

drosos (...)

Annual Report 2021



(...) DROSOS FOUNDATION is committed to unlocking the potential of young people.



Contact

Zurich

DROSOS FOUNDATION
Obstgartenstrasse 19
8006 Zurich | Switzerland
info@drosos.org
T +41 43 300 54 00

Cairo

DROSOS FOUNDATION
26 Orabi Street
Apt. 21 Maadi
11431 Cairo | Egypt
cairo@drosos.org
T +20 2 2378 2459

Casablanca

DROSOS FOUNDATION
2, rue Pierre et Marie Curie,
Appt n°8
20070 Casablanca | Morocco
casablanca@drosos.org
T +212 522 36 49 06

Ramallah

DROSOS FOUNDATION
4 Mikkawi Building
Mai Ziadeh St.
Ramallah | Palestine
ramallah@drosos.org
T +970 2 2971661

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info@drosos.org

www.drosos.org

[www.linkedin.com/company/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/drosos-foundation/)

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Dear Readers,

2021 was another year that put the resilience of many people, organisations and companies to the test. The pandemic, economic hardships and political uncertainties further impeded the route to economic empowerment for already disadvantaged groups and people, particularly the young. Our partners continually adapted their activities to take account of the new and constantly changing circumstances. They developed creative solutions and achieved positive results despite restricted contact possibilities with project participants and communities. We supported and accompanied them in this process through our close engagement. At the beginning of the pandemic, we set up an emergency fund, which allowed us to react swiftly and with the needed flexibility.

Our environment is characterised by uncertainty, constant change and complexity, and not just because of the pandemic. This harbours risks but also offers opportunities to bring about positive change. We therefore took 2021 as an opportunity to reflect and take a critical look at our activities. Does our programme and project work fully meet the challenges facing young people today in our field of activity? Do we achieve the greatest possible outcome with the deployed funds? What are our strengths and our weaknesses? What can we do to achieve long-term improvements at

both the systemic and individual level? What forms of collaboration are we neglecting? During workshops focusing on these questions and analyses, we honed our strategy and defined our global direction for the coming years. Our overall objective remains the same and is more important than ever before in these times of challenge: young people should be able to fully exploit their potential and enjoy equal opportunities.

The strengths of our foundation lie in our partnership approach, our local presence and our willingness to support innovative and untried ideas. Another important aspect is our focus on building the capacity of our partners, most of whom still find themselves in the development phase at the time of our engagement. Based on these skills, we will expand our network and enter into new kinds of partnerships in order to make an even greater impact. Joint efforts are needed to find courageous and innovative solutions enabling young people to exercise their right to co-determination and to effect far-reaching change — for the common good of society.

We would like to thank our partners and our team, who did excellent work during a challenging year. We are looking forward to continuing our common journey to a fairer world offering more prospects for young people.

Suba Umathevan
CEO



Markus E. Kronauer
Chairperson





20-year-old Mahmoud from Egypt was born with a cerebral palsy. He improved his computer skills and entrepreneurial abilities by participating in two projects funded by DROSOS. Today, he runs his own small business.

DROSOS FOUNDATION empowers young people

DROSOS FOUNDATION works to ensure that young people can discover and develop their full potential. Together with its partners, the foundation nurtures their life and professional skills to pave their way to economic and social independence. Furthermore, DROSOS aims to remove inequalities and hurdles to social inclusion. Through its work, DROSOS wants to be a part of the solution to young people's current and future challenges.

DROSOS FOUNDATION is operating in eight countries and has offices in four locations



Background

DROSOS FOUNDATION was established in Zurich in 2003 on behalf of **Christa Gelpke-Engelhorn**. She set up DROSOS with part of the proceeds from the **sale of her interest in Corange Ltd., her family's holding company**. Christa Gelpke-Engelhorn passed away in 2014. **DROSOS FOUNDATION is a private grant-making foundation** established under Swiss law and is registered as a charitable institution. **It is subject to supervision by the Federal Supervisory Authority for Foundations in Bern, Switzerland.**



DROSOS FOUNDATION is a **member of Ethos** and is committed to **promoting sustainability and positive societal change** through its activities in the form of projects and programmes as well as in the management of its assets. DROSOS reviewed its **sustainability strategy** in 2021 in order to take account of the developments of the past few years.



Innovative education methods contribute significantly to the personal development of students. The Kane Ya Makane association is promoting this approach in public schools in Morocco.

Key Characteristics of DROSOS FOUNDATION

- Long-standing experience and expertise in the **promotion of creativity and economic independence.**
- **Sustainability:** The foundation seeks to ensure that the projects it supports have a long-lasting impact well beyond the end of the project. DROSOS focuses on the **organisational development** of its partner organisations.
- **Innovation:** A strong emphasis is put on implementing new and innovative ideas and replicating and scaling up projects that were successfully completed in the past.
- **Proximity to partner organisations:** Collaboration as equals, mutual respect and empowerment of the organisations to improve their work play a central role. Country offices staffed by employees who know and understand the local context facilitate this collaboration.
- **Networks:** DROSOS promotes collaboration between partner organisations, national authorities and the private sector. This enables the sustainable financing, replication and scaling up of project work, particularly once collaboration on a project has come to an end.
- **Independence:** DROSOS FOUNDATION does not rely on donations and can focus exclusively on the benefits and long-term potential when selecting projects.



Young people learn heritage restoration professions at the “Association Marocaine des Chantiers écoles pour le développement” (AMC).

