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Managing Director’s Message

As we reflect on the Al Qasimi Foundation’s eighth year of research and outreach, we are grateful for the support and collaborative relationships that have formed the basis of our success. The Foundation team continues to embody commitment to the people of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates, partnering with our stakeholders and peers to bolster education and community development efforts in the region.

One of the primary ways the Foundation has supported the sustainable growth of these efforts is through the research it conducted over the past year. Talented visiting scholars and dynamic research collaborations have led to an influential collection of studies and publications in 2017, resulting in practical policy recommendations that are both robust and relevant to Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates. These important contributions to education and policy issues facing the region have continued to expand the Foundation’s reputation and reach. I am proud to share that the Foundation was honored as one of the top Middle East and North Africa think tanks for the fourth consecutive year, a recognition resulting from votes by our fellow industry experts and peer institutions in the “2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report.”

In addition, the Foundation spent 2017 collaborating with local and international partners to apply this compelling research to its capacity development programs and community engagement initiatives. Partnerships with local ministries and schools as well as scholarships, grants, and professional development opportunities represent an important part of the resources the Foundation provides to its stakeholders as it seeks to make meaningful contributions in the community.

The Foundation shares with national leaders a vision of the United Arab Emirates as a competitive and innovative nation that is thriving across its economic, social, and cultural landscapes. Evidence-based research is key to making policy decisions that help our community reach its long-term potential. To that end, we believe what we have accomplished this year challenges us to go further in 2018, to embrace stewardship and excellence as part of the values of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates.

As the Year of Giving draws to a close, the Foundation looks forward to continuing to embody the principals of conscientious collaboration, advancing a culture of social responsibility in both the public and private sectors, as well as supporting local initiatives that further sustainably develop our community.

Dr. Mohamed Abdulatif Khalifa
Managing Director
Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research
Executive Director’s Message

The Al Qasimi Foundation spent 2017 giving back to our community, investing in our research and programmatic endeavors, while deepening and widening our engagement in issues related to education, philanthropy, community development, the arts, and culture. While pursuing these focus areas, we also took a closer look at our relationships with stakeholders, ensuring our efforts remain responsive to the needs of our community, renewing our commitment to the holistic, sustainable development of our emirate and the UAE.

This year, the Foundation’s ongoing research initiatives built relationships with leading academics, practitioners, and local and international non-profit organizations. This included co-organizing the Inaugural Philanthropy in Education Symposium with NORRAG, the Open Society Foundations, and the Graduate Institute in Geneva, funding five competitive Faculty Research Grants, and partnering with the Department of Education and St. Antony’s College at the University of Oxford to support burgeoning scholars interested in conducting education research in the region. Long-term, it is hoped that these connections will produce additional research, increasing collaboration and the impact of our efforts.

Our engagement activities have also been varied and fruitful. 2017 saw the opening of our new Studio & Gallery space, which engages our community in arts and culture programming year round. Inspired by the success of our Hands on Learning pilot program, the Foundation also launched the Boys Enrichment Program; contributing to the improvement of the academic, social, and physical development of Emirati boys in Ras Al Khaimah. Our educator professional development programs and school reform initiatives continued to yield impressive results, bolstered by our formal collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Additionally, this year, in the spirit of the Year of Giving, we opened a library in the female prison in Ras Al Khaimah and began a series of programs for the inmates.

Through relevant research, evidence-based policy recommendations and programming, and an emphasis on relationships, we continue to contribute to strengthening the economic, social, and cultural development of Ras Al Khaimah. Our team looks forward to working with our neighbors both here and abroad for a 2018 dedicated to the sustainable development of education and community in the UAE and beyond.

Dr. Natasha Ridge
Executive Director
Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research
Who We Serve
Our Community
The Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research was established in 2009 to aid in the social, cultural, and economic development of Ras Al Khaimah and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Al Qasimi Foundation seeks to support the public and private sectors by helping them ground policy decisions and programming firmly in relevant bodies of research that reflect the best thinking in the world as well as the local Ras Al Khaimah and UAE contexts.

To this end, the Foundation serves as a bridge between the research and policymaking communities—bringing to scholars’ attention public policy questions important to Ras Al Khaimah, and, in turn, disseminating research findings to promote innovative policy tools and models that will impact positive social change. We approach our work collaboratively, and aim to establish relationships with talented scholars and world-class universities, innovative public policy research centers, established government institutions, and strategic partners in the private and non-governmental sectors.

