

AUGUST -  
DECEMBER  
22



# NICL TIMES



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 03** Message from the Head of Operations
- 04** NICL - Home to Problem Solvers
- 09** How our Foundation Council Inspires
- 10** News From the Center
- 12** Visits to the Center
- 13** Partnership Highlights
- 16** Startup Highlights



# MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF OPERATIONS



As the National Incubation Center Lahore (NICL) moves towards the end of its fifth year, it continues to be a great journey both, for me, as well as the Center. I joined NICL more than two years ago as Director, Learning and Development. Coming from a background of academia, becoming part of NICL was new and uncharted territory for me.

With NICL, I found the perfect platform to implement and apply years of learning from two decades of teaching at the graduate level. Now, 5 years down the line, NICL is one of the only incubation centers in Pakistan with a full-service learning and development team, capable of designing, planning, and executing specialized trainings.

This edition of the NICL Times serves to better orient our community and network to the range of trainings and services we offer here at the Center. As you read through our newsletter, you'll get a look at our central entrepreneurial trainings, covering pre-incubation, incubation, and the acceleration stage. You will also be apprised of our key collaborations and the various activities that have graced the NICL calendar.

The NICL team genuinely believes in the potential of all startup founders who join our network. Through our work we want to do our most in supporting them and their ventures and we hope to continue in our effort to uplifting, sustaining, and amplifying the startup ecosystem of Pakistan.

Given that this newsletter focuses on our trainings, I also want to give a special thanks to all faculty members who deliver the trainings with amazing energy, and support our founders every step of the way. Our work would not be possible without you all.

Thank you, readers, for continuing to be part of our cherished network. Happy reading!

Regards,

*Saima Rana*

---

# NICL – HOME TO PROBLEM SOLVERS

At the National Incubation Center Lahore (NICL), we know that startup success is just the tip of the iceberg. Milestones for entrepreneurs come at the expense of years of hard work, research, studying, experimentation and countless nights of workshopping ideas, business plans and strategies. This is why the programmes at NICL are designed to support individuals at every level of their entrepreneurial journey, from idea generation to growth and acceleration.



## ENTREPRENEURSHIP 101

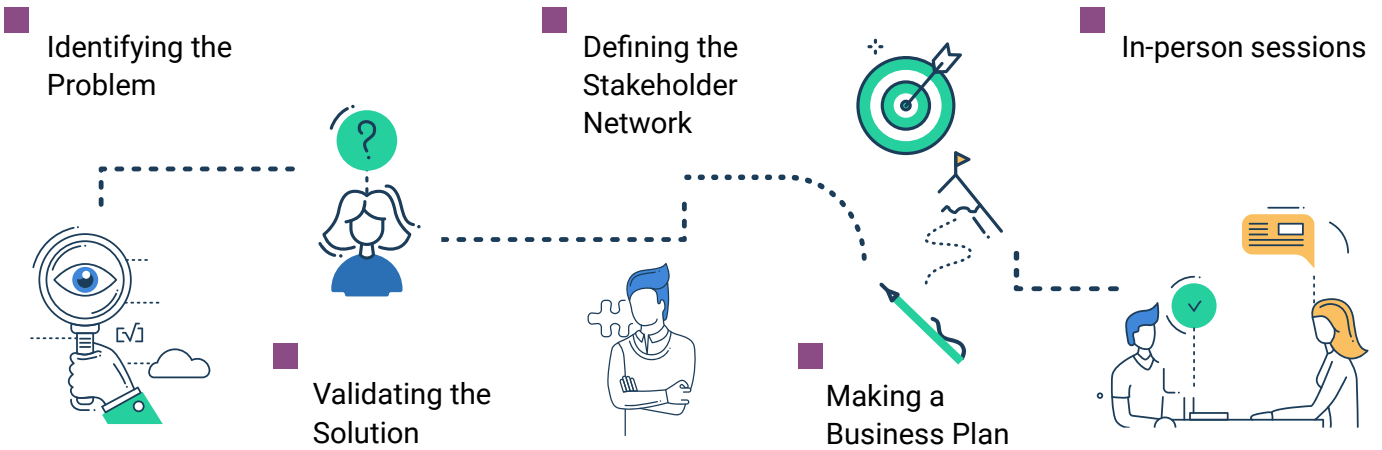
It all starts with an idea!

We've all thought of exciting business ideas, that we have not quite followed through with. Entrepreneurship 101 empowers individuals to take the next step.

