



مركز الزبير  
Zubair EDC  
مركز الزبير لتطوير المؤسسات  
Zubair Enterprises Development Centre

# ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

2024

# INTRODUCTION

The Zubair Corporation believes in the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in enhancing the national economy and contributing to sustainable socio-economic development. Since its establishment in 2013, Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) has become a professional body that capitalizes on its high professionalism, diverse knowledge base, wide range of accumulated expertise, and its extensive global and local network of strategic partners.

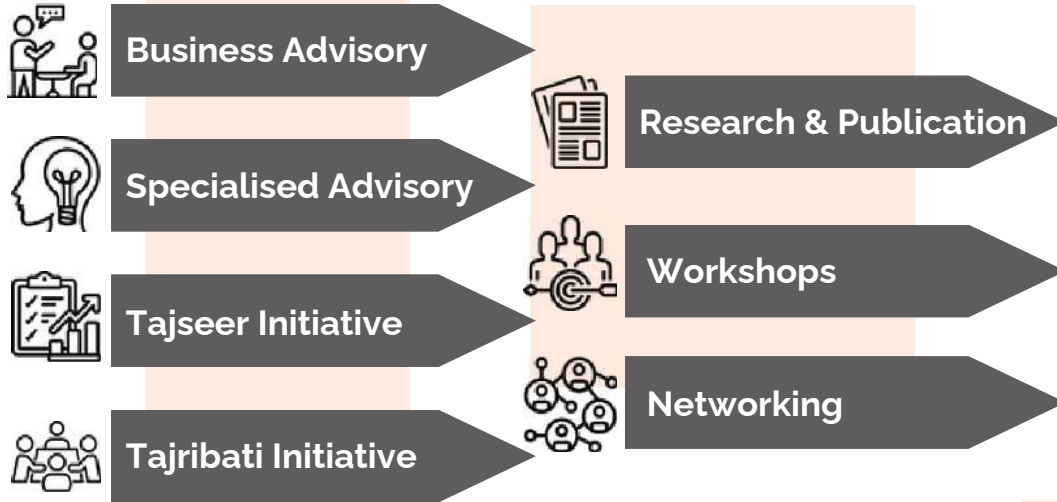
Zubair EDC has consistently played a pivotal role in enabling and establishing successful small and medium businesses led by ambitious and promising Omani youth. Each new business adds social and economic value, demonstrating a journey of perseverance and determination by its members. Whether through creating new jobs or promoting local Omani products and services in domestic and international markets, these milestones reflect Zubair EDC's commitment to fostering growth and innovation.

With a core team boasting diverse cumulative experience and expertise, Zubair EDC has delivered more than 4,000 hours of consultations and advisories and has implemented customized SME programs tailored to the unique needs of its members. The Centre has facilitated over OMR 248,000 worth of contracts and agreements and enabled access to over OMR 1.85 million in financial funding for its members, solidifying its position as a key driver of SME success and a catalyst for the ecosystem's growth.

Zubair EDC's achievements extend beyond numbers. By fostering local market reach and acting as an ecosystem catalyst, the Centre has become the preferred choice for partnerships on both national and international levels. These milestones serve as a new horizon for the Centre, motivating its core team to cultivate innovative strategies and refine ideas to deliver even greater impact.

Zubair EDC has created a significant impact not only on its members' business progress but also on the wider SME support ecosystem in the Sultanate, reinforcing its mission to enable sustainable and scalable businesses that contribute to the socio-economic fabric of Oman.

