

# Startup Haus Cairo

by enpact

## JOURNEY & LEARNINGS

Strategic Enabling Partner  
**drosos (...)**

# **Startup Haus Cairo**

by enpact

## **JOURNEY & LEARNINGS**

Strategic Enabling Partner  
**drosos (...)**



In 2018, enpact and DROSOS FOUNDATION jointly established the Startup Haus Cairo as a physical space for entrepreneurs and creatives in the heart of Cairo.

Since then, it has grown into a vibrant, diverse community of entrepreneurs, empowered with a global network and on-ground resources. Through various support programs, events, activities and partnerships, Startup Haus Cairo takes part in driving the Egyptian startup scene forward and promoting entrepreneurship across the region.

In this publication, enpact and DROSOS FOUNDATION offer a comprehensive look into the journey of building a support infrastructure and community, with a look into the history, processes, milestones, challenges and learnings. The goal is presenting a case study that can be adapted to other ecosystems, collaborations and contexts.

“

**“Individually we are one drop; but together we are an ocean.”  
– Ryunosoke Satoro.**

”

# CONTENTS

<b>01</b>	Forewords: How it all started	6-12
<b>02</b>	Why Cairo? An overview of the city's entrepreneurial ecosystem	13-16
<b>03</b>	Hardware: Building the space from the ground up	17-20
<b>04</b>	Software: Creating an infrastructure of support	21-29
<b>05</b>	Measuring the impact of Startup Haus Cairo	30-33
<b>06</b>	An overview of Cairo's impact-driven ecosystem	36-39
<b>07</b>	An overview of Startup Haus Cairo's community	40-48
<b>08</b>	Beyond Cairo: Regional outlook	49-51
<b>09</b>	Learnings from the pandemic	52-55
<b>10</b>	Conclusions and recommendations	56-59

**ONE**



**FOREWORDS:  
HOW IT ALL  
STARTED**

# 01

Since I started working with DROSOS FOUNDATION, I have come across different inspiring partners that we supported to expand innovation opportunities. In the last 10 years in Egypt, I witnessed quite a mind shift with regards to development projects. Most importantly, efforts and solutions have become more consciously geared towards sustainability. We believe that entrepreneurship provides a missing piece to achieve sustainability through thinking and acting with a business-like manner - while at the same time respecting social impact.

Having said that, I steer away from simplifying entrepreneurship as a single solution for all economic sustainability challenges; it does not fit all situations and I do not think that everyone can be an entrepreneur. However, I definitely believe that entrepreneurship is evidently one way to building a sustainable future and to harnessing innovations for maximizing impact. It is a vehicle for young people to think outside the box and address problems unconventionally, breaking grounds and creating a ripple effect.

When DROSOS FOUNDATION started its journey in Egypt in 2005, we started out by thinking about how to improve the living conditions of people so they could live a life of dignity. To assess the feasibility of our methodologies, we worked in different sectors. We started narrowing our focus and prioritized our main impact areas as we moved forward. The core of what we do today revolves around the economic empowerment of young people. To do so, young people need to take the lead in defining their priorities and to be accompanied on a journey to unlock their potential, to achieve their aspirations, to be independent, and to have a voice; and thus be capable of creating impact.

The new global strategic focus of DROSOS FOUNDATION is to support young people to become economically independent and resilient. Within that broad focus of economic empowerment in Egypt, we constantly explore specific sectors where we could add value by supporting. Agriculture and green businesses as an example, are sectors we are keen on expanding our investment in, since it entails supporting economically marginalized populations in rural areas and an opportunity for the country to be self-reliant. DROSOS FOUNDATION is also convinced that digital technology is integral to our everyday activities and can create tools to enhance effective communication and services such as accessing beneficiaries, opening new markets, reinforcing creative economies and improving efficiency of resource management. Using technology to unlock the potentials of young people and solve social problems is an integral part of development in our time and thus we integrate it in many of our programs.

DROSOS FOUNDATION is primarily focused on reducing marginalization and addressing inequalities, with all its diversity and adversity. We think that even educated young people may be underserved by the mismatching demands of the job market. Young people with disabilities face additional marginalization by being socially and economically excluded. Thus, they may not have a fair chance to develop their expertise or find a place in the market. This needs to change and thus we use innovation as an approach to addressing those problems with complete participation of the youth we are trying to support.

We supported our partners to use digital fabrication technology to produce assistive devices based on the needs of the youth to enable their everyday activities. With other partners we have established simulation experiences to enable youth with disabilities to educate the public about their everyday challenges by having them switch roles with them in “dialogue in the dark”. And lastly we have turned the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions into an opportunity to create an online academy to build the skills of youth and prepare them for the labor market.

Another challenge is the persistent gender gap in entrepreneurship. We see less than we should of skilled women who have the potential and undoubtedly deserve to showcase their ideas and be included - yet another area we need to continue supporting to earn the perspective of women to solution and sustainable development.

One of the areas we tapped into when we started being active in the ecosystem was the creation of spaces and supporting enablers of entrepreneurial communities. We wanted to see spaces that would go beyond offering the facilities as coworking spaces or a good internet connection. We were interested in building community of practices and supportive networks. Startup Haus Cairo was one of our first collaborations and it was a nucleus where a plethora of networks were built. It's a hub for educational programs in the heart of downtown Cairo, which also symbolizes reviving the city's heritage.

Startup Haus Cairo stands out for so many reasons, one of which is the partner behind it: enpact. They started with a small idea stemming from their previous experience in Tunisia, and in the four years of our journey together, we've seen them flourish. We can see how the company grows in different regions with their capacity and expertise. They are on the right track; they're learning and expanding. Startup Haus Cairo has put itself in the middle of the Middle East (SWANA)<sup>[1]</sup> and has succeeded in accessing other countries, creating synergies between Africa and Asia. Utilizing their base in Europe, they've created bridges between the different offerings that they provide to entrepreneurs and the networks that they have created.

One of the things I appreciate about enpact in managing Startup Haus Cairo is that they are building the local capacity of young and capable leaders, putting the onus and responsibility on Egyptians, led by a bright young woman. To me, it is not just symbolic. It is a statement. Together with an admirable team, they have achieved a lot in a very short time.

Being a true-to-itself organization, they set an excellent example for their community giving the pitfalls the same weight of documentation as the success stories. They remind us that we must do both: celebrate the successes and the education that comes out of difficult times like the COVID-19 pandemic. They documented how the organization was able to adapt and how we were able to overcome some of the challenges together. It's important to share those lessons so that others can learn from them as well. They have also exceeded expectations, linking various other players in the ecosystem; their role in RiseUp Summit, their partnerships with GIZ and the Swedish Embassy, to name a few, are all very promising.

---

[1] SWANA is a decolonial acronym for the South West Asian North African region in place of Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, Arab World or Islamic World that have colonial, eurocentric, and orientalist origins and are created to conflate, contain and dehumanize the people of this region.



I am personally very proud of how far they've come; the indirect contribution to expanding the capacity of impact to collaborate with influential players in the ecosystem is on its own a spectacular indicator of their potential for sustainability of Startup Haus Cairo. I hope that these partnerships keep coming and that their knowledge gets replicated. I'm putting a lot of aspirations on the documentation and experience that come out of this space to contribute to Egypt's youth's economic empowerment and prosperity.

Dr. Wessam El Beih  
Country Director Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon  
DROSOS FOUNDATION

*W.B.*



I have always had this fixed idea: real change can only happen through politics. When I started working in international development, I realized how wrong I was. It's not only politics that can change the world; watching businesses change lives and societies made me realize how entrepreneurs can contribute to the economy and influence positive change on a bigger scale. It was the point when I started thinking a lot about how entrepreneurship can change the world. After working in international organizations, embassies, and development cooperation, I left the suit and tie and became an entrepreneur myself. In my pursuit of changing the world, I met Matthias, my co-founder, and we created enpact.

enpact is a Berlin-headquartered non-profit organization founded in 2013 with the goal of empowering entrepreneurship in the context of international economic cooperation. We work with entrepreneurs and support organizations across all development stages.

We support young entrepreneurs to create jobs and build a stable economy that does not depend on old clusters and changing circumstances. We apply a holistic approach with creating infrastructures like the Startup Haus along with support programs that facilitate access to the crucial resources needed for the sustainable growth of any business: financial support, training, mentoring, and network development. I believe that young people have the freedom and the willpower to create innovative businesses, so there is no need to integrate into corporations. Enabling them to do that is one of the goals we have.

The first time I visited Egypt for business was in 2013. The startup ecosystem was still in its early stages. Cairo felt like walking into Berlin, with just a different background noise thanks to the cabs honking all the time. The Greek Campus had just started operating as a workspace instead of it being part of the AUC campus. The ecosystem was taking baby steps towards maturity. We saw a gap and believed that Startup Haus could significantly fill, especially when connecting the Berliner ecosystem to the Cairene. Having this in mind, we started wondering where founders meet. The main meeting point was the Greek Campus, and I'm a big believer in competition. Competition builds a healthy ecosystem. You need different spaces, different bubbles within the city that can support each other and have some sort of a competitor friendship with each other. That was one of the reasons why we settled in a location footsteps away from the Greek Campus.

At a glance, Startup Haus Cairo could easily be thought of as a regional hub for enpact's activities in the South East Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region, but it also goes beyond that. It is also our hub for, dare I say, the entirety of the African continent. At first, we had in mind a bilateral exchange between Germany and Egypt, but our idea evolved into a multilateral exchange between Europe, Africa, Asia - and beyond.