A collaboration between NICL and the Saarland University in Germany, the purpose of the program is to inculcate an entrepreneurial mindset in its participants through an interactive and engaging way. Entrepreneurship 101 is primarily conducted online, with one mandatory in-person session that takes place weekly at the NICL premises and is taught by a LUMS faculty.

The participants are expected to work on a basic startup idea; implementing the critical thinking and problem-solving skills they learn each week to develop it further. At the end of the programme, each participant gets a certificate from LUMS and Saarland University.

## E101 AT A GLANCE



# What's new?



To improve accessibility and expand the reach of the programme, Entrepreneurship101 has now been opened to individuals out side of LUMS. Work is also ongoing to offer the programme in both English and Urdu.



I enrolled in Entrepreneurship 101 to get some introductory knowledge about something I might want to pursue for myself. As an engineer, I didn't have much of a business background, so the programme and the case studies we read opened up a whole new dimension for me. The candid feedback from the evaluators also helped me stay in the right direction when exploring the different ideas I had."

Omer Khalid Khan

Omer's experience with Entrepreneurship 101 inspired him to begin a startup of his own. He is now Co-founder of RocketHire, and was part of NICL's 10th Cohort.

# THE FOUNDRY

Building a Foundation for  
Startup Success



The Foundry is NICL's flagship initiative entirely sponsored by Ignite. The **free-of-cost 6-month bootcamp** for early-stage startups aims to nurture their core ideas into investor ready business plans.

The current areas of focus for our incubated startups have been **Agriculture, Education, Environment, Financial Inclusion and Healthcare.**



The programme consists of trainings covering different aspects of the startup journey and are conducted by expert faculty at LUMS. The structured trainings and assignments are supplemented by one-on-one mentoring by industry leaders and investors, with startups also getting the opportunity to showcase their solutions, and attend speaker sessions by other seasoned entrepreneurs.



## FOUNDRY JOURNEY OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

The NICL team reaches out to educational institutes as well as other entrepreneurial organizations in the country to present the Foundry Programme to all potential entrepreneurs.

Increasingly NICL has also amplified its focus on women-led startups to inspire young women to fearlessly take the entrepreneurial path and make their place in the current ecosystem.



## TRAINING

The structured training during the Foundry is conducted by LUMS faculty and aims to acquaint founders with each aspect of the entrepreneurial journey. The skills they gain during the programme helps them build up a robust business venture that is ready to be presented to the market.

## INVESTOR SUMMIT

The rigorous Foundry programme culminates into NICL's capstone event: the Investor Summit. Each graduating startup is given the chance to present their venture to investors and experienced founders from Pakistan. The experience of pitching their startups can be intense but provides them with valuable and necessary feedback and a networking opportunity with leaders in the startup space.

## MENTORSHIP

After a careful needs assessment, founders are connected to mentors best suited in the area they need the most help with. This is in addition to the networking opportunities and speaker sessions by industry experts, organised by the NICL team.



## TESTIMONIALS



**Sabaina Yusuf,**  
Founder O'naps

The Foundry helped build my network, which is very important for startup founders. Through my incubation I was also able to build my business model, access business opportunities and get connected to mentors and the NICL network.



**Omar Farooq,**  
Founder Boltay Huroof

The biggest advantage I got at NICL was the mentorship and access to a lifetime of the entrepreneurial experiences that the mentors had. This helped me learn strategies and methodologies to tackle real-life challenges and to build and scale our start-up.



# SEED SPARK

## STEPPING UP WITH YOUR STARTUP



The Stanford SEED Spark Program was instrumental in helping us articulate our vision. The frameworks, expert sessions, as well as the one-on-one mentorship provided just the right mix to propel us beyond what we could have achieved on our own. Stanford is a huge brand and earning a certificate from the business school contributed to our credibility and connected us to a regional network of like-minded people working in a similar context.

### Sadaf Rehman

Sadaf is the Co-founder of Code School, which was part of Seed Spark's inaugural cohort from Pakistan and won first prize in its capstone business pitch competition.

This immersive four-month online acceleration program is an initiative of the Stanford Graduate School of Business and has been brought to Pakistan for the first-time ever by NICL. Through its network of incubators, accelerators and entrepreneurial support organisations, the Seed Spark program provides early-stage startups in the growth or traction stage the training required to develop a robust business strategy, grow their network and gain important business skills.

In addition to nominating startups from across the country, NICL also nominates industry experts as mentors for the program.