## OUR SERVICES



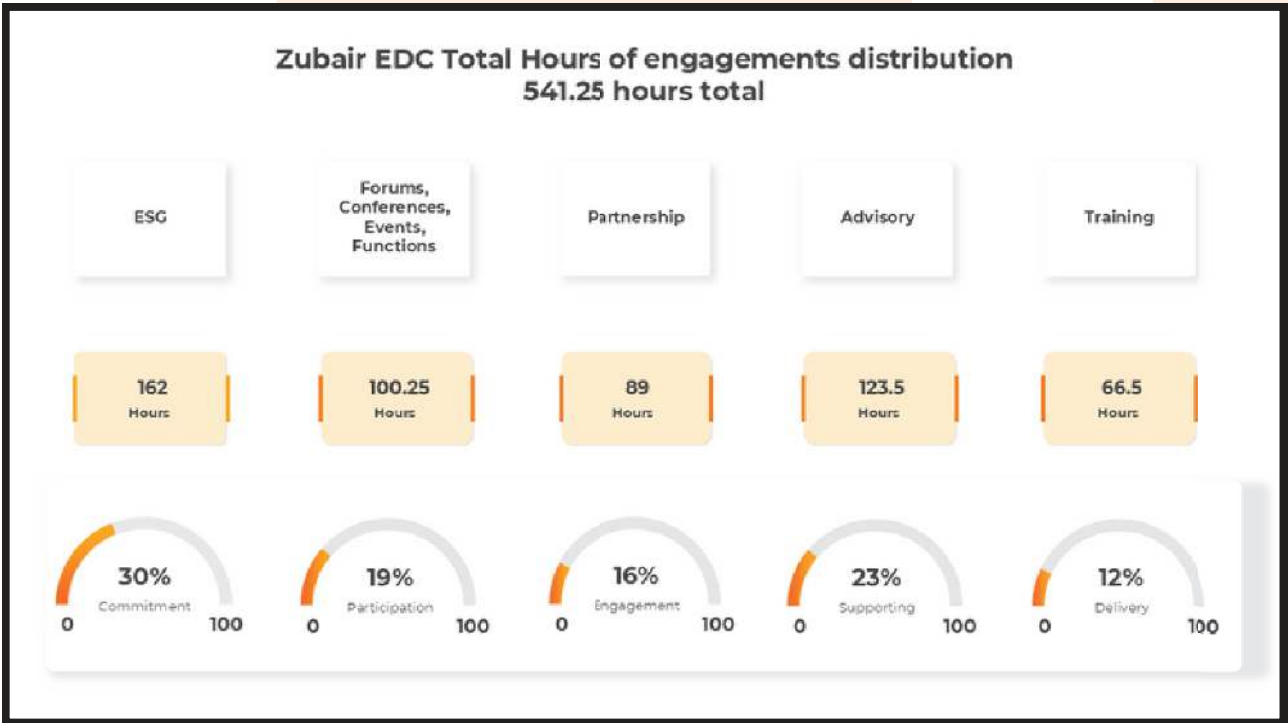
## LOCATION CHANGE & NEW OFFICE

In response to evolving market dynamics and organisational needs, The Zubair Corporation has identified the necessity to relocate the Zubair EDC Centre to its corporate premises. The new location is situated within the Zubair Corporation headquarters. This strategic move ensures better alignment with the Corporation's updated strategies, initiatives, and programs. The new site offers enhanced facilities and is designed to support the Centre's objectives more effectively, fostering greater efficiency and alignment with the Corporation's vision.

# CENTRE TIME ALLOCATION

We provide a comprehensive suite of business advisory services designed to support the growth and development of our small enterprise members. Our expertise includes guiding members on regional and economic strategies, benchmarking business performance, analyzing market demand and supply for their concepts, and creating practical training and development tools adaptable to diverse business environments.

Driven by our mission to guide, develop, and empower Omani entrepreneurs, The Zubair EDC Team dedicated a total of **541.25 hours** in 2024 to key focus areas. These include advisory and consultation services, forging and strengthening strategic partnerships, training entrepreneurs, and participating in forums, conferences, and events centred on entrepreneurship development. The breakdown of hours spent on these activities is detailed in the accompanying





With the growing number of entrepreneurs joining the Centre, Zubair EDC has become a dynamic platform for communication and collaboration, offering members the opportunity to connect, share experiences, and enhance their business knowledge. In this spirit, the Centre launched the Tajribati initiative—a periodic discussion forum open to both members and non-members. These sessions bring together entrepreneurs and experts from various public and private organizations, fostering valuable discussions on business development, best practices, and industry insights.