All of the Foundation’s efforts are designed to support progress in our emirate and nation, and our activities impact a broad range of local and international stakeholders. From collaborating with academics and non-profit organizations to co-organize the Inaugural Philanthropy in Education Symposium to partnering with top universities around the world to generate impactful, high-quality research, all of our initiatives remain focused on our community. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with the people of Ras Al Khaimah and remain dedicated to championing their interests through our research, capacity development, and community engagement and outreach efforts.
What We Do

Our Current Focus & Initiatives
The Al Qasimi Foundation generates a world-class body of research on Ras Al Khaimah and the broader UAE, develops local capacity, and engages the community in its work. Initially focused on education, we have expanded our priority areas to include health and wellness, urban and community development, and arts and culture. Signature initiatives include competitive international research grants, teacher and student professional development programs, and the annual Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival.

**Research Initiatives**
- Arab Father Involvement
- Gulf Comparative Education Society
- Philanthropy in Education
- Whole School Renewal
- Hands on Learning (pilot)
- Program to Improve Reading Fluency (pilot)
- Faculty Research Grants
- Doctoral Research Grants
- Seed Grants

**Capacity Development Initiatives**
- Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program
- Sheikh Saqr Overseas Scholarship Program
- English for Life Program
- Teacher Professional Development Program
- Ras Al Khaimah Teachers Network
- School Improvement Grants
- Teacher Scholarships
- UAE Teacher Exchange Program
- Ras Al Khaimah Prison Program

**Community Engagement & Outreach Initiatives**
- Al Qasimi Foundation Studio & Gallery
- Community Gathering Series
- Majlis Series
- Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival
- Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival Film Grants
As part of our mandate to support evidenced-based planning among the region’s policymakers, we view research as the cornerstone of our mission. The Foundation both conducts and promotes—through diverse grant offerings and partnerships—high-quality research focused on Ras Al Khaimah, the UAE, and the broader Gulf region.

The Foundation collaborates with scholars and esteemed universities across the globe and works to connect these researchers with relevant policymakers. The result has been progressive, applied research in the areas of education, health and well-being, urban and community development, and arts and culture.

This year the Foundation was pleased to co-organize the Inaugural Philanthropy in Education Symposium with NORRAG, Open Society Foundations, and the Graduate Institute, Geneva; honored to receive the Best Paper Award at the first UAE Public Policy Forum, hosted by the Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government; and excited to collaborate with researchers at the University of Texas, Arlington to conduct a highly successful pilot program that increased Arabic reading fluency in Grade 1 students.

“We are pleased that the Al Qasimi Foundation approached us to co-organize the Symposium. Their collaboration has been invaluable and has allowed the broadening of the scope and impact of the event. Discussions that took place at the Symposium and the forthcoming edited volume will undoubtedly influence the direction of research and policy around the world.”

- Joost Monks, Executive Director of NORRAG
800+
Direct beneficiaries of research initiatives

5
Doctoral, Faculty, and Seed Grants awarded

13
Arabic and English publications

2
Ras Al Khaimah schools piloting programs

19
Presentations delivered

60%
Increase in number of academic publication citations

Arabic Reading Fluency Program Pilot: Difference in reading comprehension pretest and posttest scores between the Grade 1 control and intervention groups

Scores

Pretest
Posttest

Control Group
Intervention Group

17.29
29.27
34.16
10.33

0
10
20
30
40
Curriculum Development in the United Arab Emirates

April 2017

Introduction

The emergence of international student performance assessments, such as the PISA, have taken part in their role in transforming the emphasis of education. The focus is now firmly on how to improve student performance in these assessments, such as the PISA, in order to improve their performance and attainment.

Reading in the Early Academy

Improving the performance of students in reading across the Early Academy is a challenge for educators and policymakers at all levels. Improved reading skills are critical to achieving successful learning outcomes and are central to the development of the individual and society. The present report presents an overview of the state of reading in the Early Academy and offers suggestions for improvement.

Policy Paper

What We’ve Done Research
One way that we steward our research findings is by developing and providing strategic services and support in order to build individual and local capacity across public sectors. These capacity development efforts cultivate local talent and support institutional improvements through evidence-based education initiatives.

This year, the Foundation has focused on improving teacher quality through providing accredited professional development courses, establishing formal collaborations with the Ministry of Education, developing gifted and talented students, and serving at-risk youth through supplemental life skills programming.

“The Foundation offers a Teacher Professional Development program by choosing topics according to teachers’ needs, which has a magnificent impact on teacher’s teaching skills in the classroom as well as student achievement and gives teachers ideas of what they need to keep up to date with latest practice in teaching.”

- Muhammed Atta, Ras Al Khaimah secondary school teacher
2300+ Direct beneficiaries of capacity development initiatives

1525 Ras Al Khaimah Teachers Network members

300 Teachers enrolled in professional development programs (peer-to-peer)

13 Teacher professional development courses and workshops offered

17 Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program students sent to summer university preparation courses in the US and UK

9 Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program student fieldtrips and university campus visits

170 Students participated in the Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program

13 Sheikh Saqr Overseas Scholarship recipients

3 School Improvement Grants awarded

124 Ras Al Khaimah Prison inmates attended development courses

100% of Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program Grade 12 students went on to university

21% of Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program Grade 12 students went to universities overseas
What We’ve Done Capacity Development

- Is working on a team to solve a problem alone?