Our partnership with DROSOS FOUNDATION made our dream a reality. Being a Swiss non-profit organization that has already impacted Egypt and neighboring countries like Tunisia made DROSOS FOUNDATION the perfect partner for our journey. We had the same mission to support entrepreneurs working towards economic development, focusing on social impact. Our ethos aligned with regards to connecting stakeholders to avoid double funding.

DROSOS FOUNDATION not only helped fund the set-up of Startup Haus Cairo, but the foundation also connected us to different networks, gave us visibility throughout their network, and helped cover losses during the beginning of the pandemic.

Through Startup Haus Cairo, we built and connected with more enpact ecosystems in India, Indonesia, Kenya, Ghana, and Mexico - a significant advantage compared to other players on the ground.

There's so much that we learned out of all this. Building a good team is critical. It's a popular tip, too - because it's true. The team is an essential pillar in a business, and finding one is the most challenging task. We've had many challenges finding the right match for Startup Haus Cairo. However, when we did land on this stellar team we currently have, the journey we went through was worth the trouble. I believe that the trust between the local team is what made it possible to cross all those milestones.

We also learned, rather the hard way, that a pure coworking business model is not reliable if you want to sustain a business in Cairo and even beyond. In the past, we thought enpact should create Startup Houses worldwide. Now we're scaling back to having dedicated offices in specific world regions. Our criteria of selection have also changed and become more pragmatic. We ask ourselves two questions before taking steps towards building a new Startup Haus. Is it possible? Is it physically needed? If the answer is yes to both questions, we roll up our sleeves and start studying the market, measuring the ecosystem's maturity, and weighing out the pros and cons.

In the future, enpact needs to think about the many regional hubs we aspire to have. Practically speaking, we can't have a Startup Haus in every corner of the world. We need to explore satellite teams; we need to find out if it's feasible to expand the local capacity here in Cairo to manage future operations in the region. We need to ensure that the team can lead and implement projects - mostly independently with guidance from the enpact headquarter if required. Our local team is building their expertise to fundraise and acquire more projects on the ground from different donors. We're on the right track, seeing all the work the team has done with the partnership with Facebook from Meta and the Clinical Innovation Program, to name a couple.

The learnings from Startup Haus Cairo has been an essential part of our blueprint for providing support programs across the entire region, and the foundation to replicate the model in other countries and ecosystems. Together with DROSOS FOUNDATION, we continue to provide support for those who are rolling up their sleeves and doing the work to change the world.

Dr. Sebastian Rubatscher,  
Co-founder, enact



# TWO



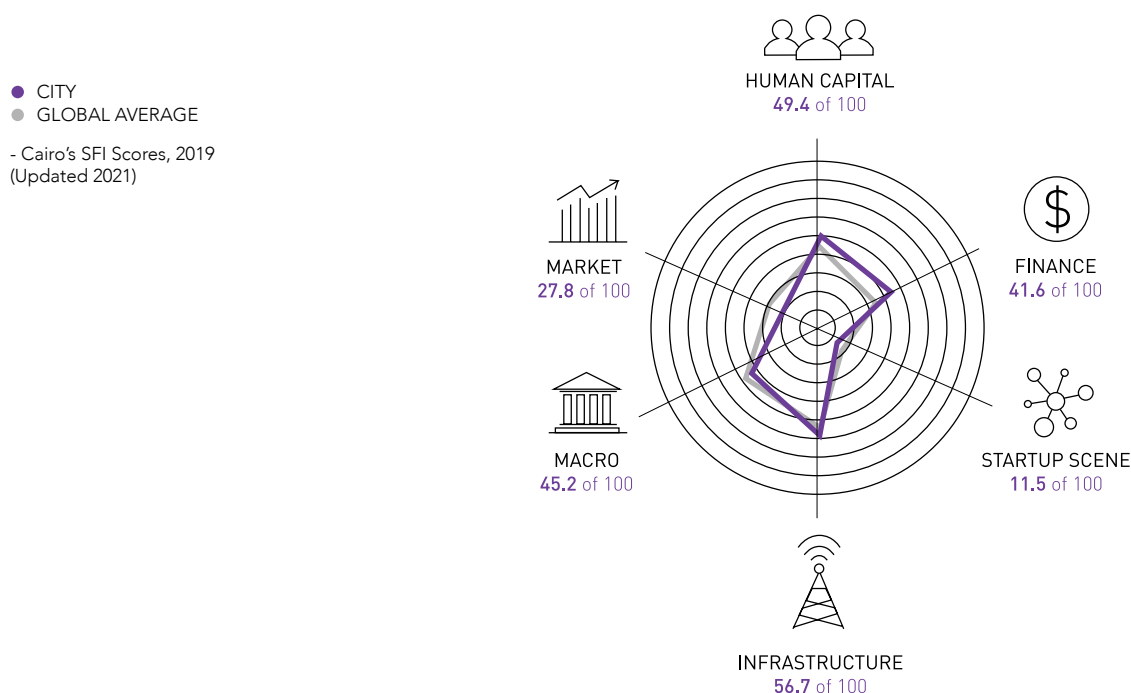
## **WHY CAIRO? AN OVERVIEW OF THE CITY'S ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM**

The Egyptian population is nearly 105 million, 25 million of which live in its hustling and bustling capital. Today, Egypt also has over 500 tech startups<sup>[2]</sup>, the majority of which reside in Cairo. Therefore, together with partners, enpact embarked on a journey to determine whether the cradle of civilization is also a cradle of entrepreneurship.

Cairo is privileged with access to resources: its startups have a better chance at scaling than their counterparts in other Egyptian cities. The Startup Friendliness Index (SFI) is a data-driven framework, created by enpact, to provide transparency, comparability and insights that support startup ecosystem decision-making. It investigates the potential for cities to advance entrepreneurship by measuring six main domains of the startup ecosystem: human capital, access to finance, the liveliness of the startup scene, infrastructure quality, macro framework, and market conditions. These six domains interact and influence one another to shape an urban environment that either champions or hinders entrepreneurship.

SFI reports are conducted in collaboration with researchers on the ground across each analyzed city. The Egyptian edition of the report, released in 2019 and last updated in 2021, comprises data from a mix of primary data extracted from 220 surveys, focus groups, and interviews with entrepreneurs and experts living and working across the country. Secondary data published by foundations like the World Bank and World Economic Forum additionally back the report.

Cairo has the most mature startup ecosystem, with an overall SFI score of 35.4 out of 100, in comparison to other cities in the country. The Egyptian capital ranks 44th out of the 72 researched cities worldwide and 6th in the SWANA region. As you can see in the chart below, Cairo's strengths shine highest in the Human Capital, Finance, and Startup Scene domains. That translates to having better chances of acquiring talents, acquiring funds and investments, and the availability of a well-connected ecosystem of entrepreneurs across all development stages through community groups and events around the year.



[2] Disrupt Africa. (2021). The Egyptian Startup Ecosystem Report. Ministry of Communication and Information Technology.

Having a base in Cairo was vital for a better integration of enpact within the city's entrepreneurial landscape and closer proximity with its game-changers. Startup Haus Cairo didn't just act as a space in this journey; it acted as a mentor to guide through rough times, as a key to finance and investment opportunities, and as a partner to help scale projects and boost results.

With its global edge, Startup Haus Cairo stands out by connecting people - and resources - across continents. Bringing experts from Europe, Asia and Africa on a periodical basis, the cultural and intellectual exchange that happens speaks volumes of the space's value in the ecosystem, and not just Cairo's in that case. Entrepreneurship events and support programs happening in cities in neighboring countries through Startup Haus Cairo's infrastructure, making it an active hub for the region's community of entrepreneurs. This includes sharing best practices, facilitating data and research, and providing office spaces and access to an international community for startups in the country and region.

Startup Haus Cairo's achievements were mostly made possible by DROSOS FOUNDATION's generous support and shared belief system. On a mission to help young people in Egypt lead a sustainable and prosperous life, DROSOS Foundation has impacted, supported and launched several spaces and initiatives around Cairo.