To further enrich the experience, Tajribati has adopted a new approach by welcoming both local and international speakers through advanced technology and virtual communication tools. This ensures greater accessibility and diverse perspectives for participants.

Below are the key Tajribati sessions conducted in 2024:

### *Alternative Creative Funding*



The Tajribati dialogue session focused on alternative and innovative funding solutions. Held at The Zubair Corporation, the session featured Mr. Mohammed Al Tamami, Founding Partner and Head of Commercial Affairs at Mamoon Company, and Mr. Mohammed Shehzad, CEO of Ethisx Investment Company. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Ali Shaker, Head of Zubair EDC

With the evolving needs of SMEs and startups, there is an increasing urgency to explore alternative financing channels that complement traditional methods while addressing the specific challenges and opportunities these businesses face.



## *Investing in Startups*

Tajribati dialogue session was focused on investing in startups. The event featured Dr. Amaal Al Arawi, Founding Partner of Sehatak, and Mashael Fairouz, Founding Partner of JEO Capital.

The session was understanding investment criteria for startups and determining the right time to seek funding. Industry experts shared valuable advice on common pitfalls entrepreneurs should avoid, alongside real-life success stories that provided practical learning opportunities. Active participation from Centre members further enriched the discussion, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences to the table.



## *Expanding Business Beyond Oman's Borders*



The dialogue session focused on the topic of business expansion beyond Oman. The session featured insights from Mahmoud Al Amri, Chief Investment Officer at Re-Solutions Company, and Mohammed Al Majid, General Manager of Kavadis Company from Saudi Arabia.

The session highlighted the challenges local companies face when expanding internationally, creating business opportunities abroad, the significance of global expansion, and essential strategies for successful international growth. This session came at a crucial time for entrepreneurs looking to expand internationally, aligning with the Sultanate's objectives of increasing non-oil exports and diversifying sources of income.

## Strategic Planning for 2025



The session, titled 'Strategic Planning 2025', was held at The Zubair Corporation and featured His Excellency Hussain bin Mohammed Al Lawati, a distinguished expert in Training, Leadership, and Institutional Development.

The session underscored the critical role of strategic planning amid evolving local and global dynamics, offering insights into the methodologies for formulating and aligning strategies for the year 2025. A particular emphasis was placed on linking Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) strategies to Oman Vision 2040, while also addressing key international trends poised to impact the future of businesses.

Participants explored actionable approaches to developing robust strategies capable of adapting to economic and social transformations, ultimately fostering sustainable growth and contributing to Oman's national economy.

## INITIATIVES & COLLABORATIONS

Our success is driven by strong collaborations with our partners across both the private and government sectors. At Zubair EDC, we believe that working together with key ecosystem stakeholders enables us to better support the growth of local SMEs, guiding them toward long-term success and sustainability. In the second half of the year, Zubair EDC remained committed to strengthening relationships with existing partners while actively implementing agreed-upon initiatives, particularly those set for completion by the end of 2024.

### ***AZM Initiative Programme in Collaboration with Ministry of Social Development & Al Jisr Foundation***



Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), has successfully concluded the empowerment and development programmes under the Azm initiative. Designed to enhance business innovation and marketing skills, the programmes were delivered in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Al Jisr Foundation for the first cohort of participants.

To elevate the Azm brand, the Zubair EDC conducted comprehensive research on four rehabilitation centres for individuals with special needs. This involved engaging stakeholders in data collection and analysis to identify workflow gaps and inform a tailored training plan to bridge skills gaps in business and entrepreneurship. Field visits facilitated the assessment of training needs and the development of a comprehensive entrepreneurship training program, including practical applications of business models for participants, alongside personalized guidance and commercial and marketing consultations to enhance product quality and market readiness.

### ***Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO-Oman) Collaborations***

#### ***Zubair EDC Participates in Workshop on Green Climate Fund Financing***

In response to an invitation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (ZEDC) took part in a two-day training workshop in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

The workshop, held under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Mohsen Al Ghasani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, aimed to raise awareness about the financing strategies adopted by the Green Climate Fund, particularly focusing on fostering partnerships between the public and private sectors. This workshop yielded a positive outcome that provided an invaluable opportunity to raise awareness, build capacity, and enhance the skills of participants in qualifying environmental projects for international funding, including from major sources like the Green Climate Fund.





