

# KING KHALID FOUNDATION

## Educating for environmental sustainability in the Arab region

- **Country:** Saudi Arabia
- **Number of staff:** 100
- **Year of incorporation:** 2001
- **Type:** Family foundation
- **Endowment:** Yes
- **More information:** [kkfeng.org](http://kkfeng.org)

The King Khalid Foundation (KKF) is a legacy project of King Khalid, who served as the king of Saudi Arabia from 1975 until his death in 1982. It is a family-run royal foundation managed by a Board of Trustees that seeks to support socioeconomic development in Saudi Arabia. KKF started its work by giving grants to non-profit projects focused on creating jobs, skills development for employment, and local support for entrepreneurship in different parts of the country. The climate agenda was not initially an issue of concern for the Foundation.

In 2008, KKF's team ran an impact evaluation and concluded that the initiatives they were implementing had little impact on Saudi society. The study showed that Saudi Arabia's non-profit sector was significantly underdeveloped, with just 200 non-profit organisations in the country formally registered. KKF decided to shift its focus to build a national sustainable non-profit sector. The Foundation began incubating new organisations, offering training programmes to entrepreneurs and supporting them to establish and manage their organisations.

After a decade of supporting the development of the non-profit sector in Saudi Arabia, KKF's team started to look beyond financial sustainability, exploring ways in which environmental sustainability could be incorporated into its approach. The Foundation restarted its grantmaking with added focus on how the private sector could contribute to the realisation of key policy frameworks that informed its approach, such as the country's

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>1</sup>, the Kingdom's National Transformation Plan 2020 and Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision. The key strategy adopted was to provide education programmes to business entities, through several KKF Awards. The Responsible Competitiveness Award, launched in 2009, was the first environmental, social and governance (ESG) focused award in the Arab region.

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*The King Khalid Awards are a tool for social change, designed to recognise, encourage and support exceptional achievements in the fields of corporate social responsibility, non-profit management excellence, and social innovation”.*

– NATASHA MATIC, KKF STRATEGY ADVISOR

## From capacity building to lasting change

The King Khalid Awards include the King Khalid Nonprofit Excellence Award, King Khalid Development Partners Award and the King Khalid Sustainability Award. The most recent is the Sustainability Award, designed to educate different organisations, the private sector and the stock market, and facilitate its engagement in sustainability issues – a big challenge for the region. The Award was also created to ensure that companies are held accountable for their climate and nature goals and targets. Any Saudi company can apply, and around 600 companies have already aligned their sustainability practices with their business imperatives and improved the quality of their sustainability reporting due to their participation in the Award.

All participants receive an evaluation in terms of ESG scorecards, specific training for their staff and leadership, and toolkits to create institutional sustainability. The most prominent driver of participation, as shown in the Foundation's 2020 Impact Report, is to enhance corporate sustainability strategies. After enrolling in this platform, the awarded companies started hiring women, reduced their environmental footprint significantly, improved their views about sustainability, and made advancements in aligning corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their broader corporate strategies.

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*There is a lot of talk about green initiatives in the Middle East. Still, if you look deeper, the number of organisations dealing with climate in Saudi Arabia is minimal – so who are we going to fund?”*

– NATASHA MATIC, KKF STRATEGY ADVISOR

<sup>1</sup> Saudi Arabia's 2030 Vision, <https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/>

## Building a climate-competitive business sector

In its latest three-year strategy review, KKF decided to expand its actions on climate, going beyond the awards and creating a specific grant scheme to address related issues. The Foundation announced the newly-developed Green Grants, which aim to support the creation of new jobs within the sector, as well as to support entrepreneurs interested in the renewables, climate and other related sectors.

The number of local organisations in the sector is, however, still very small. The Foundation seeks to pique Saudi's interest in developing regional green businesses, similarly to how it supported the development of the non-profit sector a decade before, and to support these local organisations and entrepreneurs to create companies that KKF can fund in the future.

The Green Grants is a culmination of the learnings from KKF's previous efforts in terms of field-building strategies and raising competitiveness through education and resilience. This initiative will prepare companies, non-profits and individuals to deal with the impact of climate on their performance, their lives, and the country's economic development, as well as to contribute to the nexus between climate, nature, poverty, economy and development. It is hoped that COP27 and COP28, planned to take place in the Arab region, will enhance greater awareness about climate change, nature-positive action, and the number of local organisations working on climate solutions.

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