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IRAQI ECONOMISTS NETWORK

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## Private Sector Development Policy Papers

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### **Noah's Ark Initiative: Toward the creation of a new entrepreneur generation in Iraq. By Aziz Alnassiri \***

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2017, Noah's Ark was launched. This is an initiative aimed at solving Iraq's most pressing problem, youth unemployment. The Ark is an organized Launchpad for small entrepreneurial business startups. The concept is based on this approach:

- Finding all Iraqi university graduates who have entrepreneurial tendency (12% of graduates),
- Educating, training, supporting and helping these entrepreneurs find project ideas of interest to them,
- Expose the entrepreneurs to crowdsourcing, with focus on the elite of professionals, academics, scientists, inventors, mentors, business people, and investors to support, counsel, mentor, fund, partner, be a supplier or customer. In particular, the Iraqi diaspora as well as people from around the world who are concerned about the future of Iraq, can play a pivotal role here,
- Provide complete business modelling expertise together with a variety of supporting functions through incubation, carried out by a choice of Iraqi and non Iraqi incubators available on deck. i.e The Ark is an ecosystem of all Iraqi entrepreneurship initiatives,
- Design, and establish blueprints for repeatable projects, e.g. model farms, 3D Printed buildings teams (Mosul!), river transport boats (Marshes!), Babylon tourism arcades, etc,
- Ensuring competitiveness of all projects by always basing them on the latest technology and science available. The aim



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is not to catch up with the neighbours; we should aim to leap ahead of them. Iraqi scientists and the diaspora have a major role to play here,

- Establishing a fair, corruption free, crowd funding based, loan arrangement for all projects.

In doing all the above we are helping to launch 100s, and 1000s of startups in a systemic way, each startup is carrying all the elements of success with the crowdsource joining in their journey to provide good income for their owners and employees. A feature of Noah's Ark is to carry a running total of the potential jobs each project is likely to need, as well as another running total of jobs actually created , for all projects.

### **Future Development**

Furthermore, we intend to continue to develop Noah's Ark for the benefit of Iraq's economy. The platform already accepts registrations of companies and NGOs. In addition it provides a "jobs" function whereby the startups and any Iraqi owned entity can post their job vacancies. We are planning the following major developments to the Ark in the coming 18-24 months:

- Cover social entrepreneurship projects (voluntary projects).
- Introduce a highly innovative crowd funding scheme to provide loans on easy terms to the startups.
- Made-in-Iraq eCommerce to support electronic trading of all products and services from the Ark's Startups as well as any Iraqi owned entity including state owned factories, and including handy crafts and cottage industries' products.
- Create specialist incubators focused on single industries or groups of entrepreneurs, examples; Iraqi Marshes projects, Prosthetics for disabled projects, 3D printed buildings,



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Agricultural and farming projects, mining industry, Iraqi tourism, etc. A female only incubator is also planned for 2017.

- Stretch Crowdsourcing to its ultimate limit of engaging Iraqis living in Iraq with those in the diaspora in professional groupings (musicians, poets, teachers, footballers, scientists, journalists, ... etc).

### **Who Should Come Aboard?**

Noah's Ark can be joined by graduates, entrepreneurs, inventors, businesspersons, job seekers, scientists, professionals, investors, those capable of mentoring young people, and retired professionals are also encouraged to join. We also target Iraqi owned businesses and companies. Likewise all NGOs connected with Iraq.

### **Why Noah's Ark?**

RiTS, the Iraqi company whose motto "where vision meets innovation", arrived at The Noah's Ark initiative following a long journey going back to 2006 when we tried to establish a technology park for startups with one of Baghdad's major universities. In 2016 we experimented by establishing a physical incubator in association with AlMansour University College and a Linked in group by the name "Iraqi Crowdsourcing Group". The experiences gained together with dialogues made with nearly all entities connected with entrepreneurship across Iraq and beyond, led to the birth of the Noah's Ark concept. It uniquely combines incubation of entrepreneurs within Iraq with professional technologists, scientists, mentors and investors, especially from the Iraqi diaspora to participate in the activity of helping to establish successful well planned and operated startup



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businesses. Noah's Ark is rich with spin off advantages for all participants as well as the Iraqi economy. It is the home for all those who wish to improve the Iraqi economy through developing thriving startup businesses that make a living from solving Iraqi problems.

(\*) Aziz Alnassiri is CEO, RiTS and founder of Noah's Ark Initiative

<http://noah-ark.org/>



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