As a response to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, this initiative seeks to strengthen resilience and offer comprehensive and holistic solutions to entrepreneurs, organizations and people.
Acknowledgements

This document is published by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), under the overall guidance of Bashir Conde, Industrial Development Officer Rural Entrepreneurship, Job Creation and Human Security Division. The document is drafted by Elisabetta Vignando and benefited from the valuable inputs received by Neila Amara and Milica Dimitrijevic.

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The context

As the COVID-19 pandemic causes serious public health crisis while upending daily life as we know it, its devastating consequences are ranging from disruption of global economic activity, shuttering of businesses and confinement of millions to their homes, leaving the world’s most vulnerable groups exposed to its most destructive effects.

The manufacturing sector is crucial for socio-economic transformation and recovery following the crisis. The UNIDO strategy for combatting Covid-19 uses the language “prepare and contain, respond and adapt, recover and transform,” in assisting the manufacturing sector to keep essential production chains in operation through a tailored portfolio of services for inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Looking forward, the disruption caused by the outbreak presents us with an opportunity to “build back better” by sharing and enhancing knowledge, building competitiveness and resilience and improving quality infrastructure, so that we can address unforeseen events with confidence in the future.
The framework

“Job creation for youth and women through improvement of business environment and SMEs competitiveness”.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in partnership with the Ministry of Industry Trade and Supply of Jordan, is supporting the development of competitive small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through the project “Job creation for youth and women through improvement of business environment and SMEs competitiveness”. The project is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

In accordance with the Jordan 2025 Economic Development Plan, the project aims at strengthening Jordan’s private-sector contribution to job creation and the economic inclusion of youth and women - including through self-employment - by supporting the development of competitive small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The project consists of two main components:

1. Developing an information system on the industrial sector that supports the production of evidence-based industrial and market intelligence analysis, and that facilitates overall monitoring of industrial development, including its impact on the economic inclusion of women and youth.

2. Enhancing investment and market opportunities in three selected value-chains: Fashion and Garments, Natural Cosmetic and Food supplements industry as drivers of job creation and self-employment for youth and women in both urban and rural regions.

The project will directly serve:

SDG 5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”

SDG 8: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”

SDG 9: “Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”

SDG 17: “Foster international cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships and the alignment of public and private investments and industrial policies”

(*) Source UNIDO project: Job creation for youth and women through improvement of business environment and SMEs competitiveness
The target value chains
Fashion and Garments

More than 60 fashion companies have signed “The Fashion Pact” launched by Kering’s CEO last year, creating a large industry cross-section that’s committed to seven new targets to reduce the sector’s environmental impact.

The industry is working to reduce the environmental footprint of its products. Ethically-minded fashion brands are rising their competitive influence on the market. While consumers may be willing to pay more for something that is environmentally friendly, the ultimate goal should be for sustainability to be accessible.

Natural cosmetics

Beauty products are placed directly on the skin — so a broad interest in holistic health has triggered a new consumer interest on ingredients and processes. Consumers want to know where ingredients or materials for products are sourced.

The organic and natural sector is the fastest growing sector of the global beauty industry with $160 billion spent worldwide each year on organic cosmetics, skincare and treatments. The global market value for natural cosmetics and personal care expect a positive increase from 54.5 billion dollars for the year 2027.

Food supplements

Worldwide, the lifestyles of some 6.3 billion people rely on the cultivation of plants. Demand for herbal drugs, cosmetics, foodstuffs and other products in this already vast market continues to grow.

There is an expanding interest worldwide in medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) due to their use as raw materials in the production of food supplements, medicinal and cosmetic products.

Sustainable plant use contributes to global wellbeing and a healthy ecosystem.
Digital infrastructures, global platforms and e-commerce are dramatically increasing SMEs’ reach in sourcing and selling, including through Global Value Chains, and facilitating access to distant markets.

Advancing digitalization in SMEs is a promising approach to enhance international and national competitiveness.

Digitalization is changing the nature and set of skills required to perform in data-driven and digital-enhanced markets.

The effective adoption of digital technology across SMEs can spur the whole economy and make it more competitive both nationally and internationally.

Design Thinking has become a mainstream approach in product development to meet consumer expectations.
levelUP
the accelerator for SMEs and Digital Innovators

Supports SMEs, start-ups and organizations to build game-changing and successful business models to enter global markets by adopting the design thinking approach for creating human-centred products, services, solutions and experiences.

01 Enhance industry (VCs) through digital transformation
02 Boost digital entrepreneurial culture
03 Foster SMEs competitiveness through innovation
04 Use design thinking to enhance brand awareness and meet customer’s needs
05 Improve access to finance
06 Improve digital marketing strategies
07 Foster the internationalization processes
The approach

In an effort to boost the growth of the Jordanian private sector in the context of Covid-19 worldwide economic crisis UNIDO in cooperation with the Ministry of Industry Trade and Supply of Jordan, has designed the *levelup accelerator* to facilitate the creation and growth of sustainable and inclusive businesses.

