



القمة العالمية  
للتمكن الاقتصادي للمرأة  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT GLOBAL SUMMIT

القمة العالمية  
ECONOMIC  
للتمكن  
EMPOWERMENT  
الاقتصادي  
للمرأة  
GLOBAL SUMMIT  
نقل | 2019 | REPORT

محركات التغيير  
# Drivers of Change



“

My vision to uplift women on a national level begins with respect at home. Change starts young, so we have begun including gender equity principles in early education.”

His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah

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“

Integrating women in the economic domain and investing in their development will create a ripple effect that will benefit not just individual women but families, communities and nations around the world.”

Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah, Chairperson of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

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مؤسسة نماء للارتقاء بالمرأة  
NAMA WOMEN ADVANCEMENT ESTABLISHMENT

## NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

Nama Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA) was founded in 2015 by His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah.

At NAMA, we are determined to mobilize the means required to create enabling environments to advance gender equity and inclusive economic and social growth. NAMA's efforts stem from its core philosophy that women advancement is a fundamental requirement for the sustainable development of nations.

Through its three affiliates; Sharjah Business Women Council, Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, and Badiri Education and Development Academy, NAMA designs and implements initiatives that support women across the economic, professional and social sectors.

NAMA also engages with grass-roots and international organisations as part of its comprehensive approach towards developing an ecosystem in which women's full potential is realized.

For more information, visit [www.namawomen.ae](http://www.namawomen.ae)



## UN Women

UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas:

- Increasing women's leadership and participation,
- Ending violence against women,
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes,
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment,
- And making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality, and in all deliberations and agreements linked to the 2030 Agenda. The entity works to position gender equality as fundamental to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a more inclusive world.

For more information, visit [www.namawomen.ae](http://www.namawomen.ae)

## OVERVIEW:

His Highness, the Ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi launched the second edition of the biennial Women's Economic Empowerment Global Summit (WEEGS), an initiative which his wife, H.H. Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al-Qasimi and Chairperson of NAMA, led along with UN Women. In two short days, from December 10th to the 11th of 2019, key stakeholders engaged in productive dialogue about the ways women shape Middle Eastern and global economies.

## THEME OF THE SUMMIT: DRIVERS OF CHANGE

NAMA and UN Women built upon their partnership by diving deeper into conversations about women's role in economic development. Women are the drivers of change. Women invest in their families, in their communities, and they seed change from the ground up.

Women account for half of the world's population, but they do not make up half of the global workforce. When combating a global economic slowdown, the first and most important step is to activate 50% of our workforce.

Throughout this two-day global gathering, stakeholders focused on discussing engaging women in STEM fields, gender responsive procurement, Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs), and mentorship programmes. As the world continues to reach for the Sustainable Development Goals, data makes it increasingly clear that gender equity is fundamental to delivering on shared promises for sustainability, peace and economic progress.



## AUDIENCE

WEEGS 2019 built upon the success of 2017 by continuing to focus on multi-disciplinary, collaborative approaches to solving gender inequality. More than 1450 policy-makers, government ministers, professors, lawyers, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, artists and thought-leaders convened to discuss progress, gaps and challenges related to the advancement of women's rights.



**55**  
speakers



**18**  
sessions



**24**  
individual  
workshops

These leaders included UAE Ministers, successful women entrepreneurs and CEOs, senior managers from multinationals such as Procter and Gamble, Microsoft and investors, all intent on bridging the remaining gaps between rhetoric and reality.

WEEGS Partners

— ORGANIZING PARTNER —



— STRATEGIC PARTNER —



الشارقة لتطوير القدرات  
Sharjah for Capability Development

— EXECUTIVE PARTNERS —



— MEDIA PARTNERS —



هيئة الشارقة  
للإذاعة والتلفزيون  
SHARJAH BROADCASTING AUTHORITY



SHARJAH GOVT  
MEDIA BUREAU

— INTERNATIONAL NEWS PARTNER —



— SUPPORTING PARTNERS —



## SPEAKERS:

**H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi**,  
Supreme Council Member  
and Ruler of Sharjah

**HE Reem Binkaram**,  
Director, NAMA  
Women Advancement  
Establishment

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka**  
Executive Director, UN  
Women (via video)

**Khetsiwe Dlamini**  
Chief of Staff, UN Women



## THE SUMMIT

The second Women's Economic Empowerment Global Summit (WEEGS 2019) is centered on accelerating and sustaining progress on the delivery of women's economic empowerment. As global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) scale up, strategies which invest in women are receiving greater attention. Women represent 50% of the workforce, therefore, activating their full potential can greatly accelerate progress towards our shared goals.

### KEY MESSAGES

- A study conducted by McKinsey concluded that gender equality in the workforce would add 28 trillion to the global economy by 2025.
- Gender responsive procurement drives women's empowerment by giving women a fair share of government and private sector procurement contracts.
- Each year, governments and corporations spend trillions of dollars on goods and services, yet women receive only 1% of this procurement related income. If we increase that to only 2%, that equates to 60 to 70 trillion more dollars going to women owned businesses.
- The UAE champions gender equality: 70% of its graduates are women, 50% of space employees are women, one third of Cabinet ministers are women and women contribute 10% of the revenue generated by businesses.
- UAE aims to break the kind of culture that allows gender pay gaps and underrepresentation of women in the workplace by mandating the inclusion of women on boards. The International Labour Organization's 2019 report, Women in Business and Management, found that gender parity on a board level brings better performance in business.
- There are 530 million illiterate women in the world. Education is an ideal starting point in the fight for gender equality.

### HE Reem BinKaram

There are 530 million illiterate women in the world. There is a 24% gap in women's labour force participation globally. Women hold only 34% of managerial positions globally. Women own only 8% of businesses in the Arab region. 40% of women in the world do not have equal access to financial services as men.

**Our country aims to break the kind of culture that allows gender pay gaps and inadequate representation of women in the workplace.**

UAE's efforts to improve the status of women starts with early education, and progresses steadily from there to the boardroom.

The UAE seeks to implement women empowerment initiatives beyond our borders, tackling inequality in Asia, Africa, and South America.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

I hope this summit offers you the chance to reflect on celebrating differences as we come together on the path to achieving gender equality.

**UN Women and NAMA are working on stimulating equal opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the UAE, South Africa and globally.**

It's very appropriate to host a global summit like WEEGS in the UAE because it is a leader in the Gulf when it comes to gender equality. The UAE places an emphasis on ensuring gender equality and women entrepreneurship, nationally, regionally and globally.

We know that each year, governments and corporations spend trillions of dollars on goods and services, yet women-owned businesses receive only 1% of these procurement contracts.

If we increase that 1% by another 1%, that means 60 to 70 trillion dollars more will be going to women-owned businesses.



Khetsiwe Dlamini

The summit is so well titled, "Drivers of Change". Women are in the driver seat of the future we want: a peaceful future with no war, a prosperous future with no poverty, and a planet that will not only host our generation but generations to come. When women grow, families grow. When families grow, nations grow. When nations grow, the world grows. It all starts with women, nothing new is ever born if not from women.

In the UAE, 70% of university graduates are women. This is unheard of. Education is always the beginning of empowerment. Here, 50% of space employees are women, more than 25% are cabinet members and UAE has a law which says women should be board members. Global statistics show that gender parity at board levels give you better performance.

**As we scale up efforts to reach the SDGs, it is wise to look at investing in women, because if you invest in women, you invest in the whole of society. Gender responsive procurement is key, women owned businesses can capture 60-70 trillion dollars more if these policies are adopted.**

Over these two days, we will tell the story of how women have been empowered in the UAE, and we will show the rest of the world how to uplift women in the economy.



**H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi,  
Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah**

Women are mothers, wives, sisters, peacemakers, successful professionals. They are equal partners in all walks of life; they share the same experiences as their male counterparts and should therefore never be at a position of disadvantage. This is our vision, and to achieve it all of us – men and women – must embed the principles of equity and partnership in our homes and within our values of upbringing. By doing so, we will create young advocates of social justice and gender parity who will engage with society and at the workplace in the right way and create a vibrant and continuous culture that upholds these noble principles.

The theme of this conference 'Drivers of Change' warrants its global relevance. The 17 organisations who took the NAMA Pledge during WEEGS 2017 to enforce specific initiatives to enhance women's contributions within workplace and society are living examples of drivers bringing about effective change. The benefits of their efforts, however, did not leave their premises in Sharjah and I believe that this summit has brought us together again to create global impact.

**In several countries, women's realities could be significantly improved with strong direction and financial support.**

Thus, on behalf of WEEGS and Sharjah, I announce that I will sponsor the implementation of women's economic empowerment programmes spearheaded not only by Sharjah-based institutions, but by entities worldwide

We all have a responsibility to maximise the outreach of empowerment efforts worldwide, especially in places where women suffer the gravest hardships. In Asia, Africa or Latin America, for instance, a sizeable percentage of girls and women are deprived of basic health care. This is why, we must go beyond the Arab world to extend our support to women around the world where they need us the most. I hereby pledge to sponsor global efforts to support women's economic empowerment, and particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where women need us to be by their side.



**Muhammad Majid Al Suwaidi: The Pledge**

We are here today to raise our nation as our mothers raised us. From the pearl hunting days until today, we dreamed of a better future and then we built it. We wanted Emirati leaders so we built universities, established businesses, and invested in local companies.

**Together, hand in hand, men and women shaped the UAE until we became a model of advancement and excellence.**

The Emirati woman has gained global recognition for her achievements in all sectors of our economy. Still, we pledge to do more for women. We pledge to provide equal economic opportunities and support women as they reach for positions of leadership. We will treat women fairly, without any biases. We will promote women and effectively integrate them into the global economy.

In 2017, the Women's Economic Empowerment Global Summit launched an initiative to pledge support for the economic empowerment of women.

**This pledge encompasses eight principles:**



16 PLEDGERS  
MADE THE COMMITMENT:



In the last two years our 16 pledgers succeeded in adopting two or more principles out of the eight. They implemented their own innovative strategies to uphold these principles, with NAMA closely following up and assessing the progress made on the implementation of the pledges within the two-year timeline.

Although we are proud of the accomplishments women have already made, and continue to make every day, we still have goals to meet. For ourselves, for every person, for every family, and for society as a whole, this is our message from the UAE.

There is still work to do. We pledge to employ women's abundant skills, to overcome obstacles, and to create further opportunities in all fields. We pledge to foster a culture that values women's potential.

To all regional and global businesses—we consider every one of you a partner in propelling the global economy forward—support the economic empowerment of women and join our pledge!

We pledge to reach greater heights in collaboration with women, because experience proves that we cannot succeed without women's input. The future looks better when women are involved.

Going Above and Beyond to Support Women to Excel Professionally and Economically



Sharjah Police Headquarters  
General Directorate of Sharjah Police



03  
Number of initiatives/programs

Impact

219 Women Partnerships Award

## Shedding Light on Women's Achievements



## Provide a Supportive Ecosystem and Access to Services for Women-led Businesses



## Women Excelling in Non-Traditional Sectors



## Provide Access to Services and Skill-Enhancement Opportunities for Women to Excel Socially & Economically



## Ensure Adequate Access for Women to Opportunities Through Policies, Regulations & Support Mechanisms



## Creating Healthy and Supportive Environments for Women in the Workplace



## MODERATOR:

**Diana Hamade,**  
Lawyer

## SPEAKERS:

**Najla Alnahdi,**  
HR Director, Ministry  
of Economy

**Samah Al Hajeri,**  
Chief Innovation Officer,  
Ministry of Economy



The UAE is engaged in policy-making efforts to further economic empowerment for women. Panellists from the Ministry of Economy discuss the economic future they want to see, and women's role in moving their country closer to that goal. How does a government create space for women to take more daring professional decisions? With legislature focused on innovation and gender equality, the UAE is tackling critical issues in a unique way.