Thematic focus: Life and professional skills with the objective of achieving economic independence

DROSOS FOUNDATION is convinced that life skills—technical skills, knowledge and thematic expertise—are important elements of personal development. Life skills are defined as skills that allow a person to improve their own circumstances. Improved life skills empower young people to independently manage their lives, accept responsibility, interact constructively with others, and positively contribute to their communities.

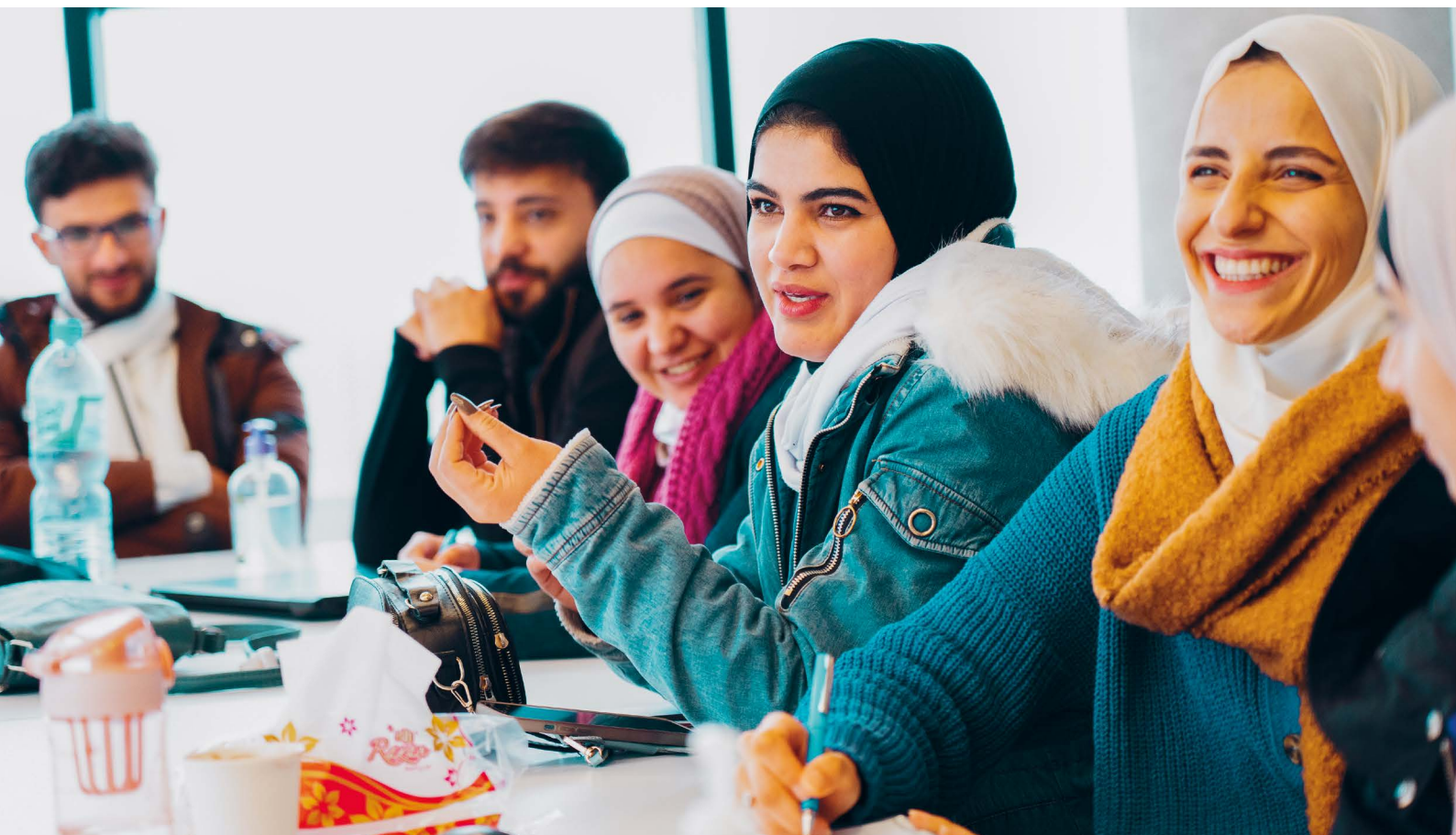
We promote projects and programmes that build on and further develop the individual skills of disadvantaged children, young adults, and youth. Our projects support the young in their personal development and access to education and employment opportunities and help create the required framework and conditions at the system level.

In doing so, we promote forms of creative expression—such as the visual arts, performing arts, applied arts, new media, photography and music, to name just a few—used by children and young people. We are

convinced that this has a positive effect on the development of their life skills. Engaging with and acquiring creativity empower children and young people to discover new prospects, rely on their strengths and demand and exercise their social rights. The self-confidence they gain in this manner also benefits them later in their professional life.

We also consolidate the life and technical skills, knowledge and thematic expertise of young adults and youth. The objective is to improve their employability and facilitate access to the labour market. We are convinced that young adults and youth who are aware of their potential, skills and expertise are less prone to the dangers of social exclusion, neglect and discrimination, exploitation and radicalisation.

In the future, DROSOS FOUNDATION will increasingly leverage and strengthen the synergies between these thematic areas and enlarge upon or hone individual topics according to the local context.



Participants of a project promoting entrepreneurship, run by our partner Taghyeer Social Media in Palestine.



