



# Balance for Better:

A comprehensive overview  
of gender balance in the UAE



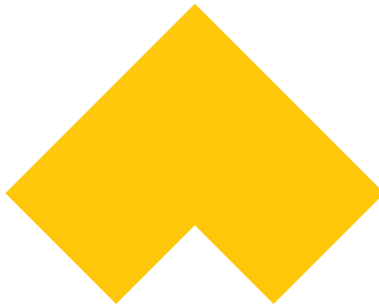
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# Balance for Better:

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of gender balance in the UAE



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# About the UAE Gender Balance Council

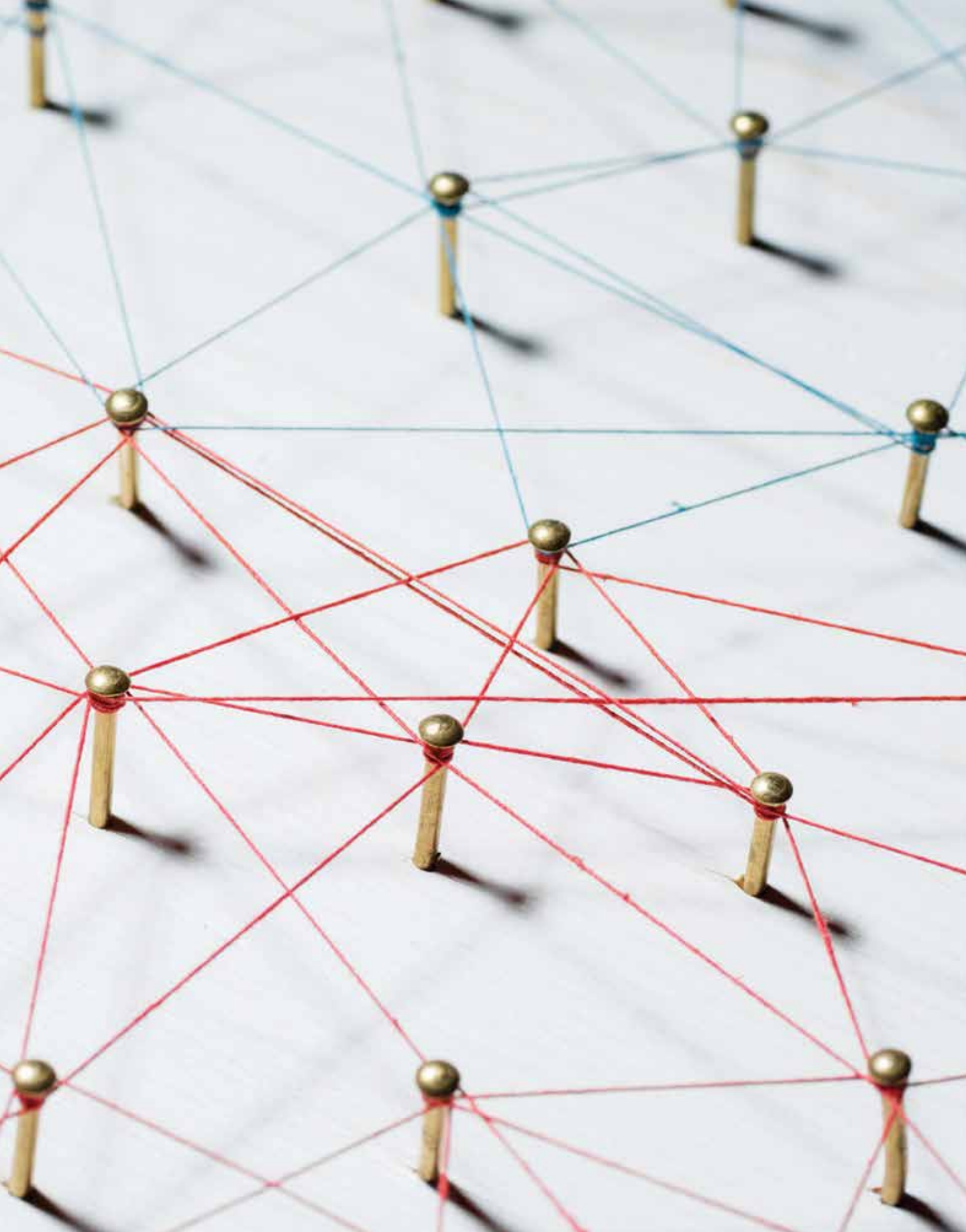
■ Established in 2015, the UAE Gender Balance Council is a federal entity responsible for developing and implementing the gender balance agenda in the United Arab Emirates.

The Council is chaired by H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the Dubai Women Establishment and wife of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs.

The Council's objectives include reducing the gender gap across all government sectors, enhancing the UAE's ranking

in global competitiveness reports on gender equality, ensuring gender balance in decision-making positions and promoting the UAE's status as a benchmark for gender balance legislation. The Council also launches initiatives and projects to enhance gender balance throughout the country and contribute to achieving the Council's vision of positioning the UAE as a global model for gender balance.

The Council liaises with other entities at the federal level to ensure the implementation of policies and regulations governing gender balance. ■



# President's foreword

Manal bint Mohammed  
bin Rashid Al Maktoum

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President of the UAE  
Gender Balance Council

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■ We are pleased to publish “Balance for Better: A comprehensive overview of gender balance in the UAE”, another pioneering report aimed at strengthening awareness and understanding of gender balance in the UAE, and presenting the country’s significant achievements in this field, which is an essential element of the national agenda and the UAE Vision 2021. The report explores opportunities for enhancing our nation’s global competitiveness and achieving the goals outlined in the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, with particular emphasis on Goal Five regarding achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.

“Balance for Better: A comprehensive overview of gender balance in the UAE” is one of various significant publications the UAE Gender Balance Council has issued

since its establishment in 2015, in line with its objectives to reduce the gender gap across all government sectors, enhance the UAE’s ranking in global competitiveness reports on gender equality, particularly those issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and promote the UAE’s status as a benchmark for gender balance legislation in the region.

The UAE government has achieved many key gender balance milestones in the past few years. Through initiatives and programmes implemented by numerous government entities, the country has sought to provide equal opportunities, foster an environment that supports both men and women, and embed the principle of gender balance in the UAE’s development process. This is a continuation of the path established by the late Sheikh

Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Founding Father of the UAE, who established gender balance as one of the values on which the nation was founded.

These achievements have all been accomplished due to the unwavering support of the UAE's wise leadership, under the guidance of the President of the UAE, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai; H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces; and H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all ministries,

government entities and private sector organisations in the UAE for their active contribution to the Council's projects and initiatives, and the implementation of laws and regulations which foster work environments that are conducive to gender balance, and encourage women's participation across all sectors.

The leadership of the UAE has emphasized that gender balance is an essential pillar of our national strategies, which aim to position the UAE as a nation that excels in the global sphere across all sectors by sustainably investing in its citizens – both men and women. By issuing this report, which outlines our nation's achievements in enhancing gender balance, we hope that both the public and private sectors will continue implementing significant initiatives, policies and procedures that will advance the UAE's competitiveness and progress in the field of gender balance. ■



# Vice President's message



**Mona Ghanem  
Al Marri**

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Vice President of the UAE  
Gender Balance Council

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■ The UAE Gender Balance Council was established in 2015 by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. Since its founding, the Council has become a regional pioneer in gender balance by launching numerous projects and initiatives to enhance gender balance and further the Council's objectives of narrowing the gender gap across all sectors, strengthening the UAE's competitiveness globally, and realising the UAE's vision to become one of the top 25 countries in the world for gender balance by 2021, as measured by the UNDP Gender Development Index.

The UAE Gender Balance Council drafts policies, designs projects, and launches initiatives to advance gender balance regionally and internationally, with a particular emphasis on the local level. The Council's efforts are in line with the UAE's dedication to supporting global efforts in achieving the UN Sustainable Development

Goals 2030, which place great importance on gender balance. Our achievements as a Council are a culmination of the efforts of this country's wise leadership in establishing gender balance as a national priority through the UAE Vision 2021, and the sustained cooperation between all ministries and agencies across government. These achievements would not have been possible without our strong international collaboration with institutions such as UN Women, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Union, all of which have provided valuable expertise and advice on advancing gender balance.

A key project implemented by the Council over the past four years has been the "Global Gender Circle", an ongoing strategic initiative through which the Council seeks to provide a platform for thought leaders and experts from various countries, institutions and international



organisations, to exchange knowledge and ideas about gender balance policies. The project's aim is to generate innovative insights and practical solutions for the advancement of gender balance and accelerate the rate of positive change in countries, leading to the realisation of Goal Five of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The Council was also proud to host the first United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel (HLP) meeting on Women's Economic Empowerment to be held in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The Council has also launched the "Gender Balance Guide" – the first initiative of its kind in the world – a comprehensive resource that helps entities in the UAE enhance gender balance in the workplace by outlining how to measure progress and detailing concrete procedures and processes to be followed in order to implement its guidelines, which have been set in accordance

with the highest international standards and in conformity with the local laws of the UAE.

The UAE Gender Balance Council has also developed a Gender Balance Index at the national level, in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office in the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and the Future. The UAE government has adopted this index and established it as one of its main national indicators. Individuals and organisations who have led exceptional gender balance initiatives are honoured annually. The Index has had a significant impact on encouraging governmental entities to strive to further support gender balance across organisations.

As part of its role mandated by the Cabinet, the Council also updates legislation and policies pertaining to women and proposes new legislation to promote gender balance in the workplace. Examples include policy amendments such as extending maternity leave from two to three months.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, the Council promotes the incorporation of gender balance principles into government budgeting and advises on policies for women's advancement in the labour market to strengthen their role as active socio-economic contributors. The Council also actively participates in annual meetings of the UAE government. The central role that the Council plays in the government directly reflects the importance that gender balance is given within the national strategy of the UAE.

Gender balance is an integral part of the UAE's culture, a fact that is reflected in the pioneering initiatives and projects that have contributed to achieving the strategic plans of our nation and the vision of our wise leadership to position the UAE as a global model for gender balance and ensure women are equal contributors to the success of society and all aspects of its growth and development. ■



The UAE:  
A leader in  
**gender balance**

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PART

1

“Women are half of the society;  
any country that pursues  
development should not leave  
them in poverty or illiteracy.”

The UAE's Founding Father  
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan





“Women have proven themselves in many workplaces and today we want them to have a strong presence in decision-making positions in our institutions.”

**H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum,  
Vice President and Prime Minister of the United  
Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai**





“Education is a true measure of the progress made by states to attain success and excellence in the field of investment in human capital, including women.”

**H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak,  
Chairwoman of the General Women’s  
Union, President of the Supreme Council  
for Motherhood and Childhood, and  
Supreme Chairwoman of the Family  
Development Foundation**



■ Gender balance is a fundamental pillar for building strong communities, and ensuring peace, prosperity, and progress. The leaders of the UAE are dedicated to advancing gender balance across all sectors and communities with the aim of building a more prosperous future.

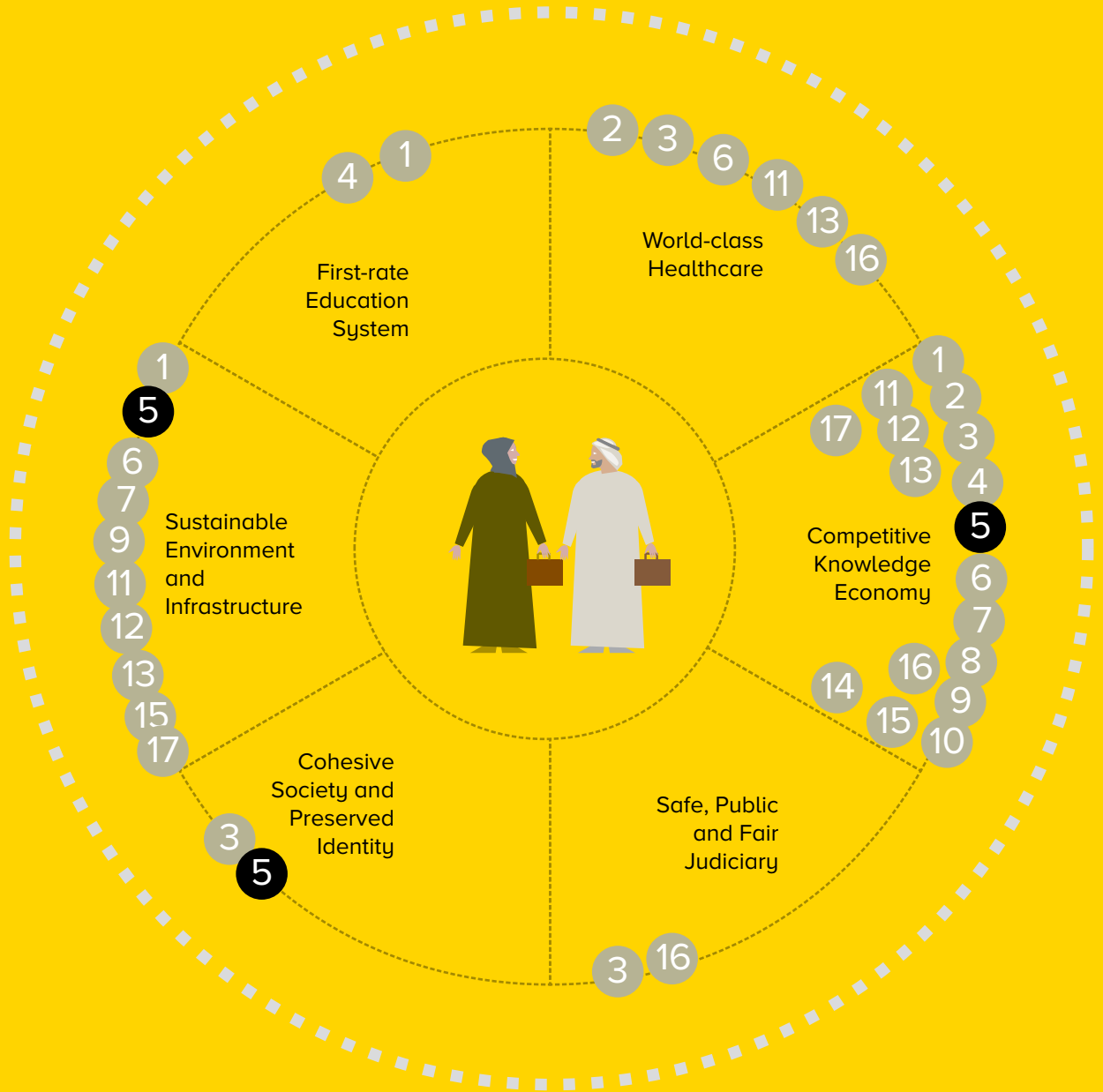
With the objective of ensuring that both men and women are represented at all levels across government and the corporate world, the UAE is following both a top-down and bottom-up approach to achieving and sustaining gender balance. ■

## UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030

- 1 No Poverty
- 2 Zero Hunger
- 3 Good Health and Wellbeing
- 4 Quality Education
- 5 Gender Equality**
- 6 Clean Water and Sanitation
- 7 Affordable and Clean Energy
- 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
- 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- 10 Reducing Inequality
- 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
- 13 Climate Action
- 14 Life Below Water
- 15 Life on Land
- 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- 17 Partnerships for the Goals

# UAE Global Vision

The UAE National Agenda 2021 is strategically aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030, with gender balance featuring prominently across the agenda.