### ***Aflaj Project, Agro-Tourism Development Programme – Balad Sayt***

The Aflaj Project: Oman's traditional irrigation system represents a remarkable engineering marvel, blending agricultural biodiversity, resilient ecosystems, and a rich cultural heritage. However, these ancient systems face significant threats, including climate change, growing competition for natural resources, and rural migration due to declining economic viability. These challenges have led to the abandonment of traditional farming practices and the loss of endemic species and breeds.

This project aims to recognize and preserve selected traditional irrigation systems, fostering a sense of identity, ownership, and pride among local communities and small farmers. It also seeks to provide essential economic and social benefits while safeguarding these traditions and cultural heritage for future generations. By doing so, it encourages farmers and governments to actively support the conservation of these unique and fragile local food systems, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In line with this vision, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO – Oman) and the Zubair Enterprises Development Center (Z-EDC) have partnered to implement the first pilot Agro-Tourism project on a selected Falaj.

In a major stride toward sustainable rural development, the Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC), in collaboration with FAO-Oman, successfully launched and reviewed the first pilot Aflaj Project for agricultural tourism in Balad Sayt village, Wilayat of Rustaq. The initiative was inaugurated under the patronage of His Excellency Dr. Ahmed bin Nasser Al-Bakri, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources for Agriculture, with the attendance of distinguished guests and local community members.

## EDUCATION & ACADEMIC

The Centre has prioritized the education sector by establishing collaborations with various academic institutions. These partnerships are driven by the belief that fostering an entrepreneurial mindset should begin at different stages of education. Through this approach, Zubair EDC seeks to cultivate a strong foundation that empowers the younger generation to embrace entrepreneurship and explore its potential.

### *Partnership & Collaboration with Middle East College*



Aiming to cultivate entrepreneurship in the Sultanate, the Zubair EDC collaborated with its strategic academic partner, Middle East College, and organised a workshop on entrepreneurship concepts and funding. The workshop was attended by professors, students, and young entrepreneurs. The Centre presented key topics of the workshop and explained the services provided to entrepreneurs and those interested in the field. Also, the Centre defined the identity of an entrepreneur, and the essential qualities needed to thrive in the world of entrepreneurship, highlighting the available funding mechanisms and challenges they could face when starting their ventures.



Zubair EDC has been invited to join the evaluation committee for Middle East College's Startup Incubator Programme. This collaboration underscores the Centre's vital role in fostering enterprise development and its commitment to nurturing the next generation of Omani entrepreneurs. Through this partnership with Middle East College, Zubair EDC will not only contribute its expertise but also support the development of the next generation of business leaders in Oman.

The Startup Incubator Programme at Middle East College aims to transform innovative ideas into viable business ventures by providing a stimulating environment that supports the growth of new startups. Through initiatives such as pre-incubation workshops, idea generation sessions, business creation, and market development, the programme fosters an entrepreneurial mindset among students, preparing them to become leaders and changemakers in their industries.

## *Al Khaboura Vocational College Visit*

The Zubair EDC welcomed a distinguished delegation from Al Khaboura Vocational College, comprising of both students and faculty members, for an educational and insightful visit aimed at fostering entrepreneurial growth and knowledge exchange.

This workshop yielded a positive outcome that provided an invaluable opportunity to raise awareness, build capacity, and enhance the skills of participants in qualifying environmental projects for international funding, including from major sources like the Green Climate Fund.



## *UTAS Shinas Entrepreneurship Forum*



Zubair EDC participated in the Entrepreneurship Forum hosted by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Shinas. Organised in collaboration with the Department of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in North Al Batinah Governorate, the three-day forum carried the theme 'Innovation for a Sustainable Future' and featured various initiatives aimed at empowering entrepreneurs.