Through the comprehensive program, startups get access to



**one-on-one mentorship,**



**live online expert sessions,**



**combined with video lectures**



**toolkits**



**activities**



**peer support groups**



# HOW OUR FOUNDATION COUNCIL INSPIRES



DR. WARDAH  
INAM



USMAN  
JAVAID

## DR. WARDAH INAM MAKES THE INC. MAGAZINE'S 2022 FEMALE FOUNDERS 100 LIST

Advisory Board Member NICL and CEO Overjet, Dr. Inam was named in Inc. Magazine's list for releasing the first-ever dental AI product cleared by the US Food and Drug Administration. She joins other trailblazing women entrepreneurs featured in the magazine's Female Founders 100 List. Dr. Inam's AI product aims to improve oral health by supporting healthcare providers with better and precise clinical decision-making.



QASIF  
SHAHID

## NICL FOUNDATION COUNCIL MEMBERS ELECTED TO PAKISTAN FINTECH NETWORK'S LEADERSHIP AND BOARD

**Mr. Qasif Shahid**, Co-founder and CEO Finja, was elected as Vice-Chairman and

**Mr. Usman Javaid**, Founder and CEO Ricult Inc., was nominated as a Director to Pakistan Fintech Network's board.

## MR. QASIF SHAHID'S STARTUP FINJA PARTICIPATED IN SERIES A2 FUNDING

Finja, co-founded by NICL Foundation Council member, Qasif Shahid, participated in the \$10 million Series A2 financing round that included investments by HBL and Sturgeon Capital. This fresh capital injection will provide Finja the capacity to finance more than \$50 million over the next 12 months. It will further scale the platform's impact in the SME sector through digital credit and the development of new online and banking products.

# NEWS FROM THE CENTER



## SULEMAN DAWOOD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND NICL HOST SPEAKER SESSION WITH SUNEEL MUNJ

Mr. Suneel Sarfaraz Munj, Co-Founder of Pakwheels, walked the audience through his entrepreneurial journey and shared his thoughts on the expectations versus the realities of setting up and managing a startup.



## FOLIO3 AND NICL CO-HOST SESSION ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The session featured guest speakers, Mr. Umair Khan, Chairman of Folio3 Software and Co-founder of OPEN (Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs); and Mr. Zafar Khan, Co-founder and CTO, Truckistan Technologies. The event kicked off with Mr. Khan's presentation highlighting the pivotal factors for a startup's success in the current turbulent market conditions, followed by a question and answers session with the different startups in the audience.



## BBOXX CO-FOUNDERS SHARE INSIGHTS FROM THEIR STARTUP JOURNEY

Mr. Mansoor Hamayun, Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Chris Baker-Brian, Managing Director of Product Division, delivered an inspiring session at NICL, sharing their experience of building Bboxx and the fundraising strategy they adopted for the startup. While discussing their expansion plans, they spoke at length about the potential in the Pakistani market and the gap that exists in terms of basic necessities available to the economically disadvantaged.



## ALUMNI HOMECOMING ORGANIZED FOR COHORT 1 TO 5

NICL alumni came together for an evening of inspiring conversations, reconnection and networking. The startups present shared their updates and progress with each other and talked about their experience at NICL and the different facilities they were able to benefit from. The NICL team was also in attendance, in addition to Mr. Muhammad Umer Akram, Project Director, Ignite; Mr. Muhammed Ali Khan, Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives, LUMS and Mr. Nauman Zaffar, Director NICL.



## SPEAKER SESSION WITH CO-FOUNDERS OF MY VITAMIN STORE

During the speaker session, Dr. Farah Faris Qureshi, Founder and CEO, Base6 (Pvt.) Ltd., and Mr. Amer Sarfraz, Co-Founder, Bramerz and Base6 (Pvt.) Ltd, discussed their journey of building Base6's consumer health startup 'My Vitamin Store'. Sharing their thoughts on the nutraceutical industry in Pakistan, digital marketing and work-life balance; both the guests gave the audience candid insight into the mindset, work ethic and foresight needed to start and grow a business.



## VICE CHANCELLORS INVITED TO NETWORKING LUNCH HOSTED BY NICL

To kickstart a discussion on the role of educational institutions in the startup ecosystem, NICL initiated a networking lunch with Vice Chancellors across Punjab. On this occasion, leadership from Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), University of Sargodha, Lahore Garrison University and other representatives, came to LUMS, and met with Dr. Arshad Ahmad, Vice Chancellor LUMS; Mohammed Ali Khan, Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives, LUMS; Mr. Nauman Zaffar, Director NICL, and Ms. Saima Rana, Head of Operations NICL. They discussed opportunities within the incubation space for students and the facilities and trainings NICL offers to startups

The leadership from all present universities agreed that through collaborative efforts young entrepreneurs in Punjab can be empowered to build on their ideas and contribute towards Pakistan's progress.