1.1

The UAE's Founding Father  
Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan



## The leadership's support for women

■ “Women are half of society; any country that pursues development should not leave them in poverty or illiteracy,” said the UAE's Founding Father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

This ethos of balance and respect for women is ingrained in the foundation of the UAE, and continues to inspire leaders, pioneers, and young people. It also empowers women and encourages them to become active contributors to, and partners in, the nation-building process.

As an advocate for women's inclusion across all spheres of society, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan spoke strongly about the importance of including women in the social and economic sectors. He encouraged women's

participation in national development; a vision and commitment that continues to guide the nation.

Emphasising the accomplishments of Emirati women, Sheikh Zayed said: “Nothing makes me happier than to see women assume their rightful role in society and fulfil their potential. Nothing should stop the progress of women. They have equal rights to men in assuming top positions that befit their abilities and qualifications.” ■

Mother of the Nation  
H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak



## Empowering women

■ H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation, and President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, continues to follow the legacy of the UAE’s Founding Father. Her significant contributions to women’s empowerment and gender balance, which have gone beyond the UAE, have garnered her recognition across the region and the world.

In 1973, H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak established the Abu Dhabi Women Development Association, the first women’s society in the country, followed by the General Women’s Union in 1975, the Supreme Council for Motherhood and

Childhood in 2003, and the Family Development Foundation in 2006. She is a founding member and a central figure in establishing the Arab Women Organisation and the Sheikha Fatima Fund for Refugee Women, in cooperation with the Red Crescent Authority (RCA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As a steadfast advocate for women and their empowerment, H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak has initiated, supported, and championed multiple initiatives at the local level, earning her more than 500 awards, 30 of which have been from the United Nations.

H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak initiated the development and implementation

of the National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE from 2015-2021. During an event held to celebrate International Women’s Day in 2015, she stated: “We believe the National Strategy should be the framework for plans to position the UAE among the advanced countries in the area of women empowerment.” In recognition of her efforts, H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak was presented the Agent of Change Award by UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. ■



## UAE Vision 2021 and National Strategy for the Empowerment of Emirati Women 2021



# Government's efforts

■ The National Strategy for the Empowerment of Emirati Women 2015–2021 focuses on eight key areas: education, health, economy, policy-making, environment, the social domain, information, political participation, and decision-making.

The strategy provides a general framework for all federal and local government entities, the private sector, and civil society organisations, that guides the design of policies and programmes aimed at empowering women.

The strategy was developed after extensive consultation with government, the private sector and civil society institutions. It aligns with the UAE Vision 2021, which similarly aims to ensure Emirati women are key partners in the advancement of the UAE. ■

## Multi-level empowerment

To achieve gender balance, the UAE has successfully adopted a three-dimensional model to empower women. The model illustrates how women's empowerment takes place across three dimensions:

### 1 The macro level

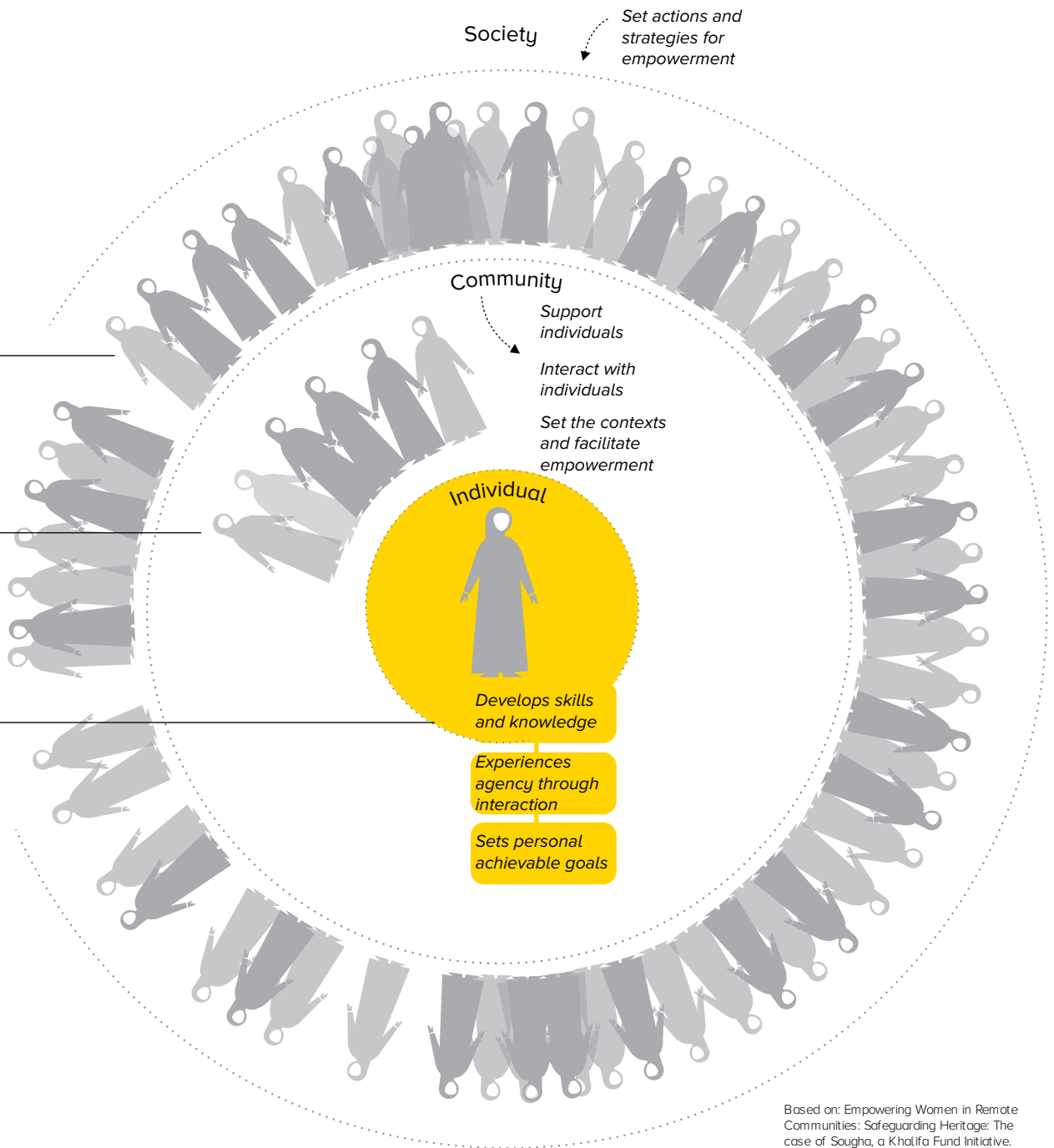
Women are empowered in the broader and societal context

### 2 The meso level

Women in particular areas of the community are granted support

### 3 The micro level

Each woman is supported individually



Based on: Empowering Women in Remote Communities: Safeguarding Heritage: The case of Soqha, a Khalifa Fund Initiative. MBRSG Research.



# The UAE progresses to 26<sup>th</sup> position in the UNDP Gender Inequality Index

■ The UAE has made remarkable progress in gender equality by advancing 23 positions in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index 2019. Today, the UAE is the top ranked Arab nation in the global Index, occupying the 26<sup>th</sup> position.

This progress in just one year places the UAE only one spot away from its 2021 target of being one of the top 25 countries globally for gender equality.

This latest achievement was accomplished merely four years after the establishment of the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2015, when the UAE was ranked 49<sup>th</sup> globally.

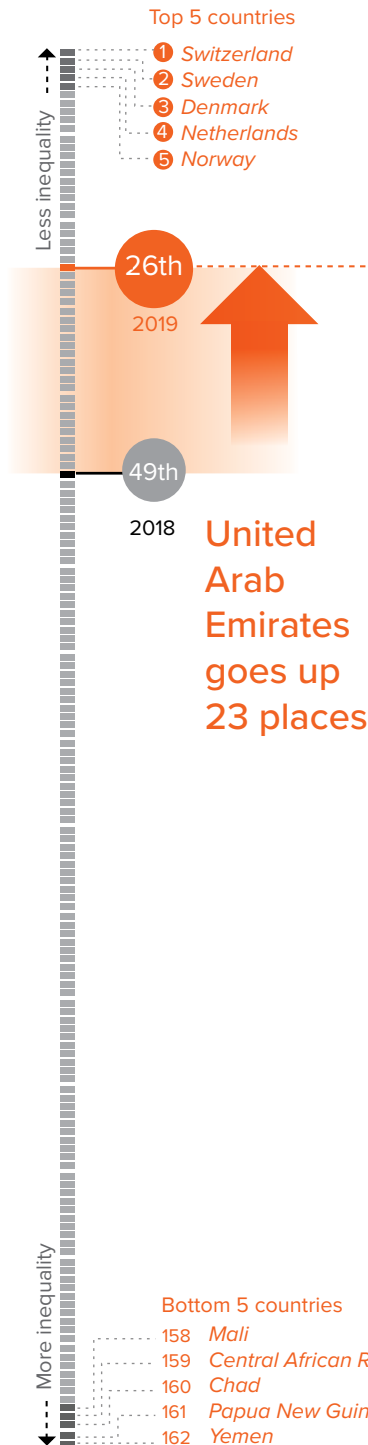
Numerous initiatives and programmes – as well as legislations and policies – have been introduced to advance this cause. Initiatives have included legislations enacted to allocate 50 per cent of Federal National

Council seats to women; support extended to new mothers both in returning to work and at the workplace; extension of maternity leave; and introduction of HR policies that support women.

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index measures gender inequalities in three important elements of human development: health, empowerment, and labour. The Index ranks countries using five indicators, including maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females, proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education, and labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older. (FCSA, 2019) ■

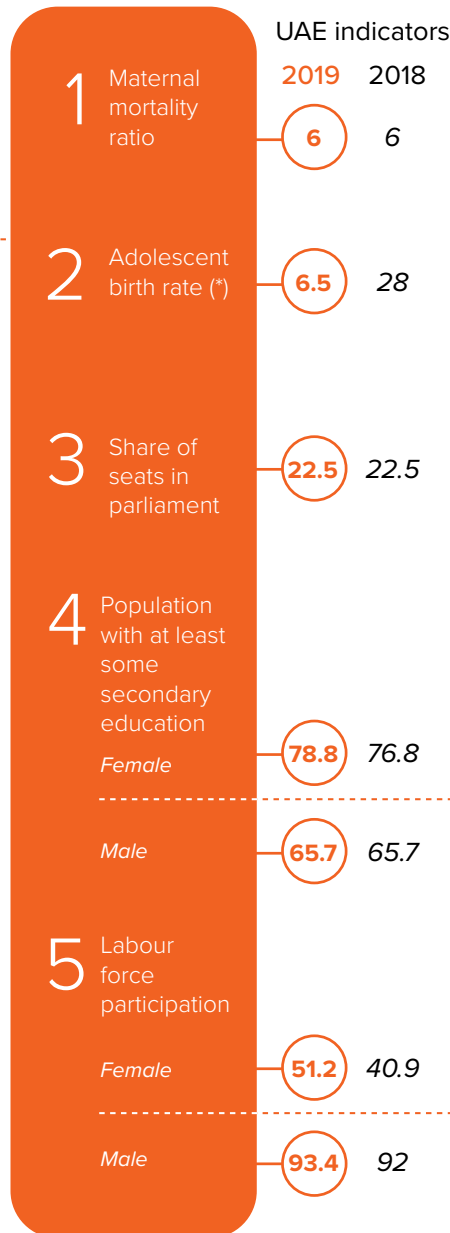
### 1 The ranking

The UAE in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2019



### 2 How it is obtained

The Index ranks 162 countries using five statistical indicators



### 3 The bigger picture

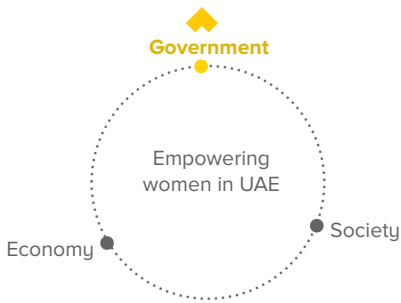
In 2019, the Index introduced the link between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and issues addressed by GII



(\*)UAE's data was corrected by WHO and UNDESA, as the FCSA and the Ministry of Health collaborated to identify the correction and communicated with related entities to ensure the UAE's values reflect the correct data.



# Empowering women across government



■ Since the inception of the General Women’s Union, the government has announced several legislations, policies, and programmes to enhance women’s participation and representation across sectors and geographic regions.

Since 2009, the World Bank’s World Development Indicators Database 2009 shows the literacy rate of both women and men in the UAE is close to 95 per cent. Currently, more women than men complete secondary education and enrol in university and post-graduate institutions.

Additionally, 77 per cent of Emirati women enrol in higher education after secondary school, and Emirati women comprise 70 per cent of all university graduates in the UAE, according to UNDP’s Human Development Report 2016. According to a 2014 report by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 56 per cent of UAE university graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are women.

The importance of women’s participation in decision-making

and presence in influential positions across government and the private sector is increasingly being acknowledged in the UAE. To ensure these goals are realised, a set of legislative and executive measures have been taken to support, encourage, and empower women to pursue the educational, professional, and mentorship qualifications. Further policy, legislative, and programmatic measures have been taken to ensure workplaces and current leadership of institutions are supportive of women.

The most recent and notable of these decisions is a 2018 Cabinet announcement on the issuance of the Law on Equal Wages and Salaries for Men and Women. With the aim of expanding existing labour legislation, this law sought to further enhance gender balance and narrow the gender gap by mandating that women be paid wages equal to that of their male colleagues.

Recognising that policy and legislative changes must be accompanied by practical support, the UAE became the first Arab country and the

second in the world to introduce mandatory appointment of women on boards of government institutions in 2012. Similarly, in April 2015, the UAE Securities and Commodities Authority mandated that no less than 20 per cent of board members of public companies should be women.

In recognition of the importance and benefit of having women's perspectives shape national planning, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, issued directives to ensure that women have 50% representation in the Federal National Council after elections in 2019 to further empower Emirati women and bolster their contributions to development. (Abusief, 2018)

Later that same year, the government introduced a new package of legislative policies and initiatives to empower women based on three key approaches: Legislation and Policy, Services, and International Representation. Each approach is designed with supportive resources to ensure the advancement

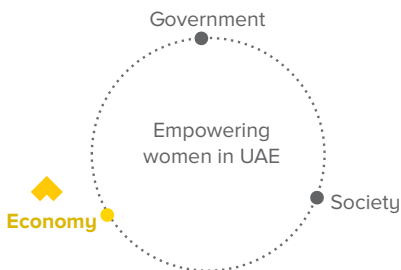
of Emirati women as active partners in local, regional, and global arenas. This is carried out, for instance, by increasing the participation of women in diplomatic missions as representatives of international organisations and peacekeepers.

