

# The **20** Most Promising Egyptian Startups

The startup scene is still nascent in the Arab world's most populous country. Total funding for the 20 startups featured on our debut list have raised a total of \$24.2 million. By comparison, the top 20 U.A.E. startups on last year's FORBES MIDDLE EAST's ranking garnered \$41.6 million.

The most active investors are 500 Startups, an American early stage venture fund and accelerator—perhaps not surprisingly, and Cairo Angels. Of the 20 startups, nine raised more than \$1 million. There are 38 angel investors, compared to 17 venture capitalists, and most of the VCs are not Egyptian.

We sent out questionnaires to 350 startups gathered from different sources, such as TIEC, A15, Cairo Angels, Flat6Labs, and Sawari Ventures, as well as entrepreneurs who recommended peers.

We evaluated them based on their potential global and regional appeal, the quality of their investors (professional VCs), and the amount of funding. We selected the top 20, with \$140,000 being the cut-off.

Several startups asked us not to publicly disclose their funding or investors.

*Researchers: Ahmed Mabrouk and Jason Lasrado*

## 1. INSTABUG

Tool to detect software glitches in apps

**Founders:** Omar Gabr,

Moataz Soliman

Established: 2013

Instabug gives app developers a tool to help them detect software glitches. Its customers include Yahoo, PayPal, Soundcloud, and Souq. Omar Gabr and Moataz Soliman met while studying at Cairo University, where they shared a passion for software engineering. In June 2016, they raised \$1.7 million in seed funding from Palo Alto, California-based VC Accel Partners, and prominent angel investors, such as Egyptian entrepreneur Amr Awadallah. With the funds, they plan to open an office in San Francisco by the end of this year.



## 2. YAOOTA

Online price comparison

**Founders:** Sherif ElRakabawy, Mohamed Ewis

Established: 2014

Sherif ElRakabawy came up with the idea for a price comparison tool for online shoppers while at the University of California at Berkeley in 2009. He teamed up with high school friend, Mohamed Ewis, a mechanical engineer with an MBA from INSEAD, to launch Yaoota in 2014. Participating retailers pay Yaoota when a user clicks through to its site from search results, paying Yaoota around ten cents per click. The startup had run out of money, and was on the verge of shutting down, when it got \$2.7 million from an Abu Dhabi investment firm last year. Yaoota now operates in the U.A.E. and has plans to expand to Saudi Arabia by the end of this summer.



## 3. WUZZUF

Recruitment platform

**Founder:** Ameer Sherif

Established: 2011

Wuzzuf matches jobs with people. More than 5,000 companies have recruited some 60,000 individuals through the site. Last year, it raised \$1.7 million in a series A round from European and Silicon Valley venture capitalists, one of the largest in Egypt. Ameer Sherif, 33, graduated from Cairo University in 2004 with a bachelor's in electronics and computer engineering.



#### 4. DIWAN VIDEOS

Multi-channel network on YouTube

**Founder: Ossama Youssef**  
Established: 2010

Osama Youssef, 37, graduated with a master's in translation in 2007 from Al-Azhar University. In 2009, he decided not to pursue PhD studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara after seeing the rise of YouTube, and became one of the video-sharing website's early partners in the Middle East. Diwan now manages a diverse collection of talent across different platforms, including YouTube, Twitter, and Vuclip. It generates nearly 600 million views per month. This past April, it raised \$5 million from a prominent Dubai executive.



#### 5. VEZEETA

Doctor appointment booking and review site

**Founders: Amir Barsoum, Ahmed Badr**  
Established: 2012

Amir Barsoum was a manager for the Middle East and North Africa at pharmaceuticals company AstraZeneca, when he teamed up with Ahmed Badr, who worked at an IT consulting firm. They formed Zezeeta, a platform that is similar to ZocDoc in the U.S. It allows patients to make an appointment with a doctor online, potentially generating more revenue for physicians. Patients can select doctors in nine cities in Egypt, and post reviews. Some 2,000 doctors covering more than 30 specialties are in their network. Zezeeta has raised more than \$3.5 million from regional investors.



#### 6. ELVES

Personal helper

**Founders: Khaled Gomma, Kareem Daa, Abeer Elsi, Karim Elsayh and AbdelRahman Zohiery**  
Established: 2016

Husband and wife team Karim Elsayh and Abeer Elsi, and their partners Kareem Daa, Khaled Gomma and AbdelRahman Zohiery are serial entrepreneurs. Before founding Elves, they formed Konnecti, which matches businesses with customers in the U.S. With Elves, a customer anywhere in the world can request a service via text message to one of 16 Elves employees who act as concierge, fetching tickets to a concert, or making restaurant reservations.

