Manal Hakim, Geek Express launched in 2017 and has since opened hubs in different three cities in Lebanon, and a fourth location in Qatar. Each hub offers daily workshops covering an ever-expanding list of topics including virtual reality, coding, robotics, video game design, AI, and more. Geek Express attempts to help bring out the techie in everyone and hopes to open new hub franchises across the MENA region.



Instapower

Ilhem Nemri, Co-Founder (Tunisian)

Increasing access to clean and affordable power

www.instapower.org



Instapower wants to expand access to clean and affordable power across the African continent, particularly in rural communities. Their solution, the Powerbox, is a light, portable device which converts fire into electricity. The idea is as simple as it is innovative. People in the region cook or warm themselves with fire every day. With the help of a Stirling Engine, Instapower transforms warmth into mechanical power and then into electricity. It is straightforward to use and can be placed close to a fire without any danger. Mobile phones and other electrical devices can then be connected to the device and charged. Led by Co-Founder and Chief Technical Officer Ilhem Nemri, Instapower has been celebrated by Open Startup Tunisia and Columbia University's Technology Challenge.



Jeroun

Lara Shahin, Co-Founder (Syrian)

Training Syrian refugee women to shape their own futures

Jeroun aims to empower Syrian refugee women and create economic opportunities through technical and business skills trainings. The Jordan-based company is based in Jordan and found by two Syrian and Jordanian women entrepreneurs. Leveraging online tools and social platforms, Jeroun seeks to play an effective and pioneering role in expanding the capabilities of Syrian women. Co-founder Lara Shahin started with only five Syrian women who left the Za'atari camp in Jordan in 2014 by training them in sewing, handicrafts, marketing and sales. Today, Jeroun employs a small full-time staff of 10 women and sources products from a growing network of women. The company has been recognized by Med-Up Fund National Committee and the Jordan Tourism Board, which highlights where tourists can find their handicrafts.



Kamkalima

Siroun Shamigian, Co-Founder and CEO (Lebanese)

Revolutionizing learning in Arabic

www.kamkalima.com



Kamkalima is a platform revolutionizing learning in Arabic, by providing teachers with appealing content and tools, and students with enjoyable lessons. Kamkalima delivers high interest digital content in Arabic, together with learning and assessment tools, and deep data analytics to help teachers in lesson preparation, student progress reporting and follow up. Since its start in 2015, Kamkalima has become the solution of choice for over 20,000 students (between grades 4 and 12), 500 teachers in 70 schools across 8 countries. CEO Siroun Shamigian has won several awards including the Cartier Women's initiative Award for MENA in 2018, she was the second place winner in the queen Rania Foundation Education Prize in 2019, and was awarded the UNIDO Woman of the Year (EdTech Category) 2017.



Ma Box Alger

Hana Guellati, Founder (Algerian)

Connecting Algerian artists to the world through personalized gift boxes

www.maboxalgerie.com

Founded in 2015, Ma Box was destined to design and create gift boxes ready to offer. Ma Box personalizes gifts according to customer expectations, highlighting the expertise of Algerian artisans and craftsmanship. This service is offered both for individuals and for businesses offering a variety of products, such as soap, pottery, candles, figs, honey and much more. Ma Box travels all over the country to unearth precious objects and products hand crafted and 100% Algerian.



Al Manar Private High School

Naseem Saleh Ahmed Al-Gershi, Headmaster (Yemeni)

Fighting to keep schools open during conflict

Al Manar Private High School has kept its doors open throughout the conflict in Yemen, since it began in 2015. Al Manar's Founder and Headmaster Naseem Al-Qurashi is an accomplished educator, serial entrepreneur, and community leader. Since her start as a teacher, Naseem has served as a Central Director in school administration for 15 years, co-founded the Al Ansar private schools, established Al Nabras Secondary Schools, and was appointed as an Administrative Consultant to the Office of Education. In addition to her impressive career as an educator, Naseem opened Al Saleh children's clothing store and Al Safaa supermarket, and was elected Head of the Women in Business Council at the Taiz Chamber of Commerce. Today, Taiz is considered a red zone in the on-going conflict in Yemen.



Mass Analytics

Ramla Jarrar, CEO (Tunisian)

Driving the growth of marketing analytics across the region

www.mass-analytics.com

Mass Analytics is a vendor of Specialist Software Solutions dedicated to Marketing Attribution and Effectiveness Measurement that help companies optimize their media and marketing budgets. Mass Analytics' flagship product "MassTer" is a one stop shop allowing the clients to perform their Marketing Mix Modelling (MMM) project end-to-end, shortening the project delivery time by 50% while improving the effectiveness of their marketing budget by at least 20%. MASS delivers its software to 20+ clients located in 12 countries around the world. Mass Analytics was included in the first cohort in Tunisia of EBRD's Star Venture program, supporting high potential early stage companies.



Rumman

Shurouq Qawariq, Founder and CEO (Palestinian)

Leveraging fintech to increase financial literacy and savings

www.rumman.co



Rumman, is a startup based in Lebanon, and has created a product that allows users to save by rounding up daily purchases to the nearest dollar, invests their savings into a customized investment portfolio (including Sharia compliant options) and is safe, accessible and easy-to-use. Rumman is making digital saving solutions available to all, regardless of income, education level or financial status. Improved financial literacy and the removal of barriers to investment will help lower-income individuals save more and rely less on credit.



