

A YEAR AT FIVE ONE LABS

HOW DID FIVE ONE
LABS ADAPT TO THE
COVID-19 LOCKDOWN?

*Publishing a survival kit,
moving events online and
keeping our community
together!*

51 LABS

**FIVE ONE
INVEST**

*A new investment initiative
from Five One Labs*

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FOUNDERS' NOTE

The year 2020 has been one of unique difficulties across the globe. Despite the challenges, we wanted to take a moment at the end of the year to celebrate the progress and persistence of our entrepreneurs.

These founders impressed us not only with their resilience, but also with their ability to launch their businesses, scale their operations, raise funding, pivot quickly and most importantly, support each other.

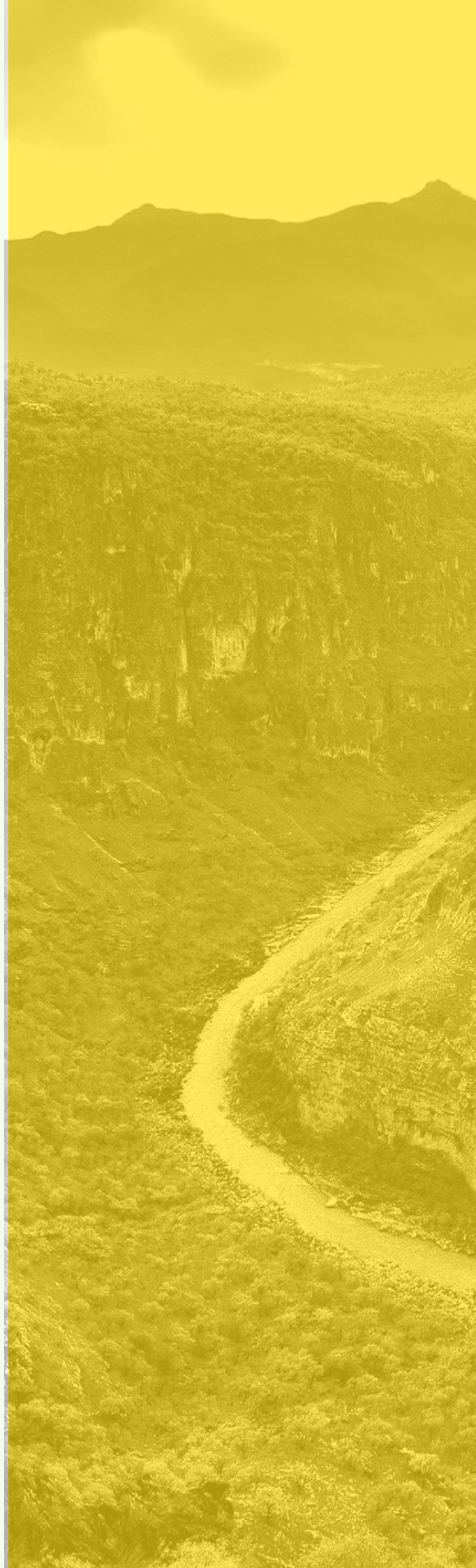
We have so much to be grateful for this year. With the support of our wonderful team - who shone every day with their creativity, positivity and commitment to our mission - Five One Labs worked with a record number of more than 200 startups all over Iraq, ran new programs and launched a new investment initiative - all with the aim of providing more robust support to talented founders from Iraq and Syria. We also provided or helped provide over \$250,000 in seed funding to our startups to help them scale.

This magazine, titled "A Year at Five One Labs," is the first issue of what we hope will be a regular publication from our organization, one that will give an insight into our programs, our startups and our plans for the future. In this issue you will meet some of our superstar entrepreneurs and mentors and read about our transition to online programming, the publication of our Roadmap2Startup and Startup Survival Kit, our focus on female founders and the launch of Five One Invest.

We hope that you - our partners, donors, mentors and supporters - will enjoy reading about what we have been up to this year. We thank you all for your commitment to and support of Five One Labs!