2021 Achievements

A **global pandemic, economic crises, political unrest** and constant change hamper young people's path to a carefree, independent future. In 2021, the priority of DROSOS FOUNDATION and its partners consisted of offering young people safe spaces and opportunities to discover their talents and helping them use these talents to become socially and economically independent despite exacerbating circumstances. Innovation, sustainability and systemic impact have been key in achieving this goal.

DROSOS FOUNDATION pursues a holistic funding approach. As an organisation and with our partners, in 2021, we contributed to positive change at the individual, organisational and systemic levels. Through the economic and social empowerment we support, individuals are not only able to improve their own lives, but they become active citizens committed to a more just and sustainable world. By supporting our partners to further develop and expand their

work and to connect with other institutions, we help them increase their impact. We support new, innovative ideas and nurture dynamics in existing ecosystems. At the same time, we help to ensure that the issues and concerns of the target groups garner weight and attention and that their perspective flows into change processes at the system level.

The following series of successful activities in 2021 illustrates what this approach means in practice.

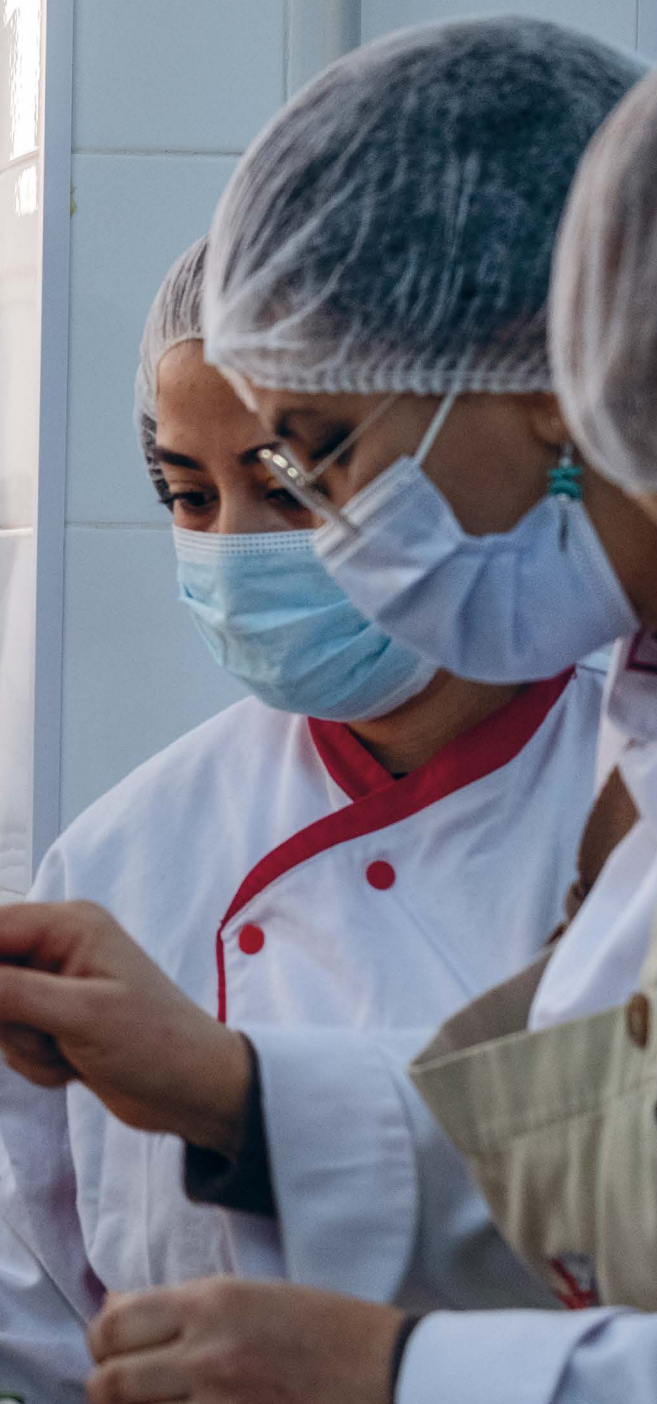


PHOTO: DROSOS / AMINE LANDOULSI

With the project “Ftartchi – l’Atelier” in Tunisia, women in difficult circumstances receive vocational training in gastronomy.

Successes at the system level

Social and economic participation is an overarching goal that DROSOS FOUNDATION has pursued for a long time. We are committed to creating an environment in which good ideas are promoted, become visible and can be successfully implemented. Creating such an environment requires change at the system level. For this to happen, a number of different actors need to engage with an issue and take action. We follow this collective impact approach to trigger impulses and, in the long term, to change the way society perceives and acts in specific thematic areas.

In **Egypt**, support for **entrepreneurship** was signalled at a high government level in May 2021: DROSOS partner Venture Lab at the American University in Cairo (AUC) signed an agreement with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development to launch **IncuDev**. IncuDev is an initiative to train staff from public universities and government agencies that oversee incubator and accelerator programmes. The Venture Lab helps start-ups to grow. Through the collaboration with AUC Venture Lab, DROSOS has supported the development and launch of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report for Egypt to avail big data that supports decision making.

The long-standing efforts of DROSOS FOUNDATION and its partners for the **holistic labour market integration** of young people in **Morocco** resonated with the government. The Royal Commission for the New Development Model in Morocco considered several **recommendations** that DROSOS FOUNDATION and its partners addressed in a memorandum at the beginning of 2021. In particular, the importance of a holistic approach to socio-economic integration programmes for disadvantaged youth was taken on board.