### ••• Spaces supported by the Drosos Foundation in Cairo







• • • Startup Haus Cairo events Arena





# THREE

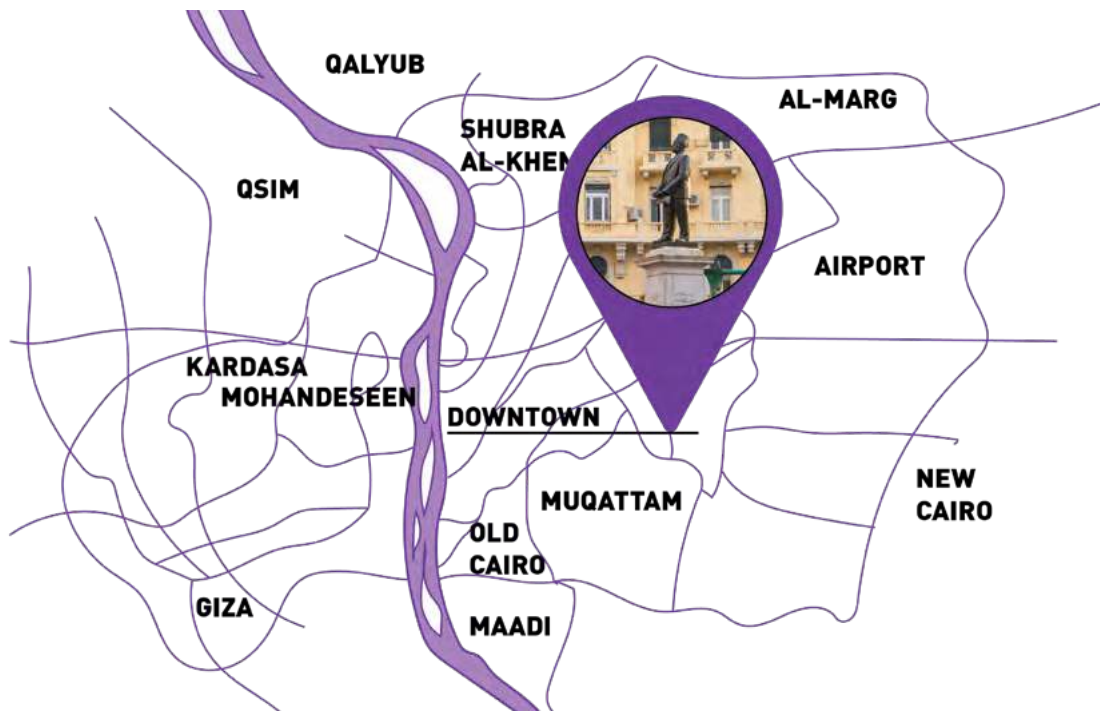


**HARDWARE:  
BUILDING THE  
SPACE  
FROM THE  
GROUND UP**

## Finding the right place

Downtown Cairo comprises ten<sup>[3]</sup> squares, one of which is named after an entrepreneur, Talaat Harb. By establishing the country's first real bank - owned and staffed by Egyptians - Harb became a symbolic and physical landmark of national economic identity and financial independence.

### • • • Central location of Startup Haus Cairo in the city



After participating in several different roundtables with DROSOS FOUNDATION, enpact submitted a proposal to launch a hub in Cairo to empower innovation and startups. Dr. Sebastian Rubatscher, enpact's Co-Founder, insisted that the space must be located in the heart of Cairo for better accessibility. It had to be a place that anyone across could easily reach by public transportation, and in close proximity to facilities, institutions, resources and organizations that entrepreneurs need to interact with (legal offices, government institutions, universities, and key ecosystem players.)

But, finding a place in downtown Cairo that could fit the criteria proved a little more than challenging. In order for the space to be truly beneficial for the community, it had to tick a few additional points:

- At least 500 m2 in size
- Spacious indoor and outdoor spaces
- Easily accessible directly from a main street

Most importantly, the place had to allow for creating a quiet, productive and comfortable environment within one of the noisiest districts in the city.

[3] Squares of Downtown: Tahrir, Talaat Harb, Mustafa Kamel, Attaba, Gomhoreyya, Abdel Moneim Reyad, Bab El Louq, Saad Zaghloul, Mohamed Farid, Mohamed Naguib

"I literally used to wake up and walk down the streets of downtown Cairo. I'd stop at any closed shop, I'd go investigate, and honestly, I was getting nowhere," says Essam Sharaf, Senior Manager at enpact, who has been a part of the enpact team since 2014, just one year after enpact's inception. He spent nine months until he found the location that would become Startup Haus Cairo. When scouting didn't work, he tapped into the enpact network to see if they had any leads for spaces in downtown Cairo that would fit the criteria.

Mohamed Azab, an alumnus from enpact's first mentoring program in Egypt and Tunisia and founder of Hassab Labs, had a tip for the team. An alexandrian real estate developer, Sigma, had recently bought a property, the Ouzonian Building on Talaat Harb street. The company specialized in developing and reutilizing heritage buildings and was thus still brainstorming new purposes for the building to make the most out of it.

## The history of Ouzanian Building

The Ouzonian Building had always been a home for diverse residents and multidisciplinary companies, ever since it was built in 1950. Throughout the decades, the building witnessed tenants change. In the early 2000s, it became home to the Indian Consulate, just before finding its new purpose with Startup Haus Cairo.

### • • • Initial viewings of the space prior to renovation



To further apply the startup philosophy that revolves around flexibility, shifting quickly, and adapting to change, Startup Haus Cairo needed to be modular and multi-purpose, allowing its entrepreneurs and inhabitants to be comfortable and creative with a setting that is responsive to their needs.

### • • • After renovation, the modular and open concept come to life.

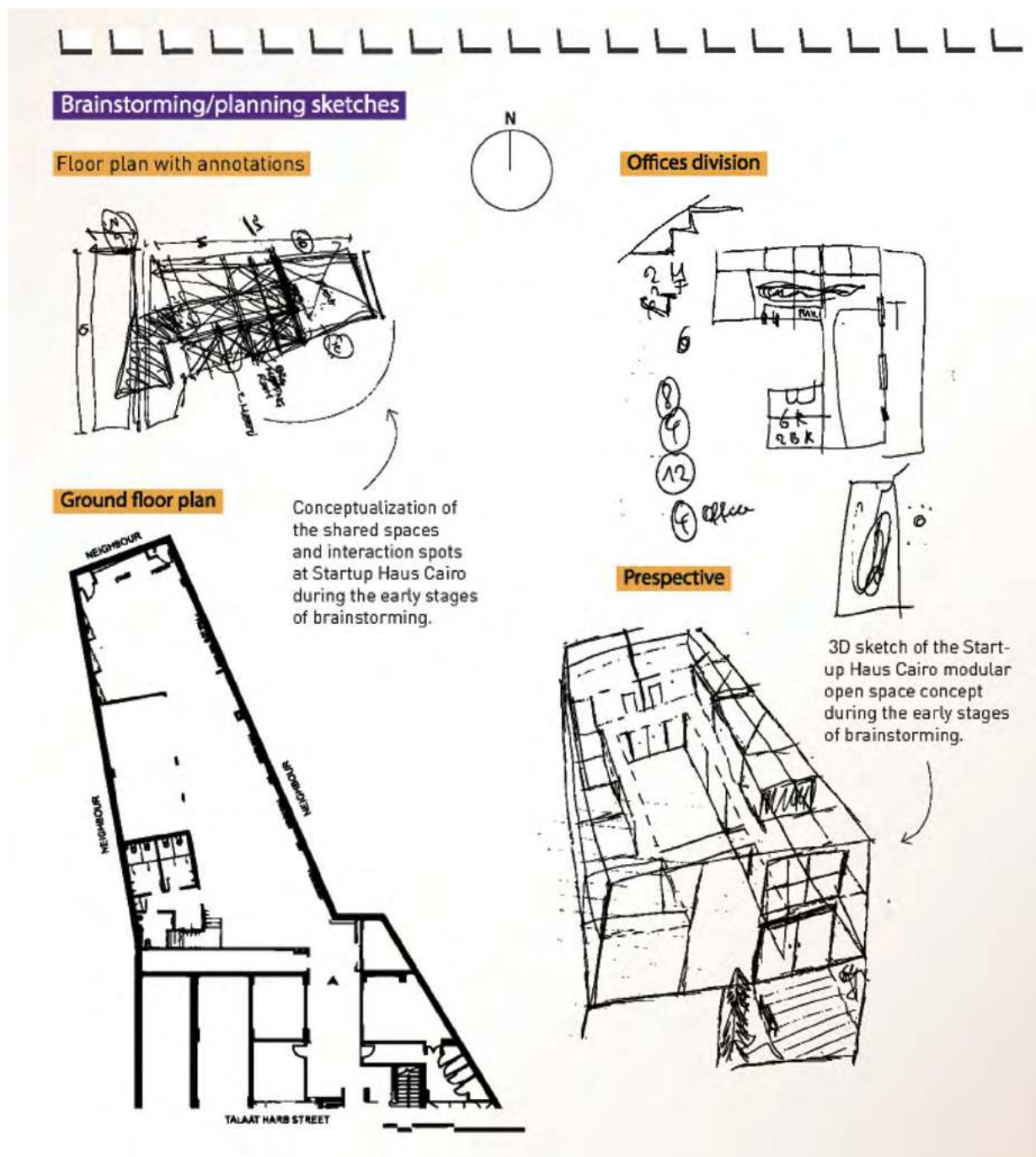


Having an outdoor space was also an integral part of enpact's vision for Startup Haus Cairo. Thus, this de facto landfill turned into the iconic arena hosting various events, from conferences and book launches to dance classes and performances.

In the future, as part of its push towards sustainability, enpact is looking to green the Backyard and envisions it to evolve into a leafy lounging area, where entrepreneurs meet and partnerships find their way. Big, open spaces are rare in downtown and even larger Cairo.

With the legacy of Talaat Harb in its literal backdrop, Startup Haus Cairo aspires to contribute to Egypt's journey to economic empowerment and growth.

• • • Initial brainstorming and planning sketches, 2017.



# FOUR



**SOFTWARE:  
CREATING AN  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
OF SUPPORT**



As Startup Haus Cairo is nestled at the heart of the SWANA region, it became an ideal basis for other enpact projects - both in Egypt and the neighboring countries.

Over the past years, enpact's team in Cairo managed several projects in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia. This was only made possible through strategic partnerships with organizations in different ecosystems that shared the same vision of providing direct support for entrepreneurs and changemakers.

The following paragraphs highlight some of the projects that were managed out of Startup Haus Cairo.

The Founder scholarships is a program that provides financial support, mentoring, and office space for entrepreneurs in their first year of business. Covering the personal livelihood of the participants for a year gives founders the financial and mental capacity to fully dedicate their time and energy to their business venture. As a result, founders can quickly and sustainably become autonomous entrepreneurs, develop their ideas into products, and position these products on the market.