## KEY MESSAGES

- The government offers programmes for female entrepreneurs which provide training, financial support, and consulting, similar to services offered by start-up incubators.
- The UAE is the top country in the Arab region in terms of gender equality and the 26th globally.
- Women are well represented in the public sector, but have not yet excelled in the private sector. Science and industry are especially male dominated.
- In the UAE we should offer paternity leave that is equal to maternity leave.
- The UAE created the "Ministry of Possibilities" to tackle critical issues, they have set short term and long term goals for gender parity.
- Women make up 66% of the public sector.

**Najla Alnahdi**

Convincing women that they are supported in the private sector is a big challenge. Plenty of women are pilots, doctors, entrepreneurs, but they are very concerned with job security. Recently I read a study on LinkedIn, reporting that women are less present in manufacturing, engineering and STEM fields. Women are pioneers, but they are limiting themselves to fields which favour soft skills.

**We are told that women excel at soft skills, but we should challenge ourselves to build hard skills.**

I do not think we're lacking female role models. I would argue that we need to re-examine what it means to be a role model. I see my mother as a pioneer. She didn't receive an education, but she taught herself from our textbooks when we were children. This is resilience, this is innovation.

**Samah Al Hajeri**

Having a platform such as WEEGS demonstrates how much our government cares about the role of women. When I try to distinguish the specific policy interventions our government ministers have made to improve the position of women in our economy, it is challenging to narrow in on such a broad concept. The policies are holistic, they range from market research to education. All ministries play an important role.

We are bringing policymakers and local business leaders together to create a new ten-year plan. Right now, women account for 66% of the public sector. In the future, we want to encourage more women to move into the private sector. Behavioural science shows that government regulation might not be the best way to increase inclusion of women in the workforce.

**By starting with education, and changing mind-sets, we are more likely to change corporate cultures than to require quotas.**

Another way to balance the corporate sector between both genders, would be to provide women with more flexible forms of work, such as freelancing.

# أفضل الطرق نحو التمويل Money Talks

MODERATOR:

**Jessica Robinson,** **جسيكا روبنسون**  
 مؤسس ومدير عام، "موكسي فيوتشر"  
 Founder and Managing Director of Moxie Future  
 and Managing Director of Moxie Future

**شاينور خوجة**  
 الرئيس التنفيذي ومؤسس شركة "بيتر بيزنس إنترنيت"  
**Shainoor Khoja**  
 Founder and CEO - Better Business Enterprise Ltd

**سحر الكثيري**  
 مدير، شركة مبادلة للاستثمار  
**Sahar Al Katheeri**  
 Principal - Mubadala Investment Company

SPEAKERS:

**Shainoor Khoja,**  
 Founder and CEO, Better Business Enterprise Ltd

**Sahar Al Katheeri,**  
 Principal, Mubadala Investment Company

**Amina Mohammed Abdelrahim,**  
 Director of Government Communication Department, Ruwad Establishment



Access to capital remains a big obstacle for female entrepreneurs. The gender bias at the root of this problem has been discussed at length. Rather than focus on the problem, this session focuses on possible solutions. Panellists give advice to other women and suggest possible courses of action to improve women's access to funding.

KEY MESSAGES

- According to PitchBook, only 2.3% of venture capital went to women in the US in 2018.
- One-third of women entrepreneurs globally face some form of gender bias when pitching and raising funds.
- Businesses with women in the C-suite outperform their male-only counterparts.
- Women are needed as mentors. Investments of time and talent in mentorship programmes by women and for women.
- Allocate 1% of government revenue to small and medium businesses, and dedicate half of that fund to women.

Jessica Robinson

We're all very familiar with the challenges that many female founders and women entrepreneurs face when raising capital.

In 2018, PitchBook found that only 2.3% of all venture capital in the U.S. actually went to female founder teams. Recently, HSBC bank came out with research that demonstrates up to one-third of women entrepreneurs globally face some form of gender bias when pitching and raising funds.

Female entrepreneurs must be innovative when seeking capital.

Expand your search for funding beyond venture capital, and explore concepts such as co-investment, foundations, family offices, and women who lead angel investment networks.

Attend networking events organized by Venture Capitalists to promote your business. Build durable and scalable businesses.



Shainoor Khoja

Young men that are in their twenties are seen as the 'unicorn makers', and so they get asked all the promotional questions; whereas women often get asked questions about the difficulties in their markets, and how they'll compete. They're all preventative types of questions.

38% of women entrepreneurs try to seek out other women investors to invest in them. Women understand the sectors that women want to tackle.

Women tend to have a long-term and social benefit lens. That doesn't mean that they do not look at profitable businesses. They do, but it's often hard for mainstream investors to understand these sectors.

62% of women do experience bias. The literature tells us that teams that have women in the C-suite, even one woman in the C-suite, performs 63% better. You get an average return of 78 cents per dollar with a woman in the team or all women teams than you do with teams of all men (which come in at 31 cents).



Sahar Al Katheeri

This landscape is changing today. A lot of VCs are realizing the potential of women founded businesses, and they are actually understanding the challenges, the investment challenges specifically, that the women are facing. Today we see a lot of the VCs looking to support women entrepreneurs.

Today we know that 25% of Middle Eastern startups have been founded by white women.

## MODERATOR:

**Amal Al Muaini,**  
Former Sharjah Radio  
News Presenter

## SPEAKERS:

**H.E. Sheikha Hind bint  
Majid Al Qassimi,**  
Chairperson of Sharjah  
Business Women Council

**Samia Ataya,**  
Founder of Catwalk Cow

**Hessa Al Ajmani,**  
visual artist and ceramicist,  
Founder of Clay Corner  
Studio

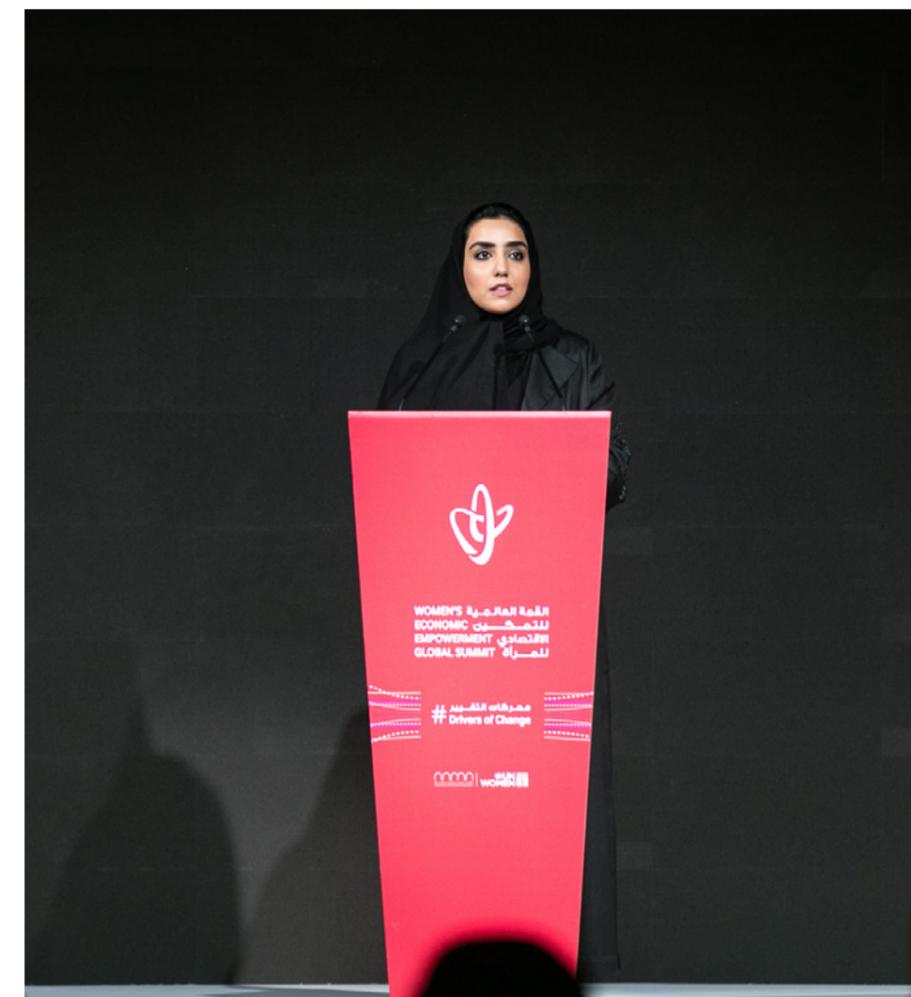
**Basma Al Maazmi and  
Hessa Al Ghas,**  
Co-Founders,  
Lift Ladies Fitness



## KEY MESSAGES

- Global economies are shifting away from monopolies towards small and medium sized businesses, offering great opportunities for female entrepreneurs.
- Embrace mistakes, people are interested in stories and processes and not perfection.
- Network broadly, in your chosen industry and beyond. Unexpected collaborations will arise.

In 2019, the Sharjah Business Women Council (SBWC) launched a new initiative named 'SBWC Talks'. 'SBWC Talks' is a platform that engages women entrepreneurs in an active, effective, and fruitful dialogue. Following the framework established by SBWC, entrepreneurs took to the stage to share their stories and give advice.

**H.E. Sheikha Hind bint Majid Al Qassimi**

The social empowerment of women is closely associated with dialogue. Through this series of lectures, we hope to provide inspiration for female entrepreneurs to unlock their abilities and establish companies or projects of their own.

Today's world economy is moving towards promoting entrepreneurship, towards small and medium-sized enterprises more than major economic monopolies.

These future trends offer historic opportunities for female entrepreneurs.

The economic and social empowerment of women must be closely associated with dialogue, discussion, and exploring positive experiences of all parties concerned.



#### Samia Ataya

I woke up this morning to an unhappy child. My son did not want to go to school. He argued that he didn't have passion, and without finding his passion (or having his passion find him), he wasn't able to move forward.

**It's a common misconception that passion is inextricably linked with success.**

We have all heard the saying, "If you find what you are passionate about, you will never work a day in your life." This implies that passion is finite, and that it doesn't change or grow. I have found that as we evolve, our passions change.

Chasing your passion is not necessarily the key to success. When I started my brand, I wasn't motivated by passion. I was motivated by a problem. I was pregnant with my first child, and I wanted to prioritize healthy nutrition. I couldn't find non-GMO organic food at my local grocery store. I wasn't passionate about cooking, or supply-chains. I found a gap. When you find an opportunity this way, you develop your skills and fine-tune them over time, and this is when the passion starts to appear. I began to understand the links between factory-farming, childhood nutrition and diseases such as ADD, Tourette syndrome, and Autism. By preparing and providing safe and healthy food, my manufacturing center makes a difference in the lives of children and parents. The fulfillment I get from this is what really counts. The key to success is finding an opportunity where you can build your skills. When you nurture those skills over time, the passion will follow.