We wish you all a warm holiday season and hope to hear from you soon!

Alice Bosley and Patricia Letayf
Co-Founders
Five One Labs





FIVE ONE INVEST: INCREASING ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Access to capital has been one of the main barriers entrepreneurs in Iraq face. Since 2017, after running a number of incubators and working with dozens of startups, we realized that a number of our founders struggled to find the financial support necessary to grow their businesses. This challenge has been particularly acute for growth-stage startups seeking larger amounts of capital as they scale.

To address these challenges and streamline the investment process, in October we launched Five One Invest, a new initiative that aims to create more efficient deal-making and matchmaking opportunities for local investors and increase access to capital for startups in the region.



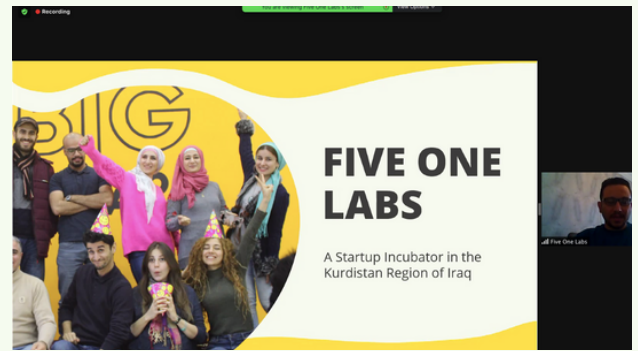
Five One Invest offers services and programs for both investors and entrepreneurs. Through our “Entrepreneur Spotlight,” we provide entrepreneurs a platform to pitch their businesses and projects to investors and receive feedback. Through our Speaker Series, Masterclasses and trainings like “Fundamentals of Angel Investment” we aim to increase knowledge of investment and enable both entrepreneurs and investors to make more informed decisions throughout the investment process. We invite you to read more [here!](#)

MOVING ONLINE: OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Adapting to a new method of work is always challenging, and in 2020 the whole world had to adapt to global lockdowns and a sudden shift to remote work. Our team immediately worked on finding the best ways to adapt to this new reality and keep our projects, events, and programs running.

We transitioned our community online, switched many of our scheduled events to webinars and online panels. Our social media team also launched "Support Local Mondays" and regular Facebook Live sessions with local entrepreneurs so that we could continue to showcase the work that these startups are doing. You can find many of these recorded sessions and resources on our YouTube page [here](#).

SINCE THE COVID MEASURES STARTED IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ, WE HAVE HAD OVER 1,200 EVENT ATTENDEES AND MORE THAN 3,000 PEOPLE BECOME MEMBERS IN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY!



We also decided to transition our incubators, traditionally full-time, in-person programs held in our coworking spaces, to online formats. Our Erbil Startup Support team successfully conducted two online incubators this year, with guests from around the world attending our online Startup Demo Days.

In Sulaimani, we conducted two Kurdish-language Summer Innovators programs, followed by three Ignite pre-incubation programs. In early January 2021, we will also launch our tech incubator for entrepreneurs across Iraq in an online format.

Despite the challenges we faced in running online programs, ranging from the internet connection and more limited in-person, face-to-face interaction with our entrepreneurs, transitioning online meant that we were able to reach more entrepreneurs across Iraq. Additionally, our Startup Support teams were able to catalogue lessons learned and develop new methods and ideas for future online programs and events.



In 2020 we ran...

**ALMOST 70 EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES
AND HAD MORE THAN 20 PROGRAMS!**

PROFILE: ZAHRA AL-ABDALI FOUNDER OF FIXIT



Zahra is the founder of **Fix It**, an app that connects her customers with workers to provide home services, such as plumbing, electrical repair, and more. She is a graduate of the Five One Labs tech incubator program in Sulaimani.

She first developed the idea for Fix It when she was home alone with her daughter, and a pipe burst in their kitchen. An internally displaced person originally from Najaf in the south of Iraq, Zahra did not know who to call in Sulaimani to help her with her problem. She also was unsure of which workers she could trust to come to her house when she was there alone.