The Egyptian edition of the Founder Scholarship, titled 'Founders' Support' was enpact's very first pilot of this component. We are grateful for the trust and support received by our partners at GIZ that enabled us to plant the first seed of the program that became a blueprint for providing thousands of entrepreneurs around the world with direct financial support to continue growing their businesses.

• • • The participants of the Founders' Support Program at their Demo Day, December 2019



Another project is enpact's Idea Marathon. It was run in 2018 as the Startup Cup in Egypt in partnership with Orange Egypt and GriffnWorx - an inclusive economic and gender empowerment organization based in Washington DC, USA. It applied the proven approach developed by GriffinWorx and implemented a nationwide incubator program. The nine-month program supported 200 entrepreneurs across Egypt. The program graduated 136 entrepreneurs, some of whom run startups that have already made waves across the country, such as Brimore<sup>[4]</sup> and Direxiona<sup>[5]</sup>.

• • • The final pitch day of Startup Cup 2018 in collaboration with Orange Egypt and GriffnWorx



---

[4] Brimore is a social commerce platform with operations in Egypt and Africa.

[5] Direxiona is a web-based aggregator connecting female driving instructors with women who wish to learn how to drive in Cairo and Alexandria.

Another example of Early Stage Development projects is enpact's partnership within the framework of the Clinical Innovation Fellowship (CIF) - in cooperation with RISE Research Institutes of Sweden<sup>[6]</sup>. It aims to improve healthcare by identifying clinical needs and challenges gathered during clinical immersion and creating solutions to address those needs.

Joint projects' between RISE and enpact started already in 2018 with delegation trips to the RiseUp Summit, in cooperation with the Embassy of Sweden in Cairo. This led to the foundation for the above-mentioned incubator program which was launched in 2020 and concluded its second round in 2022. It entailed the implementation of a five-month-long program in Egypt for participants with prior backgrounds in medicine, engineering, design, and business.

The multidisciplinary groups attended workshops with healthcare professionals and patients during everyday clinical practice. Each team was placed in a specific healthcare department where the clinical immersion occurred. It then worked alongside the host department throughout the program to co-create innovative solutions to identified needs.

• • • Kickoff bootcamp of the Clinical Innovation Fellowships, August 2020



---

[6] RISE is a Swedish state-owned research institute, collaborating with universities, industry and the public sector.



Aside from the delegation trips in collaboration with RISE and the Embassy of Sweden in Cairo, the space also hosted a trilateral delegation of 9 Iraqi entrepreneurs in 2018 and facilitated a delegation to the annual tech summit GITEX in Dubai in 2019. The aim of the delegation trips was for entrepreneurs to get to know different ecosystems in practice, create partnerships with key stakeholders and take part in intensive sessions to further scale and develop their business.

• • • RiseUp Delegation 2018 - Iraq Tunisia Egypt



• • • GITEX - Dubai 2019



Other ecosystem collaborations included a partnership with Startup Guide<sup>[7]</sup>, with the support of DROSOS Foundation, to launch Startup Guide Cairo in 2018/2019. Following a successful pilot, the collaboration continued in 2020 to launch Startup Guide's first nationwide edition in Egypt.

Last but not least, Startup Haus Cairo also became the hosting entity in Egypt for enpact's biggest ever program - the Empowering Entrepreneurship Initiative. It was launched in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and culminated in the combination of enpact's most powerful tools: mentoring, networking, capacity building, and direct financial support.

In total, through three programs over the span of two years, the initiative supported 745 businesses in Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia, South Africa, Jordan, Mexico, and Indonesia across all sectors with dedicated mentoring, financial backing of up to 9,000 Euros, and business development support. Additionally, participants took part in management, business development, leadership, and growth workshops. They also had access to enpact's global network of over 3200 businesses, 1100 mentors, and experts across five different continents.

• • • Startup Guide Cairo launch party, December 2018.



[7]Startup Guide is a publishing and media company, based in Copenhagen and Lisbon, that produces guidebooks and online content to help entrepreneurs navigate different startup scenes around the world

The **first program**, the COVID-19 Relief Program, supported 90 businesses in Egypt with 810,000 EUR direct support. 968 job positions were created or preserved by the participating businesses of the program.



**90**

Businesses  
Supported  
In Egypt



**810K**

Euros In Direct  
Support



**968**

Jobs Created  
or Preserved

“

**The Empowering Entrepreneurship Initiative came at the right moment. Its financial support enabled us to hold on to our staff, secure their salaries, and continue our mission. Aside from that, the access to a pool of international mentors was beneficial. We were able to work with a mentor from South Africa. And this was our first encounter working with someone in the South African entrepreneurship ecosystem. It gave us room to exchange insights from both Egypt and South Africa, and it made us think of starting more collaborations in Africa. Also, the training sessions, especially those about resilience, taught me how I could take care of myself to keep on fighting and doing the work.**

”

Shadi Khalil  
Co-founder of Greenish.



With the successful impact of the first round of the Empowering Entrepreneurship Initiative and the ongoing demand for support within the Tourism sector, enpact launched the Tourism Recovery Program in Egypt. Startup Haus Cairo was host to several in person and hybrid training sessions and networking events for a cohort of 50 businesses. Similar to the first round, the program offered 9,000 Euros in financial support and dedicated mentoring with global tourism experts, including renowned industry leaders from TUI Group<sup>[8]</sup>, Lufthansa and more. In partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, the Tourism Recovery Program also introduced the participating businesses to the European markets, facilitating collaboration, and supporting global expansion.

Aside from Egypt, the program was implemented in Kenya, South Africa, Mexico, and Tunisia. The Tourism Recovery Program, supported 50 businesses in Egypt with 450,000 EUR direct support. 477 job positions were created or preserved by the participating businesses of the program.



The Tourism Recovery Program was inspired through another component that enpact had successfully piloted in Egypt - its accelerator program “Travel Tech for Good (TT4G)” which was also the first collaboration between enpact and the TUI Care Foundation<sup>[9]</sup>. It targeted for entrepreneurs working in tourism and travel, focusing on social impact and sustainable development. For three months, mentors worldwide and local experts helped participants redefine their business model, research potential investors and clients, and improve their pitches. The program ended with a Demo-Day, where the founders pitched the results to an international jury. The winner went home with a cash prize and access to more pitching opportunities at regional and opportunities to present their business at international conferences.

### • • • Travel Tech 4 Good bootcamp, October 2019.



[8] TUI Group is a German multinational travel and tourism company headquartered in Hannover, Germany. It is the largest leisure, travel and tourism company in the world, and it owns travel agencies, hotels, airlines, cruise ships and retail shops.

[9] An affiliate of TUI Group, TUI Care Foundation is an independent charity that exists to use tourism as a force for good and transformation.

In addition to entrepreneurship programs, a key focus area for Startup Haus Cairo was supporting artists and creatives. The plethora of talents available in Egypt's young population is not matched in the amount of cultural programs that are available to support and foster these talents. The reasoning behind it was simple: Art and entrepreneurship have always existed hand-in-hand; you cannot truly develop an ecosystem without providing space for its artists. Together with partners such as the Goethe Institute, the Egyptian Film Producers Club, the Nada Foundation for Safer Egyptian Roads, NubiaVest, Breaking Walls Festival, 404.eg, Startup Haus Cairo hosted a variety of workshops for creatives, as well as exhibitions and exchange sessions which focused on fostering communities and creating safe spaces to tackle crucial topics; such as mental health awareness, living with disabilities, wellbeing and wellness culture, and more.