DROSOS FOUNDATION pays special attention to the **link between environmental protection and economic empowerment**. For the first time, the national competition “The Circle – Green Innovation for Recycling” took place in Egypt in June 2021. The competition aims to collect innovative and profitable project ideas in the field of recycling and to promote **entrepreneurship and economic independence** as well as **environmental awareness**. Our partner, Future Lights for Development Organisation (FLDO), organised the competition in coordination with the Ministries of Social Solidarity and Environment, together with Helwan University and other independent consultants. Ten ideas were selected and received a small amount of start-up capital as well as technical support to turn them into profitable projects. The recycling competition will be held annually at the request of the Ministry of Environment.

The **holistic impact** that can be achieved by linking the two issues is demonstrated by **VeryNile**, an initiative run by our project partner Bassita in Egypt. In 2021 alone, VeryNile worked with 54 fishing folks to remove 55 tonnes of plastic waste from the Nile, press it and sell it to upcycling companies. By collecting the plastic, the fishing folks earned an additional 1,100 Egyptian pounds per month.

Flexifeen is the first cooperative in the field of cleaning and everyday help in Switzerland. It was launched by our partner Crescenda.



“THE COOPERATIVE ENABLES US TO TAKE CONTROL OF OUR OWN DESTINY —A GROUP OF WOMEN WHO OTHERWISE GET VERY FEW OPPORTUNITIES IN SOCIETY.”

Adèle Villiger, President of Flexifeen

Project participants become agents of change

With the projects we support, we aim in the longer term to ensure that the project participants have the self-confidence, knowledge and scope to actively contribute to positive change in their environment.

In **Morocco**, for example, a **project participant** was **elected to the local council** in September 2021. This happened as part of a project by Care Morocco to economically empower young people in rural areas, particularly focusing on women. DROSOS FOUNDATION has supported this project since 2019. The project activities have led to a **change in gender norms** and increased participation of women. Women who were part of the project are increasingly making decisions within their households, taking control of the resources they generate through their income-generating activities, and partici-

pating in strengthening social cohesion in the community up to the political level. Several project participants ran in the local elections in September 2021, and one of them was elected.

Crescenda supports disadvantaged women from all over the world in setting up small businesses and facilitating their integration into the Swiss labour market. At the end of 2021, Crescenda launched the first **cooperative** in the field of cleaning and everyday help. The cooperative was created as part of the Fit4More project, which DROSOS substantially co-finances. Nine women with a migration background run

the cooperative and work for **better working and wage conditions in the sector**. To continue developing and possibly scaling its successful pioneering work in the field of cooperatives, Crescenda obtained financial support from the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality.

Another example of successful self-empowerment is a project implemented by our partner Shabab Maser in Fayoum, Egypt. Last year, Shabab Maser registered nine cooperatives for small farmers, enabling the small producers to become **owners and shareholders** of their cooperative. The cooperatives are registered as limited liability companies (LLCs) and are internally managed and governed on the basis of the cooperative's values and principles. As a collective, the farmers can bypass intermediaries, produce more and thus earn more income.

2021 in numbers

8

countries are supported by DROSOS FOUNDATION.

200

ongoing projects organised in 21 overarching programmes.

Ensured sustainability and organisational development

Sustainability is particularly important to us as a foundation—both in terms of project work and organisational sustainability beyond our support. We accompany our partners in various areas of organisational development, depending on their needs, so that they can successfully implement their work in the longer term. In many cases, we fund and support organisations or projects at the very beginning, in the pilot phase, and accompany them until they become independent.

The organisation **DROPS in Lebanon** supports vulnerable youth in their social and professional development, with a focus on refugees in the north of Lebanon. DROSOS FOUNDATION has supported DROPS since the pilot phase and has focused on its organisational development over the last two years. Since 2021, DROPS has autonomously taken care of fundraising, communication with donors, capacity building, reporting, accounting, monitoring and evaluation, and has thus gained **greater independence**.

Marsa is a sexual health clinic in Beirut that offers confidential and anonymous services in an environment free of stigma and discrimination. DROSOS has supported Marsa since it began operating in 2011 and covered 100 per

cent of its costs at that time. Over the years, Marsa has been able to diversify its income and attract different donors. DROSOS was able to reduce its support to only 5 per cent of operating costs in 2021.

Ressourc’In is the first social integration company in Morocco that is active in recycling and upcycling. It was founded with the help of DROSOS partner “Association al Ikram”. In 2021, Ressourc’In became **financially self-sufficient** thanks to its ability to sell its products (**KOUN** brand) internationally and nationally.

In Palestine, we developed an **online sustainability self-assessment tool**. The tool helps non-profit organisations and companies assess their internal capabilities and capacities and ensure the continuous delivery of services to their target group. It supports them to achieve organisational sustainability and to improve and expand their services. The tool covers three areas of sustainability that are considered fundamental to organisational resilience: institutional sustainability, programmatic sustainability and financial sustainability. It has been developed on the basis of the experience of numerous organisations and usability criteria and can be used by all non-profit organisations, regardless of the sector or region in which they operate.



PHOTO: DROPS

Mohammed is training as a mechanic with our partner DROPS in Lebanon.

26,4

CHF million
invested in **projects and programmes**.

200

partners collaborate with
DROSOS FOUNDATION.

DROSOS FOUNDATION has been committed to addressing the needs and challenges of careleavers in different countries for many years. In Germany, DROSOS has initiated the [Brückensteine Careleaver](#) programme.