## NICL COMMUNITY MARKS CANCER AWARENESS WEEK

The NICL team and the different startups at the Center participated in #Pinktober by writing down their ideas on how breast cancer awareness can be increased in Pakistan. The activity stimulated interesting discussions and reignited everyone's commitment to the cause. Each sticky note with the respective ideas was displayed on a board at the Center for the entire week, so that visitors to the Center also had the chance to think about innovative and sustainable ways of creating breast cancer awareness in the country.



## NICL AND OPEN LAHORE HOST FIRST-EVER MULTICITY CONFERENCE

Investors, VCs, and Founders from across the city came to NICL for an evening of networking and exciting conversations. The event featured a startup showcase with startups from across verticals and industries that displayed their innovative solutions. Attendees enjoyed interacting with the startups and learning about their business ideas and vision.

The showcase was followed by interesting panel discussions on the successes and failures in Pakistan's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The esteemed guest speakers included Mr. Arif Iqbal, CEO, LAAM; Mr. Saad Hameed, Founder and CEO, Game District; Mr. Shayan Sohail, Chief Operating Officer, Pakvitae; Mr. Zafar Khan, Co-founder and CTO, Truckistan Technologies; Mr. Monis Rahman, Co-founder and CEO, Dukan and Mr. Khurram Zafar, Director, 47 Ventures Ltd.

The conference then ended with **Sal Khan's** keynote address streamed live from OPEN Silicon Valley.

# WORKSHOPS AT NICL



## DESIGN THINKING WORKSHOP WITH CITY SCHOOL

NICL hosted Class 8 and 9 students from The City School for an interactive design thinking workshop. Through various engaging activities they learnt how to identify problems in their environment and come up with actionable steps to resolve them. The purpose of the session was to get the students interested in innovation and entrepreneurship in a fun and enjoyable setting. The STEM Educators also conducted a short session with the students and introduced them to the Global Makers Movement and different inspiring inventors.



## SESSION ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH STUDENTS FROM GOVERNMENT COLLEGE UNIVERSITY (GCU)

Students from the GCU Women Development Centre visited NICL as part of the 'Fostering Critical Thinking and Entrepreneurial Skills in Young Women for Gender Inclusive Socioeconomic Development' project by Shaoor Foundation. The NICL team conducted an engaging session with the students on women entrepreneurship and took them through what a typical entrepreneurial journey looks like.

# VISITS TO THE CENTER



**USAID Pakistan - Ms. Anne Flaker, Director of Education & Mr. Muhammad Azhar, Program Director, Merit and Needs-Based Scholarship Program**



**Mr. James Kwan,  
Managing Director at  
Soapbox capital**



**H.E Alfred Grannas,  
German Ambassador  
of Pakistan**



**Mr. Donald Blome,  
U.S Ambassador to  
Pakistan**



**Mr. Arif Zaman,  
Executive Director,  
Commonwealth  
Businesswomen's  
Network**

# PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

## BOP Partnership to accelerate FinTech development

NICL has partnered with Bank of Punjab (BOP) for the development and operation of a Digital Experience and Innovation Center. During the five-year partnership, the Center will act as a dynamic technological laboratory where startups can explore, experiment, design and prototype digital financial tools and services.

For more insights into the partnership, we spoke with Mr. Hussain Ali Merchant, BOP's Head of Fintech & Partnerships.

### How will BOP's Digital Experience & Innovation Center at NICL add value to the current startup ecosystem?

With the support of NICL, BOP aims to invite transformation teams and problem solvers to champion digital transformation internally and in their customer experiences. We also want to remain mindful of the segment at risk of social and financial exclusion and provide them with the necessary tools to ensure scalable success thereby strengthening the startup eco-system across Pakistan.

### Why is NICL the right partner for this project?

NICL is not only housed within Pakistan's premier educational institute – LUMS, but is also the leading incubator, accelerator, and innovation hub in Pakistan. Moreover, this collaboration connects BOP with startups at the ideation stage of their journey. This gives us the opportunity to mentor them and refine their ideas.



### What are some of the initiatives under the Innovation Center that you are looking forward to?

BOP is looking forward to participating in initiatives such as hackathons to connect with deserving potential in Pakistan. We're also keen to mentor NICL startups pertaining to financial problems, design thinking sessions, technology workshops, and exploration of emerging technologies.