Focusing on three manufacturing value chains, fashion and garments, natural cosmetic and food supplements sectors the initiative provides women- and youth-led leading high-potential businesses with the tools to expand their ambitions and cultivate their businesses globally.

From seed to markets

The *levelup accelerator* aims to award 10 Champions of Digital Change, among visionary youth and female entrepreneurs who possess a tremendous desire to develop innovation capacity that turns in tangible business benefits.

The program is built around a 5 gates’ selection process in which entrepreneurs, start-uppers and organizations will benefit from a fully-fledged acceleration program including industry-immersion internships and fundraising boot camps experiences in Jordan and in Europe.

Fashion designers, craftspeople, manufacturers of garments, natural cosmetics and food supplements as well as talented entrepreneurs, NGOs and Innovation Hubs are invited to apply to the initiative and become mentors of *levelup accelerator*.

By acting at private and public levels, the accelerator which will award the 10 Champions of Digital Change, intends to establish fruitful partnerships between Jordanian and European entrepreneurs, financial investors and potential traders, academia and business associations to scale businesses from seed to markets.

To achieve this goal, the program aims to promote digital innovation among SMEs and start-ups by providing services and funding opportunities to build trade networks and gain access to digital markets.
Key goals

To acquire a broader entrepreneurial vision that allows businesses and organizations to compete, grow and thrive on the global markets.

To move beyond the traditional business models and focus on consumers’ empathy to come up with innovative ideas and solutions that speak to global customers.

To advance by partnering with leading European businesses and potential investors.
The accelerator ecosystem

The accelerator ecosystem is a comprehensive framework designed to support and facilitate the growth of innovative businesses. It consists of several key components that work in tandem to provide a holistic approach to entrepreneurship.

1. **Training**
   - Helps in developing essential skills and knowledge required for business success.
   - Includes modules focused on visual business models and European enterprises.

2. **Coaching**
   - Provides personalized guidance to entrepreneurs.
   - Includes a focus on visual business plans.

3. **E-Learning Modules**
   - Offers online training programs.
   - Supports the design thinking process.

4. **Industry-Immersion Experience**
   - 10 European Enterprises
   - Focuses on practical learning from industry experts.

5. **Boot Camps**
   - Provides intensive training sessions.
   - Aims to develop prototypes.

6. **Design Thinking Process**
   - Defines the scope of the project.
   - Ideates on creative solutions.
   - Prototypes the product or service.
   - Tests the prototype.

7. **Access to Finance**
   - Includes seed funds and venture capitalists.
   - Aids in securing financial support for businesses.

8. **E-Commerce**
   - Promotes online business operations.
   - Facilitates the market entry of products and services.

9. **Digital Infrastructure**
   - Supports the technological foundation of the ecosystem.
   - Enables efficient data management and connectivity.

This ecosystem is designed to provide a structured approach to entrepreneurship, ensuring that businesses are well-equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, finance, and market access to succeed.
beneficiaries

- Women & youth open-minded entrepreneurs and change makers
- Fashion designers
- Craftspeople
- Garment manufacturers
- Natural cosmetic manufacturers
- Food supplements manufacturers
- Export Consortia, NGOs Innovation Hubs and any organization, whose actions have a positive impact on the selected value chains

target audience

01. Trade buyers, Distributors, Retailers
02. Key stakeholders international corporates, Economic and business associations, Academia, Vocational training centres
03. Business angels, Investors, Financial institutions
04. Public & private organization
Core Partners
Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO)

JEDCO is a nationally mandated business support organization that builds on accumulated experience in the area of supporting the upgrading, modernization and development of start-ups and SMEs. This includes upgrading of technology, IT systems, production and services processes, technology, machinery, certification (CE, HACCP, ISO, GMP), quality assurance, marketing, on innovation implementation, on access to finance; and on market and export development. JEDCO provides policy advice to public and private sector stakeholders.

Jordan Exports (JE)

Jordan Exports is a national export promoting company, responsible of promoting and developing the export sector in Jordan. In accordance with this, JE leads policy advocacy, develops programs, capacity building and measures for the active promotion of exports. Exploration of markets through the organization and facilitation of participation in international trade fairs and exhibitions abroad is one of primary duties for JE.

The Business and Professional Women Association – Amman (BPWA)

BPWA Jordan is a dynamic, innovative, member-based organization and a business association of dedicated female professionals established in 2003 by a number of professional and pioneering women in Jordan. The Association supports Jordan’s vision of a stronger economy through increased participation by women in business and the workforce by providing Jordanian women with a pathway to business and career success.

ChangeLabs

ChangeLabs builds the MENA region’s leading virtual learning programs, accelerators, incubators, hackathons, and workshops leveraging experts and global mentors. The programs are SDG-aligned and help entrepreneurs launch and scale up their businesses while developing new skills.