#### 7. AQARMAP.COM

Real estate search engine

**Founder: Amad Almsaodi**  
Established: 2011

Aqarmap has sold through its website more than 11,000 properties worth upwards of \$700 million in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Yemeni-American Amad Almsaodi was a project manager in charge of e-commerce at Boeing in Seattle, where he graduated with a B.A. in Information Systems from the University of Washington. He decided to set up business in Egypt because of lower operating costs and an abundance of talent. "To my surprise the real estate industry in Egypt was much sexier than the nearby markets, including the GCC countries," says Almsaodi.



#### 8. EVENTTUS

Platform for events ticket sales and audience engagement

**Founders: Mai Medhat, Nihal Fares**  
Established: 2012

Mai Medhat and Nihal Fares founded Eventtus to facilitate networking at events, such as TEDx and ArabNet. Event organizers can also sell tickets, send notifications to attendees, and post agenda changes, all on one platform. The Ain Shams University grads developed Eventtus for over a year before launching their app in 2012. They have raised \$425,000 from Cairo Angels, Vodafone Ventures, Middle East Venture Partners, and Raed Ventures. So far, they have helped organizers pull off more than 7,500 events, primarily in Egypt and the U.A.E.





**9. MOVIEPIGS**

Streams Arabic indie films

**Founders:** Perihan Abouzeid, Hany El-Kerdany  
**Established:** 2015

MoviePigs is a combination of movie streaming service Netflix and KickStarter, the crowdfunding platform for creative projects. Movie buffs from all over the world can fund or watch independent Arabic films. Subscribers pay \$6.99 a month. Perihan Abouzeid, a graduate of MIT's Sloan School of Management and Hany El-Kerdany, who has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Ain Shams University in Cairo, founded MoviePigs, because she found it hard to find Arabic movies in the U.S.



**11. ZEE3**

Talent scouting

**Founder:** Sherif Hossny  
**Established:** 2012

Zee3 started as a social project, with Sherif Hossny videotaping in an ambulatory booth interviews with ordinary Egyptian citizens. Topics ranged from rural life to aspirations, but Hossny regularly got requests from people to videotape them performing a song. Since 2015, Zee3 has showcased more than 400 individuals in 25 cities, in search of a star. Hossny, who has raised \$1.6 million, posts these amateur performances on his website, which has racked up so far 25 million views.

**10. EDFALY**

Facilitates online ordering and shipping of U.S. merchandise

**Founders:** Mohamed Attya, Mohamed Hisham, Ahmed Mohamed  
**Established:** 2011

Want to buy a button-down shirt from Brooks Brothers in the U.S., or a Burberry trench coat straight from Burberry's? Customers in Egypt pay Edfa3ly, which facilitates the ordering and shipping. Mohamed Attya and Mohamed Hisham, both business majors, and Ahmed Mohamed, a computer engineer from Ain Al Shams University have raised \$1.25 million from investors, including Tamkeen Capital, 500 startups, and ACE Angel Partners.



**12. CHAINO**

Social networking platform

**Founders:** Ali Zewail, Mohamed Nar  
**Established:** 2015

Ali Zewail, who managed an IT firm in Cairo, teamed up with Mohamed Nar, a software developer who has been programming for the last 30 years. Their networking app allows users to segment their social life online by posting content based on relationships with friends, family or colleagues. Chaino has raised \$1.3 million, mainly from angel investors. It has 200 registered users.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MOVIEPIGS; EDFALY; ZEE3; CHAINO

## 20 MOST PROMISING EGYPTIAN STARTUPS

### 13. BIODIESEL MISR

Manufactures biofuel from vegetable and animal oils  
**Founder: Mahmoud Abou Elrokab**  
Established: 2015



Mahmoud Abou Elrokab came up with idea for his startup when he noticed that a gas station in the U.K. also offered biodiesel. He now contracts with restaurant chains in Egypt, among other suppliers, to collect their used cooking oil and make a cleaner form of energy. He sells it to petroleum companies, which blend it with diesel fuel. Abou Elrokab, who's also a sports commentator for Abu Dhabi Media, says he produces 600 metric tons of biodiesel a month.