Do we create our own communities to thrive in them?

The Foundation enhanced my personality and helped me adapt to any obstacles that might face me in the future.

This program changed my outlook on life. I became more independent, more understanding and aware of the world around me.

I signed up for this program thinking I was going to spend 4 hours a week improving my English, but it has turned out to be much more than that.

The program gave me a great experience in applying to universities and in international exams.

The Foundation is now part of my daily routine. Joining this program helped me reach my goal.

I love it here.
Community Engagement & Outreach
Investing in people means nurturing collaboration and advancing a spirit of community while demonstrating transparency in all of our operations. The Foundation therefore remains committed to inclusiveness, open-source information, and straightforward communication as pillars of our community outreach activities. The Foundation’s avenues of outreach include our quarterly newsletter, social media presence, podcasts, and various publications.

The Foundation’s engagement is supported by our community service, volunteerism, and events. Our Community Gathering events and Majlis presentations brought our diverse community together to exchange ideas, experience Ras Al Khaimah, and share each other’s cultures. This year the Foundation held the 5th Annual Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival and opened our new Studio & Gallery space to support the Northern Emirates’ burgeoning arts scene through hosting educational programming and exhibitions.

“The events organized by the Al Qasimi Foundation have provided us with a platform to indulge in and appreciate the cultural and social aspects of life in the UAE. The Ras Al Khaimah Fine Arts Festival in particular encourages artists and gives them opportunities to shine. The Foundation is the heart of our cultural community.”

- Cheshta Roy Sarkar, Ras Al Khaimah resident
Local and international university partners

Social media followers

Local and international recipients of quarterly newsletters

Local and international news coverage

Foundation appearances and interviews in local and international news coverage

Staff volunteer hours completed in service to our community

Peer leadership boards and committees served on by Foundation staff

Care packages donated and distributed as part of the Foundation’s Annual Ramadan Giveback

Majlis events connected researchers to policymakers interested in their work

Guests at Foundation events

Art exhibitions held at the Al Qasimi Foundation Studio & Gallery

Community Gathering events engaged the public in activities related to heritage, arts and culture, outdoor adventure, and the community

Social media follower growth

Growth in local Emirati engagement with the Foundation

Staff volunteer hours completed in service to our community

Peer leadership boards and committees served on by Foundation staff

Care packages donated and distributed as part of the Foundation’s Annual Ramadan Giveback

Majlis events connected researchers to policymakers interested in their work

Guests at Foundation events

Art exhibitions held at the Al Qasimi Foundation Studio & Gallery

Community Gathering events engaged the public in activities related to heritage, arts and culture, outdoor adventure, and the community

Social media follower growth

Growth in local Emirati engagement with the Foundation
What We’ve Done  Community Engagement & Outreach
To be a resource for our beneficiaries, stakeholders, other philanthropic and non-government organizations, and fellow start-ups in the region, the Foundation strives to embody industry best practices of transparency, accountability, and sustainability in all of our endeavors. To achieve this, in 2017 the Foundation focused on conducting department assessments and organizational audits, updating our departmental policy and procedure manuals, and focusing on our staff professional development.
Looking Forward
Plans for 2018
In 2018, the Al Qasimi Foundation will remain committed to strengthening the economic, social, and cultural sustainability of Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE through relevant research and evidence-based policy recommendations and programming.

Our team looks forward to working with our neighbors both here and abroad for a year dedicated to the improvement of education, health and wellness, urban and community development, and arts and culture in the UAE and beyond. We are particularly excited to:

- Collaborate with the US Embassy and AMIDEAST in providing the Youth English Program to students in remote areas of Ras Al Khaimah.
- Increase the number of graduates from the Sheikh Saqr Student Enrichment Program who travel overseas for university studies.
- Send teachers and school administrators to Vietnam through our UAE Teacher Exchange Program in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Institute of International Education.
- Launch an academic journal focused on education in the region.
- Transition to using the SAP system.
- Develop our strategic plan for the next five years.
Who We Are

Our Team
**Collaborators**

**Helen Abadzi**
*Faculty Scholar*

Dr. Helen Abadzi is a professor at the University of Texas at Arlington. She was an education specialist at the World Bank for 27 years and has two PhDs, one in psychology and one in educational administration. Her current research explores cognitive neuroscience applications that may improve early-grade reading fluency, and she recently completed the first phase of the Arabic Reading Fluency Program pilot.