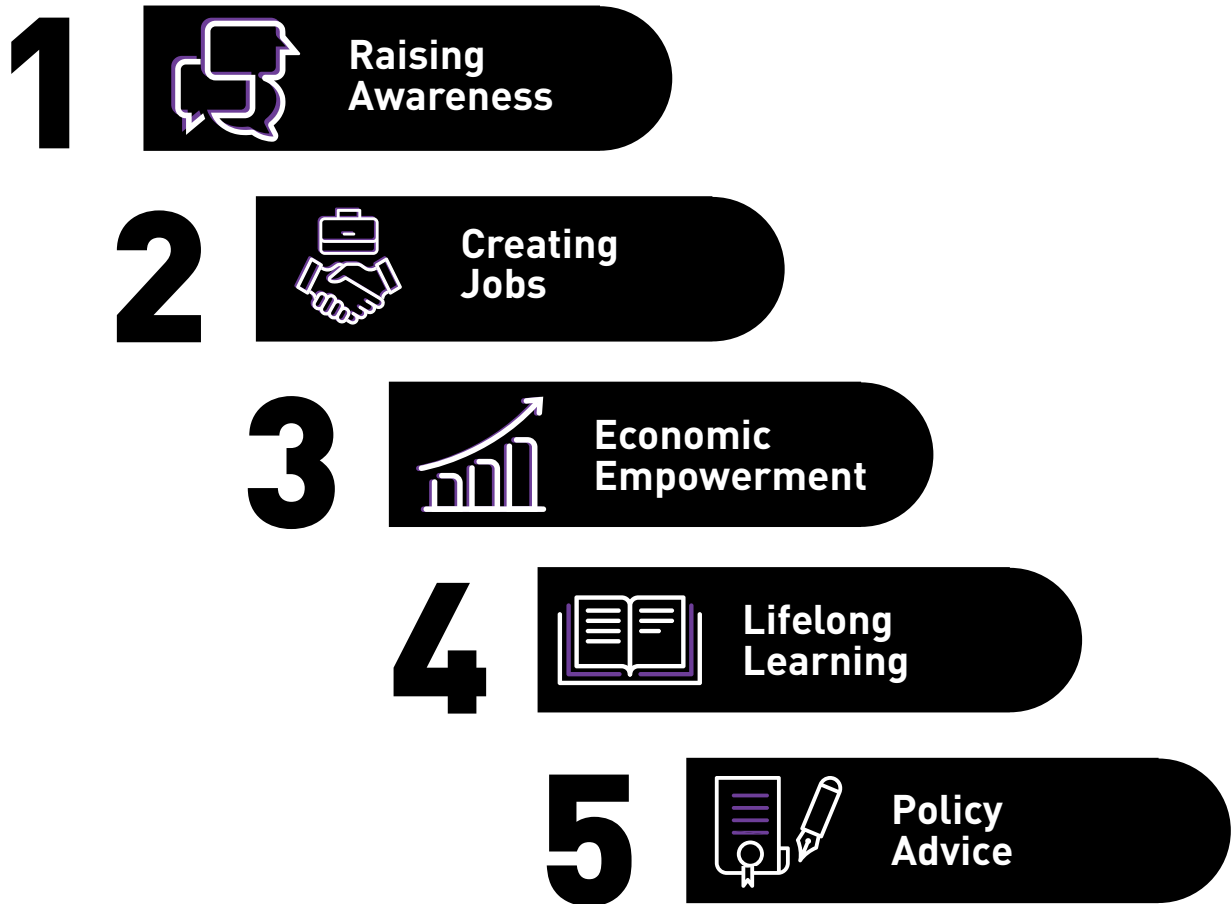
**FIVE**



**MEASURING  
THE IMPACT OF  
STARTUP HAUS  
CAIRO**

Based on its previous co-working space project in Tunisia, enpact had prepared a set of goals and respective deliverables and indicators to measure their achievement. They served as a basis for further development of an impact measurement framework with DROSOS FOUNDATION to set specific parameters by which the success of Startup Haus Cairo would be evaluated.

Sustainability, with all its different aspects, was a key factor that was broken down to be measured in five categories:

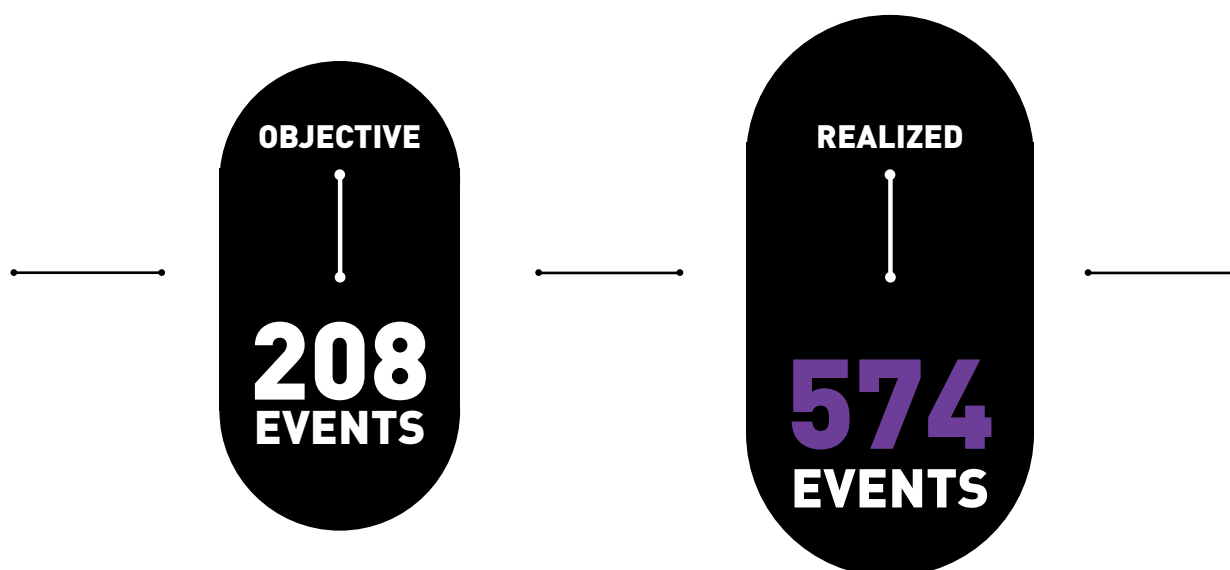


These categories were the basis on which Startup Haus Cairo developed its different types of activities to support the Egyptian startup community. Some examples include: local and international mentorship, hosting events and workshops, offering affordable office space, and organizing monthly meetups with international organizations that could provide different types of support for the space and community.

The next paragraphs showcase the intended targets and the progress towards their achievement. Most achievements exceeded the initial targets set - a fact that we are especially proud of and attribute to the dedication of the community behind Startup Haus Cairo.

## Raising awareness

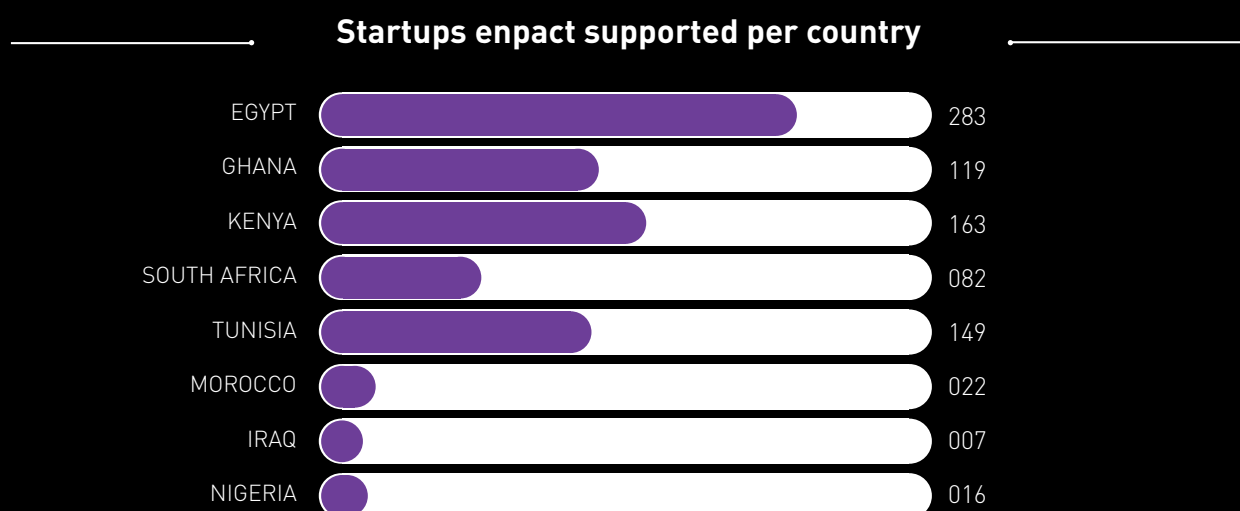
The target was to have an event per week to engage the community and share opportunities, tips and insights. This would translate to 52 events a year and 208 in four years.



In the four years of Startup Haus Cairo's life, 574 events, 76 of which were artistic and cultural events, were hosted in its space. This number includes virtual and hybrid events that were carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Job creation and economic empowerment

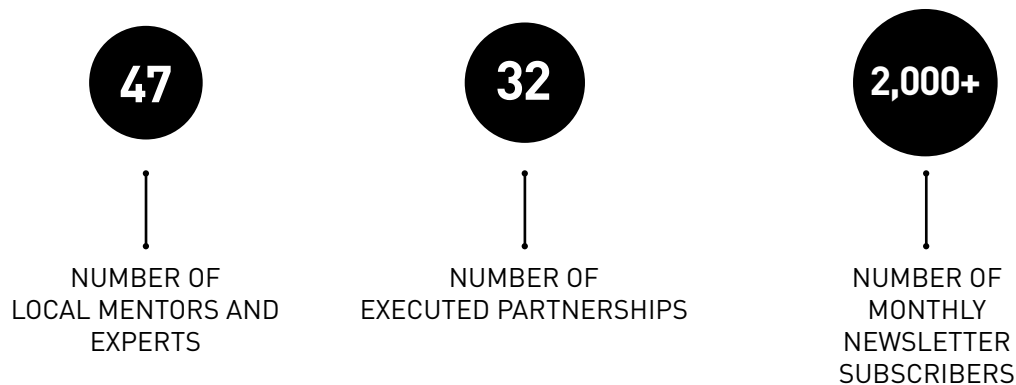
Startup Haus Cairo became a hub for entrepreneurial support programs in Egypt and the SWANA region. Entrepreneurial support programs amounted to 12, with 41 startups hosted in the Haus.





## Network and lifelong learnings

Various internal and external event formats supported life-long learning, like workshops and fireside chats with renowned business people. enpact's mentoring programs were also a gateway to a pool of dedicated mentors and experts who hosted workshops in the Startup Haus Cairo all year long. In addition, Startup Haus Cairo became a valuable and respected partner within the local ecosystem. This is reflected in the 10 official ecosystem partnerships established in addition to many more informal ones for outreach and community support.



## Policy advice

Startup Haus Cairo also acted as a research center for Egypt's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Here, its dual position as a local Egyptian entrepreneurship hub as well as enpact's regional office for the SWANA region added significant value to the collection and analysis of relevant data. The insights and synthesis were then used to publish studies and reports. Here, Startup Haus' Cairo unique immersion in the entrepreneurial community paired with continuous feedback allowed lots of new information, insights, as well as concrete policy advice, with the aim of providing best practices for regulators and governmental institutions.