#### Basma Al Maazmi and Hessa Al Ghas

Our business, Lift, felt like a plot twist for us. The inspiration came when both of us were injured while horseback riding, and the doctor suggested pursuing low-impact exercise. We found there was a gap in resources, and thought that we might be the ones to address that. We create fitness communities, offer group classes, and make room for women to connect over their daily routines, nutrition and fitness goals.

**Our advice to anyone who is contemplating starting their own business is, first of all, do it!**

Carefully plan and thoroughly study your projects, your target market, and the industry. Network with other people in your field of interest, and even beyond it, to learn from their experiences. Take action and make the first step towards starting a business.

I'm not telling you it will be easy, but it will be worth it once you see your business flourish. In the end, you'll be able to stand up and say, I've done it. It's an amazing feeling.

#### Hessa Al Ajmani

I'm a ceramicist, printmaker, photographer and educator at Sharjah Art Foundation. As an emerging artist, it can be very difficult to find the proper resources, facilities and spaces to produce your work. The Clay Corner Studio concept came from a careful analysis of this struggle. We provide other artists with the needed space and materials to make art.

**Entrepreneurs must be ready to make mistakes and learn from them, to set clear goals, and to benchmark success off of other industry leaders**

I love trial and error, people are interested in the process not perfection. Start by clearly carving out the language and energy of your brand. Let the nature of your work inspire your business' identity.



MODERATOR:

**Shaloo Garg,**  
Managing Director,  
Microsoft for Start-ups,  
Silicon Valley

SPEAKERS:

**H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany,**  
Permanent Representative  
of the UAE for IRENA

**H.E. Dr Maryam Matar,**  
Founder and Chairperson  
of UAE Genetic Diseases  
Association

**H.E. Hussain Mohammed  
Al Mahmoudi,**  
CEO, Sharjah Research,  
Technology  
and Innovation Park



**H.E. Dr Maryam Matar**

No woman can be empowered economically without being empowered with knowledge and education.

The medical field is very competitive, studying medicine requires high levels of focus.

Right now, more women are graduating than men. 90% of the UAE's medical school graduates are women, however, male doctors currently lead the field and make all major decisions.

Healthcare and medical technology is an area that investors all over the world are attracted to. To have women lead these sectors proposes a unique opportunity for them to have a bigger role in our economy. CRISPR (Genome editing technology) was developed by a woman, which will completely change the pharmaceutical industry. Women are already shaping global economies, especially in the med tech field.

With technology catalysing unprecedented innovation all around the world, women have made significant advancements in the STEM field, particularly in the Middle East. The UAE has been a key pioneer, establishing policies and initiatives that encourage women to excel in STEM sectors.

The UAE has quickly adapted to become an active part of the global women and technology movement - investing time, resources and policies in newly-developed sectors, such as space, nuclear, biotechnology, digitization, social impact, sustainability sectors.

This session discusses the greatest opportunities and challenges that women face today and the obstacles that need to be tackled to achieve positive changes in society, community, and economy in the Arab world.

KEY MESSAGES

- In the UAE, only 10% of medical college graduates are men, 90% are women.
- Though more women than men are working in healthcare in the UAE, the percentage of women effectively involved in decision-making and strategy-building is small.
- Due to technological advancements, everyone has an opportunity to be part of the sustainability sector across its different disciplines in value-chain. (e.g. legislation, fashion, technology)
- Initiatives supporting women in technology are increasing in the UAE. The Sharjah Research, Technology and Innovation Park was established by Sharjah government to serve as a global network to allow its citizens to engage with global minds and professionals.

**H.E. Dr Nawal Al-Hosany**

Sustainable manufacturing is an emerging industry, and it needs gender balance. The imbalance is huge, and it's global.

This is a great opportunity for young female entrepreneurs to enter any part of the value chain.

Engineers can design systems of production with less waste, lawyers can design more inclusive policies, software developers can create technology that increases sustainable production, the opportunities are limitless.

The key is to find work that you are passionate about. Often, women prevent themselves from seeking professional opportunities because their academic background is in a different field. If you have the passion, you can learn the professional skills needed to excel in any field.

**H.E. Hussain Mohammed Al Mahmoudi**

We have great opportunities to leverage science and technology in this part of the world, and we have the ability to make it happen.

Since its establishment, the UAE government has embedded sustainable development in its strategy and has worked specifically to ensure its social, economic, environmental, as well as more recently it's technological development. With our project, the Research Technology and Innovation Park, is trying to be a platform that encourages both women and men to enter the field of technology.

We want to help young people access job opportunities in the rapidly growing innovation economy.

UAE policies and local initiatives that support women in STEM are already making a difference. Equal pay and access to education are two goals that have already been accomplished in the UAE – goals that many countries are still fighting for.



## SPEAKERS:

**Zina Janabi,**  
PwC Middle East Director

Zina Janabi, Director of PwC Middle East, presents the results of the “Diversity in Leadership” report and programme. The programme runs in partnership with NAMA Women Advancement Establishment and studies women’s participation in the Gulf workforce. Results show that the Gulf region is taking progressive steps towards diversity and equality, but much still remains to be done. Women make up the majority of qualified university graduates, yet this doesn’t translate into a parallel growth in the labour force.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Female participation in the workforce has risen to 20.1% in the second quarter of 2019 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This also caused national unemployment rates to drop.
- The United Arab Emirates estimated that having equal numbers of men and women in the national workforce would increase national GDP by 12%.
- Women in the Middle East currently surpass men in educational qualifications and represent the majority of university students.
- Businesses in the Middle East are taking progressive steps to support women and align with global standards and goals for gender equality.

## Zina Janabi

Gender inequality is still prevalent in positions of leadership. Even with businesses where gender parity exists, there is still a gender gap when it comes to managerial roles. Only 10.2% of Gulf businesses have a woman as their CEO. 58.6% of businesses have reported that women comprise less than 29% of their senior management-level positions. The pay gap between men and women in senior-level positions stands at 40%.

**Studies have shown that the main three reasons women leave the workforce are due to the lack of professional advancement opportunities, devaluation of work and efforts, and lack of a well-suited work-life balance.**

Women in the Gulf still face major barriers in the workforce. Research shows that 54% of workers in the Gulf believe that men will continue to hold more managerial positions than women in the next 5 years. Women’s workforce progression is hindered by gendered preconceptions of women’s roles, demanding work hours and conditions, and lack of policies which support women’s workplace advancement. Male respondents have the perception that women are unqualified, uninterested, and want to leave to start families.

Having male colleagues who support and empower women is key to finding the right balance in diversity.

Simple steps can be taken to direct the workforce towards gender equality. First, remove unfair policies for parental leave. This is one of the main barriers for women in the workforce. Prolonged parental leaves for both mothers and fathers will allow women to continue their careers after giving birth.

Working remotely is a significant tool that can empower women to remain in the workforce; however, it is an unacknowledged solution in the Gulf. This often makes it difficult for women with children to continue their careers.

Some women in the Gulf region leave the workforce because they do not have career advancement opportunities. Mentorship and sponsorship programmes from women in leadership can help young women progress within their careers.

Instead of considering the period that women leave the workspace as a disadvantage in their careers, employers need to encourage women to re-join the workforce. Diversity and inclusion provide you with the right solutions which can be tailored to fit a specific person.

## SPEAKERS:

**H.E. Hessa Bint Essa Buhumaid,**  
Cabinet Member and  
Minister of Community  
Development in the UAE

Since 1975, when the General Women's Union was founded in the UAE, the UAE has made huge strides to increase the representation of women in public and private sectors. Currently leading the Middle East in gender equality, the UAE now seeks to be among the top 25 countries ranked globally in the gender balance index. Due to forward-thinking employment policies, the public sector is far ahead of the private sector. This offers a new frontier.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Education is foundational to the UAE's women's empowerment initiative.
- Emirati men are highly supportive of the expanding role of women in the workforce.
- Women are well-represented in universities and in government ministries, but only account for 10% of the private sector labour-force in the UAE.
- Women are now in roles of leadership, making decisions that will catalyse exponential progress in terms of gender equity.

**H.E. Hessa Bint Essa Buhumaid**

H.R.H Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may his soul rest in peace) adopted a developmental and social approach that firmly focused on empowering women and involving them from the very start in creating a better future. We have begun to see the results of this progressive approach. H.R.H Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan doubled the number of schools and universities, including Zayed University. I am a proud graduate of this women's only university. Knowledge is power, and education has been a cornerstone of our women's empowerment initiatives.

Women in the UAE occupy high positions. The UAE has the first woman-led Arab parliament. We have the youngest female minister in the world. We have the first female Minister of Happiness in the world. Women make up 75% of the Ministry of Community Development. Emirati women occupy 33% of decision-making senior leadership positions. The latest UAE government has nine women-led ministers; these ladies represent 30% of the Cabinet. Increasing numbers of Emirati women work in the diplomatic corps in foreign missions representing the UAE. We now have several female ambassadors in the UAE's diplomatic corps.

**The UAE aims to be among the top 25 countries globally in the gender balance index by 2021.**

We are currently ranked first among Arab countries in terms of gender equality. This is not an easy role to take on, it's a very important ranking. What's most noteworthy about this, is the support Emirati women receive from their colleagues, brothers, fathers and sons. Women in the UAE work side by side with men to make developmental changes which lead to progress.

In the private sector, women are managers and entrepreneurs, but they are still the minority. The UAE counts 22,000 businesswomen, representing 10% of the private sector in the UAE. Women represent 15% of the board of directors of the industry and trade chambers. Women contribute with tens of billions of AED yearly in the UAE, a larger workforce would mean more contributions.





القمة العالمية  
للمكين الاقتصادي للمرأة  
WOMEN'S ECONOMIC  
EMPOWERMENT GLOBAL SUMMIT



## SPEAKERS:

**Alexandria Lafci,**  
Founder and COO, New  
Story Inc.

This session explores the ways that women can harness technology and use it for social impact. New Story is a female founded San Francisco based non-profit which is using technology to address the global homelessness crisis, currently affecting 1.6 billion worldwide. New Story uses 3D printing to completely rethink the ways people build and provide access to affordable housing. New Story's goal is to develop breakthroughs in homebuilding, and to share these innovations with as many communities as possible.

## KEY MESSAGES

- New Story has built over 3,000 houses, but wasn't building fast enough to keep up with the global housing crisis.
- Over 1.6 billion people do not have access to housing, and that number is expected to double within the next 30 years.
- Last year, New Story built the first ever 3D printed home in the world.
- 3D printing increases quality of housing and speed of construction. It decreases costs and waste.

**Alexandria Lafci**

Witnessing the aftermath of the Haiti Earthquake in 2010, I knew something had to change. In 2014, 100,000 people were still living in thin tents that were supposed to only last a few weeks. We had to come up with a better solution.

**New Story seeks to rethink how we build and tackle housing. We want to identify best practices and find technologies that can create affordable housing faster, better and stronger than before.**

We have built over 3,000 houses, but our efforts are still not enough for the magnitude of the global homelessness crisis. There's over 1.6 billion people without access to adequate shelter, and that number is expected to double within the next 30 years.

Last year, New Story built the first ever 3D printed home in the world. It is not temporary housing. These homes are built to last. 3D printing promises to potentially solve issues of cost, quality control, and speed. These are three issues that affordable housing practitioners continue to face over and over again.