She Shares

Kawther Mouelhi, CEO (Tunisian)

Bringing together local artists and businesses through a digital marketplace

www.sheshares.store

She Shares created an online market place bringing together for local artists, artisans, and Tunisian businesses. She Shares aims to promote talent in Tunisia, and curates a unique experience for its users and customers on its platform. She Shares provides ready-made artisanal products for purchase but is also a marketplace for those same artisans to identify and source raw materials at competitive pricing. Kawther Mouelhi is industrial chemistry engineer graduate, and prior to being an entrepreneur, she was a commercial manger in the private sector.



Tarjama FZ LLC

Nour Al Hassan, Founder and CEO (Jordanian)

Translating over 50 languages for clients across MENA

www.tarjama.com



Tarjama founded in 2008 to meet the growing demand for good translation services that cater to the unique multicultural environment in the Middle East. Tarjama is a leading provider of Arabic translation and content (including translation to and from 50 languages) and have built one of the strongest tech-powered Arabic databases worldwide. Tarjama combines AI technology and highly educated translators to provide reliable, efficient, and accurate translation services for businesses of all sizes. To date, the company has translated 200M+ words from 30+ languages into Arabic for 800+ clients worldwide. Tarjama recently launched its "Ureed" platform, an editorial marketplace that pairs freelance translators with clients.



Tawazon

Suna Zoabi Othman, Founder and CEO (Palestinian)
Helping Arab families find balance through meditation
www.tawazonapp.com

Tawazon seeks to improve the daily life of the Arab person and families through its mobile application that provides daily, short, and scientifically proven meditation sessions. The innovation and excellence offered by Tawazon focuses on developing and recording meditation sessions in the Arabic language which aimed at Arab communities around the world. Meditation content in a person's mother tongue is a critical component to its effectiveness. In addition, the mediation session on the mobile application focuses in on many of the daily challenges faced such as anxiety, tension, lack of peace of mind and inner peace. Using digital tools readily available to many people allows for easy to access from anywhere and anytime using their own smartphones.



Only you can control
your future 99
- Dr. Seuss



We-Fi Projects in the Middle East and North Africa

The Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) is a groundbreaking partnership that aims to unlock financing for women-led/owned businesses (WSMEs) in developing countries. We-Fi's partners include 14 governments, six multilateral development banks as implementing partners, and numerous other stakeholders in the public and private sector around the world.

We-Fi operations are driven by six accredited MDBs that develop and implement programs and projects specifically designed to maximize the impact of We-Fi financing.

IFC: Flat6Labs Tunis, a seed fund building the capacity of women entrepreneurs

In Tunisia, and more broadly in the Maghreb region, funding and support for early-stage companies remain scarce, with women more acutely impacted. Flat6Labs is a regional startup accelerator program that supports and invests in bright and passionate entrepreneurs with cutting-edge ideas, providing seed funding, strategic mentorship, a creative workspace, a multitude of perks, entrepreneurship-focused business training, and access to an expansive network of partner entities, mentors and investors.

We-Fi's investment, alongside IFC's, in Flat6Labs Tunis will support approximately 90 early stage companies, helping to fill the void of early stage capital in Tunisia and MENA region and ensure that women-owned startups are a dedicated focus Flat6Labs. Specifically, the project aims to support women entrepreneurs, leaders, and private sector entities to build the capabilities of women and create role models that enable a virtuous cycle.

Islamic Development Bank: Business Resilience Assistance for Value-Adding Enterprises (BRAVE Women)

The Islamic Development Bank's (IsDB) We-Fi program, BRAVE Women, aims to enhance the resilience of women-owned and led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in fragile contexts. It recognizes the untapped economic potential of women entrepreneurs and works to increase their business growth opportunities through capacity building and increased funding. BRAVE Women focuses on reviving women-owned and led MSMEs with potential for scale up and replication in other fragile countries. In Yemen, where BRAVE Women has first launched, the Small and Micro-Enterprises Promotion Agency (SMEPS) is the local implementing agency. BRAVE Women comprises the following key components: 1) Building WSME capacity in business resilience; 2) Providing business recovery financial support; 3) promoting value chain resilience; and 4) establishing the BRAVE IT platform and project management unit (PMU). The program is managed by the IsDB's private sector arm, the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD), with joint program oversight from the IsDB gender team.

World Bank: MENA E-Commerce project: Leveraging digital platforms to support women-led SMEs

Trade, exporting, and digital technologies provide an important pathway for women to improve firm performance. Use of online platforms helps women overcome the barriers they face to trade.

WBG We-Fi leverages digital technologies to expand WSME participation in e-commerce platforms across 7 MENA countries (Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia). The project nurtures pools of e-commerce advisors and export champions in each country, while improving business environment and export ecosystems to facilitate the new entry of WSMEs. It pays close attention to marginalized WSMEs in FCV countries, including Syrian refugees. The scale up We-Fi project aims to train 75 e-commerce advisors and provide support in entering new markets to 750 WSMEs.

During FY19, the project team reviewed the e-commerce regulations in the MENA participant countries and conducted diagnostic studies to identify other main constraints women face in e-commerce, including in areas such as logistics for parcel delivery, payment systems, and obstacles to trade credit. The analysis focuses on finding those constraints specific to women. The team organized e-commerce events with government and private sector partners in Djibouti and Lebanon.

International Trade Centre (ITC) serves as the implementing partner for the We-Fi MENA E-Commerce project in Lebanon and Tunisia. ITC enables SMEs in developing and transition economies to become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, thus raising incomes and creating job opportunities, especially for women, young people, and poor communities. Established in 1964, ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations.

*To stay updated on We-Fi's work, visit:
www.we-fi.org*

*Follow us on LinkedIn:
www.linkedin.com/company/women-entrepreneurs-finance-initiative/*