“THE INITIATIVE COMES INTO PLAY WHERE HELPING HANDS ARE LACKING.”

Carmen volunteers for the Careleaver programme and grew up in a foster home herself.

PHOTO: MATTHIAS WEHOFISKY

Innovative approaches are paying off

We promote innovative approaches that have the potential to contribute to the long-term solution of social problems. In many cases, DROSOS FOUNDATION is the main funder in the initial phase. A successful first phase subsequently leads, in the best case, to interest and funding from other donors.

In June 2021, the online platform [Cariboo](#) for careleavers was launched. DROSOS played a key role in funding and setting up the German platform. In the meantime, it has developed into a **flagship approach** in the networking of careleavers throughout Germany and receives **support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy**. Careleavers are young adults who have spent part of their lives in residential child and youth care (e.g. in supervised living groups/children’s homes or foster families) and are in transition to independent living.

The “Kulturkosmonauten” (cultural cosmonauts) develop creative and artistic projects at schools, social institutions or youth centres in Switzerland that serve to **develop the skills and personalities of young people**. The project was initiated by DROSOS FOUNDATION in 2016 and **scaled up successfully**. In the meantime, the “Kulturkosmonauten” have received significant funding from the Federal Migration Commission.

Tajalla for Music and Arts, DROSOS partner since 2017, founds and strengthens local children’s and youth choirs in Jordan to teach young people **life skills** such as self-confidence, self-development, mutual respect and teamwork. Last year, as part of the EU-funded “All Around Culture” programme, Tajalla received **two years of funding** alongside The City Artists Network and Methrah For Arts & Culture, in the cultural alliance component. As Al-Rass alliance, the three organisations will focus on the importance of culture and arts in social change at the policy level and develop an educational component.



Creating awareness and networks

In order to sustainably improve the living conditions of our target groups, it is often necessary to influence public opinion or the attitude of companies and other key bodies towards certain issues or groups of people. This can be done, for example, through advocacy or simply by communicating the achievements of a project.

In 2021, the Careleaver Programmes in Germany and Switzerland **sensitised 780 key decision-makers** such as the federal government, federal states and municipalities to the challenges and needs of careleavers. In Egypt, our partner Wataneya participated in the **drafting of a proposal for a unified law** on alternative care to which Care leavers have taken a role in formulating and lobbying for themselves. This work took place under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

DROSOS FOUNDATION was the main supporter of the first “Initiators Congress” on the topic of people with disabilities in Egypt. The **congress** took place in December 2021 under the auspices of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Social Solidarity. The aim was to create a movement that builds on the **capacities of persons with disabilities**. It brought together all decision-makers from private, governmental and non-governmental organisations working on the issues of people with disabilities. DROSOS invited its partners working in this thematic area and actively participated in the design of a start-up zone, spoke at various panels and conducted training sessions during a separate day event.

Our partner organisation Ma3mal 612 Think Factory in Amman, Jordan, launched three **radio programmes** to address the relationship of citizens to their community, the role of art and culture, and aspects such as **social engagement and acceptance**, and to promote discussion and **exchange with artists** from different fields.

In **Palestine**, our partner Art to Heart produced a **dance piece featuring young people with disabilities** for the first time. The performance, entitled “**Accused**”, was shown during the Ramallah Contemporary Dance Festival in June 2021 and consisted of a group of seven young people with disabilities who had never stood on a stage before. Eight professional dancers accompanied the group. The participants stated that the project positively influenced their character and **self-esteem**. Three of them became assistants to the trainers during the rehearsals and the performance. They took an active role and supported the trainer and the group members artistically and logistically. Such activities help to change **attitudes in society** towards people with disabilities on the one hand and strengthen the self-esteem of the participants on the other.

DROSOS FOUNDATION and DROSOS partner Theatre Day Productions teamed up with Birzeit University to jointly organise a series of **TEDx events** in Palestine. In September, two events took place on the theme “**Breaking Molds!**” with 18 speakers. They **inspired the audience**—especially young people—with authentic stories and powerful **positive messages**. Their optimistic vision of the future, enthusiasm and positive energy made young people see the best in themselves despite difficult circumstances.

At the end of 2021, DROSOS FOUNDATION became a **member of SwissFoundations**, the association for foundations based in Switzerland. This membership will enable DROSOS to play a more substantial role within the sector and facilitate networking, exchange and joint initiatives.

The work of our partners is seen and recognised

PHOTO(1): JAKUB PUREJ, PHOTO(2): FABMOBIL E.V.



The Fabmobil brings creative technologies such as 3D printing, robotics and programming to rural areas.



Fabmobil wins “Kulturlichter” award

The German **Prize for Cultural Education 2021** (Prize of the Federal States) went to **Fabmobil e.V.**, an association funded by **DROSOS FOUNDATION**, bringing digital education to rural areas. The project “Werkstatt Quillo”, supported by **DROSOS**, was also nominated.

In 2021, **DROSOS FOUNDATION** was among the **finalists of the Catalyst 2030 Awards** and received a special honour for its commitment to providing start-up funding to organisations that uplift the most disadvantaged in society.

Second position and Audience Award for Werkstatt Quillo at the “Junge Ohren Preis” (Young Ears Prize).

The project of **Quillo e.V.** enables young people between the ages of 10 and 25 to develop a multi-layered, partly **digital musical theatre production** under the guidance of artists. The award “Junge Ohren Preis” is the **largest competition for music education** in the German-speaking world.

