



SMEs are a major source of new job creation in emerging and developing countries. In the MENA region, it is estimated that micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 80–90 percent of all businesses. However, despite their systemic importance, SMEs continue to face major challenges when it comes to access to finance. Lack of credit information and lack of collateral are just two of the many reasons why financial institutions are less exposed to SMEs than to larger and more established firms. COVID-19 has made the situation much worse for the region’s SMEs. The pandemic poses challenges of a scope and scale unprecedented in modern times. Millions of businesses are closed, countless jobs have been lost. The hardest hit are SMEs in the tourism and entertainment industries, which have been battered by lockdowns and travel restrictions. In response to the crisis, many governments across the region have scaled up credit guarantee schemes to tackle the urgent liquidity problem faced by SMEs and to stimulate an economic recovery through rebuilding the SME sector. In partnership with the SME Finance Forum, Kafalah SME Guarantee Program is hosting a MENA regional conference on the role of credit guarantee schemes in rebuilding the SMEs post-COVID-19.

The conference will take place on **September 6-7 2021**, and will cover: the impact of COVID-19 and the role of guarantee programs, supply chain finance, digitalization, alternative data, reviving tourism, early-stage finance, equity guarantees, and financing technology-led SMEs.

KSA Time	Monday, September 6th	KSA Time	Tuesday, September 7th
		12:00 - 13:30	Board meeting (by invitation only)
14:00 - 14:20	Opening remarks Dialogue/fireside chat on the impact of COVID and the role of the Guarantee Programs	14:00 - 14:15	Recap and Day Ahead
14:20 - 15:00	Plenary panel: Digitalization and its Impact on Guarantee Institutions	14:15 - 15:00	Plenary: Beyond Stimulus, Forbearance, and Deferment: What's Next?
15:00-15:05	Break	15:00-15:05	Break
15:05-15:50	<i>Panel 1: Alternative data transforming SME finance</i>	15:05-15:50	<i>Panel 1: Reviving /Financing tourism and Entertainment sector</i>
	<i>Panel 2: Early-Stage Finance and Equity Guarantees</i>		<i>Panel 2: Supply chain finance: roles of guarantee institutions</i>
15:50-16:00	Closing remarks.	15:50-16:00	Event Closing

About Kafalah SME Guarantee Program

Kafalah Program is a program launched by the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) and Saudi banks. The program aims to promote financing to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

About the SME Finance Forum

The SME Finance Forum works to expand access to finance to these small and medium businesses through its global membership network of 200+ financial institutions, technology companies and development finance institutions to share knowledge, spur innovation, and promote the growth of SMEs. The SME Finance Forum was established in 2012 by the G20 and is managed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC).