

The Importance of Giving Back

By **KHALED AL JUFFALI**

CHAIRMAN, KHALED JUFFALI COMPANY



Khaled Juffali is recognised internationally for his contribution to the economic and infrastructural development of Saudi Arabia. He is Vice Chairman & Managing Partner of the E.A. Juffali & Brothers Company, which has business interests in many sectors. Juffali's own investment company, Khaled Juffali Company (KJC), achieved its first IPO on the Riyadh stock market with the health

insurer Enaya. He is a leading entrepreneur and philanthropist, Chairman of the Help Centre and the Shefa Fund.

Ever since the institutionalisation of charity by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ over fourteen hundred years ago in the Holy Cities, 'giving back' has been cemented into the hearts and minds of Muslims across the Islamic world. It is a process, a way of life, an unending tradition. It is something my family takes very seriously.

Philanthropy, like entrepreneurship, is an essential factor that constitutes another building block in our foundation and is equally important for our family. Coming from Onaiza, Al-Qasim, my father, the late Ahmed Al Juffali, started his business from Makkah Al Mukarramah. He also enshrined in his children the importance of giving and contributing to a wide range of causes. Each individual family member has contributed back to society based on the causes they are most passionate about; whether it is in education, public health, or access food and aid relief. In 1985, my father launched a charitable foundation that acts as a platform to aid the poorest segments of Arab society.

Governments often do a tremendous amount of philanthropic work, but it is often individuals and families that are best placed, practically and financially, to have more impact. In August 2012, my wife, Olfat Al Mutlaq-Juffali, and I came up with the idea of setting up the Shefa Fund to pool resources as a collaborative giving initiative between Middle Eastern philanthropists and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The endeavour is led and co-chaired by my wife who wished to mobilise and encourage support for important global health projects that benefit the world's most vulnerable people, particularly children.

The goals of the Shefa Fund are encapsulated in its name and its link to Islamic beliefs. Shefa is the Arabic word for wellbeing or wellness, and the fund is grounded in the tenets of Zakat, especially the duty to assist persons living in extreme poverty. Through its collaboration with the Gates Foundation, the Shefa Fund offers Middle Eastern donors an organised, transparent, and effective vehicle to help millions of people in the Middle East and Africa, many of them Muslims, lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty.

The Shefa Fund reflects the belief that the toughest problems in global health require the attention and assistance of passionate people focused on bringing long-term solutions to those with the most urgent needs. It has three priority funding areas identified by the Gates Foundation experts: eradicating polio, ending epidemic meningitis A in Africa, and treating and preventing neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). These three areas disproportionately affect Islamic Africa and several countries in the Middle East, which brings urgency to mobilize resources from Muslim philanthropists in the region.

As well as the Shefa Fund, my family invests a tremendous amount of time in the advancement of education for children with disabilities. As in many countries in the West, and despite great leaps forward in recent years, Down's syndrome is still subject to social stigma in Saudi Arabia. The condition is not widely discussed and the majority of children with Down's syndrome receive no formal schooling.

With this in mind, my family built a facility, known as the Help Centre, that would support the education and growth of children with disabilities from birth until graduation. In 1995, the cornerstone was laid for the Help Centre, a purpose-built facility in Jeddah. Although my father passed away prior to its completion, his legacy remains in the opportunities he provides the children on a scholarship basis. Today, the Help Centre takes care of more than 350 children, while another 100 are attended to through house calls. Since inception, the Help Centre has provided support to more than 5,000 families. It employs around 150 staff who are responsible for teaching as well as conducting studies in collaboration with the Saudi government, as well as spreading awareness on Down's syndrome in Saudi Arabia.

Giving back to society is not only enshrined in our family's beliefs but it is a key pillar in Islam. Our family always remains conscious that this tradition has its origins in Makkah, the Blessed City, as my late father first set out on his journey there. **E**