H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, said: "We are embarking on a new phase in which we are introducing more initiatives to enhance the leading role of women in our society, and raise their participation and representation in all areas, locally, regionally, and internationally. ■"



## Empowering women in the economy

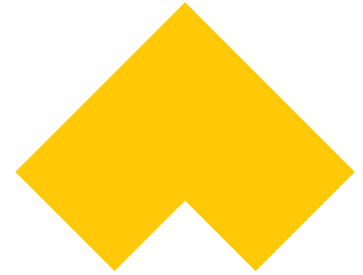
The UAE has established women's associations across the country and economy, supported by the government. These associations work to promote women-led businesses and entrepreneurs.




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Across the country, business women councils serve a number of key functions, including supporting women entrepreneurs in starting businesses, providing training, and devising networking opportunities.

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Economic support

## Al Ghadeer

■ Founded by H.H. Sheikha Shamsa bint Hamdan Al Nahyan, Al Ghadeer UAE Crafts is an organisation that strives to empower women through sustainable crafts. H.H. Sheikha Shamsa bint Hamdan Al Nahyan, the Emirates Red Crescent President's Assistant for Women's Affairs, set out to provide women with the training, designs, raw material and marketing services required to create culturally inspired products.

The primary objective of the organisation is to assist women in earning a living while sustaining traditional crafts. Al Ghadeer UAE Crafts, which supports more than 200 craftswomen from different nationalities and ages, works to empower them in the community by providing them with resources to produce culturally inspired products while being active participants in, and beneficiaries of, the labour force. (Al Ghadeer Crafts, 2019) ■

Economic support

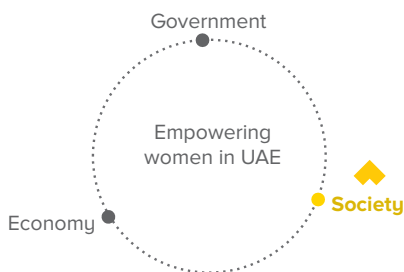
## Sougha

■ Sougha, an initiative from the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development, supports rural women in preserving local handicrafts by helping them sell their products. Ninety per cent of the UAE's population lives in urban areas. To support the economic participation and advancement of women living in rural locations, the government has devised several such initiatives. Sougha simultaneously enhances rural women's economic participation, provides them with key business training and skills, makes them financially independent, and promotes the growth of traditional crafts. (Al Nahyan & Stephens, 2018) ■



## Empowering women in society

The UAE government supports women at the micro level. The UAE empowers women to help them gain control over their lives and make choices that support their individual needs within the context of their circumstances.



### Social support

#### Qawareer

■ Qawareer, a centre dedicated to the protection of women, was established within the Department of Social Services in 2011 in Sharjah. The centre aims to provide women with decent lives, inform them of their rights, and help them live independently with dignity. Women are rehabilitated socially, psychologically, and vocationally, and reintegrated into society. (Abdullah, 2016) ■

#### Khul'a

■ The Islamic law of “khul'a” gives women the right to file for divorce. Additionally, UAE Federal Law No. 6 of 2001 stipulates that women who are divorced, widowed, or supporting orphaned children are eligible for social welfare. (UAE Government Portal) ■

## Social security programme

■ Part of the Ministry of Community Development, the social security programme responds to requests for financial aid from all strata of society including women, children, the elderly, youth, and orphans. There are approximately 20 centres around the country that receive these requests. (Ministry of Community Development, 2019) ■

## Dubai Foundation for Women and Children

■ The Dubai Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC) is an organisation that provides care and rehabilitation services to survivors of gender-based violence. In association with the Dubai Health Authority, DFWAC provides medical services, psychological support, legal consultation, and temporary housing to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking. (DFWC, 2016) ■

## General Women's Union

■ Among its many services, the General Women's Union provides certain familial support through its child visitation and family counselling programme, both of which are intended to support Emirati women with familial and psychological stability. (Sharjah Social Services Department, 2011) ■

## Ewa'a

■ Ewa'a Shelter for Women and Children is a national organisation that provides women with social, legal, psychological, and rehabilitative support services. The Shelter also provides women with financial assistance and helps them find jobs in the UAE. (Ewa'a, 2010) ■



H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin  
Zayed Al Nahyan

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UAE Cabinet Member and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation

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# **Establishing the UAE as an international benchmark for gender balance**

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‘We are proud of the achievements of our Emirati daughters across sectors, including the successful roles they play within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation’

■ The UAE’s path towards inclusive development was established by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan at the time of our country’s inception, through investment in its people and the creation of a comprehensive framework that promotes the success of both men and women, who together form the key pillars for sustainable growth and development.

This vision of inclusion laid the foundation for gender balance in the UAE and continues to be espoused under the guidance of UAE President H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the blessed efforts of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme

Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, as well as their brothers Their Highnesses Members of the UAE Supreme Council and Rulers of the Emirates.

The significant positive changes resulting from this gender balance approach are evident in the growing number of women holding empowered positions around the country, and are made possible by the unlimited support of H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women’s Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation. Emirati women today are excellent role models for men and women around the world, thanks to the significant contributions achieved through their efforts, diligence, and loyalty to their country and leadership. Their influence

and impact are essential to the development of all aspects of society, and in strengthening the UAE’s position globally, thus preserving the vision of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who believed in the vital role of women in society and in their right to education, economic participation and assumption of the highest leadership positions.

We are very proud of the achievements of the UAE in the advancement and support of our nation’s women who are treated with respect and appreciation worldwide, and we are proud of the achievements of our Emirati daughters across sectors, including the successful role they play within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. Today, 30 per cent of the Ministry’s employees are women. They hold important positions in UAE missions abroad, across international

organisations, and within the Cabinet and its offices in the country, occupying a total of 175 positions, 42 of which are in diplomatic missions. We have seven high-ranking female ambassadors

We continue to support and advance the crucial participation of women in these key roles by implementing the legislations, policies, and national initiatives launched by the Cabinet during its exceptional session at the headquarters of the General Women's Union in December 2018. Examples of these efforts include increasing the rate of female representation in diplomatic corps, international organisations, the judiciary, and in the workplace. We are indeed proud to have highly qualified women assuming leadership positions across these fields. They represent our country at the international level and demonstrate the outstanding and admirable potential of Emirati women.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, through its missions in countries around the world and in international organisations, is pleased to share these success stories, and to highlight the tremendous progress in gender balance efforts achieved in the UAE in recent years. Our achievements would not be possible without cooperation and coordination between all concerned national

institutions that actively facilitate the integration of gender balance across workplaces, under the wise guidance of our leadership. As a result of these efforts, the UAE has made great strides in enhancing its global status. Today, it is ranked as one of the top countries in the world for gender balance. We continue to reaffirm our commitment to establishing the UAE as the international benchmark for gender balance, and supporting international efforts in achieving this crucial goal, as outlined in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in regards to Sustainable Development Goal Five: Gender Equality.

We wish to emphasise that this valuable report is a comprehensive resource for gender balance knowledge in the UAE, and reflects our aspiration to advance our broader national goals over the coming years. This report outlines the significant projects and initiatives – and resulting successes – undertaken by the Council at both domestic and international levels. I am confident that our UAE missions abroad will be proud to share details of our achievements in gender equality at global forums, and that these achievements will serve as an admirable basis for enhancing cooperation, partnerships, and gender equality with countries and international organisations around the world. ■







The UAE's journey  
to **women's**  
**empowerment**

---

PART

2



1,000



1975

In 1975, there were approximately 1,000 Emirati women in UAE's workforce.



■ The UAE aims to achieve optimal levels of gender balance, and become one of the top countries in embedding gender balance across sectors, industries and communities, as well as within government decision making, including in the areas of sustainable development and international cooperation. Since its founding, the country's leadership has sought ways to create highly supportive environments for women to pursue opportunities of their own choosing in multiple spheres – personal, financial, socio-economic etc.

The UAE has made admirable economic progress over the last 40 years, transitioning from an oil and gas-based economy to a highly-skilled knowledge-based economy.

To meet the demands of this change in economic direction within the framework of the government's Emiratisation programme, highly trained Emirati graduates were recruited to contribute to the development of vital industries. Emirati women today play an important role in advancing the nation's science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. The

number of Emirati women in STEM programmes at UAE universities and in these sectors of the workforce is on the rise.

In 2016, women comprised 20 per cent of UAE's nuclear energy workforce, according to the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation - the highest percentage in any nuclear industry in the world.

Emirati women are leaders in a number of STEM-focused organisations, including Mubadala and Emirates Global Aluminium, progressing in the fields of aerospace, healthcare, and technology. The rapid growth of Emirati women in these male-dominated fields demonstrates the UAE's dual commitment to establishing itself as a key player in a global knowledge economy. ■



135,000

## 2015

Fast forward 40 years, and their participation has reached **135,000**

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This impressive growth, as highlighted in the Human Development Report 2018, was possible due to ongoing government efforts to push for women's economic inclusion as the government launches new initiatives, policies, plans, and programmes to help women achieve their potential. (Cookman, 2018)

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2.1

## Education

A famous proverb says: “If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”

■ A famous proverb says: “If you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation.”

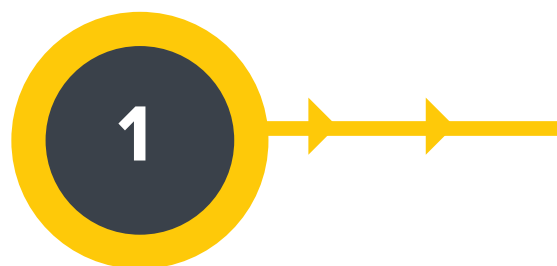
This perspective informed the vision of the founding fathers of the UAE. For them, educating women was the key to the success of Emirati society. Today, Emirati women and girls are some of the most educated in the world, and often outperform boys and men in their pursuit of highly specialised degrees. However, this was achieved due to the government’s steadfast commitment to reforming institutions, shifting attitudes, and designing initiatives to empower rather than hinder young women and girls.

In 1975, only 53.5 per cent of UAE adults were literate, but literacy grew at an average annual rate of 20.93 per cent. (Knoema, 2019). As of 2015, over 93 per cent of the population was literate – with almost equal rates for women and men, demonstrating the effectiveness of the founding vision and the efficacy of efforts to transform the UAE within a short timeframe.

Since 1980, primary education enrolment has risen from 74.5 per cent to nearly 90 per cent. Particularly salient are the numbers around women’s enrolment in secondary and tertiary education: World Bank data shows secondary education enrolment in the UAE rose from

UAE Literacy Rate, ranking 2018:

**Score: 1.000** Best GCC rate  
(WEF, 2018)



Education

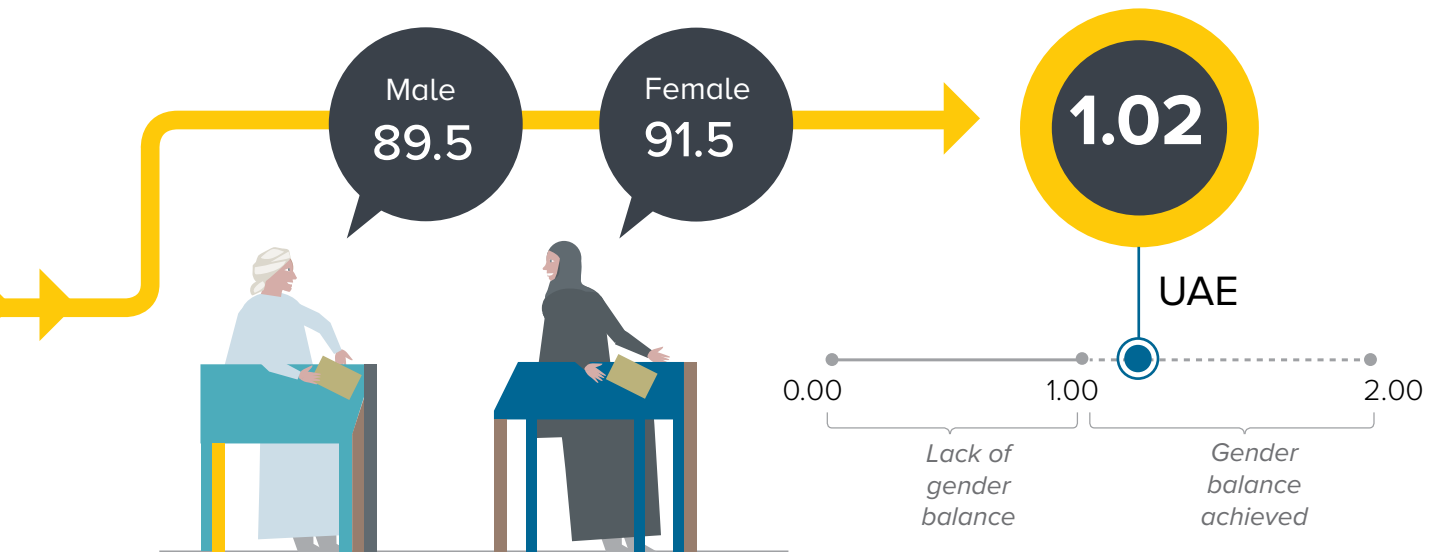
Women in STEM

■ The UAE's space programme has seen rapid growth and expansion in recent years. Women and graduates with science and engineering degrees are increasingly entering the sector. More than a third of applicants to Khalifa University's Master's space programme are women. Approximately two-fifths of Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Programme's staff are women, and the average age of employees is 27. ■

22 per cent in 1973 to 95 per cent in 2009, with the female secondary enrolment rate being amongst the highest in the region. Overall, tertiary education enrolment in the UAE progressed from 1.3 per cent in 1979 to 30 per cent in 2009, but the figures for female enrolment rates were even higher at 41.3 per cent. (World Economic Forum, 2016)

The government continues to emphasise educational attainment and knowledge-building across ages and educational levels.

Literacy: Female to male ratio  
2014-2018



A key area of focus has been the transformation of K to 12 programmes to ensure students are fully prepared to attend universities around the world and to compete in the global marketplace. The UAE Vision 2021, launched in 2010, emphasises the necessity of a top-tier education system.

The UAE approved a federal budget of AED 61.354 billion for the 2020 fiscal year, 14.8 per cent of which (AED 10.4 billion) has been allocated to public higher education and university programmes. The estimated cost

of public education programmes amounts to AED 6.7 billion (9.5 per cent of the budget) while higher and university education is expected to cost AED 3.7 billion (5.3 per cent). (WAM, 2019)

Given continuous commitment and investment, this sector continues to experience rapid expansion across the country. The UAE's education market is expected to grow from \$4.4 billion in 2017 to \$7.1 billion by 2023, according to a 2018 report released by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), titled "Where to Invest Now in GCC

Private Education".