If we increase the amount of structures that we're printing with 3D printers, we can massively decrease the waste that we create, which is healthy for our planet. Construction is a wasteful industry. 3D printing is efficient and creates almost zero waste.

Most of the existing work on 3D printing has been focused on printing for space or for futuristic dwellings, for the wealthy. No one has advocated before that the emerging technology of 3D printing can be used for its most urgent application, affordable housing.

Today, New Story is printing the first community of homes for an indigenous community in Mexico. As a woman of colour and an entrepreneur, I want to invest in these communities, and help them reach their full potential. We are finding unexpected positive impacts of our work in affordable housing. It is improving community health, increasing entrepreneurship for women, and building ties.

Due to harsh environmental conditions where we work, New Story created a printer that is more dynamic and resilient than any 3D printer out there. This proves that 3D printing is a promising tool in the toolkit. The planet needs to build homes faster and with the quality and quantity homeless communities deserve.



SPEAKERS:

**Philip Harding,**  
CEO and Co-founder,  
IMPACTJUNKIE

**Philip Harding**

The world has an abundance of life-threatening problems which may seem overwhelming and impossible to change. People choose how to respond to these problems, they can either spiral into depression, live in a sheltered bubble, or step up and become the solution. The biggest problem out there is that not enough people choose to come forward with solutions.

Making the most of the limited time we have is urgent; a person has around 29,000 days on earth if he/she lives 80 years, only 5,000 of those days are free time. When you connect your passion, purpose and calling, your life is never the same and you can leave a lasting impact.

'Toxic charity' offers temporary solutions and doesn't use a developmental approach. This type of charity harms the people it's trying to help and can leave them disempowered and dependent. It's essential that people think of long-term sustainable solutions to empower people in need.

**A growing number of profitable ventures offer sustainable solutions to some of the world's biggest problems, including poverty, illiteracy, human trafficking, and homelessness.**

Ventures such as Impact Junkie provide investors with significant opportunities, including executive access to information on developing and emerging markets, financial returns, and life-changing returns on investments. We need to redefine entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is not just about starting businesses and making money; its origins stem from empathy – understanding the problems of others and trying to find revolutionary solutions. When love is the bottom line, and not profit, we go further for people and can truly change lives.

The world is unquestionably filled with critical problems. People are frequently overwhelmed by the scale of these problems, and unable to make necessary changes happen. This state of helplessness prevents people from being entrepreneurial and finding new solutions. More and more venture firms are combining entrepreneurship with a focus on impact by offering sustainable and profitable solutions.

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Profitable ventures can bring sustainable solutions to the world's biggest problems.
- Social Impact Entrepreneurship is not just about starting businesses and making money; its origins stem from empathy – understanding the problems of others and trying to find revolutionary solutions.
- People tend to separate impact from ventures, seeing them as two distinct areas. However, when the wall separating the two is taken down, business-minded world-changers are given an opportunity to make a larger impact.



SPEAKERS:

**Rebecca Fries,**  
Managing Director and  
Founder, Value for Women

**Hanane Benkhallouk,**  
Founder and Executive  
Director, Sustain  
Leadership Consultancy –  
Dubai

**Helen Disney,**  
CEO and Founder,  
Unblocked Events



Three entrepreneurs share their stories about established businesses for her, by her. Each of these speakers has founded an organisation that focuses on developing leadership skills for women. As mentors, they can see and believe in the value of an entrepreneur's business, sometimes more than the founder herself. In this session they share their struggles and inspirations, and give advice to women who are ready to launch their own businesses.

**Rebecca Fries**

Value for Women was formed to serve as a bridge between the business sector and women. We want to design practical and concrete solutions to foster gender inclusion in businesses and investment environments.

The complex issues we are trying to address, such as food security in the face of climate change, require innovation. Diversity and inclusion are drivers of innovative solutions. Gender should be used as a lens, not as a limitation, when designing innovative solutions.

**It's important to question and challenge your interpretation of what it means to be a successful entrepreneur.**

At our organisation, we think the most significant marker of success is to create a business that aligns with your personal and professional values. In businesses, where leadership is value-driven, there is enormous power to create more sustainable and equitable business relationships.

Value for Women is a collaborative organisation both internally, by creating teams that combine gender and business experts, and externally, with partners, clients, and even competitors. Collaboration is key for building business ecosystems around the globe. Collaboration can help us break out of our own silos and specific areas of expertise to foster innovation when creating business solutions.

It takes an entire ecosystem to support women entrepreneurs. It takes changes to our mind-sets, our beliefs, systems, policies, and practices. With all those things together, and by leveraging collaboration, we can go further together.

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Creating a business that is aligned with your professional and personal values is a valid marker of success.
- Collaboration leads to innovation through overcoming the barrier of professional silos.
- Have a mission that is bigger than you, this will drive you forward.
- Storytelling is an essential business skill for entrepreneurs.
- It takes an entire ecosystem to support women entrepreneurs.
- Mentors play an essential role in empowering people with dreams and a passion.

**Hanane Benkhallouk**

Sustain Leadership was born five years ago to help generations of youth create value, and the focus is on female talent advancement.

I was coaching a woman on how to become a successful entrepreneur by helping her identify skills and convert them into money-making opportunities, when I realized how many women needed this type of leadership training. It was a turning point in my life. The second turning point was learning about the Arab human capital challenge. This refers to the existing gap in the Arab world between the skills taught in educational institutions, and the skills and competencies needed in the job market. We have a young population. That is our asset as an Arab region, and that's why I pledge to create spaces, programmes and opportunities for every individual who wants to make changes for themselves, for their communities, and for the wider world.

Our consultancy's goal is to create spaces for women to thrive. At Sustain Leadership, we try to create conducive environments for women to live off of their passions and fulfil their goals, contributing to the advancement of their communities, societies, and countries. We do not build businesses, we build people, and the people build businesses. That's the business I chose, it's the business where we build a creative, innovative mind-sets.

We join incubators and focus on creating programmes that help women and young entrepreneurs transition from concept to completion. LeanIn Arabia is one of our key partners, this organisation has also been offering peer support for 5 years, they now connect over 800 members.

**Our advice for Women Entrepreneurs is to identify a problem you want to solve or a change you want to make.**

Have a mission that is bigger than you, that will constantly motivate you to move forward.

**Helen Disney**

What leads entrepreneurs to start a business is getting frustrated with an existing problem and having a passion for it. Mentors play an essential role in empowering people with dreams and a passion. Mentors have the ability to recognise talent and potential in an individual that he/she cannot see. These relationships do not necessarily have to be accessed through formal mentorship programmes; entrepreneurs can find a mentor in anyone - relatives, teachers, and colleagues have been the most significant mentors for many entrepreneurs.

Storytelling is an essential business skill for entrepreneurs. A key challenge for entrepreneurs working with emerging technologies is getting their ideas across effectively so they can access capital.

Only 2.8% of venture funds go to female entrepreneurs, indicating the urgency to provide female entrepreneurs with the necessary skills needed to access those funds. Businesses dedicated to preparing entrepreneurs in effectively explaining their business idea, are rising and growing. Organisations, such as Dots Ventures, help start-ups convincingly communicate the value their technology has in solving a problem in a way that hasn't been done in the past.

**Not being able to communicate a start-up's vision and the change it can make can become a huge barrier in getting access to necessary funding.**

One definition of empowerment is 'the authority or power given to someone to do something', highlighting that people need someone to reach out and give them support, access, and opportunity so they can become empowered. Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.

MODERATOR:

**Dr Mona Al Ali,**  
Manager at Badiri  
Education and  
Development Academy.

SPEAKERS:

**Roula Azar Douglas,**  
writer, journalist, and  
researcher at Saint-Joseph  
University Beirut.

**Zeina Al Sharif,**  
Business Development  
Manager, Urban Retreat  
Restaurant company LLC.

**Sadaffe Abid,**  
CEO and Founder  
of CIRCLE.

**Sharon Schweitzer, JD,**  
Cross-Cultural Business  
Consultant, Author &  
Attorney at Access  
to Culture



**Dr Mona Al Ali**

As an entrepreneur or a professional, it's exciting to do it all alone, to create something on your own. The reality is, while you have a great idea, you may not know exactly what you should be doing with your business to make it sustainable. Having a mentor is foundational to launching a successful career or successful business.



Women mentors from different fields and backgrounds present stories about their mentorship experiences. Panellists agree that mentorship is key for the empowerment of women in the region, and there is much work to be done moving forward to provide women in the region with mentors and role models.

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Mentors help entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses, and many options exist for women in the Middle East.
- The Global Thinker's Forum is a great resource for women in the MENA region, their Athena program connects young women with thought leaders who are interested in equipping them with the skills needed to take their careers to the next level.
- Urban Retreat is an incubator, a platform for startups, and a social hub that freely hosts networking events.
- CIRCLE is a microfinance organisation in Pakistan which invests in women so that they can invest in their communities.

**Roula Azar Douglas**

When I came back to Lebanon after an absence of 10 beautiful and productive years, I was struck by the inequality that still exists among Lebanese citizens. Unlike their male counterparts, women cannot transmit their nationality to their children, they cannot open a joint bank account for their underage kids without the signature of their husbands, and they remain today tremendously underrepresented in politics and in upper levels of corporate management. For years, I struggled to find a way to address this inequality.

Now, I'm leading The Global Thinker's Forum's MENA program. The Global Thinkers Forum is a London-based global platform incubated at Oxford University's Said Business School in 2011.

**The Forum brings together a diverse network of thought leaders creating meaningful networking and conversations around global challenges and trends.**

Mentors help mentees also with confidence building and dealing with challenges and issues.

The Global Thinkers Forum has two mentoring programmes, Telemachus and Athena MENA, both programmes connect participants with thought leaders and high-level mentors from all over the world. Athena focuses on women from across the MENA region, giving them the chance to ignite their career and personal development by acquiring new skills and expertise that will enrich and expand their professional and personal perspectives.



#### Sadaf Abid

CIRCLE works on advancing the status of women and increasing their economic empowerment in Pakistan by offering small loans to women. We are the first financially sustainable microfinance organisation in Pakistan and amongst the few organisations of its kind globally.

Over its 12 years of existence, CIRCLE grew to have 300,000 clients, disperse 200 million dollars, and employ 2,000 team members. About 40% of CIRCLE's team members are women.

**CIRCLE also brought in a leadership component to integrate more women in managerial positions, as well as a tech component to train women and prepare them to work in tech fields**

McKinsey has calculated global gender parity would add 28 trillion dollars to the economy. So there's a huge business case to go. It's not just a morally good thing to do, it's actually a business imperative. Diversity boosts the bottom line; it brings innovation and enhances productivity.

We all know that economic parity will take another 200 years, so there's a lot of experimentation, innovation, collaboration, partnerships that are needed for us to make progress.

One of the core lessons I learned at CIRCLE was: investing in women is smart economics. You invest in women, they invest back in their families, in education, nutrition, and health care.



#### Zeina Al Sharif

Urban Retreat helps people grow their businesses from the ground up, starting from the idea stage. We mentor entrepreneurs, providing them with the platforms they need to start and grow their businesses. Connecting entrepreneurs with the right platforms helps them overcome financial barriers.

#### Sharon Schweitzer JD

I started my career as an attorney, and later, decided to switch gears and become an entrepreneur. Law was rewarding, but I wasn't prepared for a career filled with antagonism and confrontation. I decided to hit the pause button and take some time to think deeply about my life.