Bridge for Billions

Bridge for Billions is a digital ecosystem of programs for early-stage entrepreneurs. In collaboration with Bridge for Billions, UNIDO developed the IDEA App, the virtual incubation platform that provides tailor-made localized business developed modules comprising step by step interactive learning-by-doing methods. The platform serves to connect young entrepreneurs with national and international mentors to accelerate growth of new entrepreneurship communities and foster an entrepreneurial culture. This web-based service seeks to provide highly structured and qualitative digital mentoring and incubation experience through all-in-one access to one-to-one mentoring, a step-by-step incubation methodology with key definitions, business cases, and data visualizations.
How does the levelup accelerator work?

www.levelupjordan.org
The five gates of acceleration

**Gate 01: The Call for application**
- Call for applicants
- Online open days to explain the program
- Select applicants online
- Online interviews

**Gate 02: Think Digital program**
- E-training modules carried out by leading European Business Schools in synergy with Academia and vocational training centres in Jordan

**Gate 03: Scale-up program**
- Industry-immersion experience in leading European corporates
- Boot camps to raise seed funds in Europe and/or in Jordan
- Networking events i.e. investors days and corporate days in Europe and/or in Jordan
- Award ceremony in Jordan

**Gate 04: Seed to grow program**
- The program provides tailor-made solutions to incubate enterprises at mature and early stage of development including by using the UNIDO IDEA APP tool (*)
- E-coaching modules and mentorship delivered in synergy with corporates, financial ventures and innovation hubs
- Call for applicants
- Promotional events with potential traders and buyers in the target countries (B2B, B2C, trade fairs, workshops and economic missions)

**Gate 05: Go global program**
- Partnership agreements with e-commerce players
- Industry-immersion experience in leading European corporates
- Boot camps to raise seed funds in Europe and/or in Jordan
- Networking events i.e. investors days and corporate days in Europe and/or in Jordan
- Award ceremony in Jordan

(*) developed in collaboration with Bridge for Billions
The accelerator grow-flow

START
1. **CALL OPEN**
   - 4-6 weeks
   - SMEs selection

2. **COLLECT NEEDS & DATA**
   - 4-6 weeks
   - SMEs interviews

3. **E-LEARNING TRAINING PROGRAM**
   - 10-12 weeks
   - Strengthen business knowledge-soft skills

CHECK IN

4. **E-COACHING MODULE**
   - 10-12 weeks
   - Business model Elevator Pitch

5. **INDUSTRY IMMERSION EXPERIENCE**
   - 6-8 weeks
   - Prototype products and services

6. **FUNDRAISING BOOT CAMPS**
   - 2-4 weeks
   - Raise seed funds

7. **NETWORKING EVENTS**
   - 2-4 weeks
   - Investor days & Corporate days

8. **TRADE AGREEMENT**
   - 12 weeks
   - Trade events, fairs & economic missions

9. **E-COMMERCE**
   - 15-18 weeks
   - Access to market

10. **AWARD CEREMONY**
    - 1 week
    - 10 Champions of Digital Change

**CHECK IN**

- Entrepreneurial journey
SMEs selection process

gate 02
50
Training

gate 03
15
SMEs at mature stage

gate 03
35
SMEs at early stage

gate 04
10
Champions of Digital Change

gate 04
2021
Jun — Jul

gate 02
Aug — Sep

gate 03
Sep — Dec

gate 05
2022
Feb — July

gate 05
timeline 2021—2022

gate 01
Call for applications
Open Days & Masterclasses
Online

Aug — Sept 2021
14 weeks
interviews
Selection process completed by end of Sept
Online

Oct — Dec 2021
10-12 weeks
gate 02
E-learning training program
50 Beneficiaries
Online

Dec — Jan 2022
SMEs at early stage
10-12 weeks
SMEs at mature stage
4-6 weeks
gate 03
E-learning coaching program and one-to-one mentoring
35 SMEs at early stage
15 SMEs at mature stage
Online

Jan — March 2022
10-12 weeks
gate 04
Industry-immersion experience
10 Champions of digital change
Europe and Jordan
Online

Feb — July 2022
18-20 weeks
gate 05
E-commerce and trade events
10 Champions of digital change
Businesses involved: 200

Entrepreneurs trained: 50

Mio Euro funds mobilized: 5

Business Schools, Academia and vocational training centres and NGOs involved: 10

Partnership agreements signed: 10

Target Countries served: 15

Traders and buyers linked: 500

Economic & Trade associations linked: 50

New jobs generated: 250

Strategic partnerships established with regional institutions in Europe: 6

Public institutions involved in Jordan and in Europe: 10
According to SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 9 and SDG 17, the initiative will be assessed against the following key performance indicators 24 months after the end of the program:

- Number of businesses financed of which Youth-led and Women-led (incl. young women)
- Jobs opportunities created for youth and women, including self-employment in supported companies
- Access to markets in the target countries
- Number of supported companies signing new deals for export sales
- Seed capital raised
- Impact on Jordan innovation ecosystem (e.g.n. individuals involved in fablabs, new start-ups launched through the initiative)