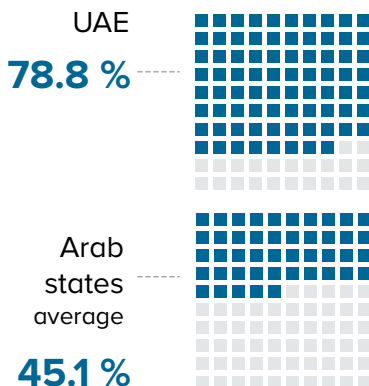
The UAE's emphasis on education and raising accessibility to it for female citizens has positively raised the country's ranking in global competitiveness reports. The World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gender Gap report highlighted the UAE's commitment to closing overall gender gaps and commended the high literacy rate among women in the UAE. More than 66 per cent of graduates from public universities in the UAE are women. (Sadaqat, 2018)

### Population with secondary education

2010-2017

Percentage of females aged 25+

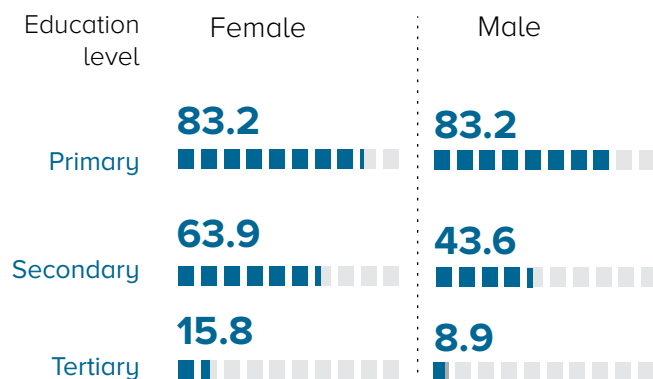
- With secondary education
- Without secondary education

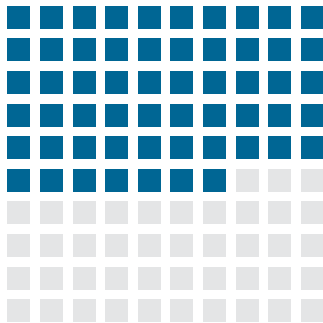


### Educational attainment

Percentage of the population aged 25+ with a specific level of education

- Education level attained
- Education level not attained





# 56%

of STEM graduates  
in the UAE are **women**

■ Women  
■ Men

Additionally, Emirati women complete secondary education at higher rates than men, then enrol in university and post-graduate institutions where they increasingly pursue higher studies in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Strata Manufacturing, an aerospace manufacturing company, serves as a case study of how investments in education, women's empowerment, and disrupting stereotypes of what male versus female jobs 'ought to be', have raised the participation of Emirati women in the UAE, while simultaneously reducing gender gaps in employment and pay.

Strata's Technician Training Programme has graduated over 300 Emiratis since its inception in 2010. UAE nationals represent 51 per cent of Strata's staff, with 86

per cent being women. Moreover, Emirati women comprise 53 per cent of Strata's Team Leaders, as well as 59 per cent of its Team Supervisors. (Strata, 2019)

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU, 2014), key sectors expected to drive the future economy in the UAE include renewable energy, high-tech manufacturing, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, telecommunications equipment, and aerospace and healthcare equipment. Female students are increasingly opting for STEM studies and specialisations in artificial intelligence, and complementing their educational pursuits with internships and field placements in oilfields, power plants, and innovation institutions. ■

Education

## Women in STEM

■ In 2006, the Petroleum Institute (PI) launched its Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) programme with an inaugural cohort of 104 Emirati high school graduates. In 2016, the institute had 2,177 students studying in different faculties of engineering. (EIU, 2014) ■

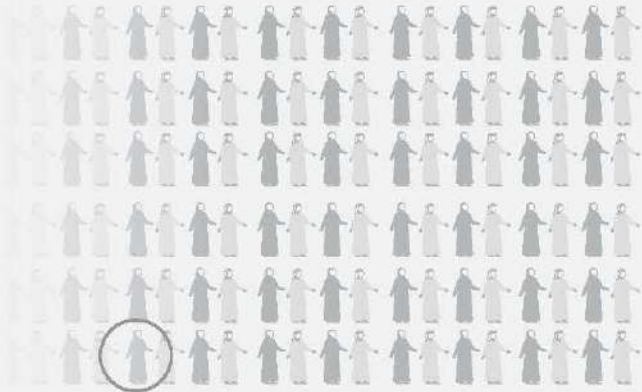


## CASE STUDY

# Strata Manufacturing

## Leading by example

Strata Manufacturing, a manufacturer of aircraft mechanical structures owned by Abu Dhabi's Mubadala Investment Company, aims to manufacture engine parts by 2020. This highlights the UAE leadership's efforts towards the diversification of the economy. Strata's initiatives are an example that defies the stereotypes of professions and gender, encouraging women's participation in the field of aerospace technology.



Requirements:  
Open for UAE nationals  
Gender: Male or female  
Age: 20–35 years old



4 Months

1

### The Strata training programme

While the programme is open to Emiratis regardless of gender, there has been an astounding percentage of Emirati women entering this programme.



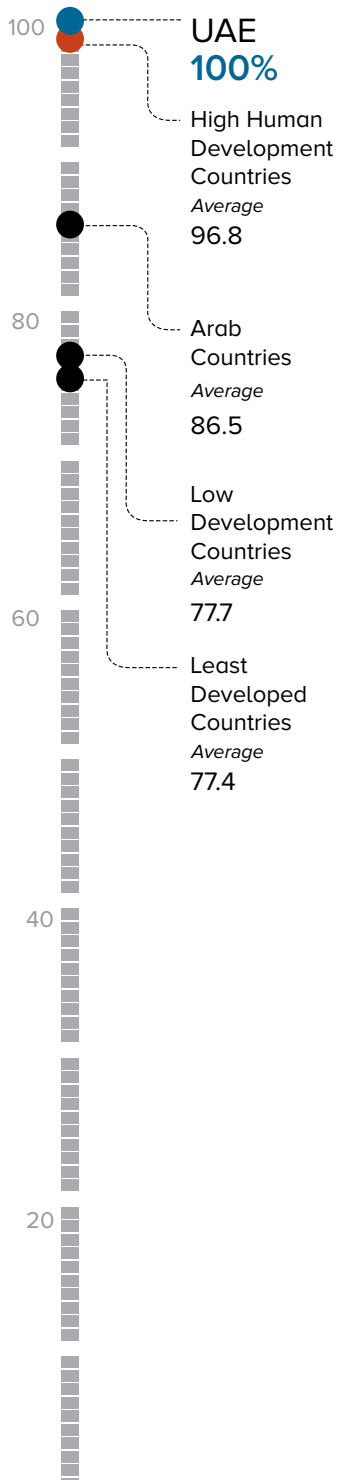
### Aerospace foundation

Technical English, math, material and hardware, basic practical aerospace fundamentals





## Antenatal coverage (%)



2.2

# Healthcare

The UAE's Vision 2021 National Agenda places high emphasis on health – both physical and mental – and aims to provide the highest attainable standard of healthcare across the UAE.

■ The government works in collaboration with health authorities across the country to ensure all public and private hospitals are accredited according to international standards. World-class healthcare provision is a priority for the UAE; however, significant attention and resources are also allocated to illness prevention. The Vision 2021 National Agenda emphasises the importance of preventive medicine and seeks to reduce cancer and lifestyle-related diseases such

as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases to ensure longer, healthier lives for citizens.

With a dual focus on prevention and intervention, the UAE has achieved an efficiency score of 59.7, higher than the United States' 29.6. The life expectancy of UAE residents is 77.1 while healthcare expenditure of GDP is 3.5 per cent, according to Bloomberg's Healthcare Efficiency Report 2018. (Miller and Lu, 2018)



Due to high standards of care across all stages of the healthcare system, life expectancy for women at birth in the UAE was reported at 78.77 years in 2016. Pre-natal and post-natal care are on par with the world's most developed countries: the new-born (neonate) mortality rate has been reduced to 5.54 per 1,000, and infant mortality to 7 per 1,000. Maternal mortality rates have dropped to 0.01 for every 100,000, making the UAE one of the safest countries in the world to give birth.

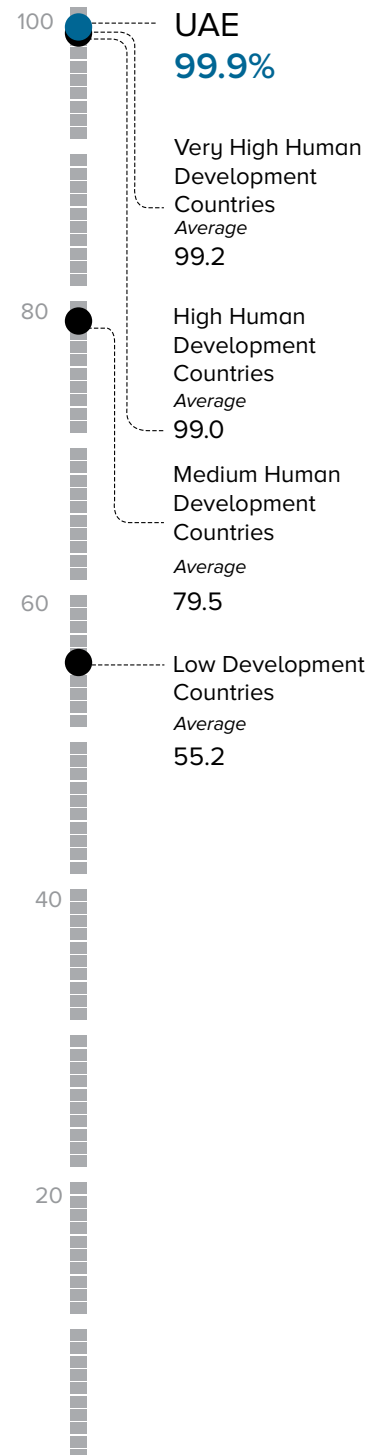
The 2018 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum gives the UAE a high score for sex ratio at birth. (WEF, 2018). According to the National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women, the government

aims to provide quality healthcare services to women, medical attention to those in remote areas, enhance health awareness programmes, and focus on their psychological health.

Health insurance is provided to all UAE nationals in each individual emirate. In Abu Dhabi, the *Thiqa* programme offers full medical coverage to all UAE nationals living in the emirate. The programme gives them complete access to a large number of private and public healthcare providers registered within *Daman's* insurance network. It also includes broader geographical coverage.

*Saada* is a health insurance programme for citizens of Dubai who may not be employed and covered under the mandatory medical insurance provided by employers. It provides insurance coverage exclusively to citizens who do not currently benefit from any government health programme in the emirate. The plan provides treatment through an extensive network of healthcare providers in the private sector and Dubai Health Authority's healthcare centres. ■

**Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel (%)**



## ◆ Cancer cure programme

# Prevention before cure

Fighting cervical cancer among women is a priority of the UAE health authorities. In November 2011, the National Campaign for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer was launched in cooperation with the Health Authority of Abu Dhabi (HAAD), the Dubai Health Authority (DHA), “Tamm” Group for Social Volunteering, and the Emirates Medical Association. In the UAE, cervical cancer ranks as the third most frequent cancer and the third most prevalent cancer among women between 15 and 44 years of age. The cancer detection programme focuses on raising awareness of the importance of early examination and vaccination to ensure prevention of the disease.

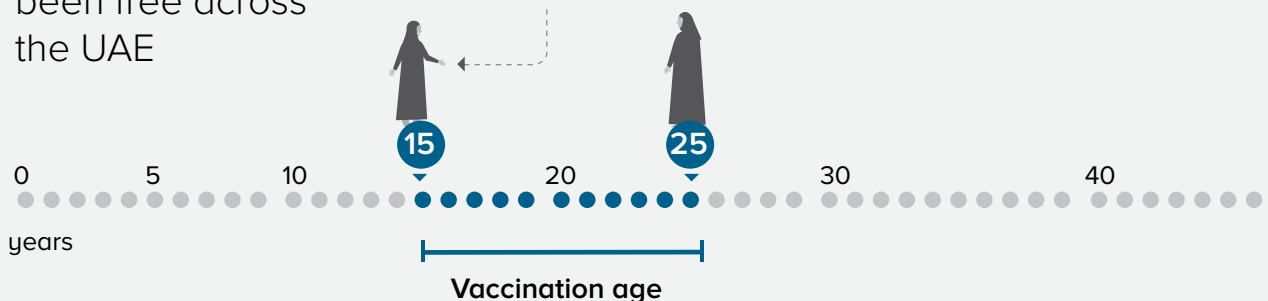
The campaign included several awareness lectures, guidance, and advice on the importance of vaccinating girls between the ages of 15 and 26 years, and the need for Pap tests for women once every three years starting at the age of 25.

The mandatory vaccination programme for schoolgirls was approved by HAAD more than a decade ago and has been effectively implemented in practice, showing a significant reduction in cases of cervical cancer in Abu Dhabi. The DHA has a similar plan that will help in the early prevention of this deadly disease in the UAE.

Since 2017, cervical cancer vaccination has been free across the UAE

To prevent cervical cancer, the UAE government made vaccination for the disease mandatory and free of charge for all schoolgirls in Dubai and the Northern Emirates.

The vaccine is part of the National Immunisation Programme under the Ministry of Health and Prevention (MOHAP).



2.3

## Society

Socio-economic empowerment of all residents is integral to, and interwoven within, Emirati society. There is a unique and specific focus on the empowerment of women.

■ At the federal level, the Ministry of Community Development oversees the UAE's social welfare system. The Ministry makes specific allocations to women's organisations in the country to ensure that all those in need, particularly women in rural areas, have access to an economic safety net, as well as financial and social support. ■

### Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme

■ According to Federal Law No. 2 of 2001, monthly assistance is provided to widows, abandoned women, and Emirati women married to expatriate men who cannot earn a living for reasons beyond their control. The government, through the Sheikh Zayed Housing Programme, provides housing for single Emirati women. Divorced women and widows can also apply to the Abu Dhabi Social Support Programme. (Ministry of Community Development, 2019) ■

### Pink Taxi programme

■ The UAE also provides services that are exclusive to women. The Pink Taxi – driven by women, for women – is a safe, affordable, and accessible transport service operated by the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) for women, children and the elderly. (Dubai Taxi Corporation, 2019) ■

### Pink Emergency Response

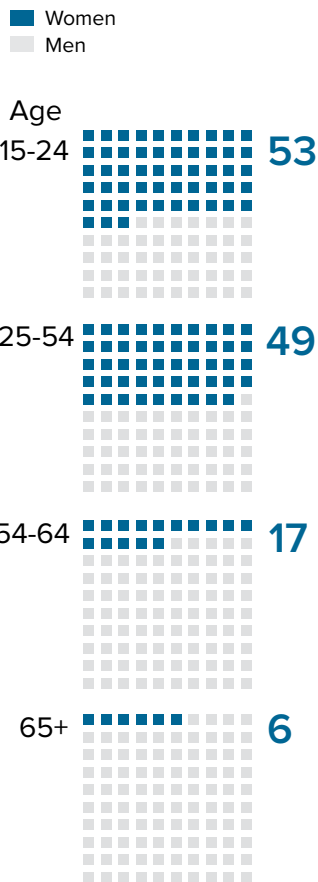
■ Pink Emergency Response vehicles were launched, exclusively for women and children. The drivers of the pink ambulances and paramedics on board are all female. (Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services, 2017) ■

2.4

# Economy

In the UAE, gender balance is now a business imperative. An increasing number of forward-thinking companies are focusing on gender balance and consider it a pivotal lever to improving business performance.

