



Abdulla Al Ghurair  
Foundation



# Nomu Al Ghurair:

## A Scalable Model for Talent Development

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Foreword

**Dr. Sonia Ben Jaafar**

CEO, Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation



Across the Arab region, young people aspire to a brighter future. Their talents are immense, yet a gap between their skills and a fast-evolving job market stifles their potential and threatens our region's future.

At the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, we harness the transformative power of education and skills development for dignified work to unlock the potential of every young Arab. The Nomu Al Ghurair Program embodies this mission.

Nomu, meaning "growth" in Arabic, represents our dedication to nurturing a generation equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to thrive in the 21st-century workforce. We are cultivating future leaders, innovators, and entrepreneurs who will shape our region's destiny.

Our unique Nomu Al Ghurair model integrates in-demand technical and transferable skills with mentorship, real-world experience, and connections to market opportunities to ensure our youth are future-ready. We emphasize critical thinking, creativity, communication, and

collaboration—essential skills for an automated world—and ground our work in a deep understanding of our region's unique challenges and opportunities.

Diverse success stories, from dynamic AI ecosystems in the UAE to thriving rural communities in Tunisia, inspire us. While we are proud of our existing partnerships, we recognize that further collaboration is key to expanding our impact. We are actively seeking new partners who share our values and vision for a better tomorrow for Arab youth.

### **A call to action: Join us in building a brighter future**

This report highlights our achievements and serves as a call to action. We invite philanthropists, policymakers, educators, businesses, and community leaders to join this mission. Together with our current partners and new allies, we can ensure every young person in the Arab region realizes their full potential and contributes to a more prosperous, sustainable future.

# Executive summary

The Arab region is experiencing significant economic and demographic changes, with many young people seeking meaningful careers. However, a gap exists between graduate skills and job market demands. The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation is helping to bridge this gap through its Nomu Al Ghurair Program: an adaptable, home-grown model of strategic philanthropy. This program aligns with global efforts to enhance the learning to earning pathway and is proving effective as a regional model. This report highlights Nomu Al Ghurair's scalable upskilling solutions, offering valuable insights for various stakeholders committed to empowering Arab youth across the region.

## Introduction: A model for the Arab region

Nomu Al Ghurair, meaning “growth” in Arabic, focuses on increasing youth employability through high-quality upskilling, transforming the economic landscape with locally driven talent solutions. This UAE-based program is adaptable, scalable, and tailored to the region's cultural and economic contexts.

Employability and labor market preparedness are key. Nomu Al Ghurair's programs are co-designed in multi-sector, multi-stakeholder partnerships that aim to equip youth with market-driven specialized technical training and transferable skills. Nomu Al Ghurair collaborates with the private sector, education providers, government, and community partners to create training pathways that are aligned to the market, allowing access to employment opportunities in sought-after fields. Participants work on real-world challenges through capstone projects, gaining industry-recognized professional certifications.

## Employment in flux: The local and regional context

The Arab region is undergoing significant economic, demographic, and knowledge-system transitions, impacting the labor market and young people in particular. Traditional economies are shifting towards diversified ones, emphasizing digitalization, sustainability, and net-zero targets. Educational systems, however, are often found to lag behind labor market needs, particularly in “soft” skills and digital competencies.

A notable demographic shift has produced a “youth bulge” (ages 15-29), reshaping the labor market and presenting both challenges and opportunities. Youth in the region show resilience and potential, particularly in STEM fields, contributing to economic transformation. However, youth unemployment is high—at 28% in 2023, more than three times the adult rate and double the global youth rate.<sup>1</sup>

Strengthening the connection between education and employment is crucial for realizing the region's youth potential. Nomu Al Ghurair, which aims to align with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), exemplifies global trends towards strategic philanthropy in the region. This program is bridging the gap between education and employment, empowering youth to thrive in a changing economy.

## The Nomu Al Ghurair model: Strategic philanthropy in action

Nomu Al Ghurair's growth and innovation offer valuable lessons for strategic philanthropy in the region, encapsulated in its "3Cs" model:

- **Comprehensive:** Combines technical and transferable skills with collaborative and creative abilities, fostering continuous learning.
- **Contextualized:** Tailored to local community needs and aligned with labor market demands and national strategies.
- **Centered:** Focused on youth, considering their needs and engaging them in learning and ideation, based on empirical research.

All Nomu Al Ghurair Pathways are:

- **Agile and innovative:** Programs adapt rapidly to changing conditions, with a focus on impact backed by data. Monitoring and evaluation ensure continuous learning.
- **Customizable:** Programs are tailored to individual needs. Inclusivity is prioritized.
- **Geared toward the job market:** Programs offer recognized certifications in market-driven specializations. Collaboration with industry stakeholders allows smooth transitions into the workforce.

Nomu Al Ghurair strengthens partner organizations through capacity building, ensuring effective program delivery, and scalability. Its homegrown nature, cultural familiarity, and proximity to local businesses enable rapid adaptation and innovative approaches, expanding opportunities for learners.

## Scaling up along multiple pathways

A key feature is that upskilling or reskilling is offered via multiple Nomu Al Ghurair's pathways. These align with the UAE's priority sectors:

- **Nomu Al Ghurair Digital:** Focuses on digital skills proficiency.
- **Nomu Al Ghurair Women:** Aims to increase female labor market participation.
- **Nomu Al Ghurair Green:** Explores upskilling in sustainability fields.
- **Nomu Al Ghurair Forward:** Encompasses transferable and soft future-facing skills.

In its first two years, Nomu Al Ghurair achieved significant success with multiple implementing partners. Building on this, the Foundation has expanded the program regionally, tailoring programs to local needs. Since November 2023, it has extended to Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon, with plans for further expansion.

## Conclusion

As Nomu Al Ghurair evolves, it remains committed to empowering youth and contributing to regional development goals. Its success highlights the power of strategic philanthropy, community empowerment, and collaboration. Flexible and innovative, Nomu Al Ghurair invites more partners to join its mission, driving greater change for lasting regional impact.

# Introduction: A model for the Arab region



**Across the Arab region, countries are experiencing a surge of young people seeking meaningful careers for a changing and turbulent world. However, career ambitions are stifled by a persistent gap between the demands of the job market and the skills that youth possess, whether graduates or NEET (not in employment, education, or training.)**

As the largest privately funded philanthropic foundation focused on education in the Arab region, the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation seeks to address this mismatch. At the 2022 World Government Summit, the Foundation launched its flagship program, Nomu Al Ghurair, to create upskilling opportunities for youth.

Nomu means “growth” in Arabic, and Nomu Al Ghurair is about enabling youth to grow and flourish: building essential future skills and increasing employability through high-quality upskilling. This program, fully funded by the Foundation, is grounded in the regional cultural and economic context. It is committed to transforming the economic landscape with locally driven, multi-pathway solutions.

Employability and labor market preparedness are embedded in all Nomu Al Ghurair Pathways. A comprehensive approach to workforce development has been co-designed in consultation with multiple stakeholders, including industry. This aims to equip youth with future-facing, market-driven, technical and transferable skills.

Nomu Al Ghurair engages with the corporate sector to give youth access to internships, job opportunities, mentorships, and apprenticeships. With opportunities to work on real-world challenges through capstone projects, participants can apply their newly acquired skills in practical settings, while gaining industry-recognized professional certifications.

The initial goal was to empower 25,000 Emirati youth by 2025 with sustainable skills needed to thrive in a diversified economy. Nomu Al Ghurair has exceeded this target—and expanded well beyond its origins to demonstrate its effectiveness as a model for the region.

This report, commissioned by the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, explores these facets, and presents Nomu Al Ghurair as a model for implementing and scaling effective upskilling solutions across the region. It is hoped that it will hold value for a range of organizations and individuals—including stakeholders in private and public sectors, academic institutions, development organizations, and international education and philanthropy communities—who are dedicated to working together towards the greater goal of empowering Arab youth to thrive, from learning to earning.