The forum's objectives included fostering awareness of entrepreneurship's significance, equipping participants with essential skills through workshops, and nurturing creativity, innovation, and a competitive spirit among students. Zubair EDC's participation underscored its commitment to collaborating with educational institutions to develop the youth sector and inspire innovation, aligning with Oman Vision 2040's goals of advancing entrepreneurship and youth development.



## Majan College Collaboration



Zubair EDC conducted a two-day educational program in partnership with Majan University College. The initiative engaged male and female students as well as faculty members, fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, technical knowledge, and practical expertise while facilitating knowledge exchange.

The program commenced with a visit to the Oman Oasis Water Factory, a subsidiary of The Zubair Corporation, where students were introduced to the production stages and quality assurance processes involved in manufacturing drinking water. The tour provided a practical understanding of operational workflows and demonstrated the application of costing methodologies in production management.

On the second day, students visited the headquarters of Oman Oasis, where they attended a presentation showcasing the company's achievements and initiatives over its 30-year history. The presentation emphasised Oman Oasis's contributions to innovation and sustainable business development in alignment with Oman Vision 2040, highlighting key aspects of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset.

The initiative aimed to deepen participants' understanding of decision-making processes essential for optimising production efficiency, managing costs, and enhancing profitability. By connecting academic learning with real-world applications, the program bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and industry practices, enriching the participants' educational experience.

## Business Partners Gathering - Sohar University Honours Zubair EDC



Zubair EDC was recently honoured as a key partner at the highly anticipated 'Business Partners Gathering' event held at Sohar University campus. This significant occasion was held under the auspices of His Excellency Mohammed Sulaiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah.

Aligned with Zubair EDC's strategy to foster and maintain strategic partnerships with pivotal players in Oman's entrepreneurial landscape, Zubair EDC's collaboration underscores its commitment to the ecosystem's growth and development.

The gathering commenced with an inspiring address by the University Vice Chancellor, followed by a dynamic dialogue that focused on addressing key challenges and uncovering new opportunities to advance the entrepreneurial ecosystem and innovation in Oman, in alignment with Oman's Vision 2040. The event also featured the signing of collaboration agreements and a comprehensive tour of the university's facilities.

# LOCAL & INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

## COMEX 2024



Zubair EDC participated in the 33rd edition of COMEX, hosted at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event, spanning four days, was held under the esteemed patronage of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said. This involvement aligns with the Centre's strategic objective to play a pivotal role in advancing the entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem in the Sultanate.

Zubair EDC showcased its comprehensive suite of services designed to support entrepreneurs, particularly those managing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The event attracted significant participation, especially within the youth and companies keen on the technology sector. The Centre engaged in numerous discussions with various public and private sector entities to forge future partnerships aimed at empowering emerging technology firms. Additionally, the Centre contributed to the event's programmes with a working paper titled 'Innovative Financing Solutions for Emerging Technology Companies'. This presentation highlighted crowdfunding, discussing its opportunities, challenges, and requirements, and showcased successful models within the domain.

## 7th Gulf Business Incubators Accelerators Conference



Zubair EDC participated in the 7th Gulf Business Incubators and Accelerators Conference, organized by the Bahrain Society for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. This event, held under the patronage of His Excellency Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, Speaker of the Bahraini Council of Representatives, explored the theme "The Future of Arab Incubators: Balancing Financing Needs with the Importance of Sustainability" and welcomed several ambassadors and officials from the GCC and other Arab nations.

During the conference's opening session, the Centre presented: "The Role of Arab Incubators in Achieving Sustainable Economic Development: Achievements and Challenges." Highlighting the significant role of business incubators and accelerators in empowering small, medium, and emerging enterprises to support sustainable development goals. Discussing challenges faced by Arab incubators and sharing successful initiatives from Zubair EDC in Oman. His Excellency MP Ahmed Sabah Al Saloum, Chairman of the Bahrain Society for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises, praised Zubair EDC's ongoing commitment to regional development, noting that this conference emphasised the need for robust financing and sustainable practices in incubators and accelerators.