Gender gap in economic participation (%)



Source: WEF, Global Human Capital Report 2017

■ Achieving ideal gender balance is at the core of the mission and vision of the UAE Gender Balance Council. The Council serves as a cross-government coordinating body to drive legislative reforms, strengthen international cooperation, and advise partners on policy changes to advance gender balance in the UAE.

In recent years, the Council has focused on enhancing women’s economic participation. It has taken a two-fold approach, simultaneously driving policy and legislative changes to ensure gender gaps are reduced in the workforce and the broader economy, and devising and running initiatives on the ground to support women through all stages of their careers, ranging from entry-level to senior leadership positions. The efficacy of these

initiatives has been validated by the rising numbers of women graduating from institutions of higher learning, the removal of gender gaps across sectors, and the UAE’s rising ranking on global indices measuring gender balance. Projections from the Council on Foreign Relations indicate that if women’s participation in the UAE were to be at par with men’s economic participation, the nation’s GDP would grow by 16 per cent by the year 2025, which is equal to an overall gain of \$101 billion, or \$10,985 per person. (Council of Foreign Relations, 2018)

### Projections

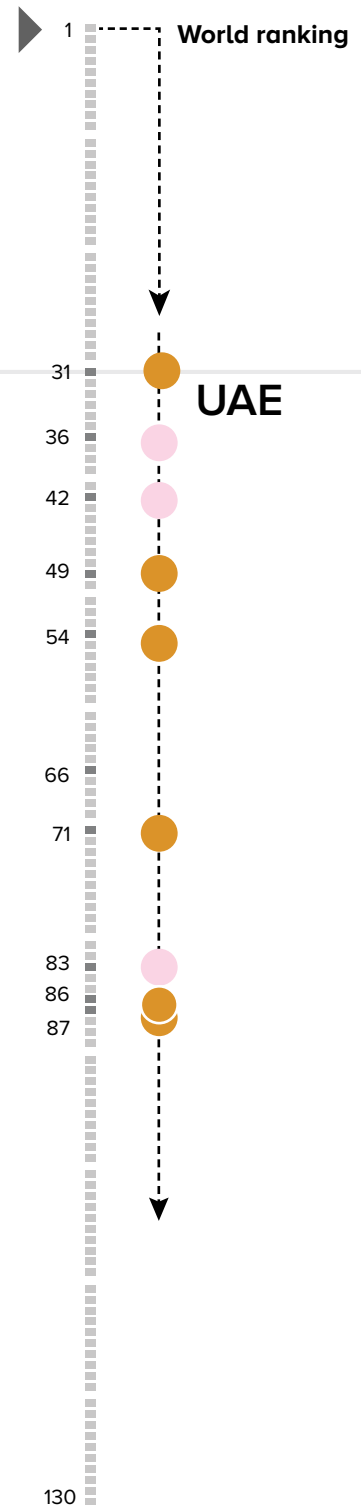
With the right legal framework in place, women in the UAE have excelled in government, engineering, science, healthcare, media, computer technology, law, commerce, business,

### High-skilled employment share

Age 25-64, both genders

#### MENA and GCC

- GCC Countries
- MENA Countries




entrepreneurship, and the energy industry. Since joining the workforce, women’s participation has increased by 400 per cent, according to figures from the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority. (Achkhaniyan, 2018)

There has been a change in human resource policies in several companies to ensure gender balance at the workplace. This encompasses recruitment, promotion, training, and incorporating human resource management policies that help women in the workplace.

The efforts of the authorities are bearing fruit. For example, in 1981, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) had only one female engineer. Today, there are more than 1,700 women workers in the field. (Thomson Reuters, 2016) Women also represent 40 per


cent of the total employees of the Emirates Space Agency.

All of these indicators show the extent of women’s empowerment in the sectors of employment and overall development, especially in the business and economic sector, where UAE businesswomen constitute about 21 per cent of the total number of businesswomen in GCC countries and thus are considered the highest percentage in all GCC countries. (Abu Dhabi Chamber, 2019)



Earlier this year, DP World, along with Airbus, hosted a training session organised by DP World and the Institute of Sustainable Development at Middlesex University Dubai. The session had the aim of training 50 attendees, representing over 25 companies, on UN Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs).

The session expanded on the principles of gender equality and encouraged companies to share ideas about how to design and implement initiatives to attract and retain women in historically male-dominated industries.



## DP World global support

There are several companies in the UAE that recognise the value of a diversified workforce. These entities are committed to gender parity, and value and support women on their teams. One organisation that figures prominently is DP World.

The company partners with leading organisations and local communities to support women in securing their right to education, employment, and health.

DP World undertook many progressive company-wide initiatives that have helped double the number of women employees between 2016 and 2018. The company supports women at various levels to achieve sustainable growth across their career. First, the organisation focuses

on understanding women's requirements. DP World's #ListenToHer campaign seeks feedback from women in order to develop a work culture and policies that encourage gender parity across all levels of the organisation.

Second, it runs a #MentorHer campaign that supports women in the workplace by helping build networks that open opportunities. The aim of this campaign is to empower women through mentoring sessions across DP World's businesses.

Third, the organisation believes in celebrating the success of its employees. #HerStory is yet another popular campaign that helps DP World in realising its sustainability goals. Shipping and logistics have long been considered male-dominated sectors, and DP World aims

to change that by positioning itself as a leader in breaking the barriers and highlighting the role that women can play in this field. It has been a forerunner in contributing to a paradigm shift in the industry by welcoming women employees and giving them leadership roles within the industry.

Finally, DP World helps prepare women for future roles in the shipping business. #InvestInHer is a programme that raises awareness of DP World's business in local communities and helps build a talent pipeline in the future.

Apart from the strong campaigns that are now a part of the human resource policy of the company, DP World partners with external entities to push for women's empowerment in the region. ■



## CASE STUDY

DP World4Women

# From the UAE to the world

Change starts with action. DP World launched the “DPWorld4Women” initiative to empower female employees across its multiple operations.

The initiative is divided into four key areas

- Mentorship ▶ *#MentorHer*
- Promotion ▶ *#HerStory*
- Dialogue ▶ *#ListenToHer*
- Investment ▶ *#InvestInHer*

## #MentorHer

DP World connects industry leaders with young professional women to help those women gain knowledge and advice on how they can achieve their career goals.

49

Mentors and mentees from across the world were paired together.





2.4.1

## Self-made businesswomen

■ The UAE encourages entrepreneurship and sees it as a key component for a sustainable economy. In this context, female entrepreneurship is recognised as an essential source of economic growth in the country.

Women entrepreneurs not only create new jobs but also come up with new and exciting approaches to management, organisation, and business problems.

According to a 2016 Emirates Business Women Council report, businesswomen account for 15 per cent of board seats at the UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry and women-owned businesses contribute 10 per cent of the total value of the private sector in the UAE. (Tashakova, 2016)

Many organisations have been established to support Emirati women entrepreneurs to start their businesses. These include specialised government agencies, business incubators,

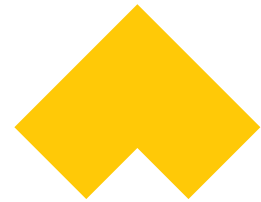
science parks, and NGOs. These women's associations provide social services and help women gain a source of income by becoming an entrepreneur.

In the past few years, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been extensively promoted by the UAE government. Bigger projects like the Khalifa Fund and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders (MREYBL) are helping UAE nationals, including Emirati women, to start, operate, and grow their own enterprises.

As a result of these efforts, the number of Emirati women making a mark in the start-up arena has increased. According to research by Arabnet and Dubai SME, women represented 13 per cent of all founders in 2015.

2.4.2

## Women's active presence in markets



Work participation

### Niche sector in health

■ The success of women is remarkable in education and healthcare. The number of Emirati female doctors increased from 388 in 2013 to 405 in 2014, and again to 450 in 2015. In Dubai, Emirati women accounted for 96.8 per cent of all Emiratis in the nursing profession in 2015, while Emirati female teachers constituted 96.7 per cent of all Emiratis in the teaching profession in 2015-2016. ■

■ Women have a formidable presence in stock markets. They are active participants, investing in the stock market and increasingly occupying senior leadership positions in the asset management industry.

For example, at the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX), the number of Emirati female investors reached 222,000 by the end of the first half of 2019, and the number of shares they hold is about 3.5 billion with a market value of about AED 20 billion, according to statistics released by ADX. Emirati female employees hold more than 58 positions in various market departments in the

exchange, thus accounting for 46 per cent of the total number of employees. (WAM, 2019)

At the Dubai Financial Market (DFM), the total value of female-owned listed securities reached AED 7.8 billion, while the total value of female investors' trading activity reached AED 7 billion in 2018. Women account for 58 per cent of DFM's workforce and run many of its divisions and departments. (Government of Dubai Media Office, 2019) ■





H.E. Essa Kazim, Governor of Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), and H.E. Mona Al Marri, Vice President of the UAE Gender Balance Council, ring the DFM Gender Equality bell as part of International Women's Day celebrations.

2.4.3

## Emirati women in the armed forces

■ Women are now active participants and leaders in previously male-dominated roles such as aviation, military, and defence. Fifteen Emirati women joined the country's first Women's Firefighting Unit at the Sharjah Civil Defence in February 2018.

Women's participation in the military is not a new phenomenon in the UAE. Women have played a role in the armed forces since 1991, when the Khawla Bint Al Azwar Military School was founded in line with the directives of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan to prepare young women for careers in the military. This is the first military academy for women in the UAE and the GCC. The state-of-the-art institution provides world-class training, physical fitness sessions, and leadership development.

Female cadets are given the same training and responsibilities as their male counterparts. They play a significant role in humanitarian assistance and peacekeeping operations in countries that need them.

In April 2019, the first batch of female Arab peacekeepers graduated from a United Nations training programme in the UAE, after going through intensive training, proving their leadership, mental and physical strength, flexibility, teamwork, and integrity – showcasing the qualities of a true soldier.

The military and peacekeeping initiative, operated by UN Women in partnership with the UAE Ministry of Defense and the General Women's Union, involved more than 130 women from the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Yemen, Egypt, Bahrain, and Sudan. The UAE also has four female fighter pilots and has trained more than 30 women to work with the country's special security forces. (WAM, 2019) ■



# Government and politics

Emirati women are well represented in the country's parliament, comprised of the Federal National Council (FNC) and the UAE Cabinet.

■ Women are well represented in government and hold decision-making positions in the UAE. The country's leadership encourages equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions, as the government believes that women bring important perspectives to national decision-making. Women hold many senior positions in government departments and political office.

Prominent women role models in this sector include the former Speaker of the FNC, Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi. She became president of the FNC in November 2015, making her the first woman in the region to lead a national assembly. She previously made history in 2006 as the first elected female to the FNC. In 2011 she was appointed its deputy speaker.

Women make up 50 per cent of the FNC members. The UAE became one of the countries with the highest female representation in parliament, overtaking the UK and US where women make

up about 32 and 19 per cent of Parliament and Congress, respectively, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Achievements like these reflect the country's approach to realizing the full empowerment of Emirati women and its commitment to ensuring women actively participate in national development and have equal opportunities to attain leadership positions at all levels of decision making in political life.

In 2019, there were nine women ministers in the UAE Cabinet, making up over 29 per cent of ministerial roles, one of the highest rates in the region. H.E. Shamma bint Sohail Faris Al Mazrui, the UAE's Minister of State for Youth Affairs, was 22 when she assumed office in early 2016, demonstrating the UAE's commitment to women's empowerment and political inclusion.

Women make up 30 per cent of the diplomatic corps, where they occupy 234 positions, with 42 working on missions abroad,

and seven being ambassadors to the United Nations, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Portugal, Spain, Hong Kong, and Brazil.

In September 2013, Lana Nusseibeh became the UAE's first female Permanent Representative to the UN and the fifth woman in the country to serve as an ambassador. She was elected President of the UN Women Executive Board in 2017, the first Arab female president to lead the Board. Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh was also elected as Vice President for the 2017 United Nations General Assembly, representing the Asia-Pacific Group of Member States. ■

The UAE has nine female ministers.



**H.E. Reem bint Ibrahim  
Al Hashemy**  
Cabinet Member and Minister of  
State for International Cooperation



**H.E. Noura bint Mohammed  
Al Kaabi**  
Cabinet Member and Minister of  
Culture and Youth



**H.E. Hessa bint Essa Buhumaid**  
Cabinet Member and Minister of  
Community Development



**H.E. Jameela bint Salem  
Mesbeh Al Muhairi**  
Cabinet Member and Minister  
of State for Public Education



**H.E. Dr Maitha bint Salem  
Al Shamsi**  
Minister of State



**H.E. Ohood bint Khalfan Al Roumi**  
Minister of State for Government  
Development and the Future



**H.E. Shamma bint Suhail Faris  
Al Mazrui**  
Minister of State for Youth



**H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed  
Saeed Hareb Al Mheiri**  
Minister of State for Food and  
Water Security



**H.E. Sarah bint Yousif Al Amiri**  
Minister of State for Advanced  
Technology



H.E. Sultan bin Saeed  
Al Mansoori

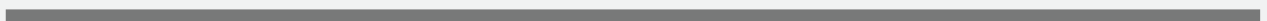
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Former UAE Cabinet Member  
and former Minister of Economy

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# **Creating** **an inclusive** **corporate** **culture**



The Ministry has issued decisions encouraging women to be nominated to boards of directors, and promoted to the top and executive management at public and private companies.

■ The UAE is fast creating a corporate culture conducive to women taking up executive and leadership roles. This change is being brought about as the country pursues robust labour market reforms, including legal amendments to advance women's workplace protection, programmes to bolster the number of women on boards, and policies to support women's mentorship and leadership across sectors.

H.E. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori, former Minister of Economy, believes women are an asset to the economy, and increasing women's involvement and leadership in the country will simultaneously generate returns and empower society.

"The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women has outlined seven internationally

recognised principles. All of them are currently being implemented in the UAE, based on the vision of our wise leadership and the resolutions of the Cabinet.

We are working towards these goals by supporting women to be highly educated and helping them take up their roles in society by offering all the necessary tools and opportunities," he says.

The Ministry is helping different industries commit to women's empowerment with strong initiatives and decisions that promote women's empowerment. "We issued ministerial decisions encouraging women to be nominated to the board of directors, and promoted to the top and executive management at public and private companies."

The Ministry plays an important role in supporting women's empowerment by serving on the board of the UAE Gender Balance

Council. The Ministry also works closely with the private sector to increase opportunities for entry and advancement of women.

The Ministry is also focused on developing the UAE's ecosystem to boost entrepreneurship. Evidence shows that women are increasingly pursuing the entrepreneurship path.

"The UAE's entrepreneurship ecosystem is very different from five years ago. We have an SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) law, which was issued in 2014 and provides key incentives to support UAE nationals in financing and procurement, among others. It also created the current ecosystem and institutions to support competitiveness for SMEs and entrepreneurship. It includes the SME Council, which consists of 15 federal and local SME entities and representatives

from the private sector, which is responsible for all policy coordination and strategy on SME and implementation of incentives for UAE national entrepreneurs. We have the SME National Programme, which provides several major services to support UAE entrepreneurs. Today, the UAE is the leading Arab country in supporting the spirit of entrepreneurship, and we are the 11<sup>th</sup> globally, according to the World Bank's Doing Business Report, as we strive to be among the top five countries in the world," highlights H.E. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori.