Second position for the “Kulturkosmonauten” at the youth project competition in Rapperswil, Switzerland

In training sessions conducted during the “CHANGE” project, **eight young people** with different backgrounds and languages met and developed a **collage film** during the pandemic. The project was awarded second place in the competition and is now part of the **interregional final**.

Q-HUB wins Al-Taawon Awards for Achievement and Excellence

The Q-HUB is an entrepreneurship and training centre for **people with disabilities in Palestine**. It was established as part of our project cooperation with **QADER for Community Development**. It follows a holistic approach with the aim of **improving access to the labour market** for people with disabilities. In 2021, Q-HUB won “The late Al-Haj Ahmed Abu Ghazaleh Award” of the Al-Taawon Awards for Achievement and Excellence 2020. The award is endowed with 50,000 US dollars and will be used to develop Q-HUB’s activities.

The Venture Lab of the American University in Cairo (AUC) wins the Global Startup Award for the best Accelerator/Incubator Programme in North Africa

AUC’s nationwide programme helps technology-based creative start-ups develop to the growth stage, compares data on **entrepreneurship in Egypt** with global standards and engages various stakeholders to improve the Egyptian entrepreneurship ecosystem.



PHOTO: BASSITA / VERYNILE 2021

VeryNile wins the **Arab Financial Inclusion Innovation Prize** and **Prince Mohamed Bin Fadh Foundation award**. VeryNile is an initiative of DROSOS partner **Bassita** in Egypt. The project combines social, economic and environmental components. By **removing plastic waste from the Nile and recycling it**, fishermen are generating new sources of income.

PHOTO: HOUSAM KHATTAB



Award and recognition for Tiro for Arts and Culture

Tiro for Arts and Culture (TAA) received the Inter-cultural Achievement Award from the Ministry of European and International Affairs for its **Arab Cultural and Arts Network**. TAA won the award among 1,300 competing projects from 87 countries. The Lebanese Minister of Culture praised TAA for its important contribution to culture in

the country, and the **Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres**, recognised TAA as one of the most important civil society organisations in South Lebanon. TAA brings art and culture to the marginalised areas of South Lebanon and provides opportunities for local youth to explore different forms of self-expression and network with others.

Nida Society for Children with Hearing Impairment receives recognition from **Minister of Social Solidarity**. This DROSOS partner in Egypt was awarded for its **pioneering** work in integrating children with multiple disabilities and setting up special nurseries for children with hearing impairments. Through the collaboration with Nida and Perkins International, the skills of government staff in Ministries of Education and Solidarity have been elevated and core training curricula endorsed.

PHOTO: DANIEL SUTTER

**“WE SEE
GREAT POTENTIAL
IN FURTHER
DEVELOPING OUR
PARTNERSHIPS.”**

Suba Umathevan



“It’s imperative to work at the system level.”

Suba Umathevan has been the CEO of DROSOS FOUNDATION since 1 November 2020. In the interview, she talks about the challenges of our times, what is needed to bring about lasting change, and how she wants to further develop the work of DROSOS.

DROSOS FOUNDATION supports projects that empower young people. What difficulties are young people facing today?

Promoting the potential of young people has played a pivotal role in our work since DROSOS FOUNDATION was established. We work to ensure that they have the opportunity to thrive, develop their capacities and take control over their own lives. Today, some nineteen years after our founding, this task has become even more relevant. Our environment is constantly changing and faces a high degree of uncertainty—particularly in the project countries where we work. Lebanon, for example, is suffering economic chaos of historic proportions, which has left the local young people with a total lack of prospects. Another problem is that in many countries where we’re active, there’s no real labour market for the large numbers of educated young people. To this must be added gender and other forms of discrimination, as well as widespread mental health challenges that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Anything but a rosy outlook.

It’s challenging because young people often find themselves feeling helpless. How can they identify prospects when they are faced with social inequality every day of their lives? People can only have self-confidence if they’re given opportunities—if they can act independently. As a foundation, we can join forces with our partners to give young people the courage to believe in themselves and help them to look for prospects where

there are real opportunities. And in spite of these difficulties, there are still opportunities to develop new ideas and careers. Digital technologies, for example, have gained in importance during the pandemic. Knowing how to use them is one thing, while creating them is another. Many young people could see their future in this field. We as a foundation can be forward-looking and promote opportunities in innovative fields such as this. It’s important to create a social environment and a system in which young people can help to design and in which they can develop their potential. In the end, it’s about their social inclusion.

How does DROSOS FOUNDATION approach these challenges?

Since our establishment in 2003, we’ve been able to develop excellent partnerships and projects in all the countries where we

work. It’s vital to us that our funding approach meets current and future needs and has the greatest possible effect that is lasting. As the new CEO, I’ve taken a closer look at what we’re doing well, whether we’re equipped to master today’s challenges, and what we can do better. We discussed these issues with our team from all regions during our 2021 strategy process. We came to the conclusion that many things already work very well, but that there’s a need for further development and improvement in some areas. Our strengths include our proximity to the local context and to our partner organisations and our partnership-based approach. We don’t feel that an organisation has to come to us with a completely mature concept for which we will then donate money. It’s a collaborative process where our partners and our team work together on a concept that supports our funding objectives and meets the local needs. Instead of only supporting individual projects, we also focus on developing and strengthening our partner organisations. I’ve seen several instances where an organisation wants to do something good but lacks the knowledge or experience it needs in specific areas to bring an idea to fruition. Together with the organisation, we analyse the individual areas and identify the gaps before jointly deciding what support is needed and what form this support can take. We help them—either directly or via external service providers—to close these gaps and to become stronger as an organisation, thus ensuring their long-term existence and ability to bring about lasting



Suba Umathevan speaking at a panel in Egypt during El Gouna Film Festival 2021 on social integration of refugees.



social change. With this approach, we ensure sustainability and contribute indirectly to promoting an entire system.