I am a third-culture kid. As a young girl I lived in different countries throughout Asia, I was in Japan for a number of years, and these cultures shaped my life. When I found myself ready to leave law, I asked myself, what can I do differently? I took a two-year sabbatical and began shifting my skill set to become an intercultural trainer.

From a young age, it was important for me to help people overcome challenges. I wrote a book, "Access to Asia" where I drew upon my reflections and the lessons that I learned when I lived in Japan.

**Our organisation is very diverse, we support projects in the food businesses, jewelry design, painters and charities.**

Urban Retreat also acts as a social hub that freely hosts networking events.

**One of the most significant lessons from my career is that sometimes failure is a sign of success.**

In certain cultures, failure can be very hard to acknowledge. Someone who has failed is able to overcome challenges and move on to better opportunities. Another lesson from my book is that you can be proud of your success, but it's important to explain your success with humility. Never brag.

One last piece of advice, get as much education as possible. Surround yourself with people who are smarter than you are. Fill your circle with people who make you reach, this is how you become a life-long learner.

KEYNOTE:

**Anne Githuku-Shongwe**,  
Representative for UN  
Women's South Africa  
Multi-Country Office

MODERATOR:

**Elizabeth Vazquez**,  
President, CEO and  
Co-Founder, WeConnect  
International

SPEAKERS:

**Anne Githuku-Shongwe**,  
Representative for UN  
Women's South Africa  
Multi-Country Office

**Nihal Hashish**,  
Senior Purchasing  
Manager, Procter  
and Gamble

Elizabeth Vazquez

President, CEO, and Co-Founder,  
WeConnect International

آن جيثوكو- شونغوي

ممثلة مكتب الأمم المتحدة للمرأة في جنوب أفريقيا

Anne Githuku-Shongwe

Representative for UN Women's South Africa  
Multi-Country Office

نيهال حشيش

مدير أول مشتريات - بروكتر وغامبل

Nihal Hashish

Senior Purchasing Manager – Procter



Gender Responsive Procurement creates openings for women-owned businesses in fields which are traditionally male-dominated. Structural barriers have existed for decades, making it extremely difficult for women to access information necessary to apply for procurement tenders. A cultural transformation is needed to bring female-led businesses into the supply chain. This can be accomplished by deliberately seeking businesses owned by women, inviting them to apply for opportunities, and preparing them for legal and technical hurdles. Policymakers can facilitate the transformation by creating policies which offer women new access to opportunities. Gender inclusive economies are stronger and larger, but can only be accomplished through strategic collaboration between private and public sectors.

KEY MESSAGES

- Gender-responsive procurement involves addressing the parts of the economy that have been set aside for established male-dominant businesses for decades, and finding opportunities that invite women into the space.
- Procurement makes up between 10%-30% of a country's economy, which is a huge portion of an economy.
- Across the world, barely 10% of the procurement economy is produced by female led businesses.

Anne Githuku-Shongwe

This is not a sprint; it's a marathon. We are trying to disrupt and shift an entire economy over time.

Gender Responsive Procurement is taking the part of the economy that purchases goods and services, which has been set aside for decades for established male businesses, and making these tenders available to women-run businesses.

Policy decisions that support and unlock opportunities for women are key in moving the procurement economy into women's hands.

Looking into the private sector is vital to see what private businesses are doing to include women in their value-chain, and to understand what skills and capacities women need to access new opportunities.

Collaboration between the public and private sectors is also essential, not only for gender equality but for a stronger economy.

Public sectors in UAE, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan, and others are shifting policies to empower women-owned businesses in taking more opportunities in the economy.

A key challenge is convincing public and private sector leaders that women's inclusivity is a strategic economic decision that will not only be socially beneficial but will also be key in growing the economy.

Having champions in the public sector is the foundation to success. Government funding is essential.



#### Elizabeth Vazquez

Unless women have access to certain opportunities, their businesses will struggle to grow.

We're talking about changing procurement systems and the way we think about the role of women as business owners, employers, and innovators.

Established contractors and suppliers have been providing goods and services to the same companies for decades. This is a huge barrier preventing women-owned businesses access to these 'all-boys-clubs'. Efforts need to be made to disrupt the dominance of established networks when the end-to-end process is completely gender biased.

**Not being a part of the supply chain from the beginning of the process prevents women from accessing necessary information to apply for opportunities.**

It's vital that we build a value-chain that women can enter as business owners and get the cumulative experience, know-how, and capabilities so they can work their way up to become prime suppliers.



#### Nihal Hashish

We believe that a diverse supply chain represents the diversity that we have, whether from the employees, consumers, stakeholders, which helps our business grow and the communities that we operate in thrive.

**Diversity is a key driver to higher performance.**

P&G's Supplier Diversity Program, which has existed since the '70s in the U.S., has shown that diverse suppliers outperform non-diverse suppliers by 10%. In 2016, witnessing the clear added value, performance, innovation that diverse suppliers bring, P&G began expanding their program to the rest of the world.

With most of P&G's brands and products targeting women, and 5 billion daily customers, it's vital that such businesses involve women in their supply chain to represent the female end users.

Women own 85% of the household purchasing power for consumer goods, which means that when women are economically empowered, their consumer power increases.

MODERATOR:

**Anna Roberts,**  
Founder and Managing  
Director, Anna Roberts

SPEAKERS:

**H.H. Sayyida Basma  
Al Said,**  
Founder, Whispers of  
Serenity Clinic

**Dr I.N. Amber Ghaddar,**  
Co-founder, AllianceBlock

**Shainoor Khoja,**  
Founder and CEO, Better  
Business Enterprise Ltd



Though women have made great progress against overt gender bias, unconscious bias undoubtedly still exists. Inequality is so deeply embedded in our society that women often have an unconscious bias against themselves. Well-educated and highly skilled women suffer from imposter syndrome, they believe they're inadequate and lack confidence, doubting their own proficiency in skills they have certainly acquired. To move beyond unconscious bias, speakers in this panel recommend mindfulness to tackle misconceptions, false judgments, and misguided decisions. They also recommend reform on a community level, intersections between gender, race, orientation and poverty deepen bias wherever it exists. Panellists called for us to build communities that are inclusive of everyone, providing equal opportunity to all marginalized groups alike.

KEY MESSAGES

- Unconscious bias is much tougher to tackle when compared to conscious bias because it's embedded within people from an early age. Many are unaware of its existence.
- A Stanford study reveals that when people were given a female and male version of identical, blind resumes, more male resumes were accepted than female, and male's recommended starting salary was \$3,000 more than female's (more than a 10% difference).
- The key to tackling unconscious bias is to acknowledge that the bias exists and practice mindfulness – living in the here and now.
- In an increasingly globalized world, there are more opportunities for bias to arise.
- Governmental, cultural, political, and corporate structures all need to be reconstructed and reiterated to accommodate the changing world we're living in.
- Instead of using the word 'empower', women should instead be told to 'power up'. This implies that they have power and it just needs to be activated.

Shainoor Khoja

Bias against women is learned from childhood, where girls are brought up to look and act pretty and encouraged to focus on linguistic, artistic fields (e.g. English and History) while boys are brought up to build and break things and encouraged to focus on more intellectual fields (such as Science and Mathematics). This is reflected in whole fields that are greatly dominated by men and recruiters that are biased towards hiring men. Though bias against women in the workplace has been tackled progressively, and women have been infiltrating many levels of management, a 'glass ceiling' still exists, preventing women to effectively reach C-suite management levels. A 2012 study, published by the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford, revealed that when people were given identical resumes, with one key difference: one resume had a male name and one was female, the male candidate was selected more often than the female's, and the male's recommended starting salary was \$3,000 more than the female's (more than a 10% difference).

We are now recognising that many of the soft skills which women have, like empathy, compassion, or multi-tasking, are skills that are very conducive to today's business and management.

As a parent and working member of society, I encourage you to challenge any bias that you see. Because the more you challenge it, the more you'll promote people to think about it and change their biased mind-set.



H.H. Sayyida Basma Al Said

Mindfulness is the key to tackling unconscious bias. To tackle unconscious bias, we must acknowledge that the bias exists and practice mindfulness – living in the here and now. If you can observe yourself as you make decisions, you can identify biases which make you prone to judging others, and challenge your own assumptions as they arise.

**Overcoming bias has to start with you. If you do not see and believe the bias within you, the change needed will not be achievable.**

The rise of the internet and travel opportunities has resulted in a highly networked, global community where shared knowledge, experiences, and problems are shared across borders. We are all a product of the cultures we grew up in, and as such, we carry all of our culture's biases. People all over the world will need to continually re-check their bias to ensure equal opportunity and treatment for everyone.



Dr I.N. Amber Ghaddar

We cannot move forward without overcoming the fear of the 'other'. Every community has criteria for what is accepted as good and bad behaviour, and often, you acquire the 'good' label simply by being part of that community. An essential aspect of recognising and challenging bias is to get to know the 'other', to overcome fear as a barrier and be open to mindfully listen, listen while recognising whether or not you judge things that are different, and whether or not those judgments are based on bias or value.

**Meeting new people and doing new things exposes people to new perspectives that may change their mind-set.**

We all have biases that are built within us, through both history and society, and we should always give people a chance to speak before judging and building first impressions.

The terminology 'empowering women' has become overused, and often backfires by reinforcing low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy among women. A more accurate alternative to the term 'empowerment' is 'inclusion', where the focus is on providing the structure and access needed to ensure all people are invited to professional opportunities. 'To empower' is a passive verb indicating that women are weak, and that something must be done to make them powerful. Women should instead be told to 'power up', which implies that they have power, and it just needs to be activated. Equal access is a huge challenge. Governmental, cultural, political, and corporate structures all need to be reconstructed and reiterated to accommodate the changing world we're living in.