### 14. MUMM

Delivers home-cooked meals  
**Founder: Waleed Abdel Rahman**  
Established: 2015



Waleed Abdel Rahman was a founding managing director of MIT Technology Review's Arab Edition, and worked as general manager of a food and beverage company before forming Mumm. He got the idea while living in Beirut, where he spent too much money on restaurants and craved homemade meals. The startup connects home cooks with customers. It has six cooks so far in its network. Abdel Rahman says Mumm conducts spot checks every two weeks to make sure cooks maintain quality standards. Meals cost on average \$3 to \$5, and Mumm pockets up to one-third of the bill. It claims to deliver orders within 90 minutes.

### 15. ELWAFEYAT

Online obituaries  
**Founders: Omar Hamdalla, Yousef ElSammaa, Nesma ElFar, Con O'Donnell, Ashraf Maklad**  
Established: 2013

Cairo University classmates Omar Hamdalla, Yousef ElSammaa and Nesma ElFar teamed up with Con O'Donnell and Ashraf Maklad to form Elwafeyat, after meeting at accelerator Flat6Labs. Experience with personal loss prompted them to find a way to notify relatives and friends of a passing. Apart from publishing obituaries, ElWafeyat allows people to pay their respects by posting condolences. Hamdalla, ElSammaa and ElFar run day-to-day operations; O'Donnell and Maklad serve as advisers.



### 16. NAFHAM

Crowdsourced K to 12 educational platform  
**Founders: Mostafa Farahat, Ahmed Alfi, Muhammad Habib**  
Established: 2012

Nafham provides free crowdsourced educational videos that follow the public curriculum, and connects teachers with students who are seeking tutors. The platform has over 23,000 videos and 500,000 monthly unique users. Mostafa Farahat and Muhammad Habib worked at a Vodafone digital publishing and marketing company. Ahmed Alfi is chairman of Sawari Ventures, and a founder of Flat6Labs where Nafham was incubated. It earns revenue through ads from customers, such as the American University of Cairo, but plans to add a premium subscription service.



**17. TAGADDOD**

Renewable energy  
**Founders:** Nour El-Assal, Ahmed Raafat, Mariam Afifi  
 Established: 2013

Like Biodiesel Misr, Tagaddod makes biodiesel from used cooking oil. It completed its production facility in 2015. The company says it plans to produce 5,000 metric tons of biodiesel per month in four years, up from 100 metric tons a month currently. Nour El-Assal has a bachelor's in petroleum and petrochemicals engineering, and Ahmed Raafat graduated with a bachelor's in mechanical design and production, both from Cairo University. Mariam Afifi has a degree in economics and international business from the German University in Cairo. All three graduated in 2013.



**18. FELOOSY**

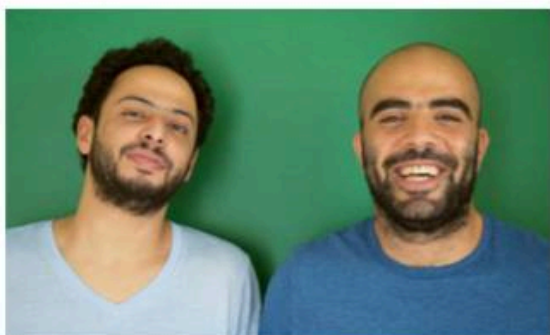
Money management  
**Founders:** Karim Beltaji, Aly Kouchouk  
 Established: 2015

Karim Beltaji and Aly Kouchouk quit their finance jobs in 2015 to form Feloosy. Beltaji was an analyst on the debt capital markets team at Citigroup in London, and Kouchouk was an equity swaps trader at UBS, also in London. Customers can create an account managed by Feloosy based on their financial goals and risk profile.

**19. TASKTY**

Home maintenance services  
**Founders:** Ibrahim Abdeen, Ahmed Galal Arara, Ahmed Atef Abdelmoaty  
 Established: 2012

The home maintenance market in Egypt is made up of mom-and-pop shops, where quality and service are hit or miss. Tanta-based Taskty provides professional service by listing, for example, prices and offering house-cleaning packages. If a customer is not satisfied, Taskty returns the money or redoes the job. Its services are also available in Cairo and Alexandria. Ahmed Galal Arara is a dentist and serial entrepreneur, Ahmed Abdelmoaty is a graphic designer, and Ibrahim Abdeen is a software engineer.



**20. IFIX**

Fixes mobile phones  
**Founders:** Mohamed Fayez, Omar Galal  
 Established: 2015

iFix's technicians will repair a broken smartphone at a customer's residence or office, typically in less than one hour. Mohamed Fayez says that eases worries about data privacy. Services are backed by a lifetime warranty. Fayez and Omar Galal are both American University of Cairo grads in petroleum and energy engineering, and computer science, respectively. The idea for iFix came from breaking their smartphone screens more than once, and waiting days to get them fixed.