# 01

## Employment in flux: The local and regional context

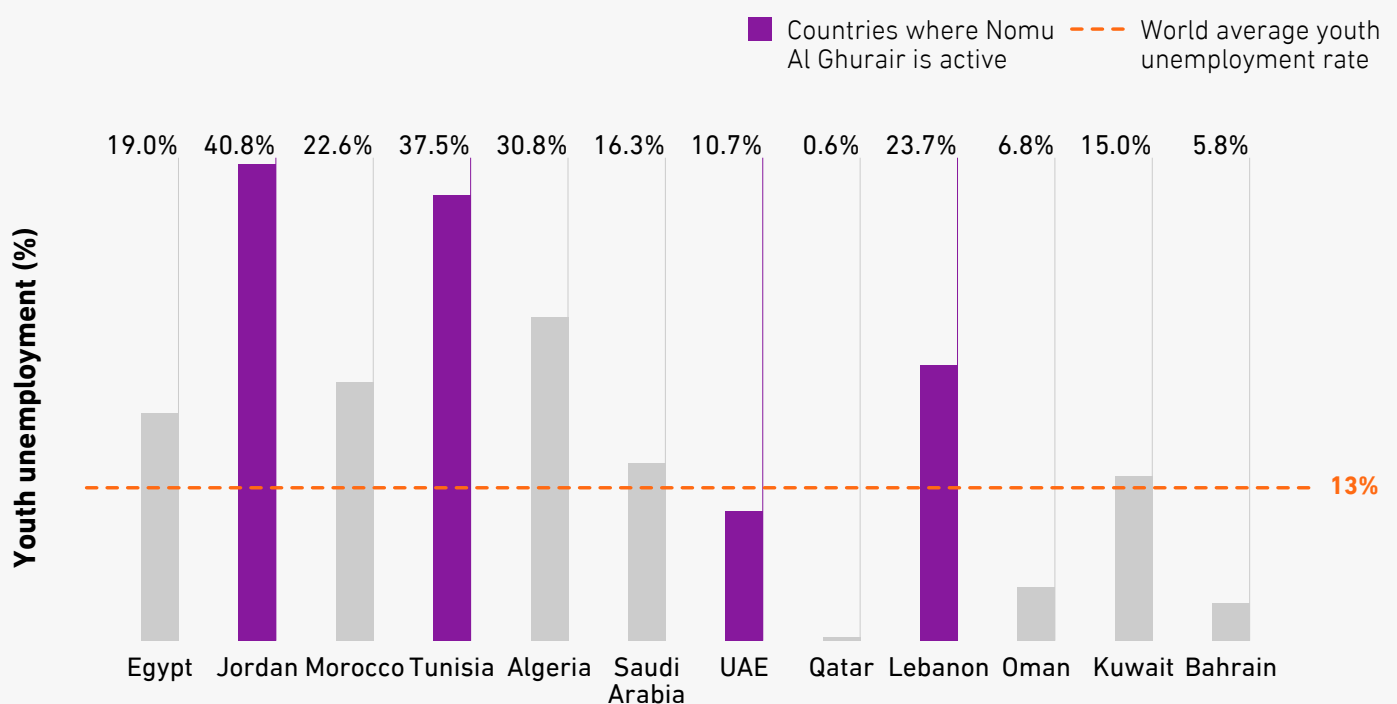
**A drastic economic, demographic, and knowledge systems transition is occurring across the Arab region, with profound consequences for the labor market and for young people. Addressing these emerging demands means empowering graduates to adapt and assume new roles.**

The world is seeing a shift from traditional economies (such as oil-based) toward diversified economies that emphasize digitalization, sustainability, and net-zero targets.<sup>2</sup> A further complicating factor is that the region has seen a striking demographic shift over the last few decades, producing a “youth bulge” between the ages of 15 and 29. The reshaping of the labor market has a particular impact on these young people, many of whom are just starting to navigate the employment landscape.

The influx of youth into the workforce brings both challenges and opportunities. With a rising interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, they are poised to contribute meaningfully to, and benefit from, the economic transformation.<sup>3</sup> More and more youth are engaging in the private sector, shaping the future of the region. Properly harnessed, their resilience and potential can energize the economy.

However, if job creation and employment levels do not keep pace with a surging youthful population, individual hardship and social instability will follow. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) projections, the youth unemployment rate in the Arab region stood at 28% in 2023—around double the global youth rate.<sup>1</sup> Youth unemployment is almost twice as high as the world average, and growing even faster. (Figure 1.)

Figure 1:  
**Youth unemployment rate in the Arab region vs world average, 2023<sup>4</sup>**



Source: World Bank Group, modelled on International Labour Organization estimate

To accommodate young workseekers, more than 33 million new jobs need to be created by 2030 in the Arab region, according to the United Nations.<sup>5</sup> These challenges are even more severe for young people living in poverty or in remote areas; refugees; women; and people of determination (POD). Many regional economies have not been growing at a pace sufficient to generate jobs or opportunities for the youth.

Compounding these problems, the systems and content of education frequently lag behind the needs and priorities of a rapidly changing labor market—where “soft” skills such as communication, creativity, and critical thinking are in demand. With the rapid adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and automation, basic and advanced digital skills will also be required to meet and create the future demands of the job market.<sup>6</sup>

To realize the economic and educational potential of the region’s youth, a key priority is therefore to strengthen the connections between education and employment—“learning to earning.”

## Strategic philanthropy in the regional context

All this plays out against a backdrop of trends in global philanthropy, which has emerged as a significant force for development and which is central to the mission of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, there has been a trend toward greater “institutionalization” of the philanthropic sector—meaning a closer alignment with the broader development sector. As elsewhere in the world, there has also been a shift toward more strategic philanthropy in the Arab region, involving social investment for long-term, collaborative solutions. The geopolitical and socioeconomic challenges of the region place even greater emphasis on humanitarian and development assistance.<sup>8</sup>

Since 2015, one powerful focus for such efforts has been the United Nation’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This recognizes that ending poverty must be integrated with strategies to build economic growth and address environmental and social needs, including education and employment.<sup>9</sup>