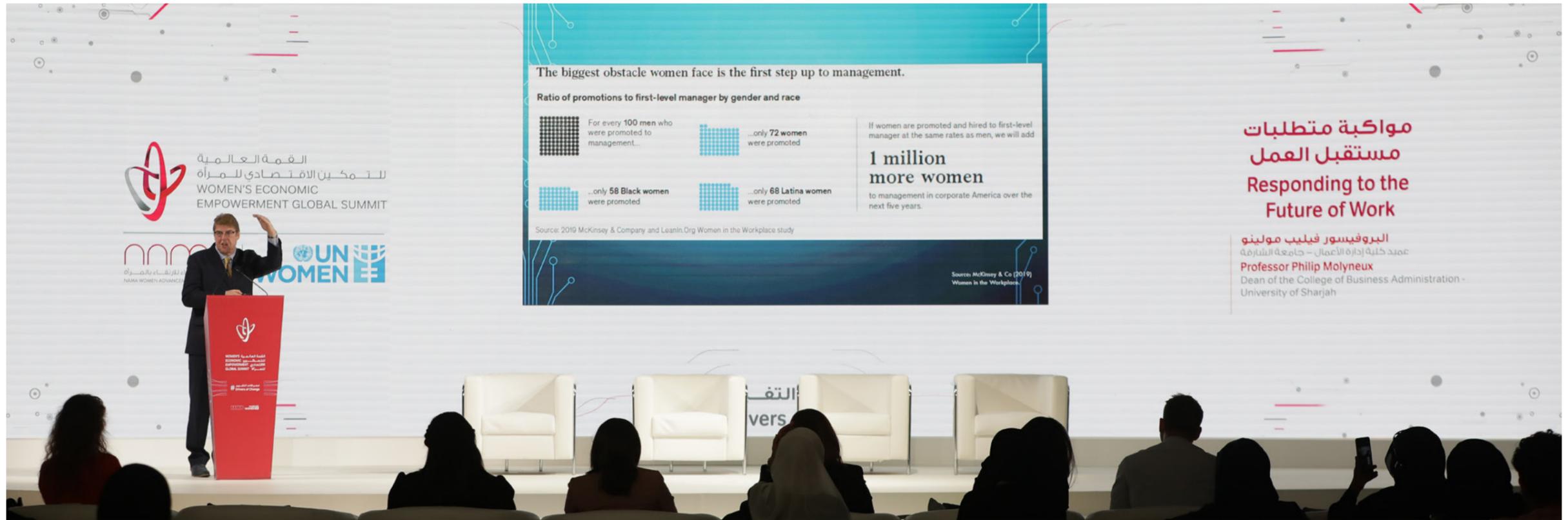
KEYNOTE:

**Professor Philip Molyneux**,  
Dean, College of Business  
Administration, University  
of Sharjah

SPEAKERS:

**Dr Nancy W. Gleason**,  
Assistant Professor of  
Practice, Political Science,  
NYU Abu Dhabi

**Xiangcen Guo**,  
Assistant Director,  
SkillsFuture Singapore



Advancements in technology and automation are disrupting the market and changing how people engage in the global workplace. These disruptions give us the much-needed space to examine what we can do better. From gender parity and diversity in the workforce, to re-evaluating our higher education system, panellists had great insights on the future of work.

KEY MESSAGES

- Women are gaining a presence in senior management positions, but there is still a lack of women in low and mid-level management. This provides a huge obstacle for women who seek promotions.
- A report by McKinsey reveals that 1.2B people worldwide are working in automatable jobs. This translates into 46% of the U.S workforce, 52% of the Chinese workforce, and 47% of the Indian workforce.
- Technology will not displace full jobs and roles, but it will change and displace the specific automatable tasks within each job.
- When technology automates some parts/ tasks of the role, it gives the individual more capability to upskill into a more empowering role.
- The future of work involves technology enabling humans to reach more possibilities. E.g. more flexible work arrangements like remote jobs.

**Professor Philip Molyneux**

Women's representation in the workplace has undeniably witnessed progress over the past few years. However, an annual study on the changing role of women conducted by McKinsey reveals that this progress is focused on senior-level management positions, leaving the lower-managerial levels underrepresented. In order to develop a workplace centred upon equality, companies must focus on empowering managers at all levels, not just senior executives, to drive diversity and inclusion.

**The first step to management is often women's largest obstacle.**

For every 100 men promoted to first-level management, only 72 women get promoted. Figures are even lower for black and Latino women.

It is very troubling that there hasn't been any change in the past 5 years. Women feel their gender prevents them from succeeding professionally. If organisations promoted women at the same rate that they promote men in the United States, there would be one million more female managers.

Corporations need to change the way they recruit and promote. Companies must invest in female managers at all levels, not just senior leadership, to drive diversity and inclusion within their teams. Much more needs to be done to improve the representation of women and minorities. The underrepresentation of diverse ethnic groups in the workplace is even more dire than the gender gap. When changing corporate cultures to make them more diverse, we must not forget ethnicity.



#### Dr Nancy W. Gleason

The new relationship universities are building with industries is very important, this provides graduates with skills and opportunities that they can use immediately upon entering the workforce.

#### Universities need to regularly monitor and improve their employability ratio.

NYU Abu Dhabi has a 97% employability ratio (within 6 months of graduation). Industries are now focused on becoming educators. This is seen in examples such as Visa University in Singapore and McDonalds University.

We're no longer going to frontload our education on those first 24 years, but instead it's going to be lifelong learning, the market has begun to demand this approach. Lifelong learning is becoming embedded in our lives, careers, and work journeys. Having a growth mind-set is crucial in order to thrive in a rapidly changing, technology-driven market.

Our approach to learning should shift from what kinds of jobs can be done to what kind of problems can be solved and what are the skills needed for those. We need to constantly seek new environments where we can learn something new that can be applied in a new context.

#### Xiangcen Guo

Opportunities have become more equal for women who are entering the workforce, but as they step up into more senior leadership roles, the struggle begins. Access to mentors who can give women access to knowledge, opportunities, and funding is key in women's economic development. A supportive organisation with good leaders who value employees and their development is crucial.

In the future of work, when technology displaces and changes routine tasks and the way we work, live, learn, and play, it's then important that our younger generation feels they are equipped when they graduate and are ready for work.

#### As new technologies continue to automate work, we need to be much more adaptable than we have been in the past.

In the past, we have seen technology replace certain tasks within jobs without replacing the whole role. For example, in the banking industry, automation provided a means to replace the teller's task to manually count money, freeing him/her up to develop in other ways. This generation must develop cognitive flexibility to transfer what we know from one type of work to the next.

A core skill needed to thrive in the automation economy is problem-solving – knowing where to find resources, information, and connections and knowing how to apply them to a given situation.

Self-care is a vital skill in a disrupted market that is putting strain on youth's mental health and wellness. Having resilience - the audacity to get back up when things do not work out - is very much essential.



MODERATOR:

**Philip Harding,**  
CEO and Co-founder,  
IMPACTJUNKIE

SPEAKERS:

**Noura Al Midfa,**  
Noura Al Midfa, Member of  
Sharjah Youth Council

**Meera Al Mheiri,**  
Nuclear Safety Inspector,  
Federal Authority for  
Nuclear Regulation

**Shamma Al Bastaki,**  
Writer, Multidisciplinary  
Artist, Qasr Al Hosn  
Education Specialist,  
Department of Culture and  
Tourism

This is a session that looks into the enlightening and inspiring stories of three female disruptors from the UAE. Although each woman comes from a very different background, working in sectors as different as nuclear safety and poetry, they all have shared experiences. They provide an overview of their respective journeys, and the challenges and opportunities for growth they found within.

KEY MESSAGES

- Youth can accomplish great things when given training and responsibility.
- Women should set ambitious goals for themselves, seek higher qualifications, take on more projects, drive themselves to become more impactful and influential.
- Having the right coaches and mentors makes a difference.



الشباب: نظرة من  
صناع المستقبل  
Youth: Insights from  
Future Disruptors

المدير التنفيذي والشريك المؤسس - شركة  
under IMPACTJUNKIE

**شمة فيصل البستكي**  
كاتبة ومفائلة متعددة التخصصات وأخصائية تربية  
في قصر الحصن - دائرة الثقافة والسياحة  
**Shamma Al Bastaki**  
Writer, Multidisciplinary Artist, Qasr Al Hosn Education  
Specialist - Department of Culture and Tourism

**ميرة المهيري**  
مفتشية أمان نووي - الهيئة الاتحادية للرقابة النووية  
**Meera Al Mheiri**  
Nuclear Safety Inspector - Federal Authority  
For Nuclear Regulation

**نورة المدفع**  
مجلس الشارقة للشباب  
**Noura Al Midfa**  
Member of Sharjah

Noura Al Midfa

I was born with a walking disability. My first school wasn't wheelchair accessible, so I had to transfer to another school. This was one of my first challenges, it marks when I began to learn how to embrace challenges as opportunities. I graduated from the American University in Sharjah and today I am a member of the Sharjah Youth Council. I originally studied accounting and worked as a debt manager. It didn't fulfill my soul, so I transferred to other fields, media and IT. Still feeling lost, I sought a life coach who helped me dig more into the essence of who I am.

You make your best decisions at the weakest moments of your life, when you're most uncomfortable.

Slowly, I started coaching myself and other people, helping and inspiring those around me to see themselves better.

I'm not sure what's next for me, I'm still exploring! However, I know that I want to work on inspiring people and awakening their capabilities. For me, everyone has a gift to share and everyone can be creative as long as they understand that their only limitation is their mind. People are naturally creative and resourceful. They just need to believe in themselves.



#### Meera Al Mheiri

I am the first Emirati woman to work as a nuclear safety inspector. I studied mechanical engineering and applied my knowledge and passion for this field to the UAE's peaceful nuclear program. I also joined the UAE's regulatory body (for 6 months) and then was invited to join the youngest minister in the world's team.

I created an agenda for youth, by youth. I was impressed by how young people freely gave their time to serve their communities.

**It's not about age, it's not about what you're doing, it's not about your qualifications nor your position...it's about your will to give back.**

This inspired me to help develop these young people's talents, to give them more responsibility, so they would be ready to serve as leaders in our future. At first, this idea was challenging, but we managed to overcome those obstacles with the support of young leaders.

Working with the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, who was very inspiring, gave me a unique view on how much you can accomplish, regardless of your age or gender. Adapting to the mind-set that we as women can do anything is life changing. With this mentality, you seek higher qualifications, take on more projects and you start to think of yourself as more impactful and influential.

I believe that women are strong creatures who can easily rebalance and adapt their mind-set to do anything. For my personal future plans, I am currently pursuing a Masters degree in International Affairs so that I can base future decisions on more concrete knowledge and less on intuition. I am also chairing a new initiative that brings together people of different backgrounds, ethnicities and religions to ensure that they coexist in the UAE.



#### Shamma Al Bastaki

I started writing poetry at 7 years old. At 15, I started to perform at open mics locally. I have been gradually taking my poetry to an international level.

I was a shy introverted 15-year-old when I found a community of Emirati women writers on Twitter under the name "Untitled Chapter." I joined and became the youngest founding member in that community. This was scary at first, but eventually it became a safe place where I thrived and was able to push my boundaries. The concept of relational aesthetics is very important to me. In my practice as a visual artist and poet, I greatly value having a community.

**I believe that all creative work is collaborative in some sense, whether it's intentional or not.**

I recently graduated from NYU Abu Dhabi, where I studied Social Research, Public Policy and Creative Writing. I was chosen as one of the ambassadors to the Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi.

I would like to get my book of poetry published. I have also just started to work for the first time as an education specialist. I'm hoping to teach history through a contemporary lens. Locally, in the UAE, I am proud that my country champions gender balance. Still, I would like to see a grassroots women's empowerment movement, instead of it being purely state-led. Gender balance and women empowerment starts in the home, in the family, and then it grows from there into neighbourhoods and the community. At a global level, I would like to see more economic empowerment for women in creative fields.

## MODERATOR:

**Heba Al Emara,**  
Managing Director, Middle  
East, Vistra Group

## SPEAKERS:

**Heather Henyon,**  
Founding Partner,  
Mindshift Capital

**Laila Hassan,**  
Principal, 500 Startups



This session discusses investment from a gender lens. Panellists dive deep into the challenges that women face within the venture capital industry, in the Middle East and abroad. Experts on incubating startups, these women discuss ways for female entrepreneurs to scale their businesses, combat unconscious bias, and directly confront investors with a conscious bias.

## KEY MESSAGES

- In order to prove their work ethic, women put in more working hours than men.
- The most difficult challenge for women is securing co-investor relationships, since it's difficult to find like-minded investors who accept female founders.
- Networking opportunities for women build storytelling skills while also offering a platform for women to discuss strategies for overcoming gender bias.
- Women must find new ways to build relationships in the venture capital ecosystem.