What were the new findings arising from this strategy process?

I'm very satisfied that we're already doing excellent work. But we can achieve even more, starting internally with us as an organisation by paying more attention to exchanging knowledge, learning from one another and trying to think in an agile and innovative manner. An important aspect that stood out during the strategy phase is the high level of youth unemployment in most of our countries of intervention. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated this situation. Young women have been affected disproportionately. We as an organisation regard this as a very urgent problem. We will therefore focus even more sharply on future skills that children, young adults and youth need in order to gain a foothold in the labour market. This differs according to age, gender, social background, educational attainment and context. A ten-year-old may

have a greater need for personal development and boosting of their self-confidence, while a thirty-year-old will require specific support in developing and implementing their business idea. This is what we're now focusing on with our partners during this implementation phase: How can we help young people to leverage their potential, and how do we approach this specifically in Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Switzerland and Tunisia? Instead of completely redesigning our strategy, we're refining it and focusing on achieving the greatest possible impact. For example, in our project work, we emphasise scaling effects, tackle problems holistically, create awareness and work on the causes of specific hurdles.

What does this mean for DROSOS's partnership approach?

Partnerships are and will remain at the centre of everything we do. However, we want to nurture these with even greater awareness and focus. We're currently working mainly with implementation partners such

The projects and programmes supported by DROSOS mainly contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



Economic empowerment, especially of young women, is an important goal for DROSOS FOUNDATION. By upcycling waste glass, a young woman creates new products and generates her own income by selling them. (left, project Kendaka in Egypt).

Suba Umathevan on visits in Egypt (below, initiative VeryNile) and in Germany (right, partner meeting regional start-up initiatives).



PHOTO(1): REHAB ELDALIL, PHOTO(2): PAD, PHOTO(3): THOMAS DIETZE

as small and medium-sized civil society organisations, local NGOs, etc. This collaboration will continue to serve as the foundation of our work. We also identify great potential in developing our partnerships and cultivating them as an ecosystem consisting of implementing, enabling and influencing partners. Depending on the topic and needs, we can involve other key stakeholders such as other foundations or organisations. This will enable us to align expertise, funding, knowledge and networks in order to achieve a broader impact. Through collaboration and exchange with influential organisations, we can raise awareness of the challenges facing marginalised young people. It's imperative to work at the system level in order to tackle the inequalities and hurdles that prevent young people from reaching long-term social inclusion. It will always be difficult to change the mindset of an entire society. But if we can successfully change the way in which society sees, for example, people with disabilities while empowering them to earn their own living, we will have made enormous progress.

How do you see the future role of DROSOS FOUNDATION?

We're currently working hard on improving the definition of our future role. I believe it's our duty to sharpen our reflexes for thinking, to truly understand the networks that make it possible to effect long-term change, and to integrate this into our project and programme work. As we're not a political organisation and don't have any hidden agendas, we can have the courage to drive systemic change. I also see a role for us within the foundation sector. There's great potential for rethinking our sector and approaches, and jointly developing new solutions for forward-looking funding initiatives based on facts. As a sector, we should ask ourselves: Do we act in the manner that we expect from our partners? As an organisation and sector, we can have great leverage. We can motivate and inspire other players and have a positive impact on society.

Suba Umathevan, CEO of DROSOS FOUNDATION

Suba Umathevan has a Master's degree in **International Relations specialising in International Law** from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. She earned her Bachelor's degree in International Studies and Modern Languages from the University of Ottawa in Canada. **She started her international career as a research fellow at the UNESCO International Bureau of Education.** In her ten-plus-year career in nonprofit management, she focused on the rights of women and children. She also managed development programmes in many countries in Africa, Asia and South America and developed strategies helping managers to identify global megatrends and prepare for change. Before joining DROSOS FOUNDATION, she led Plan International Switzerland, an organisation advancing children's rights and equal opportunities for girls. Suba Umathevan **is a member of the Assembly of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).**



Youth bearing the brunt of the pandemic

The **COVID-19 pandemic** has shaped the daily lives of people around the world for the past two years. Contact restrictions and planning uncertainty posed major challenges for us and our partners. But young people in particular are struggling with the secondary effects of the pandemic. Our partners and we as a foundation have adapted our working methods to support the youth we serve in the best possible way.



PHOTO: EL NAHDA CAIRO CINEMA SCHOOL

Young filmmakers attend a course run by our partner El Nahda Association for Scientific and Cultural Renaissance in Egypt.

COVID-19 affects the professional development of young people

Even before the pandemic, youth unemployment rates in the MENA region were among the highest in the world. COVID-19 made it worse.

86%

of learners worldwide had to interrupt their education during the pandemic.²

50%

Almost half of companies have stopped paying stipends or wages to apprentices, interns, and trainees.³

29%

was the **average unemployment rate for youth** (15–24 years) in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia in 2020.