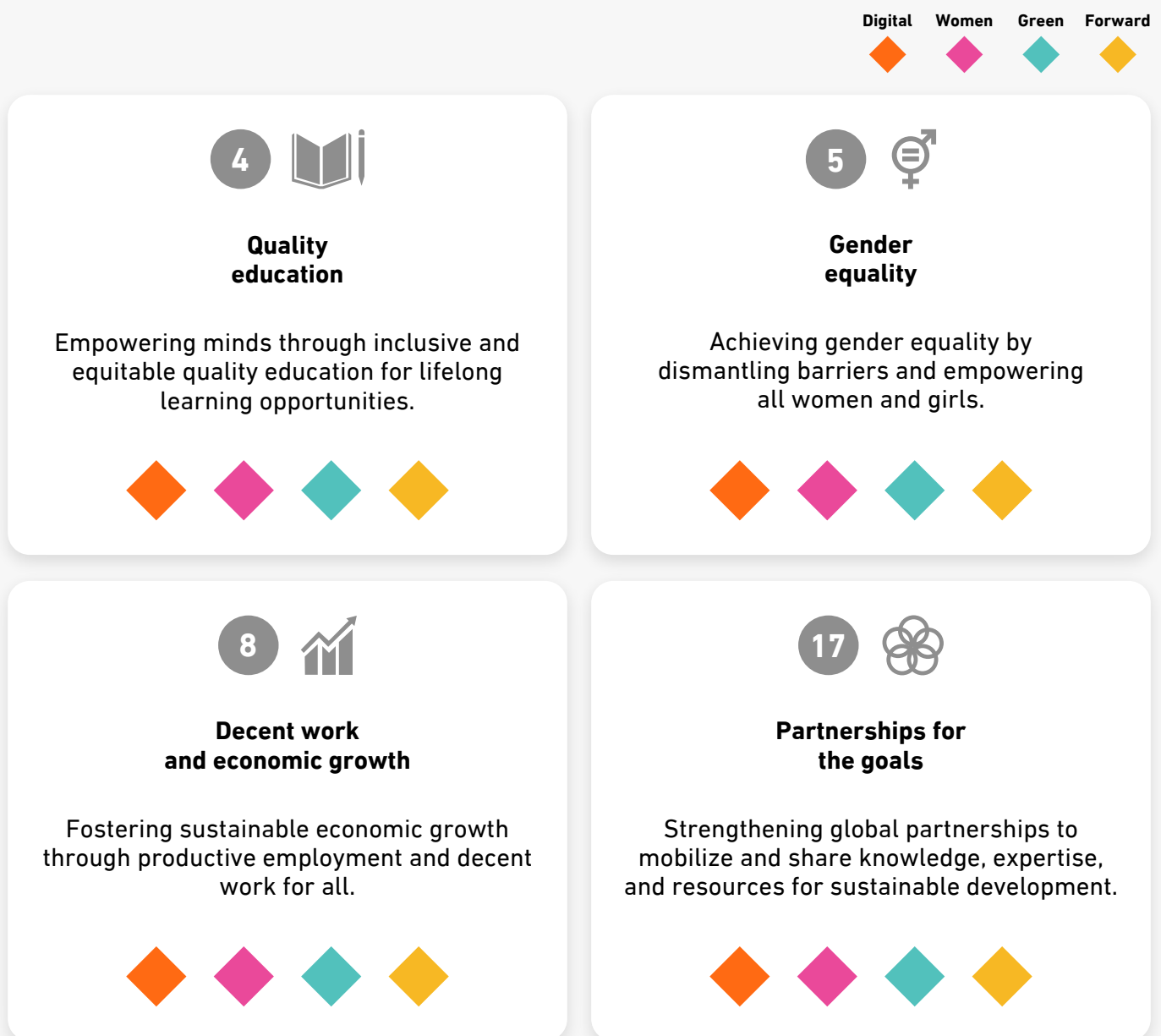
The Foundation, through its programs and partnerships, adopts the Nexus model, which recognising the interconnected nature of SDGs and aligns closely with UAE Vision 2030.<sup>10</sup>

SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). Programs align with other goals such as SDG 13 (environment) as applicable. (Figure 2.)

In line with these aims, Nomu Al Ghurair embeds four core SDGs into its framework: SDG 4, (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality),

Figure 2:

### Nomu Al Ghurair aligns with key UN Sustainable Development Goals





# 02

**The Nomu Al Ghurair  
model: Strategic  
philanthropy in action**

**Nomu Al Ghurair is built on an agile model that enables it both to scale up and to adapt to specific local contexts and participants. As such, the program contributes to regional and global efforts to close the learning to earning gap.**

Nomu Al Ghurair's growth and innovation has produced valuable lessons and insights for how to conduct strategic philanthropy in the region. These lessons are encapsulated in the program's "3Cs" model—Comprehensive, Contextualized, and Centered—which informs the design and implementation of pathways and projects and enables scalability.<sup>11</sup> (Figure 3.)

- **Comprehensive:** Combining complementary technical and transferable skillsets with essential collaborative and creative skills, fostering a continuous learning mindset.
- **Contextualized:** Tailored to the needs and interests of the local community; aligned with labor market demands as well as national strategies and priorities.
- **Centered:** Placing youth at the center of learning processes, taking into consideration their needs and interests and engaging them in learning and ideation, grounded in empirical research for data-driven, evidence-based efforts.

Within the 3C framework, certain characteristics allow Nomu Al Ghurair Pathways to be both responsive to local conditions and scalable: they are agile and innovative, customizable, and geared toward the job market.

- **Agile and innovative:** One key to the program's success is its agility—the ability to pivot and adapt rapidly to changing

conditions, including cultural context and audience needs. For example, in the Nomu Al Ghurair Women Pathway, one cohort was taught online during the month of Ramadan, allowing participants flexible attendance during fasting hours.

Nomu Al Ghurair adheres to principles of monitoring and evaluation (M&E); feedback is encouraged and learnings are rapidly applied. This is a continuous learning process that is inclusive of everyone involved.

While flexible and open to experimentation, the model is also rigorous. Agility is designed to maximize effectiveness, and is backed up by data from the field. Always, the focus is on "impact" not "impulse."

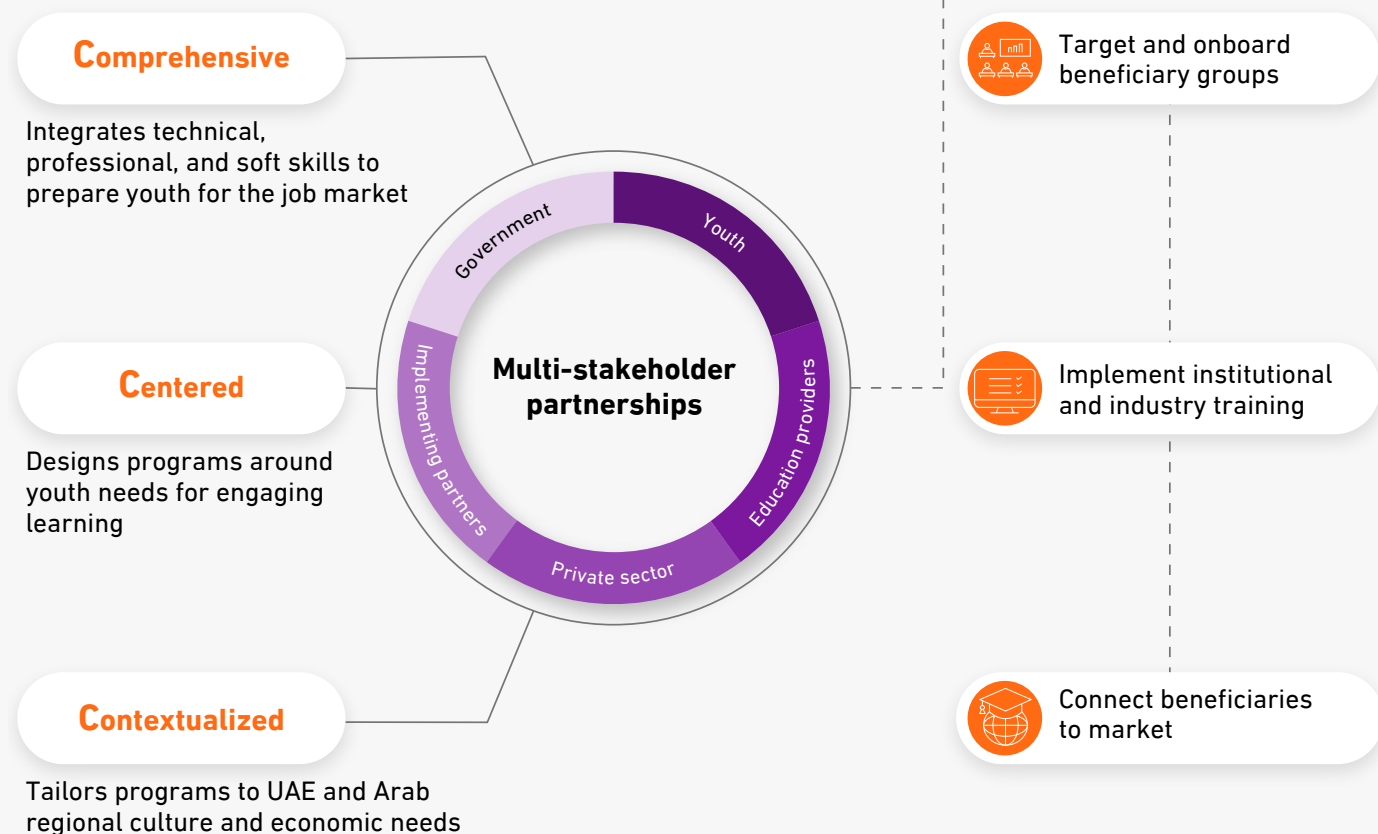
- **Customizable:** Programs are tailored to the individual needs, work aspirations of participants, and local market needs. They might be delivered fully online to allow learners across different localities to join. In another example, while programs are primarily delivered in English, Arabic speakers can be provided to facilitate the learning journey. Inclusivity is important here: priority is given to youth with less access to opportunities, including women and those residing in remote areas.

Different levels of skill and education can also be catered for, with opportunities ranging from foundation level through to specialization. This differential training ensures each participant receives exactly what they need to succeed. Short but intensive programs (between one to six months) address immediate gaps while also providing depth of content.

Figure 3:

## Nomu Al Ghurair's approach to program design

### Principles underpinning the model



- **Geared toward the job market:** Nomu Al Ghurair is focused on connecting talent to the market. Practical interventions are grounded in immediate and long-term future employment needs. One aspect of this is that all programs offer recognized certifications in market-driven specializations.

Close collaboration with industry stakeholders at all stages helps participants transition smoothly into the workforce: from identifying skills shortages and designing projects to fill those gaps, to creating capstone projects that involve students in workplace projects, to helping place students in jobs in desirable sectors. Projects are effectively embedded within a network of partners committed to providing opportunities.

Nomu Al Ghurair focuses on strengthening these organizations. This capacity building involves working closely with partners to build administrative and project management capabilities and interconnectivity, ensuring that they continue to deliver and scale programs effectively into the future.

These valuable qualities are linked to the homegrown nature of Nomu Al Ghurair. Cultural familiarity and proximity, including to local businesses, makes it far easier to react rapidly to circumstances or try out novel approaches, expanding opportunities for learners in innovative ways.

## Multi-sector, multi-stakeholder partnerships

Collaborations with stakeholders are central to creating responsive programs. The youth themselves are important partners, involved in shaping projects and ensuring that Nomu Al Ghurair remains relevant and impactful. In addition:

- **Private sector partners** provide real-world insights into industry needs. They help shape the curriculum and can offer internships and job placements—effectively investing in their future workforce through Nomu Al Ghurair.

- **Education providers** bring expertise, academic quality, and innovation in curriculum design and delivery, and help bridge the gap between education and employment.
- **Government partners** help to align Nomu Al Ghurair's efforts with national strategies such as Emiratization and workforce development objectives, and can support scaling up.
- **Collaborating community partners** support outreach and can connect Nomu Al Ghurair with youth across the UAE and the Arab region.

The Foundation collaborates with strategic partners and responds to requests from significant stakeholders to support them in delivering their mandate. Partners choose each other based on complementary strengths and a matching vision.

Partnerships vary in duration, nature, and depth: from long-term, strategic collaborations with key stakeholders like government agencies and large corporations; to operational relationships for day-to-day implementation; to creative collaborations with tech firms, start-ups, or research institutions that bring new ideas and approaches to the table.



# Partner Spotlight: Higher Colleges of Technology

Driving career readiness through strategic partnerships

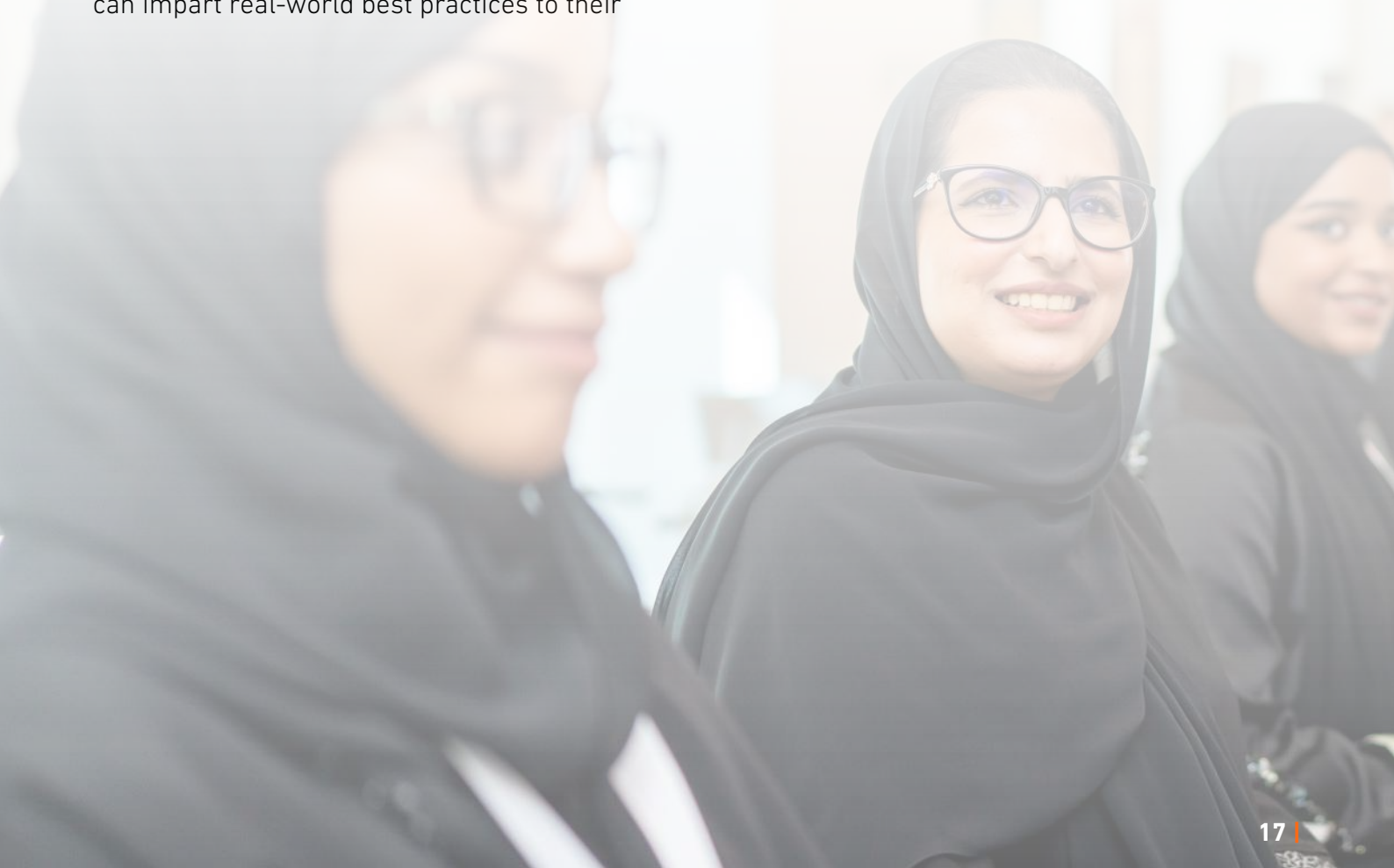
The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) is the UAE's largest applied higher educational institution, with 16 campuses in major cities. HCT specializes in hands-on education in fields like business, engineering, and health sciences, focusing on workplace-relevant skills and professional certification—always with an eye on market demands.

The partnership between the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation, HCT and The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MoHRE) was announced in May 2024, with the goal of providing 1,000–1,500 professional certificates annually for HCT students, as well as mentorship, training, and innovation support. Partnership director Sara Almarzooqi explains that HCT seeks out “extraordinary partners” that can impart real-world best practices to their

students. With aligned visions, the Foundation and HCT were a good fit: many HCT students were already deployed in Foundation programs. The agreement was based on milestones and clear KPIs that put the students and their career readiness first.

The Foundation has made Nomu Al Ghurair TechUp Program courses available to all 25,000 bachelor and diploma students enrolled at HCT, while the Nomu Al Ghurair Leadership Program allows students preparing for the workplace to benefit from exposure to international organizations.

Sara says: “Those experiences can’t be found easily; the coaching and mentorship the Foundation provides has a huge impact.”



The Foundation also enables access to influential role models such as Mr. Sultan Abdulla Al Ghurair, Board member of the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation; Chief Executive Officer, Al Ghurair Properties & Al Ghurair Energy. Sessions with such leaders give students the confidence to speak up and engage, Sara says. The interventions extend to staff, too, with the rollout of several courses with Waterloo University to upskill HCT faculty. Sara notes: “We did a session yesterday that targeted 150 students, but more than 200 students attended. It was amazing. Usually, I struggle to attract students. But when they see ‘Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation,’ they are happy to come and join.”

Sara particularly values the Foundation’s ability to transform ideas into tangible interventions, tackle challenges quickly, and find fresh solutions. Constant, reliable communication is also important, and Sara meets with the Foundation weekly: “Their communication is highly professional, and they make themselves available,” she says. “We talk about problems early.”

In closing, Sara reflects: “The Foundation team is humble, available, down to earth, and has an open mindset. It gives me a feeling that I am part of their team, and they are part of HCT. We know each other very well.”



**I want to meet people from different cultures and build my communication and teamwork skills and qualifications ... Nomu Al Ghurair Women is a new opportunity, a new experience, a new adventure that will help me create the new version of myself—with more skills.”**

— Shoug Alawadhi, HCT student,  
Fujairah, UAE



# 03

**Scaling up along  
multiple pathways**

**One of Nomu Al Ghurair's distinguishing features is that it provides multiple pathways, each enabling access to unique employment opportunities for youth in need of upskilling or reskilling, regardless of their educational or employment history. These pathways are supported by multi-stakeholder partnerships, creating a comprehensive youth-development ecosystem.**

Mirroring the UAE's priority sectors, Nomu Al Ghurair has developed four distinct upskilling pathways, all continuously expanding and evolving. (Figure 4.)

**Nomu Al Ghurair Digital** is focused on upskilling in different levels of digital skills proficiency. Projects that fall under this umbrella have included the Nomu Al Ghurair TechUp Program, in partnership with Udacity.

**Nomu Al Ghurair Women** aims to increase female participation in the labor market through management and leadership upskilling, professional development, and digital

advancement. Programs have included the Nomu Al Ghurair Women in AI Program in partnership with Zaka AI and the Nomu Al Ghurair Women in Leadership Program with Skyrize Partners.

**Nomu Al Ghurair Green** explores upskilling in sustainability fields such as sustainable construction and environmental planning. A Professional Development Certificate on Sustainable Built Environments was launched in partnership with the Abdulla Al Ghurair Hub for Digital Teaching and Learning at the American University in Beirut (AUB).

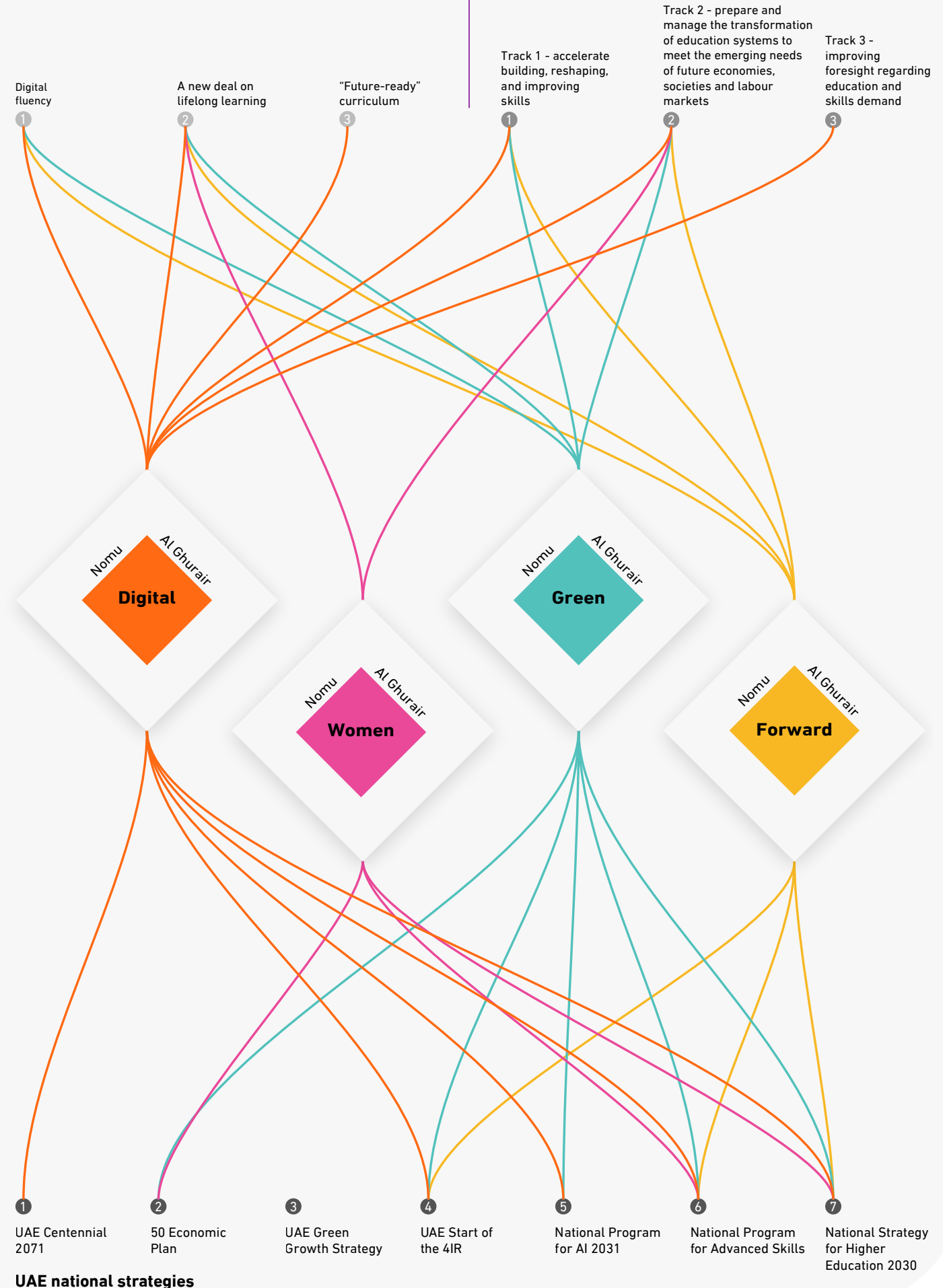
**Nomu Al Ghurair Forward** encompasses transferrable and soft future-facing skills, including language skills, for employment across all sectors. Programs have included Nomu Al Ghurair Siraj Program with CNN Arabic and SkyNews Arabia, and Nomu Al Ghurair Talaqa Program with Englease.

Figure 4:

## How Nomu Al Ghurair Pathways target youth unemployment: 3 key strategies aligned

### WEF's "Closing the Skills Gap" Initiative

### UAE's "Closing the Skills Gap" Initiative



At the national level, Nomu Al Ghurair's strategic objectives are closely aligned with the UAE government's visionary projects, notably "Projects of the 50." This is a series of projects aimed at accelerating the UAE's development over the next half century, transforming it into a global economic hub that attracts talent and investors. Nomu Al Ghurair provides high-quality training to equip Emirati youth to contribute to this scheme.