## MEMBERS' UPDATES

### *Janain Al Hamra School in Wilayat Al Hamra*



The Zubair Enterprises Development Centre (Zubair EDC) team, in collaboration with representatives from the Private Schools Department and early education supervisors, recently visited Janain Al Hamra School in Wilayat Al Hamra, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. This visit is part of Zubair EDC's strategy to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs), aiming to support their growth and sustainability. The visit also provided an opportunity to review the significant achievements of Janain Al Hamra School in recent years.

Kadhiya Hamid Al Nabhani, the founder and director of Janain Al Hamra School, has been an active member of Zubair EDC. Her exceptional performance led to her selection for the Direct Support Program in its third edition. Janain Al Hamra School is recognized as a prominent project with substantial societal impact in the education sector.

This visit was an opportunity to witness the project's development years after Kadhiya Al Nabhani joined Zubair EDC and was selected among the winners of the Direct Support Program. Kadhiya joined Zubair EDC at the beginning of her business project, and through her efforts and the efforts of the school's management, a plot of land was allocated to build a model school with integrated facilities. We at Zubair EDC are proud of Kadhiya Al Nabhani's success story and look forward to seeing other entrepreneurs benefit from the experiences of the Zubair EDC members and the services we provide.

## *Tuhlub- Feasibility Study Agreement*



Zubair EDC announced the facilitation of a significant agreement between Tuhlub, a member of its Direct Support Programme (DSP), and the Leaders Consultancies and Development Centre. This partnership aims to conduct a unique feasibility study on using Azolla as raw material for fish feeding in Oman. If proven feasible, this study has the potential to greatly impact food security in the Sultanate of Oman.

This initiative aligns with The Zubair Corporation's strategic direction towards promoting sustainability. With the Zubair EDC establishing new criteria for its DSP initiative, the entity rewards members who demonstrate exceptional commitment to success and dedication in applying the recommendations provided by the Zubair EDC team.

Projects and businesses must reflect strategic planning and accurate feasibility studies, showcasing their eagerness to implement best business administration practices with the assistance of Zubair EDC.

## *Innovation in Healthcare System- Zaher Al Alawi*



Marking another feather in its proverbial cap, a member of Zubair EDC, Zaher Salem Al Alawi, has developed diabetic wound stickers as part of his master's studies. Zaher, an employee of the Environment Authority of Oman, has utilised brown and red algae to accelerate the healing of diabetic wounds, presenting promising results that mark a significant advancement in medical treatment for diabetics.

The initial phase of this project demonstrated the potential of polyphenol-rich extracts from *Saccharina Latissima* and *Alaria Esculenta* Algae to enhance the proliferation and migration of human skin cells. This enhancement is crucial for patients experiencing delayed wound healing, especially diabetics. The findings of Zaher's research have been published by Coventry University and are slated for publication in a scientific journal.

This product addresses the health challenges faced by diabetics and other patients with delayed wound healing, including the elderly. Diabetics' impaired ability to heal naturally requires specialised care, as their wounds heal slowly due to complex processes such as inflammation, cell proliferation, matrix deposition, and tissue remodelling. Current treatments rely on topical dressings to create a moist environment for healing. Our sustainable dressings made from Oman's native brown algae can promote rapid, cost-effective healing, especially for diabetic patients.

## Wadiaa Partnership



Zubair EDC has signed a strategic partnership with Wadiaa. This collaboration aims to provide cutting-edge crowdfunding solutions that will attract start-ups and investors—both individual and institutional, fostering smart investments and contributing to the prosperous future of the nation.

By signing this agreement with Wadiaa, Zubair EDC will open new and alternative channels to finance the projects of its members, particularly those entering the growth and expansion stages of their businesses. The availability of these alternative financing solutions is crucial, given the challenges that project owners face in securing traditional financing.

Wadiaa, based in the Sultanate of Oman, is at the forefront of providing financial solutions and crowdfunding services through advanced technology. The platform facilitates financing through both capital participation and lending, creating a vital link between projects and companies with investors, thereby driving economic progress and social development.



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