# SIX



## **AN OVERVIEW OF CAIRO'S IMPACT-DRIVEN ECOSYSTEM**

In their effort to create a strong entrepreneurial and cultural network in Egypt, DROSOS FOUNDATION expanded its support to a handful of programs in Cairo's entrepreneurship and innovation hemisphere. The common thread that unites all programs under their umbrella is the aim for **sustainable impact**.

This chapter provides an overview of these other activities as well as how and where synergies between them are created.

## Entrepreneurship and Culture hubs in Egypt

### KMT House

Founded in 2017, KMT (pronounced Kemet) House offers an inclusive space where urban players from across Egypt and Africa collaborate and innovate to build a better city. The vision driving KMT is to truly be an innovation hub that attracts and welcomes people from many different walks of life and fields to work together to create solutions for the pain points of living in urban areas. Hence, just like Startup Haus Cairo, KMT goes way beyond just being a coworking space, and beyond the borders of Cairo. With the help of DROSOS FOUNDATION, the hub invites think tanks and organizations to become part of its ecosystem, providing a playground to exchange ideas between cities locally as well as globally.



### Nahdet el Mahrousa / El Garage

Nahdet El Mahrousa<sup>[10]</sup> is an Egyptian civil society organization. Its mission is to generate a positive and lasting impact on Egypt's cultural, social, economic and environmental development by sustainably activating and engaging Egyptian youth. Its programs are designed to support social entrepreneurs, build the capacity of youth, and help civil society organizations in improving their capacity. It runs the Garage El Mahrousa, a cozy space in Downtown Cairo dedicated to entrepreneurs, freelancers, and innovators to work, network, and collaborate on projects that have positive impact at their core values.



[10] Nahdet El Mahrousa is literally Renaissance of the Protected (Land) in Arabic, referring to Egypt as the protected land/entity.

## AUC Venture Lab

As the name suggests, located in and supported by the American University in Cairo (AUC), AUC Venture Lab is Egypt's first university-based incubator and accelerator. Its mission is to help Egyptian startups commercialize their innovative technologies by turning their business models into viable ventures. The overall goal is to contribute to economic growth, competitiveness and job creation. The AUC Venture Lab connects innovative startups with its wide network that includes alumni, faculty, mentors and investors. In combination with the support of DROSOS FOUNDATION, this fosters a thriving ecosystem of innovation, education and responsible businesses.



---

## Entrepreneurship as a vehicle for reducing economic inequality

In addition to supporting physical innovation and cultural hubs, DROSOS FOUNDATION also supports entrepreneurial initiatives. Especially those that are working to solve local development challenges such as diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and job creation in rural areas.

### Helm Foundation

The Helm Foundation provides comprehensive advisory and coaching services for institutions, professionals and governments towards more inclusive workplaces and public spaces in Egypt. Together with DROSOS FOUNDATION, they are working on the Helm Academy/SEED Initiative, which aims to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Egyptian labor market. The program helps candidates prepare the skills they need for employment and transform the perception of employees regarding their productivity.





## VeryNile

Founded in 2018 with the support of the Egyptian Ministry of Environment and DROSOS FOUNDATION, VeryNile is the first initiative to develop sustainable means to clean the Nile. At the same time it actively raises the awareness on the importance of protecting our environment. VeryNile has already developed eco-friendly solutions to remove inorganic waste from the river.



## Nawaya Rural Heritage Initiative Project

Nawaya Rural Heritage Initiative Project is a DROSOS FOUNDATION project which facilitates the startup and growth of women-led rural enterprises that highlight local agrobiodiversity and rural heritage. As part of their work, Nawaya project collaborates with Rove Egypt, a pioneering business in the field of agritourism in Egypt and one of the participants of enpact's Tourism Recovery Program.



# SEVEN



**AN OVERVIEW  
OF STARTUP  
HAUS CAIRO'S  
COMMUNITY**



A fundamental part of Startup Haus Cairo's journey was finding partners that align with its vision and mission for empowering young entrepreneurs towards self-sufficiency and economic independence. Here, enpact's presence in the Egyptian ecosystem since 2013 was a crucial ingredient to the growth and sustainability of the space. As the space came to life, there was already an existing partner network ready to support it.

Next to actors within the entrepreneurial realm, acquiring stakeholders in the government and international development hemisphere was also a key goal for Startup Haus Cairo, as that paved the way to developing more opportunities for - and from - the region.

### • • • Startup Haus Cairo outdoor terrace



2019 saw the first collaboration with the German Goethe Institut Kairo. The first joint project was to host an extension of Goethe's Dialogue and Transition program.

### • • • Marketing and Growth strategies workshop at Goethe Institut, November 2019



Startup Haus Cairo also engaged international players and public representatives such as the German and the Swedish embassies in Cairo. This allowed for the opportunity to connect the respective ecosystems while at the same time promoting innovation and economic growth in Egypt. When asked what he expects from Startup Haus Cairo in the coming years, Mohamed Amin, the Business and Trade Promotion Officer at the Swedish Embassy in Cairo, said he'd want to see the Haus expand and have a physical presence in other governorates across Egypt. Participating in the Digital Egypt Builders and other national initiatives is also one of the things the Swedish Embassy wishes to see on Startup Haus Cairo's roadmap.

...

Delegation trip networking  
breakfast at the Swedish Embassy  
in Cairo, December 2019.

“



**Credibility, dedication, and genuine  
passion for making a real change are the  
main reasons we would always welcome  
collaboration opportunities with enpact**

”

Mohamed Amin  
Business & Trade Promotion Officer  
Embassy of Sweden in Cairo.

• • • H.E. Håkan Emsgård, Swedish Ambassador in Cairo, at Startup Haus Cairo, August 2021



The Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) - Germany's international development agency - is and has always been a significant supporter in enpact's and Startup Haus Cairo's journey. Through this partnership:

- **10** **founders** received direct financial support & coworking access in their first year of business
- **3** **ecosystem events** were held with the goals of supporting talent retention, highlighting emerging tech initiatives, and driving the collaborative growth of the Egyptian ecosystem
- **420** **founders and entrepreneurs** received direct financial, technical and mentoring support to overcome the impact of COVID-19
- up to **75** **teams of Egyptian youth** will be up for a pre-incubation and incubation program to build products and solutions for the manufacturing sector in Egypt
- **7** **startup ecosystems across Egypt** were evaluated through enpact's Startup Friendliness Index (SFI) framework



### • • • GIZ Egypt and enpact entrepreneurship conferences at Startup Haus Cairo, 2019



Just as it was important to collaborate with public development institutions, it was essential to build connections on the grassroots level with the startup ecosystem. Activities and synergies ranged from supporting incubators, training community enablers, hosting exhibitions, providing workshop space, organizing and implementing events to bringing international delegations to Startup Haus Cairo and engaging with national and regional entrepreneurship conferences such as RiseUp Summit. With this inclusive and participatory approach, Startup Haus Cairo became a melting pot and exchange point, both metaphorically and physically, for learning from and with each other between different cultures, verticals and people.

In the following pages we provide some examples for this exchange on eye level with different ecosystem actors. For instance, Startup Haus Cairo was home to several of Womena's <sup>[11]</sup> activities over the years. Whether it was an early morning Bossladies breakfast, a Riseup satellite event, or a massive viewing party for the season finale of our web series "Womentum," said Womena's Founder Elissa Freiha. "Startup Haus Cairo brought together the right community and gave us a home in Cairo to call our own." Freiha also elaborated that her team always returned to the Haus for the friendly atmosphere and reliable internet. In order to be even more cozy, Freiha also has suggestions for the interior setup: She imagines Startup Haus Cairo to fashion a hammock or a hanging chair overlooking the busy yet enchanting streets of downtown Cairo.

### • • • Womentum Watch Party at Startup Haus Cairo, 2018



[11] Womena is a Dubai-based platform that aims to support the SWANA entrepreneurship ecosystem by empowering and educating women investors and entrepreneurs.

Another example for a fruitful cooperation is the project that Startup Haus Cairo did together with Nubiavest<sup>[12]</sup>. The objective was to build a network of Nubian and Cairene entrepreneurs and investors within the creative industry to help preserve the Nubian heritage through business. “We wish that Startup Haus Cairo continues with the support provided by their workspace to embrace creative entrepreneurs and localize creative industries locally and globally,” said Ramzy Helal, CEO of Nubiavest.

• • • Nubian Nights at Startup Haus Cairo, August 202



---

[12] Nubiavest is an incubator which connects investors and entrepreneurs of creative industries from the Nubian cultural heritage



Learning opportunities and joint initiatives were another topic high on the list. This is why in December 2021, Startup Haus Cairo started its partnership with Wuilt<sup>[13]</sup>. Together they launched Digital 2 Grow, a learning program for early-stage entrepreneurs to experience digital tools and techniques to grow their online business presence. “The support provided by the team was great. The event went smoothly. I would go again for many reasons. The team was supportive, the venue was beautiful and well organized, and the most important factor is the commitment,” said Amr Ashraf, Wuilt’s business development manager.

Another point to highlight are add-on collaborations between partners that met through their connection to Startup Haus Cairo. As a result of the partnerships with NubiaVest and Wuilt, these two organizations also started working together. Around 35 entrepreneurs joined the first workshop with NubiaVest, which was held over two days. The participants got an overview of the fundamentals of Digital Marketing and building e-commerce websites along with a 20% off their first subscriptions to Wuilt’s platform.