As SMEs get a boost in the country, the role of women entrepreneurs is becoming important. The Ministry is working with its national and local strategic partners through the National Agenda KPIs on entrepreneurship and SMEs to increase the incentives and minimise procedures and costs for new entrepreneurs, especially women.

"We've received very positive feedback from the Departments of Economic Development throughout the country, and we are working on implementing more ideas and projects. Training programmes have been rolled out to help entrepreneurs navigate the business environment. We participate in international SME conferences that help entrepreneurs exchange and gain knowledge and expertise on many challenges that SMEs usually face," adds H.E. Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansoori. ■





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H.E. Nasser bin Thani  
Juma Al Hamli

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UAE Cabinet Member and Minister of  
Human Resources and Emiratisation

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# **Empowering women through innovative and supportive human resources efforts**

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Not employing women or investing in their capabilities is a missed economic and social opportunity.

■ Empowering women in the workforce doesn't just happen by increasing their headcount. Companies need to think out-of-the-box and improve the way they hire and promote women, and this can only be accomplished by a multidimensional approach, says H.E. Nasser bin Thani Juma Al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation.

With each passing year, Emirati women rise in the corporate world in the United Arab Emirates and continue to gain ground at every level along the way. They benefit from support at all levels, are not discriminated against in promotions, have equal access to professional opportunities, and now assume leadership positions, becoming role models at the top tiers of big companies and government organisations. Today, Emirati women are highly

educated. In 2018, the UAE achieved outstanding results in the global indices on female enrolment in higher, secondary, and high school education. This is a testimony to the ambition and capabilities of Emirati women, who lead organisations and entities and contribute significantly to the economic advancement of the country.

In 2018, the Dubai Women Establishment and PricewaterhouseCoopers published a report titled "Power of Choice". The report indicates that 80 per cent of women who participated in the study are determined to work and pursue a successful and fulfilling career.

"Emirati women have undeniably fascinated us all with their achievements in the fields of judiciary, diplomacy, and politics. As of 2019, we have nine female

ministers, a female President of the Federal National Council, and seven female ambassadors representing the UAE abroad. We have also witnessed an unmatched desire, at least in the Gulf, from Emirati women to join all kinds of jobs that require specific scientific knowledge, whether in the field of astronomy or flying large aircraft that heavily depend on mastering advanced technological systems.

"There are several names that come to my mind, who have gained immense popularity - the first Emirati woman to fly an Airbus who was just 26 years old; or the first Emirati woman to join the UAE Air Force. There are many others in the fields of industry, engineering, and energy. I expect the labour market to soon witness an increase in the overall participation of Emirati women

in the private sector,” H.E. Nasser bin Thani Juma Al Hamli, Minister of Human Resources and Emiratisation proudly states.

The Minister proposes a three-fold approach to empowering women. “First, encourage women and provide them the opportunity to access employment. Second, when they enter the workplace, an enabling environment should be in place that supports upward mobility and career progression through training, mentorship, and professional development courses. Finally, I believe, rules should be in place to ensure that work obligations do not impede women’s commitments, but rather promote a work-life balance for them,” he explains.

Commenting on prospective obstacles that may hinder a woman’s upward career progression, H.E. explains employers have a responsibility to support women to simultaneously work and be able to meet family commitments.

“One of the main obstacles hindering women and girls from joining the private sector is geographical location. Thus came the decision to introduce innovative employment, which efficiently utilises technology and provides a suitable workspace for employees. The Ministry lent all necessary logistical support to create such spaces and remove the hassle of long commutes for women.”

Remote working increasingly supports personal and

professional growth, and harmony across the country.

“Indeed, this initiative has been successful in creating job opportunities across the Emirates and especially in areas located farther away from the two economic centres – Abu Dhabi and Dubai – making it possible for women to work from home or from designated spaces within their emirate, without the need to travel or commute long distances.”

The system has also been successful in creating job opportunities for women whose social obligations, responsibilities, and other commitments may serve as barriers to entering the conventional workforce.

“With the objective of empowering and enabling women, and based on our deep belief that raising future generations is a responsibility to be borne by society as a whole and not solely by women, we decided to implement nurseries at the workplace. All ministries, authorities, public departments, and government entities where the number of married female employees reaches 50 are bound to provide this service at a reasonable cost and also at an excellent quality. Furthermore, the maternity leave for women working in the public sector has been increased to three months of paid leave,” he says.

“We have further adopted policies that support and recognise self-employment

for females while providing them with all the necessary professional advice, guidance, training, and funding to ensure their success. Moreover, the recent decision to align both public and private sector holidays was adopted with the aim of making the private sector a favourable and attractive option for all job seekers,” comments H.E., referring to the legalisation of flexible working hours and part-time employment models across the country.

While reducing the barriers to growth, the Ministry is also working hard to equip women with all necessary tools that can put them on a progressive career path.

“Providing knowledge and training facilities can ensure that women progress and succeed at the workplace. There’s a huge responsibility, which lies on us as decision-makers in the government, to provide and offer professional guidance and advice to all job-seekers. We are trying to do this through Tawteen 360 Student Forums, which are organised by the Ministry, under the patronage of the Knowledge and Human Resources Council. The Ministry has also entered into several memorandums of understanding with various training institutions in the country, which helps us in implementing training programmes and in equipping job-seekers in the private sector, especially women, with the right set of skills and know-how. This is reflected in the increasing number of women





taking up jobs.”

Even as the Ministry pushes for women’s empowerment on all fronts, there are areas where more needs to be done.

“After closely studying international best practice, the importance of protecting working women on maternity leave, and prohibiting their termination during this period or due to it, has

been brought to our attention,” he elaborates.

The Ministry also urges the private sector to hire more women and work towards the gender balance goals that the country has set for itself.

H.E. Al Hamli reiterates that private companies should establish a professional pool founded on the principle

of gender diversity. This is necessary for the growth and sustainability of the private sector and not simply a social obligation for companies to fulfil.

“We conducted a study with Gallup that investigated the impact of gender diversity on the overall performance of companies in the hospitality sector. The study concluded that companies with higher gender



diversity earned a net profit approximately 58 per cent higher than those with a skewed gender proportion, whether it was females or males only. The study also highlighted that gender diversity increases the levels of creativity and motivation among workers.

“Regardless of profits made, not employing women (who are qualified and equipped

for these jobs), or investing in their capabilities, is a waste of available human resources. My advice to the private sector is to take advantage of and utilise female capabilities.

I would like to emphasise once again that establishing gender diversity, increasing the participation of women in the labour market, and placing them in leadership positions

is a responsibility to be jointly borne by the government and private sector institutions. I am of the total conviction that we will not diverge from bearing this responsibility,” he affirms. ■



H.E. Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy

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UAE Cabinet Member and Minister of State  
for International Cooperation

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# **Women leading the way to make Expo 2020 a grand success**

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One of the key pillars of Expo 2020 Dubai's SDG programme is "women and girls", which will come to life through a series of strategic dialogues and a visitor journey that will take place in the Opportunity Pavilion.

■ As the UAE gears up for Expo 2020, women are working hard on the ground to make this event a grand success. H.E. Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Cabinet Member and Minister of State for International Cooperation, the trailblazer behind Dubai's successful bid to host Expo 2020, says women are key players in all aspects of hosting this event. The gender balance within the Expo team is notable, not just within the ranks of Team UAE, but amongst the commissioners general of participating countries as well.

According to H.E. Al Hashemy, Expo 2020 Dubai has committed a significant contribution to advancing the global Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) discussion, raising awareness of the issues and leaving behind a legacy that ensures that all future events will make GEWE

issues integral to the themes that hosting countries opt for.

In this context, one of the key pillars of Expo 2020 Dubai's SDG programme is "women and girls", which will come to life through a series of strategic dialogues and a visitor journey that will take place in the Opportunity Pavilion, she says.

The country is committed to curating a women's pavilion. "Since the hosting of the first Expo in 1851, a dedicated space addressing women's issues has only happened three times before. We will be hosting a 'women's pavilion' that is distinguished from its predecessors in its inclusivity and its universal messaging on the contributions of women to societies worldwide. One of our key objectives in this endeavour is to recognise and raise awareness of female role models

and the potential and value that women contribute across all sectors, which will invariably impact attitudes towards women's employment."

Moreover, a significant amount of Expo 2020 Dubai's content and programming will also highlight the important contributions that women have and continue to make to societies around the world. Celebrating the successes of women worldwide, Team UAE will mark International Women's Day as one of six special days at Expo, in addition to marking the anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Additionally, female entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to display their products or services at this global platform, and will also

have the opportunity to address the gender-specific business challenges they face. “Through Expo Live, female entrepreneurs in marginalised communities will continue to have the backing of Expo 2020 Dubai, with grants provided to projects chosen among innovations in water management, renewable energy, healthcare, and education.”

H.E. Al Hashemy believes Expo 2020 will be different from what the world has ever seen. “We won the bid because it was not just about us – Dubai or UAE. We are keen on writing our narrative and telling the world who we are and what we stand for as Emiratis, but we bid on the premise that it will be an Expo for the entire world. We promised to be the most diverse and international event in the history of World Expos, carrying ourselves with the assurance of a global convening hub.

“As we head towards 2020, we continue to power the formidable energy you see on the Expo site with this strong clarity of purpose. The achievements we have accomplished are due to the tremendous support we have received from the leadership, business communities, and

citizens from across the country and beyond. We have promised a concrete programme of global innovation, called Expo Live, to create a tangible impact on communities around the world. We have also offered an inspirational theme, going beyond any one specific issue to focus on the way we come together to solve all challenges. The catchphrases ‘cross-fertilisation’, ‘one country, one pavilion’ and ‘an Expo for every country’ are being bandied around for a good reason. Even so, the true impact of Expo 2020 Dubai largely depends on the actual collaboration and the fruitful partnerships that are being forged and which hold the keys to our collective future,” she explains.

Having been a regular in international corridors of power, H.E. Al Hashemy hopes to see more work being done to help create gender parity on a global level.

According to her, better legal and regulatory empowerment is needed. Women should be allowed to own or inherit property, have access to credit or income, be free from job discrimination, and become

important decision-makers. These are vital factors that need to be addressed across the globe as some countries around the world face issues in this regard.

Education should be made mandatory for girls everywhere. The UAE is a role model as the country has announced its commitment to provide a financial contribution of AED 367 million (\$100 million) to the Global Partnership for Education over the next three years to improve learning outcomes for 870 million young people in 89 developing countries.

Women’s health and safety is also another important area of focus. Through several projects and programmes in more than 25 countries, the UAE has worked to improve the health and wellbeing of children and mothers by providing vaccinations, establishing health centres and specialised clinics, conducting awareness campaigns, and supplying essential foods to pregnant and lactating women, as well as to children under five.

“Empowerment of women and girls is one of the three global thematic focus areas of the UAE Foreign Assistance Policy



for 2017-2021, and one of the strategic focus areas of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC). By 2021, the UAE Foreign Assistance Policy will commit up to 100 per cent to bilateral and multilateral international development investments to either target or integrate gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women and girls,” she said.

Through the ‘1,000 Women Leaders’ programme, the UAE will also provide training and empowerment opportunities to

women, honing their skills and aptitudes to become leaders in their chosen sectors of activity, making the stereotyping of gender roles and abilities a thing of the past. Additionally, the UAE is among the main contributors to the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (WeFi) by the World Bank, with a financial pledge amounting to \$50 million. It is estimated that the initiative will unlock more than \$1 billion in financing for women entrepreneurs.

The UAE has small ventures on the R&D front as well,

co-sponsoring with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation the Lancet Series on Gender Equality, Norms and Health. With first-hand knowledge of the advantages of promoting gender equality, the UAE will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that other women around the world can feel the same sense of appreciation and partnership.

As a woman, H.E. Al Hashemy hopes that young girls understand their rights and take control of their lives – in their households, communities, and societies. “The best predictor



of a state's peacefulness is not its level of wealth, not its level of democracy or ethnoreligious identity; it is how well its women are treated. In a world where women still face both direct and subconscious discrimination, anything that prevents their abilities to develop the social, economic, and cultural life in their countries is holding them and their societies back."

Her views on women's empowerment have been shaped by her experiences in the UAE, and she attributes them to her personal and professional

role models. The foremost on the list is the Mother of the Nation, H.H. Sheikha Fatima.

"Since the days of the late Sheikh Zayed, our leadership has emphasised the important role that women play in all aspects of our society and has stressed our roles as equal partners to men in our nation's progress and development. The commitment to translate the concepts and ideals of women's empowerment into reality and ensure opportunity and access to women from all walks of society has instilled in me, and I think a lot of women

across the UAE, a conviction that nothing is impossible.

"The growth, stability and successes we are experiencing in the UAE have largely come from how our country's leaders are embracing the fundamental truth that women and men are equal partners in society. In the UAE, our leadership has 'led by example' so that Emirati men and women are allies in this equation," H.E. Al Hashemy says. ■





H.E. Hessa bint Essa  
Bhumaid

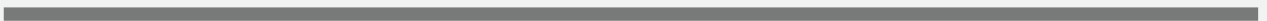
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UAE Cabinet Member and Minister  
of Community Development

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**Happy families  
build happy  
nations**



If our country finds a UAE national with the potential and drive to develop and progress, then leaders will support them to fulfil their dreams and advance the goals of the country.

■ The Ministry of Community Development empowers citizens by providing community-based services and support.

A core pillar of the Ministry is ensuring women, children, and families are supported, with the ultimate goal of nurturing strong and stable societies.

“When the UAE launches a policy or programme for space exploration, it also launches a national policy for senior Emiratis, a national family policy, and works to achieve community cohesion. Both are equally important for wholesome growth and on par with each other. It is vital to empower women for sustainable development, growth, and prosperity, which is what we need to achieve the goals of the 2030 Plan for Sustainable Development,” says H.E. Hessa bint Essa Buhmaid, Minister of Community Development.

Recently, the Ministry has adopted national policies that positively impact women. The scheme of ‘family development’ empowers women, whether they are senior Emiratis, mothers, wives, or potential brides. One of the initiatives is ‘Taaluf Family Counselling’, a service offered through personal interaction, e-chat, or on the phone. This service is for all community members but attracts large numbers of women. Another initiative, ‘Form an Emirati Family’ is for young male and female Emiratis who are about to get married, whereas ‘Eddad’ prepares this generation for marriage and how to raise a family.

The Productive Families Department at the Ministry of Community Development encourages women entrepreneurs. The number of productive Emirati families registered with the Ministry

has reached 2,500 and they receive continuous support with marketing and training services, and 94 per cent of the registered productive family projects are run by businesswomen, under an initiative called ‘Al Sanaa’.