Zahra said, “When I first started the incubator, I just had an idea of a business with some skills, but after finishing three months in the incubator, I was able to have a real business launched! The incubator improved my skills and I had so much support, advice, mentorship, and help in the post-incubator program.”

When Zahra graduated from our GIZ-supported incubator in February 2020, she was one of ten startups that won funding from a partnership between the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Five One Labs. IOM provided Fix It with a \$20,000 grant, and Zahra was able to begin serving customers immediately after the end of the program. She has almost finished developing her Fix It app and currently serves 20-30 customers per month.

Recently, Zahra was one of the earliest stage companies to graduate from the Takween Accelerator in Sulaimani, where she has focused on business growth with the support of expert trainers and mentors. She also recently successfully completed a UNITAR program on how to grow her business. Finally, Zahra won the local Iraq competition of the Seedstars Global Competition, and will compete in the regional competition soon!

SUPPORTING FEMALE FOUNDERS

At Five One Labs, supporting female founders has been a central part of our mission as an organization. This year, we had the privilege of working intensively with women entrepreneurs from across Iraq and Syria not only in our incubators, but also in our women's-focused entrepreneurship programs.

We supported a diverse group of 10 growth-stage women-led startups in Erbil and Sulaimani in our Female Founders Fellowship Program and an additional 10 in our Kurdish-language horizontal mentorship program, Woman Led Circles.

These businesses included **Urbilum**, the first Iraqi board game; **FAMacademy**, a counselling and family center; and Kurdish fashion business **Kattan21**, the first Kurdish brand to be showcased in Milan Fashion Week. As part of the program, the women had weekly meetings in their city; were matched with either a mentor; worked with a business intern recruited by Five One Labs; and participated in four one-day long workshops about practical hands-on business topics.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

One of our key priorities in 2020 has been expanding our impact by offering more programs and events in Kurdish and Arabic.

Throughout the year we embarked on a year-long project, "Curriculum in a Box," to standardize our incubator curriculum and translate it into both Arabic and Kurdish. With this project complete, we implemented two iterations of our first full-length Kurdish-language program, our Summer Innovators entrepreneurship program, with 26 startups.

The Summer Innovators was geared towards local IT and engineering university students who were interested in learning about how to turn their tech skills into a business.

The startups we supported included tourism app Bareo, business consultancy app My Consultant and e-commerce business Daisy Crafts.

In addition to our Kurdish-language programming, with the support of GIZ, in 2020 we completed our first full-time Arabic-language incubator program and awarded a total of \$30,000 in seed funding to the top three winners.

In 2021 we will continue to grow our Arabic and Kurdish offerings, including increasing the number of webinars in these languages and designing and implementing Arabic-language entrepreneurship programming across federal Iraq and in a number of refugee and IDP camps in the Kurdistan Region.



BRINGING SOLAR POWER TO MOSUL



Mohamed, the founder of Mosul Solar, launched his energy business in our Arabic incubator program.

After receiving seed funding from Five One Labs, Mohamed opened his new office and registered his business in Mosul, where he has installed three solar systems to date. Using his [Facebook page](#), he is now securing new clients while working on raising awareness of the benefits of solar energy and

INSIGHTS FROM OUR ENTREPRENEURS

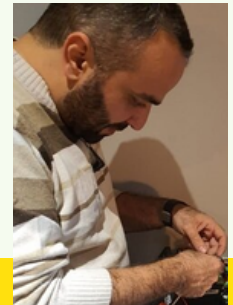


"Because I didn't have any experience in the business field, I needed someone to advise me and support me to start developing my Idea. I would say that Five One Labs made my dream of having my own business come true!"

- RANOO HIWA
BINA APPLICATION
GRADUATE OF TECH INCUBATOR PROGRAM

"I joined the Five One Labs incubator to know the ways and means to transform my business from an independent worker to a company that has a team that is able to cover all of Iraq's cities with services for CNC machines."

- NOORELDEAN A. AL-JUMELI
AL-RUAA CNC
GRADUATE OF ARABIC INCUBATOR PROGRAM

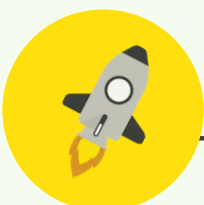


"I chose to join the business incubator to obtain development and training, and if necessary, the necessary funding to ensure future expansion, both vertically and horizontally."

- AZHIN ABDEL RAHMAN
WINSOME
GRADUATE OF ARABIC INCUBATOR PROGRAM

"I joined Five One Labs just at the right time. What does a startup need when she jumps into the busy world of business? A mentor? Trainings on project and financial management? Marketing strategies? Supervision and feedback? Financial support? All of it. right? That is how I was and still am being supported by Five One Labs."

- SHYAW NAWROLY
FAM ACADEMY
GRADUATE OF FEMALE FOUNDERS FELLOWSHIP



BEING RESOURCEFUL IN 2020

Navigating the business landscape in Iraq can be a complex effort even for most companies, particularly startups. In an effort to simplify some of these processes, throughout 2020 Five One Labs embarked on a series of projects to provide startups with easy-to-use resources that were **"by entrepreneurs and for entrepreneurs"**. One of the challenges we sought to tackle was business registration, a process which can be both time-consuming and expensive, particularly for startups with innovative business models. With the support of the Netherlands Consulate General in Erbil, Orange Corners, the American University of Iraq and the Chambers of Commerce in Sulaimani and Erbil, Five One Labs published our **Roadmap2Startup**. The roadmap provides details on the steps an entrepreneur should take to register his or her business in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, along with tips on how to navigate the process.



Our research team also included a number of case studies from entrepreneurs who have gone through the registration process (both successfully and unsuccessfully) in order to provide real-life insight into the realities of registration from the entrepreneurs' perspectives. This document was released in three languages (English, Kurdish and Arabic) to help local entrepreneurs through their journey of business registration.

Alongside the document, we also designed an **online platform** with step-by-step instructions so that entrepreneurs can find their way through the regulatory process. Since its release, hundreds of entrepreneurs and online users have accessed the document in all languages and many have downloaded our guide.

Another key challenge startups faced in 2020 was navigating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on their businesses. In April, our Startup Support team published our **"Startup Survival Kit"** to provide our entrepreneurs with a resource on how to deal with the crisis and best manage their businesses to stay afloat. The guide features insights from companies across Iraq and best practices from startups that pivoted early in the crisis. Read the toolkit **here!**



MENTOR PROFILES



SOHA EL-BAKLAWY
FOUNDER OF BUSINESSITA; CAIRO STARTUP GRIND
CHAPTER DIRECTOR
CAIRO, EGYPT

"It has been a great pleasure working with Five One Labs as a business mentor. I have noticed the impact of their support not only on the local entrepreneurs but their overall impact on Iraq's entrepreneurial ecosystem and economy.

Offering me the privilege to mentor two outstanding entrepreneurs with huge potential, drive and passion has been quite rewarding. I was able to see the incubator program's effect on supporting the entrepreneurs as they grow and enabling them to overcome the challenges that they faced through their entrepreneurial journey."

BASSEM ABUNIMEH
ACCELERATOR MANAGER, TAKWEEN ACCELERATOR
LONDON, UK

"Working with Five One Labs startups as a mentor has inspired me and reminded me of my purpose in life. Working with smart and young entrepreneurs is rewarding on many levels and you can experience these entrepreneurs' resilience in real life. I like to work with young founders and help them build innovative and scalable business models that are profitable and have a great social impact. "



FIVE ONE LABS WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR DONORS AND SUPPORTERS



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People for development



AND ANONYMOUS INDIVIDUAL
DONORS AND FOUNDATIONS

**WHAT'S
YOUR
BIG
IDEA?**