Collaborating with a hub like Startup Haus Cairo that provides an attractive existing network in the innovation and startup ecosystem, also attracts other international actors. Based on Startup Haus Cairo’s reputation, RISE and EIT health decided to implement a Clinical Innovation Fellowships<sup>[14]</sup> (CIF) program in Cairo at Startup Haus Cairo. Basis for this decision was the access and support regarding connections with necessary stakeholders in the healthcare sector, experts and educators.

“The long-distance collaboration was not easy,” says Ulrika Henricson, program manager at CIF, but Startup Haus Cairo has managed the difficulties well and always with a positive attitude.”

- • • Clinical Innovation Fellowships hybrid Graduation Ceremony at the Swedish Embassy in Cairo, March 2021



[13] Wuilt is the first Arab platform of its kind to help individuals and businesses create ready-made websites and e-stores in 5 minutes.

[14] The Clinical Innovation Fellowship is an eight-month innovation scholarship starting August 2020.



Startup Haus Cairo was also keen on leveraging its facilities to encourage cultural activities and events. Two prominent examples were the cooperations with the Egyptian Film Producers Club and Breaking Walls Festival<sup>[15]</sup>.

### • • • The Egyptian Film Producers Club meetups at Startup Haus Cairo



In 2021, Startup Haus Cairo hosted workshops that Breaking Walls conducted with Egyptian and migrant artists. The organizers found the Arena of the Startup Haus to be the perfect setting. In the past, most activities took place either in Zamalek, Garden City or Cairo Necropolis. But this year, they were looking for a venue that was big enough to absorb the large number of participants as well as to cater to the safety measures required due to the pandemic. And with the Arena they found the ideal place. While most of the activities were held in the backyard, the auditorium at the Mezzanine level was also used, maintaining the required distance between the participants, who came from all over town, New Cairo, 6th of October, Maadi and Heliopolis. The central location of the Startup Haus made everyone happy - with minor mourns by those who arrived in their personal cars and had to find a parking area.

“Startup Haus was the missing spot to connect all of this,” said Hazem Haider, the founder of Breaking Walls. “The scheduling flexibility was helpful since we had some venues cancel on us at the last minute for issues related to security or COVID-19. Startup Haus Cairo saved those activities by providing the space.”

---

[15] Breaking Walls is a month-long festival of collaboration between international and local artists.

While he would recommend Startup Haus Cairo for the quality of the space, hospitality, professionalism, and location, Header sees that there is also still room for improvement. “I would like to see Startup Haus Cairo more involved with the underground art scene,” Header added. He suggested improving the existing lighting and sound system as well as installing a removable dance floor and ceiling to protect the Arena from flooding during rainfall and sandstorms.

• • • The Breaking Walls festival at Startup Haus Cairo, 2018 and 2021



# **EIGHT**



## **BEYOND CAIRO: REGIONAL OUTLOOK**

Today, Africa is by far the fastest growing continent. Its current population of more than 1,3 billion people is estimated to double by 2050. Not only that, Africa has the world's youngest population, with 60% being younger than 25 years of age. That translates to millions of people with dreams, talents, diverse ambitions - and endless potential to change the entire world.

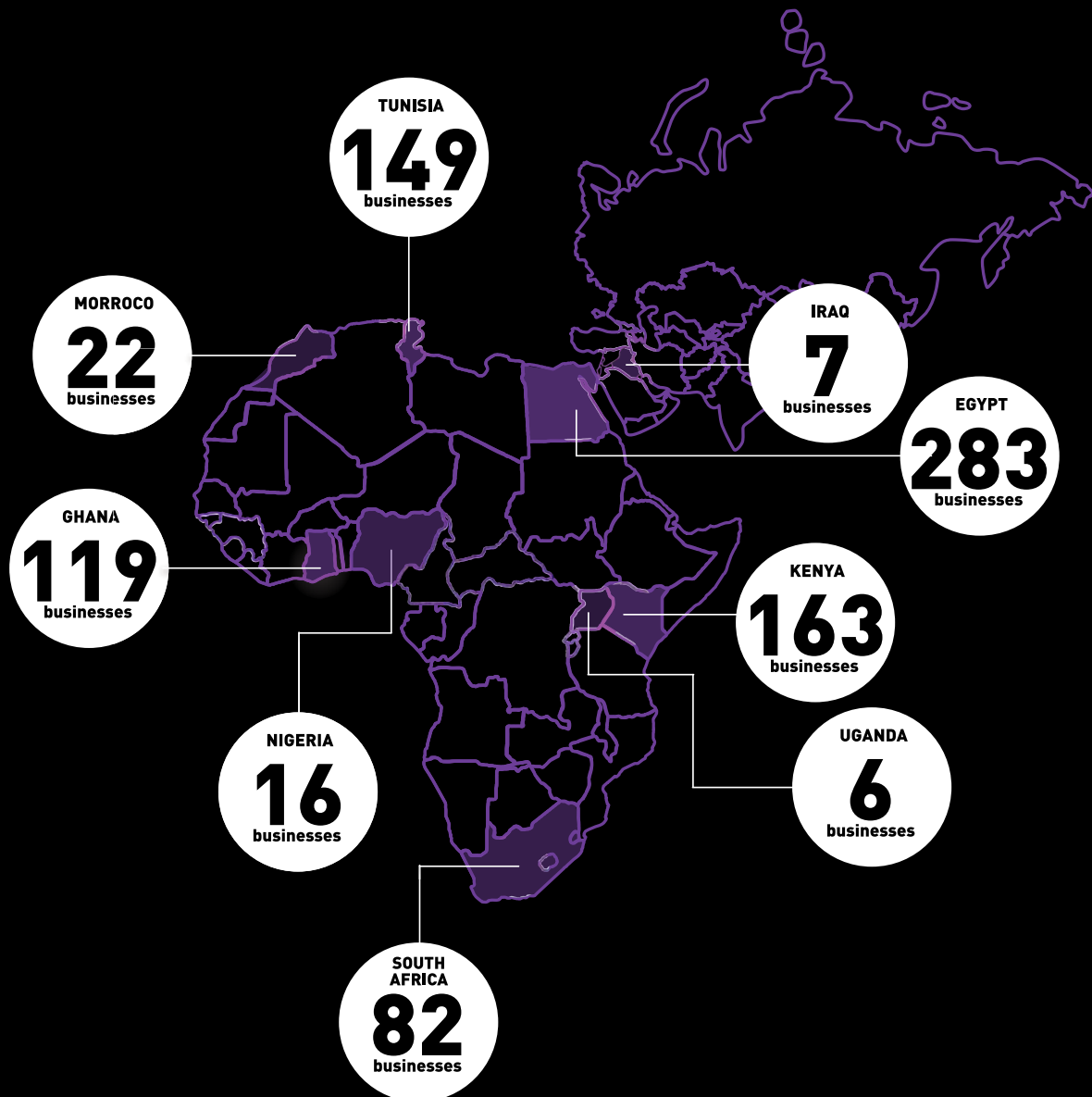
In order to leverage the potential that this massive human capital provides, we must create opportunities for empowerment where people can find support, grow, collaborate and learn from each other. **How?**

**By removing barriers and connecting people with the needed tools and space to dedicate their focus on solving challenges and creating impact.**

This is the main approach that enpact piloted and tested in Egypt, which has been the starting point for many of our support programs in the region, with Startup Haus Cairo being a key enabler in this process. As a result, these programs continued to evolve and expand their impact to the rest of the region. Examples include<sup>[16]</sup>:

- **Founders' Support**      Implemented in Ghana in 2020 before being expanded into the Empowering Entrepreneurship Initiative approach (See chapter 4 for more details.)
  - **Travel Tech 4 Good**      Implemented in a hybrid format in East Africa in 2020 following its success in Egypt
- Other enpact activities in the region also constantly draw on the experiences, learnings and networks created at Startup Haus Cairo. Examples include:
- **AfricaBerlin Network**      A collective platform that is bringing together startup ecosystems across 5 countries: Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Germany. Startup Haus Cairo has been home to its sessions on how to access the Egyptian market, networking and community sessions, and a gateway for stakeholders from other ecosystems to expand to and learn from Egypt.
  - **Touchbase Events**      A series of events in Ghana that take place on a monthly basis to raise awareness about entrepreneurship as a valid career path, building on the best practices gained through the Startup Haus Cairo community.

[16] The above programs are further expanded in chapter 4 of this publication.



To date, the work piloted in Egypt - and Startup Haus Cairo - has provided nearly 850 businesses across the continent with various types of support. **But, impact is not - and cannot be - only measured in pure numbers.** It is also measured in the resilient and supportive community that was created around these numbers. Life-long partnerships, relationships, friendships and love were born within the national and international community as a direct and indirect result of the spirit created at the Startup Haus Cairo.

While both enpact and DROSOS FOUNDATION are proud of what we have achieved together, there remains so much more to be done. Hence, we are glad to announce that we continue collaborating together in the future!

**NINE**



**LEARNINGS  
FROM THE  
PANDEMIC**



Just like everyone else around the globe, Startup Haus Cairo was struck severely by the outbreak of the pandemic and subsequent health restrictions and regulations that came in its wake.

Before COVID-19 changed everything, the year had started positively. In January 2020, the internal planning retreat set the strategy for the year. The outcome was a roadmap outlining the next steps in regards to how we wanted to adjust our business model; which events to pursue, what we wanted to offer for the community, and what partnerships we wanted to build within the ecosystem. We were also planning to provide facilities and infrastructure for upcoming enpact support programs, with an international mentoring bootcamp planned in Cairo at the end of February.