‘Women of Determination’ also receive support through the recruitment platform provided by the National Policy for Empowering People of Determination. Initiatives include ‘Mashagel’ for People of Determination, the ‘Qelada’ project, and ‘Bracelets-Asawer’ workshops which give girls with intellectual disabilities the opportunities to use their creative talents. The Ministry adopts these initiatives and programmes for a better future for Emirati women.

The UAE has been on a path to empowering women since its founding. “This started with the vision outlined by the late Sheikh

Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Later, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, reinforced the role of women in various fields," she adds.

H.E. Buhumaid fondly talks of H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, President of the General Women's Union, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and Supreme President of the Family Development Foundation, who has become the role model for all Emirati women.

"Our rights are enshrined in the Constitution. Today, Emirati women occupy leadership positions in any sector that you can name. The Cabinet comprises of 29 per cent women; they also constitute 33 per cent of decision-makers in big organisations; and 15 per cent of board directors of government institutions," she says.

The achievements of women in the UAE are commendable at many levels. "We have the highest enrolment percentage in higher education. Women comprise 66 per cent of employees working in the public sector; they represent us not only as ambassadors in different countries, but also in

the United Nations. We have a woman heading the Council of UAE Scholars, as well as the first woman in the Gulf and the Arab world to head the parliament and the Federal National Council. Emirati women's savings exceed AED 50 billion and they own 33 per cent of total projects that generate revenues exceeding USD 100,000," elaborates H.E. Buhumaid.

"Our success is the result of the forward-looking vision of our leadership, which gives Emirati women, senior citizens, children or employees, married and unmarried, as well as women of determination, the care and attention they need. This approach will help us achieve the objectives of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in particular the goal of reducing inequality within and between countries," she states.

H.E. Buhumaid credits her achievements to the wise leadership of the UAE for whom the citizens are the focus and the priority. "If our country finds a UAE national who has the potential to develop and progress, the leaders will support them with possibilities to fulfil their dreams and the goals of the country."

She believes men and women should work together for a better future. "We believe in balance; we understand the importance of the role of a man in a woman's life and vice versa." ■







Legislation,  
policies, **and**  
**best practices**

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PART

3

“Every citizen shall be free to choose their occupation, trade, or profession within the limits of the law.”

**UAE Constitution, Article 34**





**“Emirati women have the capabilities and the ambition to excel and contribute to the UAE’s ongoing development and prosperity.**

**The UAE government is establishing policies and innovative solutions to enhance female participation across all sectors, and to empower them to play their part in the country’s future growth and achieve their aspirations. This comes in line with our national objective to position the UAE as one of the best countries in the world by 2071.”**



H.H. Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum,  
President of the UAE Gender Balance Council and  
President of Dubai Women Establishment (The Power  
of Choice report by Dubai Women Establishment).

Many initiatives in recent years have marked a strong shift in the approach to women's empowerment from welfare to development and active inclusion at all levels. These initiatives have increased women's participation in parliament, eliminated gender pay gap by enforcing legislation that mandates equal pay in private and government sectors, helped working mothers stay in the work force, and allowed them to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

■ The importance of providing equal opportunities to both men and women in the development process is supported by a strong political will. The leadership in the UAE strives to remove all legislative, cultural, societal, and administrative obstacles that might present women with challenges.

According to Article 14 of the UAE Constitution, equality, social justice, ensuring safety, and equal opportunity for all citizens are the pillars of society.

Women in the UAE have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

The Constitution recognises and guarantees that women have the full right to pursue

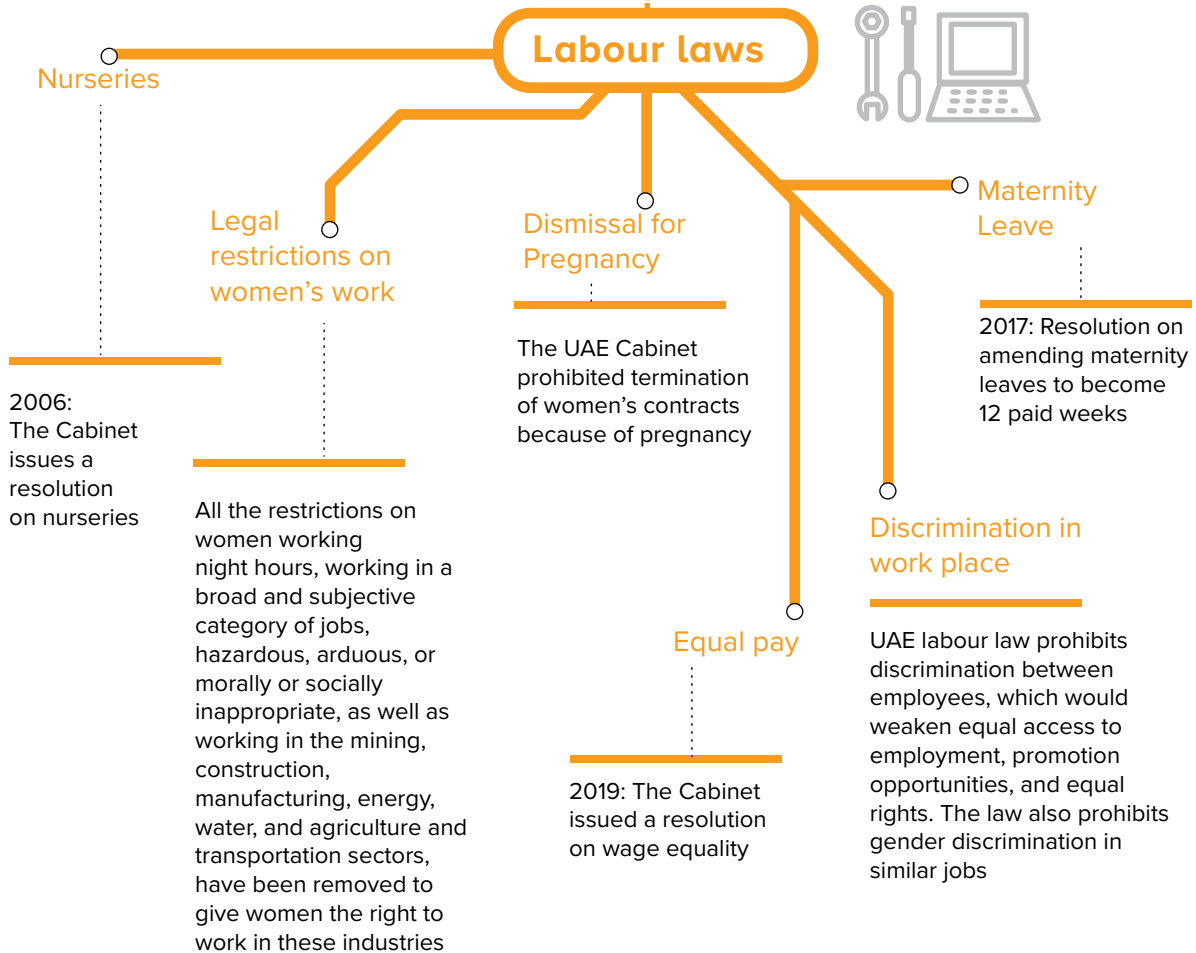
an active role in society. This Constitution is based on the UAE Founding Father Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan's strong belief that "women have the right to work everywhere" and "like men, women deserve the right to occupy high positions according to their capabilities and qualifications".

In 2018, the UAE Cabinet adopted a new package of national legislative policies and initiatives to empower Emirati women. The package provides practical methods to strengthen women's leadership roles and representation in society across all fields at local, regional, and global levels. The new initiatives aim to increase women's representation in judicial and legal affairs, while the legislation and policies axes seek to include more female participation in the UAE's judicial system as well as other leadership positions in business.

In addition to national and local efforts to promote gender balance, the UAE is applying a gender lens on its international agenda. The country regularly participates in and hosts international conferences focused on women's issues and has signed all international treaties on protecting the rights of women, including the Convention concerning Night Work of Women Employed in Industry (1982), the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention (1982), the Equal Remuneration Convention (1996), the Convention on Minimum Age (1996), Child Protection Convention (1997), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 2004. (UAE Embassy in US, 2019) ■

# Gender Legislations in the United Arab Emirates

The Constitution of the UAE ensures women's rights and enshrines the principle of equality between men and women in line with their respective nature, upholding their access to education, jobs, benefits, and holding government offices



## Judiciary system

The government issued a Federal Decree in 2019 on equality in representation in the judiciary sector



## Discrimination

The UAE Combating Discrimination and Hatred Law prohibits all gender-based discrimination

## Political participation



### Ministerial

Men and women have the right to hold cabinet posts (27.3% female representation)

### Parliamentary

Emirati women must occupy 50% of the Federal National Council's (Parliament) seats

### Voting system

Men and women have had the right to vote and stand for elections in the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates since the beginning of the electoral experience in 2006

### Women on boards

2012: The Cabinet issued a resolution on women's representation on the boards of federal entities and institutions

2015: A resolution issued by the Securities and Commodities Authority on the representation of women in companies operating in securities markets



**Personal status**

**Head of a household**

The definition of the head of household has been amended to remove restrictions on a woman becoming “head of household” or “head of family”

**Leaving for work**

Article (71) from the Personal Status Law has been amended to give women the right to leave home for work without any permission

**Choose where to live**

Article (75) from the Personal Status Law has been amended so that both wife and husband can choose where to live

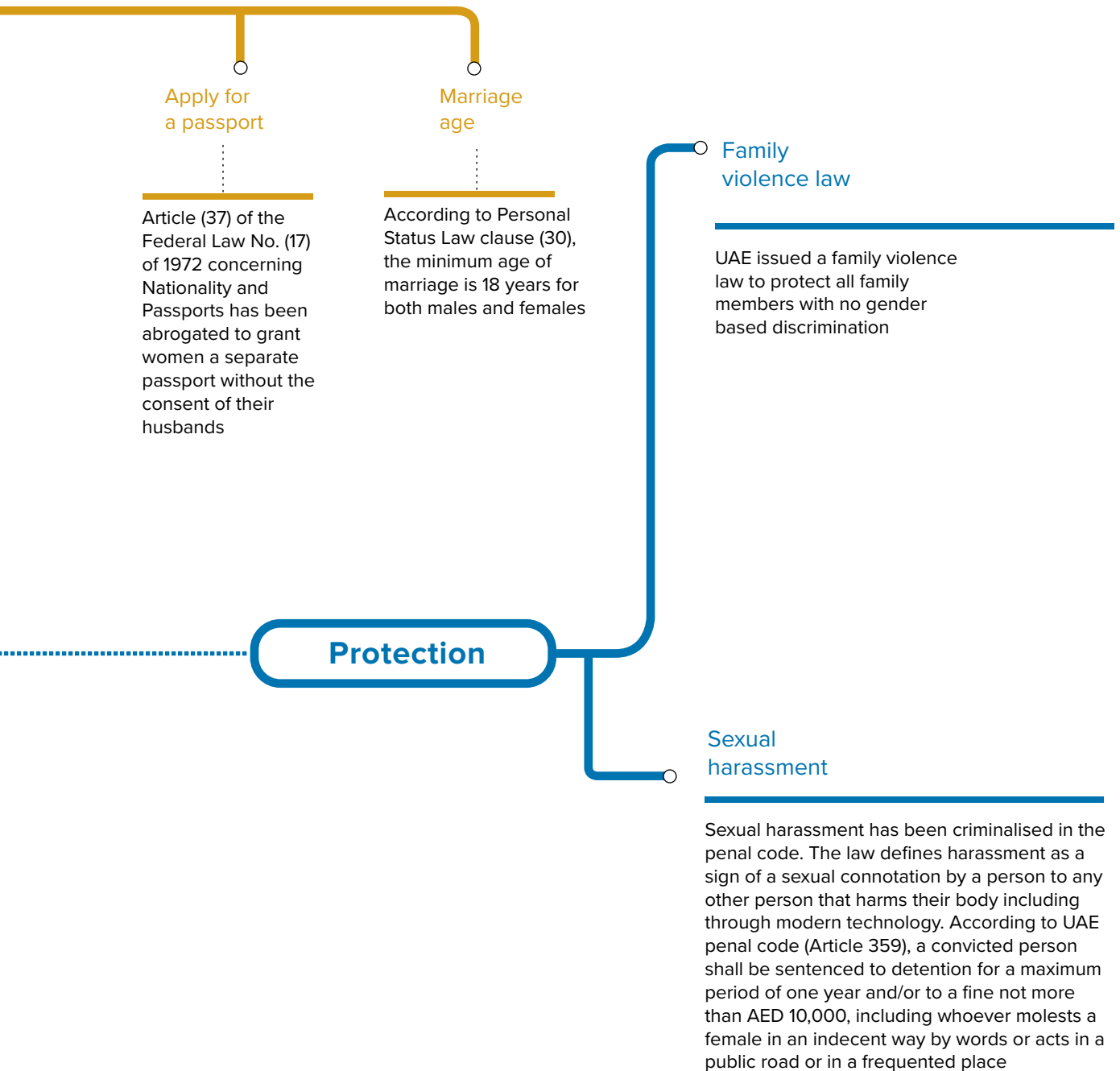
**Travel outside the country**

There are no restrictions in the UAE laws when it comes to women traveling alone internationally

**Access to credit**



2019: The UAE Central Bank issued a notice to all banking and financial institutions in support of the UAE’s objectives of achieving gender balance and removing discrimination. Banks and other financial institutions are required to provide services to their individuals and business-owner customers, equally with no discrimination



3.1

## Equal pay policy

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■ In 2018, the UAE Cabinet approved the issuance of the Law on Equal Wages and Salaries for Men and Women in recognition of the need for both genders to receive equal pay.

The Cabinet's approval of the Law on Equal Wages and Salaries is in line with the government's objective to ensure the protection of women's rights and recognise their role in the national development process. ■



3.2

# 50/50 Federal National Council

Emirati women are equally represented in the UAE's parliament. Under the directives of H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, female representation in the Federal National Council (FNC) was raised to 50 percent.

The Presidential directive aims to position the UAE among the top countries worldwide in women's parliamentary representation. This made the UAE the fourth ranked country globally in the number of women in parliament, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

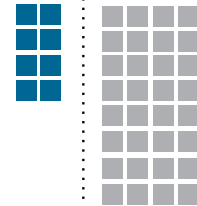
This step reflects the country's objective of achieving full empowerment of Emirati women, and stresses their prominent role in all vital sectors of the UAE.

Dr. Amal Abdullah Al Qubaisi, former Speaker of the FNC, stated: "The trendsetting initiatives launched by the UAE leadership to empower women are models to be copied, not only for fair legislation to ensure women's rights, but also to unleash women's potential and double their contributions to the sustainable and comprehensive development drive".

Female Male

Before

22.5% 77.5%



8 32

40



Now

50% 50%



20 20

40



## 3.3

# Women on boards programme

■ Emirati women are increasingly being represented in C-suites and corporate boards across the UAE. It is now mandatory to have women on the board of every government agency in the UAE.

This requirement is the first of its kind in the Arab world and was one of the objectives of the 'Women on Boards' initiative. This initiative was launched to advance female participation in decision-making and contribute to achieving UAE's target of 20 per cent female presence in corporate boardrooms of listed companies by 2020.