This is why Nomu Al Ghurair partnered with NAFIS, a federal program under the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MoHRE). NAFIS is designed to increase the competitiveness of Emirati workers and empower them to occupy positions in the private sector. In this strategic partnership, Nomu Al Ghurair's training and development pathways are hosted on the NAFIS platform. This crucial partnership allows Nomu Al Ghurair to reach a broader network of learners, and helps to integrate and align its training projects with the national framework and priorities such as Emiratization.



**As a fresh graduate, I struggled to find a job in my dream companies and was constantly rejected. I felt disappointed and less confident in myself. Joining the the Nomu Al Ghurair TechUp Program was the first time I got accepted in something, so it was a lovely response. After I graduated, I got a paid internship position in the medical industry and I was able to build a digital app which impressed my supervisor and team."**

— TechUp Learner, UX graduate,  
Abu Dhabi, UAE

# Partner Spotlight: Udacity

## Bridging the digital talent gap

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation partnered with Udacity (Part of Accenture) to launch the first Nomu Al Ghurair TechUp Program in March 2022. Udacity is a global educational organization that specializes in “nanodegrees” in high-demand digital skills. This innovatively coupled the delivery of nanodegrees with employment readiness training and community building.

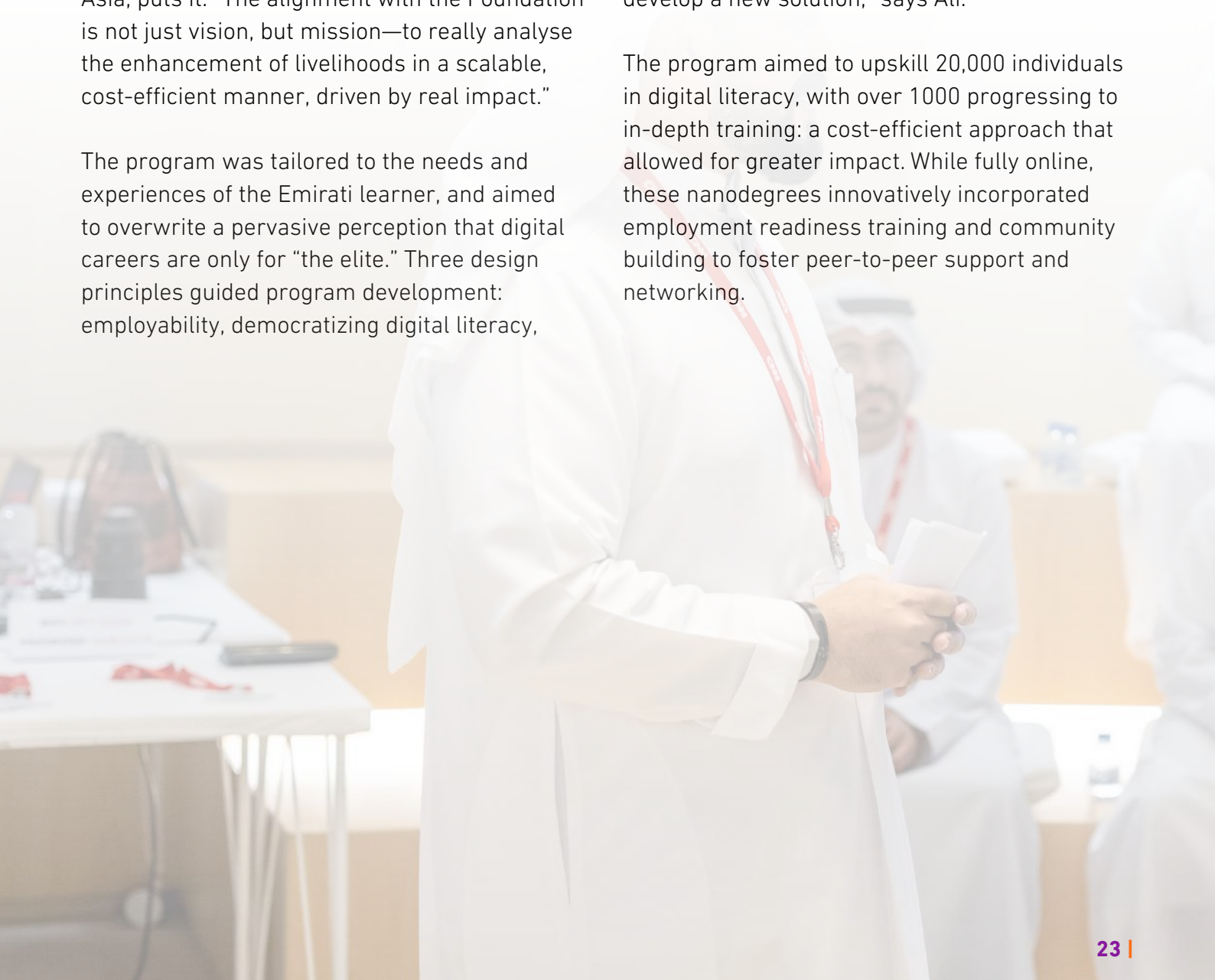
Udacity has long been a champion of bridging the digital talent gap and equipping learners with future-ready skills, which aligns well with the Foundation’s vision. As Ali Kesserwani, Udacity’s societal impact director for the Middle East and Asia, puts it: “The alignment with the Foundation is not just vision, but mission—to really analyse the enhancement of livelihoods in a scalable, cost-efficient manner, driven by real impact.”

The program was tailored to the needs and experiences of the Emirati learner, and aimed to overwrite a pervasive perception that digital careers are only for “the elite.” Three design principles guided program development: employability, democratizing digital literacy,

and inviting Emirati learners to participate in previously untapped learning spaces. Ali explains that the design was not “off the shelf”. Nomu Al Ghurair and Udacity aligned on a consultative approach in framing the problem and designing solutions.

The Foundation, with its highly collaborative and adaptable ethos, was particularly well equipped for such a partnership. “The power of the dynamic we co-created allowed us to really adopt an analytical, data-driven approach in understanding what the issues are and pivoting in a very agile manner—very key—in order to develop a new solution,” says Ali.

The program aimed to upskill 20,000 individuals in digital literacy, with over 1000 progressing to in-depth training: a cost-efficient approach that allowed for greater impact. While fully online, these nanodegrees innovatively incorporated employment readiness training and community building to foster peer-to-peer support and networking.