**Sandeep Agrawal**
*Faculty Scholar*

Dr. Sandeep Agrawal is an internationally recognized urban planning scholar and practitioner with over 20 years of experience. Currently, he is a professor and the Inaugural Director of the Urban and Regional Planning Programs at the University of Alberta in Canada. His expertise lies in international development and planning, and he has been a recipient of multiple international faculty fellowships and grants. He has collaborated extensively with the American University of Sharjah and is currently researching the impacts of affordable housing policies and programs in Ras Al Khaimah.
Elizabeth Buckner
Faculty Scholar

Dr. Elizabeth Buckner is an assistant professor of Higher Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. She is interested in globalization, education and international development policy. She has researched various aspects of globalization’s effect on education, including textbook portrayals of globalization, the growth of English language learning, and the privatization of higher education. She is currently researching the factors impacting gender differences of Emirati student achievement on international assessment.

William Raynolds
Faculty Scholar

William Raynolds is an adjunct assistant professor of preservation at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, where he focuses on heritage conservation. He has worked on heritage projects throughout the MENA region and he is currently researching the historic felaj waterworks. His research describes the prospects and challenges associated with preservation, and identifies opportunities to better incorporate the waterworks into the historic narrative that Ras Al Khaimah presents to its citizens and the broader world.

William Cook
Doctoral Scholar

William Cook is a PhD student at York University in Toronto in the Linguistics and Applied Linguistics program. His research generally focuses on language policy and he has special interest in investigating how local, unwritten language policy is articulated and experienced by people in their everyday lives. His current research explores the lived language policy experiences of people working and studying at a school in Ras Al Khaimah.
Who We’ve Worked With

Our Partners
The Al Qasimi Foundation values collaboration as a key to building a stronger community. Therefore, the Foundation remains grateful and honored to partner with esteemed organizations who remain dedicated to research, development, and outreach initiatives in Ras Al Khaimah and the UAE.

**Ras Al Khaimah and UAE Government Partners**
- Al Ghail Youth Center
- Higher Colleges of Technology
- Masafi Cultural Center
- Ministry of Culture & Knowledge Development
- Ministry of Education
- RAK Bank
- RAK Correctional Facility
- RAK Department of Finance
- RAK Economic Zone
- RAK Education Zone
- RAK Electronic Government Authority
- RAK Gas LLC
- RAK Hospital
- RAK Investment Development Office
- RAK Management Office
- RAK Media Office
- RAK Rock
- RAK Schools
- RAK Tourism Development Authority
- RAK Waste Management Authority
- Ras Al Khaimah Department of Antiquities and Museums
- Ras Al Khaimah Department of Civil Services
- Ras Al Khaimah Municipality
- Ras Al Khaimah National Museum
- Sheikh Saqr Program for Government Excellence
- Young Men Social Foster Home

**Other Local Partners**
- Abdulla Saleh AlJooan
- Al Jazeera Aviation Club
- Alive Advertising
- American University of Ras Al Khaimah
- American University of Sharjah
- AMIDEAST
- Art 276
- Challenging Adventure
- Emirates Airline Festival of Literature
- Emirates Foundation
- German Emirati Joint Council for Industry and Commerce
- House of Beauty
- Middlesex University Dubai
- New York University Abu Dhabi
- Ras Al Khaimah Academy
- Ras Al Khaimah Medical and Health Sciences University
- University of Sharjah
- US Embassy in the United Arab Emirates
- Zayed University
- Clifford Chance
- Clyde & Co
- Dechert Law LLP
- Ernst & Young
International Partners

Arab Foundations Forum
British Council
CCI Greenheart
Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT)
Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation
Georgetown University
Goethe-University Frankfurt
Hands on Learning Australia
Institute of International Education (IIE)
John Hopkins University
Lewis School of English in Southampton
Nonprofit Tech for Good
NORRAG
Open Society Foundations
Oxford College Summer School

Peartree Languages Summer Junior School in Cardiff
Teachers College, Columbia University
The Graduate Institute, Geneva
The Gulf Comparative Education Society
The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)
Tribal Group
UNESCO
University of Alberta
University of Massachusetts
University of Münster
University of Oxford
University of Sydney
University of Texas at Arlington
University of Toronto
World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE)
York University in Toronto
A political economy of philanthropy

- Those concerns frame my analysis and discussion and an interest in what might be called the ‘political economy’ of philanthropy.
- I am interested in ‘big’ philanthropy, and the ‘entanglements’ (and constitution) of philanthropy and business, of reform and profit, of personal visions and education policy.
- Illustrate these issues and concerns via work on MSDF and ‘impact investing’ (Philanthropy 3.0) with a focus on India.
- I worry about neatness and typologies (doubles)