## Do you see gender biases shifting in the region?

**Laila Hassan**

Building relationships, especially in the venture industry, is more difficult for women. Men form relationships over meetings at night. Women are uncomfortable taking part in these outings. As a result, new and separate ways of building relationships are being formed for women and by women, like breakfast meetings. Change is happening, but relationship building continues to be extremely difficult for women in venture capital.

**Heather Henyon**

Venture Capital in the MENA region is a new ecosystem. It's full of stereotypes about female founders, investors believe that female founders lose their focus because of marriage, and that women cannot handle the pressure of leadership. As female founders, we work differently but that doesn't mean we work any less. Women often put in longer hours, to disprove existing stereotypes.

I think it's easier for women to confront, or openly disagree, the conscious bias you find in the Middle East. It's much worse in the United States or Europe because the sexism and bias are built into the system. The more success stories we have of women showing that they were able to deviate the business model, the more the ecosystem will become accepting of female founders.

## نظرة عميقة في مفهوم "الاستثمار من المنظور الجندي" Deep Dive into Gender Lens Investing

### هبة العماره

المدير العام في الشرق الأوسط لمجموعات "فيسترا"  
**Heba Al Emarah**  
Managing Director, Middle East - Vistra Group

### هيدزر هينيون

شريك مؤسس - شركة "مايند شيفت كابيتال"  
**Heather Henyon**  
Founding Partner - Mindshift Capital

### ليلى حسن

مدير - "500 ستارت أبس"  
**Laila Hassan**  
Principal - 500 Startups



### What is keeping the investment world from attracting more female entrepreneurs to scale their business?

#### Heather Henyon

It's not a problem of data, because data will not create the change needed. It all comes back to the deeper unconscious bias.

There are also not enough venture capital partners who are women, and therefore less women who are attracted towards these roles. Women entrepreneurs attract other women into the field. We need to see more venture capital partners who are women.

The more they get into these roles, the more we will see funding opportunities going to women. If a female founder approaches a Venture Capital fund where there is at least one female founder, she's three times likely to get funded.

The power structures need to change so that more women get more funding.

### What steps do you recommend to help women access funding?

#### Laila Hassan

Mentoring, coaching and introductions can be very helpful. Initiatives such as female founder office hours where women host on a weekly basis female founder pitch nights. Events and networking are very important so that women get the chance to form relationships within the industry.

Thanks to a growing awareness of gender bias, we now have more women discussing strategies for overcoming bias. This is what we need to educate the venture capital ecosystem about. Education is very important. We have to make sure these biases are no longer embedded within Middle Eastern culture.

### What does the future look like for gender lens investing?

#### Heather Henyon

I'm optimistic about the future but progress is still quite slow. Hopefully, it will no longer be necessary to distinguish between males and females when screening to source better deals.

#### Laila Hassan

The more female success stories we have, the more we see women deviating from their business model and raising funds. Women are empowering other women.

SPEAKERS:

**Nawal El Masri,**  
Founder and Storyteller,  
Exhale

**Majd Mashharawi,**  
CEO SunBox company for  
solar solutions(via video)

**Rawan Maki,**  
Fashion Designer, Rawan  
Maki Design House and  
PhD Candidate, Fashion  
Sustainability in the Arab  
World



As the climate crisis deepens, more people are talking about building a healthier and more sustainable economy. What does it mean to move from linear modes of production to a circular economy? This session offers three case studies in sustainable production. Each organisation shares what it means to them to build a healthier economy.

KEY MESSAGES

- In many ways, the environmental crisis is a design crisis. It's a consequence of how things are made and used.
- 'Shop less, choose better' is the guiding principle of an environmentally conscious consumer.
- The textile industry is second only to the fossil fuel industry in terms of pollution.
- 35% of consumers are willing to pay more for clothes labelled as environmentally friendly.
- Establishing an emotional connection between the wearer and the piece of clothing is a key element in tackling fashion sustainability.
- Gaza has been suffering from a severe energy crisis since 2006, and solar energy offers both solutions and employment.

Nawal Al Masri

I used to dream of a world filled with only love, communication and mindfulness. In 2019, I chose to make my dream come true, to build a world filled with communication, storytelling, connections and above all mental wellbeing. What kind of world do you want to live in? Reflect, decide on that, and build it.

As a woman building an empire, it was a push through the mud. But it doesn't mean the harassments I faced would push me back, make me quit or scare me off. It means I had to work twice as hard, and I got twice as far.

With my brand, Exhale, I see fashion as a way to share information about mental health, living with anxiety and overcoming grief. Through design, I want to build a community, so that people know that these feelings are acceptable. Exhale licenses Peanuts, a comic strip where characters like Snoopy are used as mental health advocates, to communicate heavier messages about depression and anxiety in a palatable way. We also form artistic collaborations, where we use storytelling and visual journeys to share messages about social causes.

**We advocate for acceptance and hope to change people's perception of struggles with mental health.**

We want to create timeless fashion in the same way that wellbeing is timeless. The clothing is not produced according to fashion trends, instead, we create new products when we have a new story to tell. Now, Exhale reaches out to artists around the world whose work communicates a deeper social message.

Our brand is now sold in Virgin Megastores, and we recently collaborated with Cadillac for conceptual storytelling merchandise.

We promise sustainability by using organic materials, producing low quantities mainly in the UAE but also in Turkey and India. The clothing is made from handpicked and organic materials. We work to assure that our supply chain is fair trade and we insist upon fair treatment of all workers.

Designing with intention means that you have a purpose in creating a company. The intention of Exhale is to bring more people in conversation about mental health, to promote physical comfort and mental comfort. Every detail about the brand is purposeful. Even the logo is made to be reflective, to remind people to reflect, look within and understand who they want to be. The brand is simple and comfortable but is filled with meaning.



#### Majd Al Mashharawi

I am a Palestinian citizen of Gaza. I founded SunBox in 2017, seeing that Gaza has been suffering from a severe energy crisis since 2006. The reality is that 2.1 million people are living under 3 to 6 hours of electricity per day in Palestine. There is no electricity, drinkable water, nor freedom in Palestine at the moment. Most of all, there is no employment.

SunBox started providing On-Grid, Off-Grid and High-Grid solar solutions to families suffering in Palestine. We have guaranteed 2000 people access to electricity in Palestine. Thanks to our design, people are now enjoying free electricity and free water.

**My company is focused on creating employment opportunities, especially for youth in Palestine.**

We created full-time jobs for more than 25 people. We have also trained over 200 young engineers and technicians. Our target for 2020-2022 is to be able to reach 4000 people. The hope is to expand to different markets, hopefully the West Bank as well as many African markets.

#### نحو اقتصاد أفضل A Healthier Economy

#### روان مكّي

مصممة أزياء و مرشحة للدكتوراه، روان مكّي ديزاين هاوس

#### Rawan Maki

Fashion Designer & PhD Candidate, Rawan Maki Design House

#### Rawan Maki

In many ways, the environmental crisis is a design crisis. It's a consequence of how things are made and used. The textile industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, ranked as 2nd in terms of environmental impact, following the oil and gas industry.

This calls for companies, designers, and consumers to find sustainable solutions and alternatives to improve the current situation.

**25% of chemicals produced globally are used within the fashion industry in one way or form (e.g. textile dyeing and agriculture products).**

The danger is not only on the environment but also on people's bodies, where 59% of luxury fashion products tested had one or more hazardous chemicals.

The definition of sustainability varies between countries, depending on the specific community, environment, culture, and capabilities. What defines sustainability in one country may not be measured in another.

**It's vital that companies implement sustainable thinking across all stages of the fashion value chain – from obtaining the textiles and material to production, marketing, and distribution.**

Companies must consider sustainability in the working conditions where clothes are made, how clothes are shipped, and what type of packaging is used. Adherence to sustainable and ethical solutions at each stage of the product conception will deliver creative final products that inspire consumers and form connections, which will, in turn, drive them to keep the clothing in the long-term.

In a world where fashion trends move very quickly, consumers need to adopt a more sustainable fashion approach by valuing and taking care of the clothes they own, which will contribute to a longer lifetime of the clothing. 'Shop less, choose better' is the guiding principle of an environmentally conscious consumer, where the emphasis is on choosing high-quality clothes that are long-lasting and treated as valuable investments.

Supporting ethical and sustainable brands is yet another significant way consumers can encourage and participate in sustainable fashion. 35% of consumers are willing to pay more for clothes labelled as environmentally friendly, with ages 18-34 showing the most engagement with sustainable solutions.

By taking the environment into consideration when designing clothing, designers can avoid up to 80% of the impact that would have been otherwise imposed on the environment. Sustainability is multi-faceted, and it can be achieved on a material level that impacts the environment and on the social level that empowers the community and culture.

Designers must work on finding innovations that can solve problems in society, ultimately for the most marginalized within the community. Establishing an emotional connection between the wearer and the piece of clothing is a key element in tackling fashion sustainability. When people have a personal connection to specific clothing, they are most likely to take good care of it and reuse it across time.



MODERATOR:

**Heather Henyon,**  
Founding Partner,  
Mindshift Capital

ENTREPRENEURS:

**Thea Myhrvold,**  
CEO and Founder, GetBEE

**Simona Agolini,**  
CEO and Co-Founder, Qidz

**Leila Hamadeh Alanani,**  
Co-Founder, Finyal Media

**Bintou Macalou and  
Fousia Akrad,**  
Co-Founders, Le Majlis

**Oreabetse Matihare,**  
Founder, The Scalable CFO

JUDGES:

**Joumana Jallad,**  
Investment Committee  
Member, Mindshift Capital

**Sharif Al Badawi,**  
Partner, 500startup

**Lucy Chow, Director,**  
Women's Angel Investor  
Network

**Neil Flemming,**  
Founder, Middle East  
Angel Investor Network

**Vera Futorjanski,**  
Ecosystem Catalyst

This session was aimed at giving UAE-based, women-led, early-stage startups visibility, guidance, and networking opportunities with potential future funders, to ultimately help them scale up. Five startups presented pitches describing their businesses and their profitability. A pool of industry experts, influential mentors, and potential investors were present in this session as judges.

KEY MESSAGES

- Tell a story.
- Know your market.
- Use statistics.
- Describe how you would scale your growth.



WHY NOW? DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION VALUED  
AT \$ 462 BILLION BY 2022



**Pitch: GetBEE**  
**Thea Myhrvold**

The on-demand economy is predicted to hit 335 billion by 2025. Digital transformation is everywhere. We help simplify that experience.

GetBee is virtual consulting made simple, by streamlining all online operations from showcasing experts, to booking, billing, and live consulting.

GetBee is the first regulated telehealth platform with Dubai Healthcare City Authority. Examples of GetBee use cases include:

- A virtual school created by a single teacher entrepreneur scaling up to USD 200,000 in revenue.
- A virtual school connecting mentors and students as part of the One Million Arab Coders Initiative by the Dubai Future Foundation.
- An official platform for Accenture in Latin America to deliver live coaching and mentorship for people with determination.

GetBee has an elite team and has been recognised in international media outlets. We're built in seven languages for global scale. We have clients in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and here in the Middle East, as well as Africa. We're used and loved by Fortune 100 companies and brands. We launched in 2018 and have the potential to grow to 3.7 million dollars in annual recurring revenue with existing contracts.