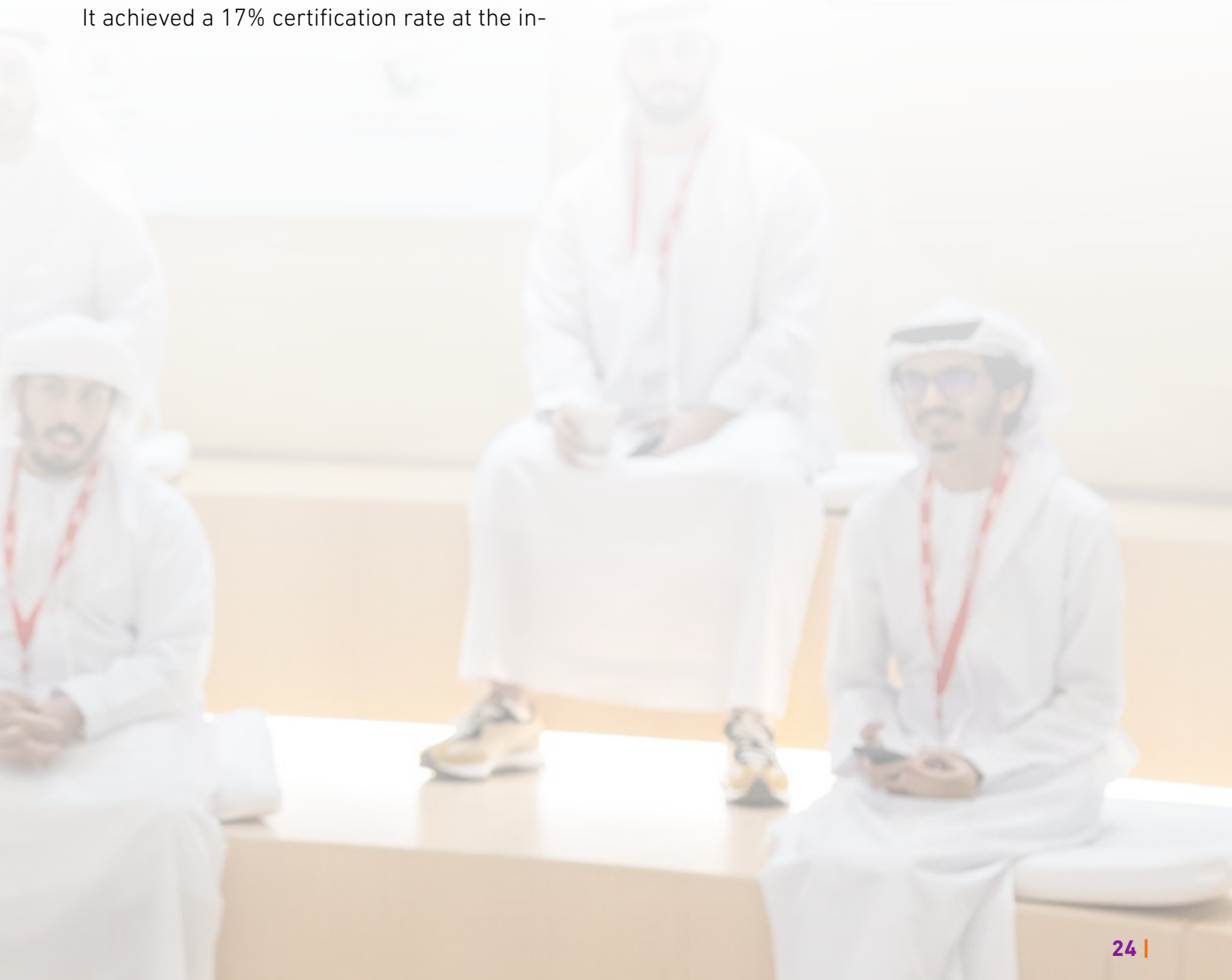


Implementation brought certain challenges. Midway through the program, only 25% of the 20,000 target was achieved—but agile problem-solving saved the day. The Foundation and Udacity team adopted an analytical, data-driven approach to overcome these challenges, collaborating on framing the problem and co-designing a solution. They also explored creative options: reaching the youth in promotional campaigns via influencers, implementing retention strategies like live sessions and community moderators, and introducing a revoking system to ensure commitment.

The program upskilled over 25,000 Arab and Emirati learners, surpassing the initial target. It achieved a 17% certification rate at the in-

depth training level, and a peak graduation rate of 72% for a single cohort: “the second-highest grad achievement we’ve seen from all our global Social Impact programs,” Ali says. More than eight in ten participants reported career improvements 6–12 months post-program.

This success laid the groundwork for the expansion of Nomu Al Ghurair TechUp Program, which aims to further bridge the talent gap and position the UAE as a leader in the ever-shifting global digital ecosystem. This program should be pitched at a practitioner level, and emphasize career models, freelancing, generative AI, and hands-on training, with a select group of learners advancing to specialized programs.





# Partner Spotlight: Skyrize

## Women starting out with confidence, purpose, and real-world skills

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation started working with Skyrize Partners at the start of 2023 and have just enrolled their seventh cohort of learners. Skyrize is a training company that offers management training programs to Arab corporates and businesswomen. The five-week program, tailored to Emirati women, focuses on building leadership skills through practical training, collaborative group projects, and mentorship opportunities.

Over the course of her career, Sarah Sefiane, managing partner at Skyrize, has observed changes in the region's employment landscape: "For local people there is a huge preference for the government sector, but now we're seeing a shift to the private sector, which is employing more Emiratis and people from the Gulf." Sarah saw this as an opportunity to prepare Emirati

women for corporate careers, using tools that had proven valuable in her own professional journey—like time management and one-on-one communication.

Skyrize approached the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation with an idea for a program. "We co-designed the project from the very first email," Sarah explains. In November 2023, after months of collaboration, the program was launched: a curriculum that equips young women—students and fresh graduates—with essential management and leadership know-how.

Corporate partners play an important role: "We always pick a winning group of partners ... they provide mentorship as well as interview and workplace opportunities."



This was Nomu Al Ghurair's first large-scale program for women. Engaging content and youth-focused online channels were designed specifically to reach young women who are often overlooked or excluded. Ultimately, Skyrize's impact has exceeded expectations. As of the sixth cohort, it had engaged 315 learners, more than 10 strategic partners, and over 50 mentors.

The program's success has been aided by the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation's reputation as a trusted leader in quality education, Sarah says. There is mutual trust between the Foundation and Skyrize, and a shared ambition to build on

their learnings in real time. "The Foundation is efficient in a way that is closer to a business than other foundations in the region," she explains. "The team makes decisions and implements learnings quickly ... it's very inspiring for our organization to see how you can turn ideas into impact so fast."

Looking ahead, the partnership aims to see the next generation of Emirati women graduate, find employment, and increase their share in the private sector. For Sarah, the mission is clear: "The women we see have huge potential—and this is all about unlocking it."



**The sessions boosted my confidence, helped my time management, fostered effective communication, and equipped me for networking. The hands-on experience gained through the capstone group project, in particular, enhanced my confidence."**

— Noor Rahmeh, Nomu Al Ghurair Women Empowerment Program graduate, Dubai, UAE



# Scaling impact and extending reach into the region

In its first two years, Nomu Al Ghurair achieved remarkable success, with over six implementing partners and multiple collaborating organizations. It gained the trust of the youth, industry and employers, government departments, and academic institutions.

Building on this success, the Foundation has scaled the program across the region. The ongoing expansion of Nomu Al Ghurair has followed the tried-and-tested model applied in the UAE: supporting youth with access to relevant upskilling pathways. The program's ability to provide localized solutions means that programs are tailored to address specific local challenges and requirements.

Since November 2023, this regional expansion has extended to Tunisia, Jordan, and Lebanon, and will expand into other Arab countries in the years to come.

The Foundation has partnered with three experienced local organizations: Al Hussein Technical University (HTU) in Jordan, Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) in Lebanon, and Fondation Tunisie pour le Développement (FTD) in Tunisia. (Figure 5.)

There are three different regional pathways, catering to different needs and levels of specialization:

- **Bridge projects:** Foundational courses and English-language support are offered for youth who are not eligible for more advanced technical training.
- **Upskilling opportunities in market-driven specializations:** Short-cycle, certified projects are prioritized. All certifications are accredited or industry recognized and directly aligned with market needs. Different levels of specialization are offered, from practitioner level through to more advanced tech skills.
- **Business skills support:** Skills training is provided for talented youth in business, including young entrepreneurs.