Then the world we knew changed within two weeks. While we applied entrepreneurial techniques in order to pivot and mitigate risks, it soon became obvious that a plan to continuously disinfect the space and the provision of sufficient sanitizers and masks for the whole community would not be enough. After the initial shock, we were left with only one safe option for the community: To shut down the space. By no means was this an easy decision. Everyone was frustrated and - maybe even worse - nobody knew when we would be able to reopen nor what to expect on both an individual and a broader scale.

After we announced the official shutdown, we started working with our partners to figure out ways to provide remote support for the ecosystem. The first priority was to address the concerns of our current tenants. So we devised flexible payment plans based on individual discussions on how we can best support them during this time to keep their business going. We also reached out to mentors in the enpact network and set up office hours, called **'Emergency Mentoring'** sessions. This allowed business owners to seek advice, support, or merely someone to listen to while they worked on tackling the challenges of the pandemic. Along with other ecosystem partners, we co-organized and provided support for an online hackathon. It aimed towards finding solutions for challenges that the local community faced because of the pandemic.

These measures were designed to keep our community inspired, motivated and actively engaged. We wanted them to feel that despite the lockdown and isolation, we were all still there, and still working towards the same goal. We started our **'Founder Stories'**, a web series that was live every Tuesday on our Facebook channels featuring the stories of entrepreneurs from the region. The Founder Stories focused on storytelling and covered how they started, how they built their business, and how they're coping with COVID-19. The overall goal was to provide some self-help, share learnings and best practices and, generally, to let everyone know that they weren't alone in this. These regular exchange formats provided a platform to share knowledge, discuss common challenges and tackle topics such as taking care of your mental health and maintaining balance in your life as a business owner during the pandemic.

It was also abundantly obvious at the time that women founders were being affected disproportionately by the pandemic to their male counterparts<sup>[17]</sup>. Thus, we launched a meetup forum specifically for women in entrepreneurship, addressing concrete gender topics within and outside the context of the pandemic.

---

[17] "Women-led micro-businesses, women-led businesses in the hospitality industry, and women-led businesses in countries more severely affected by the COVID-19 shock were disproportionately hit compared with businesses led by men." Source: Policy Research Working Papers, 2021.

At the same time, we worked towards preparing the physical space for its eventual reopening. We developed safety guidelines in line with the country's policies and the World Health Organization's (WHO) requirements for workplace safety during the pandemic. This process involved feedback, insights and concerns from our community members. We also executed a thorough deep cleaning and disinfection of our beloved Startup Haus Cairo. We installed signage with the new safety requirements, and procured the required equipment that our community needed to keep themselves safe and their workstations disinfected. Last but not least, all shared areas were redesigned in accordance with social distancing guidelines.

In June 2020, once the first lockdown was lifted, we reopened the space. We reduced the capacity for the shared spaces and the private offices. While we were eager to host in-person events again, we decided to wait until the last quarter of the year before we could execute any. The following table provides an overview of our safety measures in regards to gatherings:

- **Capacities of all indoor event spaces were reduced to 25%**
- **Capacities of the outdoors arena was reduced to 50%**
- **Strict policy on mask usage and disinfection**
- **Temperature check for bigger events**

After witnessing the positive reception of our online initiatives, we decided to invest more in providing online and hybrid event solutions. A key factor for their success was to have them even more engaging and more accessible. To cater to our audiences and clients needs, we set up a streaming studio at Startup Haus Cairo. Fully equipped with professional production tools, it provides cameras, sound, lights, and switchers for multi-camera productions. Using this setup, we streamed hybrid workshops and bootcamps for our support programs and hybrid events on all kinds of topics catering to the needs of our heterogenous community - ranging from cultural awareness to green entrepreneurship.

## Short-term

### Community initiatives:

- Partnering with ecosystem stakeholders for online hackathons and support programs
- Online regular meetups for women in entrepreneurship
- Founder Stories web series

### Physical changes:

- Partnering with local service providers for complete deep cleaning and regular disinfection
- New signage and seating set-up
- New community guidelines and reduced capacities for event spaces

## Long-term

### Business model changes:

- Offering a professional studio set-up for seamless streaming of online and hybrid events
- Creating long-term partnerships with trainers and content providers that offer hybrid options
- Providing flexible payment plans for all tenants
- Providing recorded versions of events

By the end of 2020, we were able to resume our day-to-day operations within the framework of the new restrictions. However, the pandemic left its lasting impact on our business model. While it reduced or even eliminated revenue streams, programs and activities at the time, it opened the door for new ways of working together, new people to join our community - especially from outside Cairo - and new services we can offer to the ecosystem in Egypt and across the region.

# TEN



## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS



Startup Haus Cairo, in its strategic location in downtown Cairo, became a home for enpact's global community and the stepping stone of many of its activities in the region. The journey in Cairo allowed the team - both internationally as well as locally - to learn how physical spaces can contribute to enhancing economic development via empowering entrepreneurship and by cultivating networks. At the same time, it opened doors into neighboring ecosystems in the region. Startups around the world, especially those who are in their early stages, need a physical space that acts as an ecosystem enabler attracting support from bigger organizations to cascade their influence

Based on the learnings, challenges and successes of the last years, we compiled three recommendations for fostering ecosystems through physical hubs

## RECOMMENDATION ONE

### Stepping outside the traditional coworking model

First and foremost we learned, that a co-working space that only exists for co-working does not have an attractive sales proposition. Therefore, as early as possible, Startup Haus Cairo aimed to step outside the traditional coworking model.

In order to create true value and lasting impact for the community - and the whole entrepreneurial ecosystem - additional services and programs are required that go beyond renting out offices or providing facilities. Startup Haus Cairo is a great example for this, as it became a catalyst for entrepreneurs, artists, and ecosystem enablers

Without a physical space, startups often lack many elements essential for their success: a supporting community, a mutually beneficial network, meaningful connections, spontaneous life-changing encounters, access to financial support, mentoring, and training, international exposure, office space, events and all the other intangible benefits that come with spaces like Startup Haus Cairo.

With its combination of "hardware" (the physical premises) and "software" (the many different programs implemented by enpact), Startup Haus Cairo, partners, donors, other stakeholders and - last but not least - the community itself, provide a fertile ground for everyone involved to grow as professionals.

## RECOMMENDATION TWO

### Ensure financial sustainability with diversified revenue streams

From the beginning, the clear strategic objective for all partners involved was to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of Startup Haus Cairo. Both enpact and DROSOS FOUNDATION wanted to ensure that Startup Haus' Cairo activities and impact go beyond the actual project duration. A special focus was put as an integral part of all strategic discussions to jointly look and explore additional and diversified revenue streams that secure the long-term financial sustainability of the space.

The most important learning is that a variety of programs with and by external stakeholders are needed. The simplified and averaged profit/loss sheet below shows this clearly, with more than 50% of the income being provided through such programs.

ANNUAL EXPENSES	ANNUAL REVENUES
50% Space Rentals	25% Private Office Rent
25% Staffing Costs	20% Events
25% Operational Costs	55% Programs

Annually, Startup Haus Cairo achieves breakeven point with the programs and 'software', that is being operated from the space.

Startup Haus Cairo made significant progress in its aim to be financially independent. This was also attested by an external evaluation.

"The project is on track for achieving operational financial sustainability (excluding CAPEX and renovation costs), which means that the project team has to raise more money for expansions like activating the events space, which is considered normal practice in this line of business. We can see from the financial reports that the project becomes cash flow positive in the months when a decent-sized event is hosted or when a program is executed." - Statement by external consultants<sup>[18]</sup> on the assessment of the financial sustainability of Startup Haus Cairo.

[18] The external consultants were hired by DROSOS FOUNDATION as part of the auditing process of the project.



## RECOMMENDATION THREE

### **Nurturing collaboration, expanding synergies with uncommon allies and new formats**

Partnerships and collaborations, as well as being embedded in many different communities that include entrepreneurship in a much broader sense, are another important learning and recommendation. Here, the diversity of the collaboration should be grown both regionally and thematically. Concrete partnership programs, shared co-working spaces, recurring event series by externals, etc. are examples of recommended formats to ensure growing collaborations with different types of cultural and entrepreneurial stakeholders.

Significant progress was made in creating partnerships with organizations and actors that focus on addressing the needs of underserved communities. While this was not in the first years of Startup Haus Cairo, today many amendments in the physical setup start to cater to accommodate people with disabilities. Starting with portable ramps that allow wheelchairs access to the Arena, accessible bathrooms for wheelchair users and access to the mezzanine levels and second floors through lifts. Future plans include ensuring that Startup Haus Cairo is accessible to people with visual impairments.

Another focal group of the Startup Haus Cairo were artists and creatives. Acting as an inclusive platform and physical exchange place for these groups supported the growth of Startup Haus Cairo and its community. It also provided exposure to creative groups which often lacked an opportunity to showcase their creations and connect them to potential markets. Seizing this opportunity, throughout the past three years, Startup Haus Cairo has become a hub for creative performances, exhibitions and bazaars.

Startup Haus Cairo is the enpact hub in North Africa and is central to all the organization's activities and support programs across the region. It was established in 2017 by enpact with the support of DROSOS FOUNDATION. Startup Haus Cairo is home to workspaces, services, amenities, and dynamic collaboration with a vibrant community where you can exchange ideas, knowledge and inspiration.



STARTUP HAUS CAIRO

[shc@enpact.org](mailto:shc@enpact.org)

37 Talaat Harb, Bab Al Louq,  
Qasr El Nil, Cairo Governorate