39%

of girls and young women in the MENA countries where DROSOS works are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The NEET rate for boys and young men in these countries is 22.2%.⁴ The gender gap is also noticeable in Switzerland and Germany. **Young women are disproportionately affected.**

The social and economic impacts of the pandemic affect young people in multiple ways: they reduce their chances of employment, disrupt their education and training, and have serious implications for their mental well-being. The disproportionate repercussions for youth are demonstrated, for example, by these figures from the International Labour Organization: young people accounted for 13 per cent of the global workforce in 2019, while 34.2 per cent of the total employment decline affected young people.¹ This is all the more worrying because youth unemployment was already very high in many of our project countries before the pandemic. School closures led to a range of problems, from social isolation and anxiety to abuse, violence, or dropping out of school entirely.

In view of these challenges, the focus on youth empowerment and the corresponding work of our partners is more important than

ever. The pandemic also hit them hard and other, new forms of support were needed. Maintaining or building relationships with project target groups, especially vulnerable youth, proved difficult due to the measures taken to contain the pandemic. However, our partners quickly developed creative alternatives to compensate for this lack of contact with the means available to them. For the first time, DROSOS FOUNDATION established an emergency fund, which facilitated the rapid adaptation of activities. The fund enabled us to dispense funding quickly, with minimal bureaucracy and in a flexible manner, and to accompany our partners through the crisis.



PHOTO: TOM SCHWEERS

Youth develop their own musical theatre production in a hybrid workshop held by Quillo e.V.

The following examples show how our partners adapted their work to the new situation in order to support project participants as much as possible.

- Quillo in Germany implemented its musical theatre workshops in digital and hybrid formats and was able to reach **twice as many participants** as originally planned.

- In Switzerland, Crescenda underwent a **digital transformation process** within a short period of time. The entire start-up course for women entrepreneurs took place virtually.

- In Egypt, DROSOS launched the **digital marketing campaign #Ipledge-Handmade**. The campaign aimed to promote e-commerce of handicrafts and to help partners tap into different markets to increase sales during the pandemic and beyond. The campaign reached more than five million people within three months.

- The design school Creative Space Beirut opened up **new markets abroad** with its online shop and was able to attract multinational companies such as Heisco and PricewaterhouseCoopers for its mask project. Creative Space Beirut produced almost 150,000 masks and made a **profit of more than US\$100,000**, which they are investing in their sustainability.

- Zoukak provided **psychosocial support** to people affected by the explosion in Beirut and the local crisis (political, economic, and pandemic). They organised care sessions using drama therapy and non-violent communication tools.

- In the first months of the pandemic, our partner FPEC (Future Pioneers for Empowering Communities) in Jordan provided the project participants with **internet bundles** that they could use not only for their work, but also to enable their children to access online education.

- Most partner organisations in Morocco and Tunisia switched to **online activities** during the pandemic and equipped project participants accordingly.

- Art to Heart in Palestine used the coronavirus crisis from the beginning to further expand its **online presence**. The organisation worked with its target group and their families via social media, delivered materials to its members' homes, and carried out numerous online activities. This allowed Art to Heart to **reach more people**, even outside the region where the organisation normally operates. The number of followers of their Facebook profile tripled within a short period of time.

The pandemic has further advanced digitalisation and given rise to new trends and forms of collaboration that we will continue

to use in our work. But digital tools are only complementary elements that cannot replace direct, personal exchange. Personal contact creates more proximity — to our partners, to our target groups, and to the environment in which they live. This closeness is important for the quality of the project work.

The worst of the pandemic seems to be over. But its impact will be felt for a long time, especially for young people who were already disadvantaged before the pandemic. Our role as a foundation is to ensure that the special needs of these young people receive the attention they deserve and to support them via our partners to be equipped to face these challenges.

1 Source: ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Eighth edition. Updated estimates and analysis. 27 October 2021

2 Source: www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/covid-19-impact-skills-enterprises-global-survey-findings

3 Source: www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/covid-19-impact-skills-enterprises-global-survey-findings

4 Sources: European Training Foundation, Youth in transition in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, 2021. European Training Foundation, Policies for Human Capital Development, Palestine, 2021. For Youth NEEET in Palestine, see: www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-03/03_trp_etf_assessment_2020_palestine.pdf

In memoriam: Reem Khalil

09/02/1980 – 24/12/2021



Reem Khalil opened the office of DROSOS FOUNDATION in Ramallah in 2017 and has been its head ever since. The team in Ramallah has implemented more than 20 projects and numerous initiatives that connect local organisations and improve the lives of young people. Reem Khalil passed away on 24 December 2021.

We miss our colleague Reem Khalil.

We miss a unique woman full of energy who worked tirelessly to achieve what was most important to her: giving hope to children and young people in Palestine.

Her dedication and drive were remarkable. She brought people together and empathised with them. Her positive energy gave others hope. Her passion was infectious.

Reem took time for our partners. She was critical but also pragmatic. She listened and always tried to establish and nurture relationships. She had a sense of responsibility and bore the weight of her dreams. In spite of her strength, Reem never hesitated to show her vulnerability.

She was honest and always spoke from the heart. Reem was a woman with values and principles. She was and will always be an inspiration for many.

Our thoughts are with Reem's family and everyone who was close to her.

Reem, we will never forget you.

**Foundation Board, Leadership and Team
of DROSOS FOUNDATION**

The Foundation Board of DROSOS FOUNDATION pays specific homage to Reem Khalil's special efforts to support young people in Palestine. In light of her commitment, it has decided to make additional funds available to continue this important work.