Figure 5:

### Scaled Nomu Al Ghurair Pathways in Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, and UAE

#### Tunisia

**Year of launch:** 2023

**Objective:** Certified training in industry-recognized areas

#### Lebanon

**Year of launch:** 2023

**Objective:** Training in digital skills through a consortium led by DOT Lebanon

#### Jordan

**Year of launch:** 2023

**Objective:** Training in engineering, computing and informatics, and business

#### UAE

**Year of launch:** 2022

**Objective:** Equipping Emirati youth with skills that are future-facing, market-driven, technical, and transferable

# Partner Spotlight: Foundation Tunsie Pour Le Développement

## Tackling unemployment through targeted training

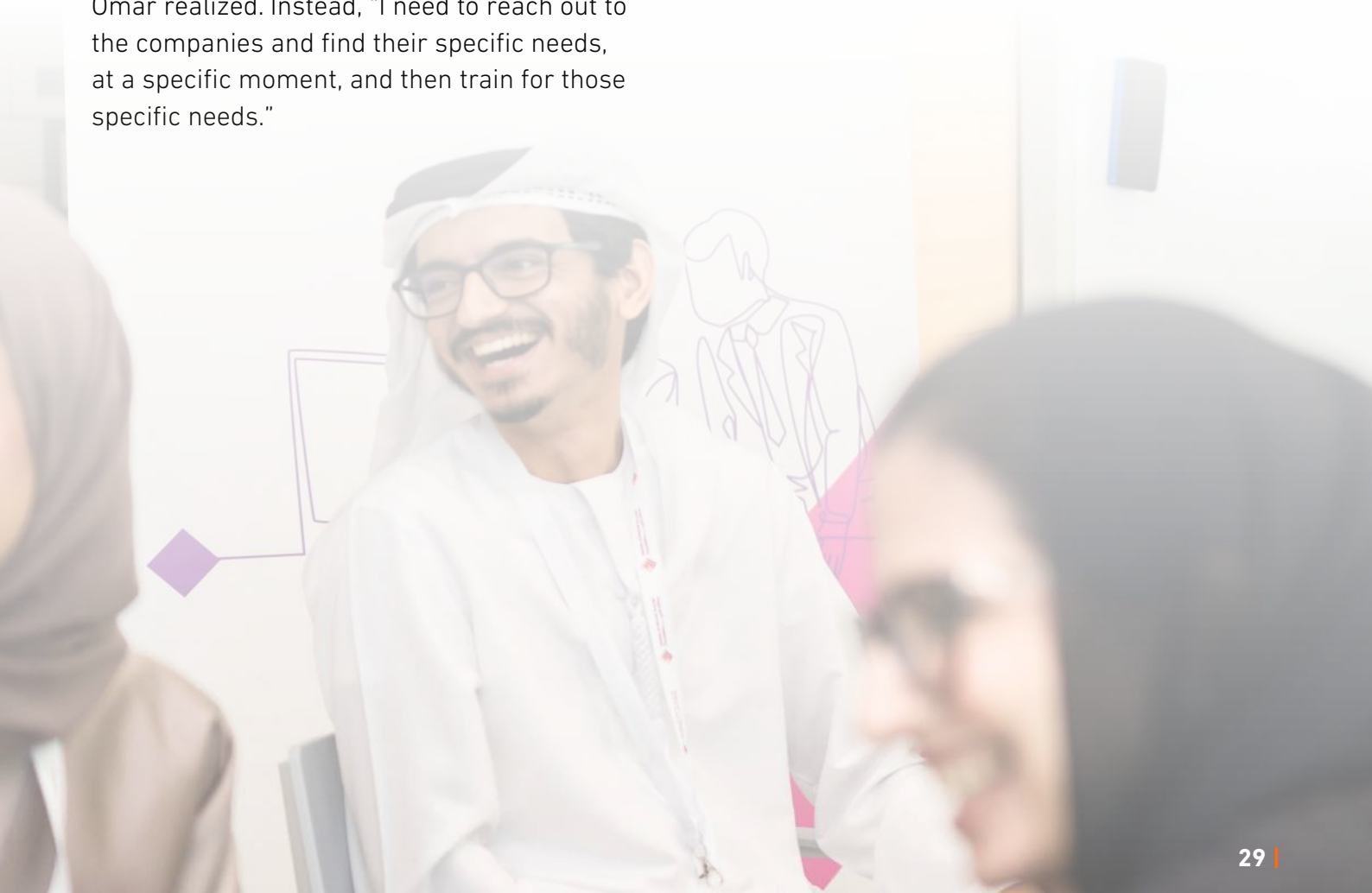
The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation started working with the Fondation Tunisie Pour Le Développement (FTD), based in Tunisia, in 2023, with an innovative approach to tackling the country's unemployment crisis. FTD's mission is to promote and support the country's economic and social development.

After six years of experimentation, Badreddine Quali, president of FTD, and director Omar Triki figured out that training students to specialize in specific occupations was not working. Tunisia's unemployment rates still exceeded 25%, with a significant mismatch between university graduates' skills and job market demands.

"The classical model, where I train on a specialty that is needed by the market, is not working," Omar realized. Instead, "I need to reach out to the companies and find their specific needs, at a specific moment, and then train for those specific needs."

FTD partnered with the Foundation to find an innovative solution: a program design based on a network of high-tech training centers in underserved areas. "Each center is typically 1,200 square meters, with 150 PCs, optic fiber, five training classes, a fab lab, and a multipurpose room," Omar explains.

The program utilizes a kind of "reverse engineering" approach to meet market demands. FTD continuously compiles training and hiring needs from local industries via dedicated relationship managers. It then designs short-term training programs based on immediate market demands. FTD also involves potential employers in the trainee selection process and ensures job placement opportunities before starting training programs.




Two success stories emerge from the tourism and textile industries. In the tourism industry in Jerba, FTD surveyed 50 hotels, identifying 1,500 job openings. They selected 60 trainees from 300 applicants for a three-month program in room service, bar, and kitchen specialties. The program achieved an almost 100% placement rate. (One person declined a position for personal reasons.)

In the textile industry, FTD developed a program for 250 women, incorporating technical textile skills, waste management, and soft skills. This novel approach resulted in a 100% placement rate. Nearly 50% of enrollment KPIs were met within the first year of the program, and it has expanded from IT training to 19 different industries.

FTD wants to continue expanding the partnership and exploring innovative training models. Omar sees potential for a longer-term program, exploring innovative models such as integrating online learning platforms with on-site coaching, implementing a knowledge-sharing platform among Foundation partners to exchange best practices and experiences, and investigating ways to formalize informal jobs into viable career paths.

Omar is dedicated to continuous learning, supported by impactful partnerships. “We’re open to innovative models—you name it. We can experiment with a cohort and see what worked, and what didn’t work, to replicate successful, repeatable patterns.” It is the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation’s unusual openness to this kind of innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking that makes it uniquely suitable for the partnership with FTD.



**I am satisfied with every aspect of the training, especially the soft skills: how to convey clear information, how to manage stress and emotions, how to handle problems. The technical part was a new discovery: it was the first time I'd used these machines, and I became proficient, ultimately securing a job I hadn't expected.”**

— Dhekra Hattabi, FTD Textile Training student, El Kef, Tunisia

# Conclusion

As Nomu Al Ghurair evolves and expands, it remains dedicated to good giving, continuing the enduring legacy of generosity of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Father of the UAE. Nomu Al Ghurair gives to the region by empowering youth, contributing to national and regional development goals. Its ongoing success underscores the transformative potential of collective effort by diverse stakeholders.

This demonstrates what can be achieved when strategic philanthropy meets a commitment to community empowerment; when local talents are harnessed; when an environment of continual learning and adaptation is fostered; and when stakeholders combine forces for change. Flexible, innovative, and focused on long-term sustainability, Nomu Al Ghurair stands as a model of impact for the region.

But the work is far from over. The vision of strategic philanthropy calls for bold action and collaboration across sectors and borders to ensure that these efforts resonate across the region.

With this report, the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation invites more industry partners, philanthropies, and organizations to join them on the journey, building on Nomu Al Ghurair's UAE-brand of philanthropy and strong model to drive even greater, lasting change for future generations.



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