# NICL Startups Pitch During the Huawei Spark Program

Huawei Spark is a global support program launched by HUAWEI CLOUD for startup. The purpose of the program is to provide support to global startups working towards creating disruptive solutions for a more intelligent and interconnected world.

Under the mandate of the NICL and Huawei partnership, NICL graduates and nominated startups, Printmeall and Cashmail, pitched their startup ideas to a seasoned panel of investors and entrepreneurs for 2022's Huawei Cloud Spark Program.



“Huawei is globally committed to enhancing the tech enablement of startups through Huawei Cloud and the launching of the Spark Program. It is our goal, particularly in a high potential market like Pakistan, to facilitate the startup ecosystem by incubating and accelerating tech startups. We are pleased to partner with NICL and are certain that the Center will be an invaluable ally in our collective goal.

**Syed Bilal Qasim,**

Market Development Head at  
Huawei Cloud



## NICL Partners with Star Farm Pakistan

Star Farm Pakistan Pvt. Ltd. is a consulting company and subsidiary of Metro Group. It is primarily involved in on-site training, capacity building, implementation of international standards and market linkages services, particularly in the food and agriculture sector.

Both NICL and Star Farm are committed to facilitating each other in developing further linkages with relevant ministries, corporations, industries, professionals and key stakeholders interested in engagement within the agriculture industry and other allied verticals.

# GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP NETWORK



**MR. ARIF  
ZAMAN**

Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW), organised by the not-for-profit the Global Entrepreneurship Network, is the largest annual celebration of entrepreneurship involving 200 countries from around the world. Pakistan currently ranks 12th equal globally, the top in South Asia, on the leaderboard of countries that are the most active during GEW, reflecting the robust level of interest in entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

NICL participated in GEW with two very exciting events, with a key focus on inspiring young women. The Center partnered with LUMS Women in Computing, and hosted Founder's Lab; a panel discussion where founders shared their experience of starting their own business. The panel featured Ismail Khan, Co-Founder Tajir; Malaga Shaukat, NICL Foundation Council Member and Co-Founder AimFit; Zari Zahra, Co-Founder Spekit, and Sadaf Rehman, NICL nominated Seed Spark alum and Co-Founder Codeschool.pk. The NICL team also conducted a session on 'Entrepreneurship for Young Women,' in collaboration with the LUMS Community Service Society, for students from the SOS Children's Villages Pakistan.

GEN is a key partner for the Commonwealth Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator and a powerful connector to the Commonwealth entrepreneurship ecosystem. Mr. Arif Zaman, Executive Director, Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network, visited NICL at LUMS to meet with female NICL entrepreneurs and to discuss how NICL can play a significant role in strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship within the Commonwealth.

As part of Pakistan's tenure as Chair of the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on Youth, NICL can play its part in developing an inclusive, vibrant and dynamic ecosystem with other partner countries.

**"I loved the supportive atmosphere that I encountered when I was at NICL. I said there were 3As that struck out in the building. It's ambience, atmosphere and attitude. Attitude is a big part of the conversation when you're talking about entrepreneurs in terms of their approach to business, the resilience that they have, and appetite for collaboration. And I certainly saw a lot of that at NICL."**

**Mr. Arif Zaman,  
Executive Director,  
Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network**

# STARTUPS HIGHLIGHTS



## INSTACARE

Healthtech

Won a PKR 15 Million grant in the Karandaaz Financial Inclusion for Women Challenge 2022



## PAKVITAE

Environment

Partnered with National Bank of Pakistan, Hashoo Foundation and Asifa Irfan Foundation to provide 150 Million liters of clean drinking water to flood affectees



## MILKIFY

Agritech

Won 1st position at the Professional Freelancing Training Program (PFTP) and the SEE Pakistan 2022 startup competition



## BOLTAY HUROOF

Edtech

Won the P@SHA ICT awards in the Inclusivity and Community category



## AERO ENGINE CRAFT

Environment

Received Outstanding Achievement Award by the Ministry of IT & Telecom during the celebration of Digital Inclusion Week & ICT for Girls Day



Scan the code for more updates



[niclahore.com](http://niclahore.com)



NICLSolveTogether



[niclahore](https://www.instagram.com/niclahore)

National Incubation Center Lahore, Syed Babar Ali School of Science and Engineering, LUMS, DHA, Lahore 54792, Pakistan