

Middle East Venture Partners (MEVP) Announces First Close of \$30 million Middle East Venture Fund II

Fund will offer Series A funding of between \$500 thousand to \$3 million in the region's digital economy focusing on web and mobile businesses in their early stages

19 April 2015 – Dubai, UAE – Middle East Venture Partners (MEVP) today announced the first close of Middle East Venture Fund II (MEVF II) at US\$15 million. MEVFII that will invest in the region's tech and mobile businesses, is MEVP's fourth fund and succeeds its US\$70 million Impact Fund that was launched last year for investments in Lebanon's ICT sector. The fund will aim to close in second quarter 2015 with US\$30 million to invest. MEVFII is already operational and has approved four investments:

- **YouGotAGift.com:** The first of its kind online marketplace specialising in digital gift cards in the Middle East, with more than 65 retailers across the UAE, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The service offers a fun and convenient way of sending prepaid Gift Cards from leading brands using the web and mobile devices.
- **Lamsa (www.lamsaworld.com):** Lamsa World is a state-of-the-art Arabic digital library tailored for children aged 1 to 7, offering them a world of creativity and imagination. Lamsa delivers entertainment and fun, along with an interactive, perceptive, and exciting learning experience via a wide array of content including interactive stories, games, art, and rhymes.
- **The Luxury Closet (www.theluxurycloset.com):** A fast growing online marketplace that sells pre-owned luxury items at a discounted price and on a consignment basis model, while maintaining brand and item integrity and ensuring the authenticity of sold items.
- **Altibbi (www.Altibbi.com):** The Middle East's leading digital medical content platform that offers several online medical services in Arabic. These services include a symptoms checker, a medical dictionary, a directory of hospitals and physicians, an encyclopaedia for medicines available in the Arab World, and an interactive physician-patient social platform.

Recent macroeconomic studies suggest that digital capital is not only growing rapidly but has also become a major contributing factor in global

economic growth. High smartphone penetration rates and a growing e-commerce sector have made MENA a breeding ground for tech startups that require growth-stage investments to allow them to survive, grow, succeed and create a sustainable job base. The region is experiencing unprecedented growth in capital raised with Venture Capital transactions in ICT sector dominating investments and transactions - almost half of total deals completed by Venture Capital funds since 2010 were in IT and software companies.

“The Arab digital economy is a large one offering strong growth opportunities and Middle East telecoms and tech providers will drive MENA’s economic transformation,” says Walid Hanna, Managing Partner of MEVP. “We are excited by the promising talent and technologies emerging in our region. As partners and investors, we add value to startup companies as we offer our portfolio companies capital as well as strategic and operating expertise.”

MEVF II has attracted a distinguished set of institutional and professional investors with relevant backgrounds in digital, telecom and media. Zain Group, a pioneer in mobile telecommunications in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, is one of the Limited Partners in MEVF II. Zain is a leading mobile and data services operator with a commercial footprint in 8 Middle Eastern and African countries providing a comprehensive range of mobile voice and data services to more than 43 million active customers.

Earlier this year, and in order to help manage MEVF II, MEVP has partnered with Ihsan Jawad, the Dubai-based digital entrepreneur who founded and exited Zawya.com to Thompson Reuters in 2012. Mr. Jawad also co-founded Honeybee Tech Ventures which incubated and invested several consumer Internet ventures including Laimoon.com, youtagift.com and RoundMenu.com.

Collectively, the principals of MEVP bring deep experience from the financial and tech sectors. They are active investors who have years of both investment and operational experience, and have worked with entrepreneurs to create and build successful companies. MENA Venture Fund II will leverage the firm’s extensive regional network to generate a flow of high quality deals and accelerate the creation of value by assisting portfolio companies in acquiring the right talent and required resources to reach their full potential.

MEVP, which began operations in 2010, is the region's oldest and largest independent VC with Assets Under Management that exceed US\$100 million. MEVP completed its first exit in December 2014 when its portfolio company Shahiya.com, the GCC's leading user-generated Arab food recipes website and mobile application, was acquired by the billion dollars publicly-traded Japanese recipe website Cookpad for US\$13.5 million, a transaction yielding a 130% IRR. Since inception, MEVP has invested in 21 portfolio companies - 7 of which are market leaders - employing more than 300 high skilled professionals across the region. TwoFour54, an Abu Dhabi government entity and Dubai Silicon Oasis, a Dubai government entity – have both invested in The Luxury Closet, one of MEVP's portfolio companies. This is the first time both governments have invested in a VC-managed business.

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About Middle East Venture Partners (MEVP)

MEVP is a Middle East-focused venture capital firm that invests in the early and growth stages of innovative companies run by talented entrepreneurs primarily, but not exclusively, in the Middle East Region.

With offices in Beirut, Dubai and Silicon Valley and more than USD 100 million in Assets Under Management, MEVP is the largest and most established VC firm in the region, with clear cross border investment appetite.

MEVP has a unique combination of backgrounds and expertise that allows it to partner with innovative entrepreneurs and help them grow and develop, especially in their early stages.

MEVP believes that today, timing is ideal to start companies in our region. The region has a young, middle-class population that is rapidly growing, disposable income is increasing due to economic growth and societies are more aligned with global culture due to higher levels of connectivity. The company seeks passionate entrepreneurs with young companies or fresh ideas that are innovative in their fields. These innovations could be in their product, service, business model, or value chain. Their differentiated and proprietary edge will allow them to build a great brand, customer loyalty, and a robust, healthy business.

For more information about MEVP, please visit www.mevp.com

For media queries, please contact:

Hazar Alzaki

Email: hazar@allthingscomm.com