



Libya's Stream Incubator Program Helps Local Entrepreneurs Launch Successful Start-ups in the Face of War and COVID-19 Pandemic

Stream is a business incubator and accelerator program located in the heart of Tripoli. It was started in the summer of 2019 to support and help accelerate entrepreneurs and start-ups. Since it started, it has received more than 1,750 applications and has worked with more than 100 participants from eight different regions across Libya.

Incubation Program

Stream's incubation program is a four- to five-month program that helps potential business developers transform their ideas into start-ups — from a feasibility study for their idea, how to study the market to define their targeted audience, how to reach this targeted audience and how to manage their team and finances. Over the past two years, 75 entrepreneurs have gone through this program; 14 of the ideas were transformed into successfully running businesses and another 11 of them are about to launch but were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acceleration Program

The acceleration program is a three-month program that helps start-ups to grow their sales, increase their revenue and expand business. It includes training on marketing strategies and growth, financial management and investment, developing business plans and more. The acceleration program also includes one-to-one mentoring sessions and expert sessions with advice on marketing, legal hurdles, website development and content creation, and financial grant assistance. So far 29 startups were accelerated and boosted with the help of 45 mentors.

Libya's financial sector is underdeveloped and dominated by the public sector. State-owned banks are the main source of financing in the economy and non-bank related funds and investing in start-ups are still rare. So access to finance can be a big hurdle for potential innovators.

"Stream is focused on improving access to finance to bridge the gap between investors and entrepreneurs," said Tameem Addeeb, the manager of the Stream Business Incubator.

Featured Companies and Projects:

Speetar

Speetar is an online telemedicine platform that links Libyan health professionals from around the world with patients in their home regions. Libyan doctor-turned-tech-CEO Mohamed Aburawi developed the platform so doctors who had left their countries could treat patients back home and it's now being used to help with the influx of COVID-19 patients.

Co-founder Ahmed Elfaituri, the executive director, was a participant in both the incubation and then the acceleration programs of Stream. Through Stream's network, he further developed the platform's business prospects and collaborated with the United Nations Development Program to help increase the accessibility to healthcare services to rural areas and people in need.

With more than 1,500 specialized physicians onboard, Speetar allows the patients to do their regular check-ups online efficiently and professionally, giving people with limited access to health care an opportunity to benefit from their services.

"Libya is a country crushed between a civil war and a pandemic," Elfaituri said. "Some patients had to travel 200 kilometers just to speak to a doctor. One woman traveled 1,000 kilometers just for a follow-up visit about her pregnancy."



The Speetar app has more than 40,000 customers and 1,500 doctors and dentists using the platform across all regions in Libya, according to Elfaituri.

“We’ve received a lot of help from Stream. They connected with the right government officials to help us register, which was difficult during the pandemic, and offered their facilities so that we had reliable internet access, a good productive work environment,” he added. “We were also able to connect with other Streamers in different categories to collaborate.”

Servo

Servo is an online transportation platform that started in Benghazi, and now it is available in 16 cities across Libya. Amir Khalid, the founder of Servo, is a stream’s acceleration program participant.

Servo is mainly a pick-up and delivery application that aims to become the Libyan version of Uber. It quickly became the top used app for transportation and delivery in Benghazi and now has branched out to Tripoli and 14 other cities. Joining Stream had provided Amir with the knowledge to better manage his team, in addition to a space to work and host his meetings.

The company is growing quickly and is already seeing about 850 trips a day.

“I would comfortably say that around 60% to 70% of our customers are female because we offer a very affordable and reliable service. They can take a ride with us every day without breaking their budget,” Khalid said.

Servo is now considering expanding the business to offer scooters to the market and is working with the Stream to develop the idea.

Libyano Customer Service Robot:

Libyano is a the customer service robot designed and entirely built by Libyan engineers. Created by a firm of the same name, the robot is being deployed at Mitiga International Airport and offers services such as flight information and allows customers of Libyana Mobile Phone service (the main service offered in Libya) to top-off their Libyan credit cards. This friendly robot speaks in the local Libyan dialect; it will also start speaking languages such as Tamazight and English at later stages of development.

Tameem Addeeb, who came up with the vision for the robot, was inspired by the global trend of robots. Addeeb’s belief in the Libyan youth and their potential for accomplishment when given the opportunity, is what led him to search for local talent for the research and development os this robot.

“The goal of this modern technology is to help improve the local economy and support the talents and inspiration of Libya’s youth,” said Addeeb, whose firm developed the robot. Mr. Addeeb also serves as the Stream Business Incubator manger.

The project introduces the employment of service robots in professional settings and represents a disruptive technology for Libya’s technological industry, incorporating state-of-the-art technology and design methods — additive manufacturing, artificial intelligence and autonomous navigation algorithms, among others. Libyano uses autonomous navigation, facial recognition, emotion and gaze detection, and interactive user interfaces.

Developing Libyano was done under challenging circumstances, including the struggle to raise funds, scarcity of components and resources in the local market, a tight development schedule of 6 months and the restrictions of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic on mobility and global shipping services.

“Our team’s objective was to meet global robotic standards while preserving the integrity of the Libyan identity.”

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