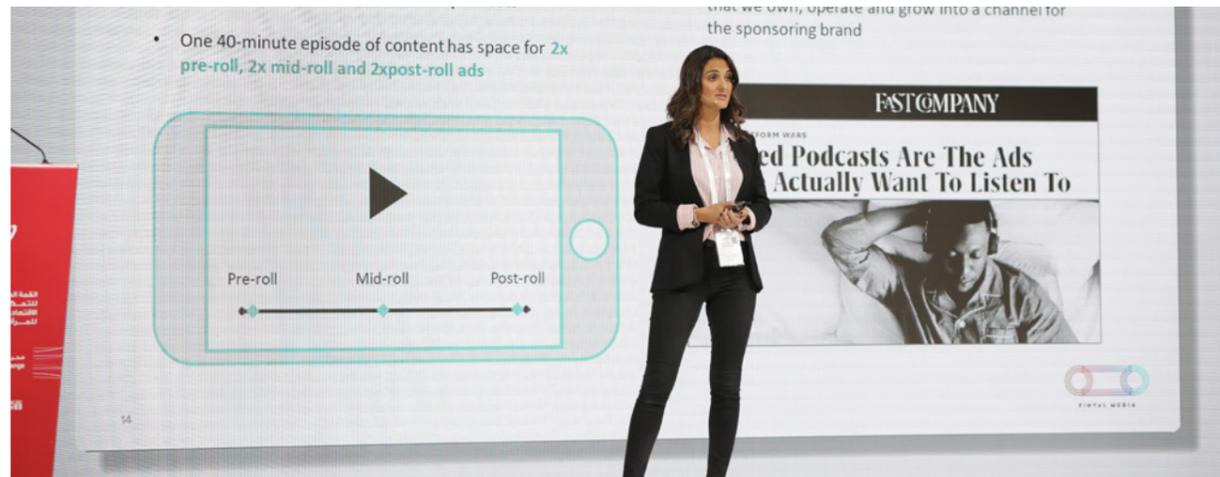
**Pitch: Qidz**  
**Simona Agolini**

Qidz was launched in 2017 by 5 women co-founders who are all mothers (they have a total of 12 kids) and who have complimentary skills from a variety of professional backgrounds.

Qidz is a mobile application that helps parents find activities in the region for kids of all ages on the one hand, and helps vendors connect to their target audiences on the other hand.

Qidz has three streams of revenue: advertising revenues from vendors, commissions on sold tickets, and commissions on after-school activities.

In the leisure and entertainment industry, the UAE's spending alone is about three billion dollars. It's very, very substantial. If you expand to MENA, it's around eight billion. Globally, leisure entertainment is around a 600-billion-dollar business. Qidz recently expanded to the KSA, and is ready to scale up.



**Pitch: Finyal Media**  
**Leila Hamadeh Alanani**

At Finyal Media, we create podcasts specifically for the Middle East, from the region, for the region. In recent years, the podcasting sector has been exploding at a global level. It's one of the fastest growing advertising platforms in the world, and all the tech giants are investing billions of dollars in creating platforms and the infrastructure that will enable podcast production.

We create local podcasts, based on MENA history and culture, to fill a need for entertainment in the middle eastern market.

Long commute times coupled with high levels of video consumption in the region, gives Finyal Media a large captive audience to tap into.

For 2020, Finyal Media has a pipeline of 14 different seasons of content. We are launching a children's series, an original scripted drama series, reality shows, and more. Thus far, Finyal Media has produced seven podcast series, we have more than 600,000 active listens, and we are at the top of charts in the region. We are monetizing content with four distinct sponsorship deals, three branded shows, and licensing.



**Pitch: The Scalable**  
**Oreabetse Mathare**

The Scalable allows SMEs to benefit from the services of CFOs without hiring full time talent or investing in the infrastructure, processes, or technologies.

We allow CFOs to work with as many SMEs as they like effectively through our technology and our processes that are aligned with international financial and accounting standards.

We perform quality control, analysing CFO profiles before allowing them into our network of experts. SMEs sometimes take months to find the right people. We can do it in a matter of days through our extensive network of qualified finance professionals.

The Scalable has generated a total gross merchandise value of USD 475,000 to date and expects a monthly recurring revenue of USD 130,000 in 2020. We began growing our business in the MENA region, but are looking beyond it. We hope to expand to European markets, and to Sub-Saharan Africa.



**Pitch: Le Majlis**  
**Bintou Macalou and Fousia Akrad**

Le Majlis is an online outlet that offers top brand and designer clearance sales, targeting young women who are tech-savvy and fashion lovers. Our promise is to bring you everything up to 90% off. We cater to every budget from casual to luxury.

Our partnerships are incredibly diverse, we have contracts with local designers and many of the world's largest brands.

Le Majlis focuses on modest fashion, which has an estimated market of 160 billion next year.

## SESSION 19:

## THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

### KEYNOTE:

**Rima Assi,**  
Senior Partner, McKinsey and Company

### MODERATOR:

**Anna Fäth,**  
Senior Programme Manager and Head of the Women's Empowerment Principles Secretariat, UN Women

### SPEAKERS:

**Hend Kassab,**  
Quality and Corporate Affairs Director, Daltex Corporation

**Helen McGuire,**  
Co-Founder and MD, Hopscotch



### Rima Assi

Women's role in the economy will be one of the main drivers of change and transformation in the Middle East. Women's participation in the workforce has been estimated to have an impact of adding 600 billion dollars across the MENA region.

There are still significant advancements to be made. Women have to see other women in highly skilled, professional, and technical jobs that are highly paying.

Women need political role models, who represent their values. Women's rights are still not protected, there has to be a legal and regulatory environment that protects women. Both, financial and digital inclusion are essential. Women must have access to bank accounts, they need credit to start their own businesses and accelerate growth.

Women in the Gulf rarely use online applications to search for jobs, this leads to them receiving hourly rates that are 30 to 40% lower for freelance work.

During this session, contributors from Daltex Corporation, Hopscotch, and McKinsey and Co, explored the relevance of Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs). The panellists discussed the importance of implementing the WEPs in today's evolving workplace.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Today we see raised awareness of gender equality principles among job seekers, consumers, business partners, and within the investing community. More people are scrutinizing organisations, exercising due diligence and favouring socially responsible organisations.
- The support of senior management, and development of progressive HR policies are both key when implementing the WEPs.
- Advancing the gender equality agenda is an effort that has to be equally driven by the governments, companies, professional organisations, and society.
- There is room for UN Women to further promote the WEPs, more exposure and a deeper understanding is needed.

Arab women studying STEM fields have increased from 35% to 60%, yet most women struggle to work in those fields. Social constraints, and the lack of female role models in those sectors effectively prevents entry.

Upon joining the workforce, many women report feelings of isolation, not having access to senior roles, receiving less support, and are not able to identify role models in their workplace. Yet, if they are promoted to senior positions, their satisfaction levels are much higher than men. Women face microaggressions throughout their careers. These appear at the beginning of their careers and continue as they acquire senior positions. Women in senior positions describe the microaggressions as a constant questioning to their judgment and capacity to lead.

The 4th industrial revolution is supposedly a threat for the labour force, but not for women.

Through automation, digitization, the creation of online platforms and the rise of entrepreneurship, 30 million jobs for women can be provided.

Many interventions need to occur at different levels to overcome gender inequality in the workforce. We need more education and training for women, but these training methods also need reform.

Education must be targeted towards skills and competencies of the future, such as STEM, and should leverage the soft skills that women are naturally skilled at. Structural changes are also needed: regulations and policies that support women are needed at a national level, but also within the workplace.

A conducive workplace environment is equally important. Employers need to be aware of the challenges that women face and learn about gender diversity.

What's on us, on women? We have to act, be resilient, be courageous and to really try because without trying we won't achieve much.



Hend Kassab

CEOs need to be on-board with the WEPs to enable change. HR can develop policies to advance issues like equal pay and good working conditions for women.

Existing social norms and cultural barriers are key challenges that Daltex had to overcome in order to achieve equal pay.

We need to make a shift in culture from microaggressions to macro-progressions in order to foster a supportive, encouraging, and kind work environment for women.

Workplace environments for women are changing, but we need corporations to embrace stronger policies rooted in the WEPs to make sure the shift in culture is complete.



Helen McGuire

Hopscotch also faced cultural barriers when working on advancing women's careers in the Middle East. There is the lack of flexible work arrangements within most organisations, which is also a challenge for women around the world.

Women need perseverance to continually address limiting external barriers imposed by society and inflexible workplace environments.

Women also have to fight any internal, mental barriers they might have regarding their own abilities.

In the UAE, the private sector has to exert more effort to catch up with the public sector. Organizations need to share their experiences, learning, and data instead of working separately in silos. The UAE is becoming a global star at promoting the WEGs, but there is a divide between public and private sectors. The private sector still has room to grow.





SPEAKERS:

**H.E. Ambassador Dr Haifa Abu Ghazaleh,**  
Assistant Secretary General, Head of Social Affairs Sector, League of Arab States

Significant strides towards social justice have been made in the Arab world, we are closer than ever before to closing the inequality gap. Leadership initiatives which brought women into the government and onto boards of directors have been pivotal, changing economic opportunities and making the Middle Eastern workplace more inclusive of women. Though crucial progress was made, challenges are still prevalent worldwide. Strategic unity and collaboration between individuals, communities, institutions, and governments is needed to promote women's skills and abilities. The official closing ceremony celebrates achievements, and looks toward goals we still need to accomplish to bring us closer to global social justice.

KEY MESSAGES

- 2020 marks the 5th anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) launch.
- It is the 40th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 25th anniversary of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325
- This year will be the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women –a remarkable landmark in the life of women both in the Arab world and globally.
- Women, particularly women in the Middle East have made great progress, but we are still far from achieving SDGs. Collaboration and strategic policies will help us reach these goals.



**H.E. Amb. Dr Haifa Abu Ghazaleh**

It is nearly 2020, and many of us anticipate that the struggle for social justice will continue in the next decade. We need to strategically tackle all obstacles to equality. For economic justice to be fully realized, more efforts need to be taken by individuals, communities, and institutions, and these efforts must be collaborative.

We should take pride in the achievements our region has made in terms of gender equality. Thanks to the inclusion of women in the government, and the mandatory requirement that women are present on boards of directors, women's participation in the Middle Eastern economy has significantly advanced.

**Leadership initiatives, like this Summit by NAMA Women Advancement Establishment, are a beacon in the Arab world.**

These initiatives have caused an upsurge in the number of women actively engaged in systems of employment, development and productivity. The city of Sharjah has led change by supporting women in the Arab world and encouraging their leadership in the workforce. By bringing female energy and power into more economic sectors, communities have seen new economic growth.

People still hold bias against women. We have committed ourselves to achieving the SDGs, therefore we need to form productive partnerships and align together to meet women's rights.

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T + 971 6 594 1262  
ص.ب. 31122  
الشارقة، أ.ع.م. | Sharjah, UAE.  
  
[weegsummit.com](http://weegsummit.com)

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EMAIL  
[INFO@WEESUMMIT.AE](mailto:INFO@WEESUMMIT.AE)

WEBSITE  
[WWW.WEESUMMIT.AE](http://WWW.WEESUMMIT.AE)

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#### Disclaimers and Report Limitations

Conclusions and judgement in this report should not be attributed to, and do not necessarily represent the views of the WEEGS Summit, its Board of Governance, partners and staff.

#### Visual Concept and Design

Romy John  
NAMA Corporate Communications