The 'Women on Boards' initiative is a collaboration between Dubai Women Establishment, Hawkamah

Institute for Corporate Governance, and Mudara Institute of Directors.

This important government-driven initiative identifies policy barriers restricting the participation of women at senior executive levels. This initiative also strives to overcome these barriers, develop a communication strategy aimed at increasing awareness on gender diversity in local and regional boardrooms, train women investors, directors, managers, and other stakeholders on the foundations of good corporate governance, and mentor the next generation of women leaders. ■



👁 | H.E. Hamad Buamim, President and CEO of Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and H.E. Mona Al Marri, Vice President of the UAE Gender Balance Council, awarding women executives as part of the Women on Boards initiative



Women on Boards Initiative  
by Dubai Women Establishment

# Achieving gender diversity in decision-making positions

The objectives of the initiative are achieved through three phases





3.4



# The National Corporate Childcare Project

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■ The UAE is the first country to have passed a federal decree mandating a law to establish childcare centres at the workplace.

In 2006, the Council of Minister's Decision No. 19 led to the establishment of childcare centres that provide care for the children of female workers in government departments and public institutions with 50 or more female employees.

The directive to establish onsite nurseries aims to support working women and allow them to be more productive by providing them with the comfort of having their children in a nearby facility that offers a safe and nurturing environment.

The National Corporate Child Care Project (NCCP) was launched in 2009 by the Dubai Women Establishment as part of its strategic mission to ensure that women enjoy a working environment that is more

conducive to the successful maintenance of a healthy work-life balance.

This initiative was based on the National Childcare Standards, which supports the UAE federal strategy to improve the quality and standards of education at all levels in the public and private sectors.

The Standards aim to define the minimum acceptable qualitative and quantitative requirements that should be provided by all types of childcare settings; to offer a safe and healthy environment that fosters children's physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and emotional development.

In 2009, Dubai Customs inaugurated the first model nursery for the children of working women in all Dubai government departments. Since its launch, many government entities have adopted this policy by opening childcare facilities

within their premises, benefiting 1,800 mothers. To date, 52 nurseries have been set up across federal institutions.

The government also carries out initiatives to make women aware of their rights and encourage them to ask for childcare centres at their workplace. ■



## The Childcare Centre at the Ministry of Presidential Affairs

Based in Abu Dhabi, this Centre provides the highest standard of care in the emirate. The Centre started in 2011 with 45 children in two classes. Today, it operates from its new premises, which was inaugurated in 2017 with a capacity for 100 children.

The Centre was highly rated in all aspects after winning the coveted 'Best Nursery Award' in 2018, which is part of the Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak Award for Motherhood and Childhood. According to Amna Abdulla Al Shehhi, Director of the Childcare Centre at the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, "it was like the Oscars in childhood care".

This Centre accepts the children of female and male employees working for the Ministry of Presidential Affairs, and ensures every possible support is available to young parents working in government.

The Centre maintains high levels of excellence in many areas: its educational programme, children's health and safety, physical environment, staffing arrangements, relationships with

children, and partnerships with families and communities.

The Centre complies with the guidelines of the Creative Curriculum for preschool, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that helps children learn through exploration.

"We don't give answers to our kids; we let them find it. This is a concept where the emphasis is on exploration and discovery as a way of learning. We have 43 goals to meet in one year, and the teachers plan their work around these targets and try to achieve them by the end of the academic year".

"These goals are tweaked according to the calibre and requirement of each child. There is no one formula that fits all. This approach helps us raise confident and creative children, and they take with them lifelong critical thinking skills when they are ready for the next phase in life," explains Al Shehhi.

There are five classes in the Centre, which accept children from three months to four years



مرآة  
Mirror



of age. An optimal student-teacher ratio is maintained, keeping in mind the number of children in a class. For example, in Grade 1, there are three teachers and four assistants for 20 children.

All classrooms have different zones for different activities, including feeding and changing areas. The teachers are Emiratis and have received specialised training in early childhood studies from Zayed University.

Over the years, the Centre has become what Al Shehhi calls “the centre for happiness in the Ministry”. “We have so many special occasions and the entire Ministry comes to participate, whether they have children in the nursery or not.”

The Centre has made long-lasting relationships with the children and their parents, even after they graduate. The walls of the building are adorned

with photos of alumni and Al Shehhi proudly speaks of their achievements as they progress through the education system.

Ayesha Al Khatri, an employee of the Scholarship Department at the Ministry, calls the centre “a blessing in her life.”

“This Centre has been a lifesaver for me. I’m very attached to my children and I’m happy and blessed to have the privilege of bringing them to work with me. All my six kids have been a part of this nursery – three have graduated, and three are still here,” she says.

“I have three-month-old twins here, and I’m happy that I can check on them whenever I want and can participate in all their activities. It’s very important that a mother stays close to her kids during these formative years and I’m glad I have this opportunity from my employer.”

“The Centre is not just a nursery where I can keep my children during work hours. The teachers here have built the character of my children, they’ve taught them empathy and respect, which are very important characteristics in Emirati culture,” she adds.

The centre is equipped with various feeding rooms, and has a laundry room with separate washers and dryers for each classroom. A doctor assigned to the nursery makes four monthly visits to monitor the children and ensure they are meeting all their milestones. Individualised medical reports are prepared for each child, with the option of having discussions with parents to talk about any anomalies that arise.

The Centre also strongly emphasises outdoor activity and play, healthy eating and wellbeing, and awareness of individualised needs and diets. ■



## Dewa childcare centres

Progressive companies support new parents by providing daycare for infants and young children in the workplace, based on evidence and recognition that working parents need to know that their children are receiving the best possible childcare, ideally in close proximity to their workplace.

The Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) is a pioneer in this area. The company strives to ensure that a working mother's happiness, her job satisfaction, and career prosperity are not

mutually exclusive. By helping 249 children stay close to their mothers, DEWA scores high on improving employee morale, lowering turnover, and attracting a wider variety of applicants.

DEWA's first childcare centre was established in 2010 at its head office, with an initial cohort of 37 children. The second centre to open was set up at its Al Quoz branch in 2013, with 42 children. The biggest one to date, established in Warsan, opened its doors in 2015 with a capacity of 102 children. The



latest childcare centre opened in Al Ruwaiya in 2019 and accommodated 68 children.

DEWA's childcare centres are in line with the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 19 of 2006 regarding the establishment of such centres in government departments and public institutions for the provision of care for the children of female workers.

As of 2019, DEWA has the largest number of nurseries amongst government entities in Dubai, and 1,036 women employees have benefitted from this service since 2010. The centres also accommodate 'Children of Determination'. In 2018 the childcare centres achieved a satisfaction level of 98 per cent.

The nursery offers a caring, stimulating environment that

supports parents and ensures children are thriving. Different activities are planned each day to help children engage with their environment by playing and exploring, actively learning and creating, and thinking critically.

There are seven different areas of learning, which include physical development, mathematics, language, and



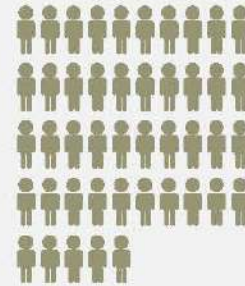
personal, social, and emotional development of the children.

The centre accepts babies as young as three months and up to the age of four. There are different classrooms for children based on their age, and a healthy child-to-adult ratio is maintained so that all children get personalised attention. ■

# Childcare centres At home in the office

Policies to achieve women's empowerment need to be supplemented with an infrastructure that supports women and helps ensure that parents' professional development is not hindered by the need to devote time to childcare during working hours. This support can go a long way in strengthening the development of families and giving Emirati citizens the power to build a cohesive society.

2011



The Ministry of Presidential Affairs' childcare centre started with 45 children.



The Centre is primarily aimed at mothers who work in the government sector



A father also can bring his child (if his wife does not work in the government)



**“We have full confidence in the ability of women to effectively contribute to the UAE’s efforts to lead in every sector. We continue to extend our support and remove all the hurdles that women face”.**

**H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai**

3.5

# The Gender Balance Guide

■ ‘Actions for UAE Organisations’ was launched in 2017 by the UAE Gender Balance Council in collaboration with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The first initiative of its kind in the region, the programme reflects the pioneering role played by the UAE Gender Balance Council.

The Gender Balance Guide sets out best practices and policies to promote women’s empowerment in the UAE, in line with the goals of the UAE Vision 2021, international standards, and UAE legislation.

Incorporating the principles of the Guide supports the UAE in fulfilling its commitments to the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which in turn advances the nation’s position as a global role model for gender balance.

The Guide addresses key challenges that exist in the workplace and provides solutions and tools to overcome them. It lays out the roadmap for the UAE and its organisations to benefit from the potential of women employees and their expertise.

It offers practical actions that can be taken by UAE organisations, in both the private and public sectors. These actions cover five areas – commitment and oversight, policies and programmes, personnel engagement, leadership, and communication.

The Guide describes actions and approaches that can be taken to fully realise the UAE’s national KPIs and Gender Balance Indicators. These actions should be led by senior public officials such as director generals and under-secretaries, chief executive officers, senior managers and board members, and human resource managers in public and private institutions.

The implementation of these actions not only helps women employees but also positively impacts companies that follow these guidelines as they benefit from increased productivity, enhanced performance, and improved competitiveness.

The Guide also offers case studies of policies that have led to a positive change and helped in creating a more inclusive and cohesive society and professional work environments. ■





Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD, speaks on the importance of the Gender Balance Guide



How do we achieve it?

# A roadmap for gender balance

The Gender Balance Guide offers five key pillars for achieving gender balance:



1

Promoting gender sensitive engagement of personnel



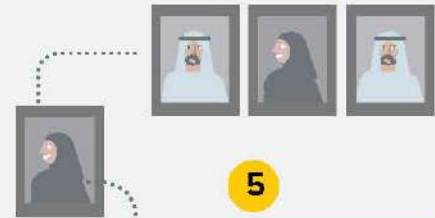
2

Gender sensitive communication



3

Improving gender balance in leadership



5

Commitment and oversight



4

Integrating gender into policies and programmes

(e.g. Human Resources Management policies, Gender Responsive Budgeting, etc.)





3.5.1

## The Gender Balance Index

■ The Gender Balance Index launched by the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2016 is one of the UAE's national indicators that assesses the performance of government entities in enhancing gender balance.

The Index is in line with the UAE Vision 2021 to promote the country's efforts in driving women's participation in national development. It is based on the highest national and global benchmarks that include the UAE Cabinet's national indicators and the United Nations Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index. ■

👁️ **H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum with the winners of the Gender Balance Index**







Above: H.H. Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan receives the award from H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Opposite right: H.E Reem Al Hashemy receives the award from H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Right: H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum with the winners of the Gender Balance Index





# Maternity in the UAE

Since 2016, maternity leave has been extended from 60 days to 90 days for government employees

Number  
of days

0 10

## KEY

Paid leave



Unpaid leave



Daily break\*



*\*After resuming work, working mothers are entitled to have their working hours reduced by two hours for a period of one year. Fathers are granted paternity leave of three days across all emirates.*





**“We will seek during the next period to increase the representation of women in the judiciary and diplomatic corps, the workforce, and international organisations”**

**H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates, and Ruler of Dubai**

3.6

## Women in judiciary

The number of judges in the UAE courts is a testament to women's empowerment in the country.

■ In October 2008, the first female judge was sworn in, and in 2016, the Government of Abu Dhabi ruled that any man or woman could hold the position of judge. Earlier, only men were allowed this privilege.

Today, there are women judges in financial, inheritance, civil, personal affairs, and criminal courts, as there is no legal restriction for women in holding a judge's position.

Media reports state that, as of 2017, a total of 592 female staff were employed in the Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, which

encompasses the Al Ain and Al Dhafrah courts.

This included 11 women judges, 62 women hold leading positions in the court, 17 as members of judicial authority, seven as assistant counsellors and lawyers, seven administrative directors, and 29 women employed as directors of section at the court. (Ahmad, 2018) ■





H.E. Noura bint  
Mohammed Al Kaabi

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UAE Cabinet Member and Minister  
of Culture and Youth

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# **The new generation of UAE women define creativity and culture**

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The UAE has many influential women who have positively impacted the Emirati community, culture, and society through their artistic talents.

■ Today, the arts landscape is rapidly evolving, with the talents of emerging, mid-career and established women artists being increasingly recognised and celebrated, paving the way for more women artists to take centre stage in the world of art and culture in the UAE and beyond.

The UAE is committed to reducing gender imbalance in this sector by giving women artists a platform to contribute to the country's creative scene. H.E. Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Youth, has been entrusted with developing and enriching the cultural landscape of the UAE.

H.E. Al Kaabi is an admirable leader, setting a strong example for other Emiratis to develop their creativity through art, thought, and culture.

She believes that many great and influential Emirati women have positively impacted the Emirati community, culture, and society through their artistic talents.

“Emirati women are educated and knowledgeable. They have excelled in artistic fields such as plastic arts, drama, radio and T.V., as well as visual arts such as cinematography,” she says.

The UAE supports women in developing their creative talent by recognising their artistic skills and encouraging them to pursue global opportunities to showcase their abilities.

The participation of the award winning poet and filmmaker Nujoom Al-Ghanem in the UAE's National Pavilion at the 2019 Venice Biennale to present her film *Al Ubour (The Passage)* is

one such example. Al-Ghanem was the only female poet from the Gulf region whose poem was featured in *Al Diwan Al Jadeed*, a book published by Ginko, a British publishing house, to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first publication of Johannes Wolfgang von Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan*. This represents a notable international achievement.

“We also take pride in the creative work done by Emirati artists and designers like Farah Al Qasimi at the Art Basel global exhibition. She highlighted the country's creative scene and the role played by Emirati women artists.

In collaboration with Emirati businessman Khalaf Al Habtoor, and in conjunction with the celebrations of Emirati Women's Day, we also launched an award

for traditional Bedouin 'Nabati' poetry, which recognises the role of Emirati women in society. The award was named in honour of the late female Emirati poet, Osha bint Khalifa Alsuwaidi. With this esteemed award, we not only celebrate the legacy of the late Osha bint Khalifa Alsuwaidi, an Emirati symbol of talent, wisdom and literature, but we also aim to inspire the youth to follow in her footsteps," H.E. Al Kaabi adds.

Technology is advancing all areas of life across the country, including the culture and arts sectors, and the Ministry of Culture and Youth is increasingly employing modern technologies to encourage new artistic pursuits amongst millennials.

"The Ministry invited experts from the culture and arts sector to participate and carry out a study in the Arab region using the 'intelligence of the artificial squadron'. It examined the challenges faced by artists in the fields of Islamic art. Through the study, we were able to shape the future of the Islamic arts sector and based on its results and recommendations, we've launched the Burda Grant," H.E. Al Kaabi highlighted.

She also spoke of the creative talents of millennials at the showCACE 2019 exhibition, during which senior female students from Zayed University's College of Arts and Creative

Enterprises (CACE) presented their artworks and projects at Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi.

Students presented projects in interior design, graphic design, animation and visual arts. Through technology, students are increasingly able to promote the cultural sector and help to position the UAE on the global cultural map by preserving the Emirati identity, she said.

H.E. Al Kaabi encourages Emirati women to aim higher, be patient, push for self-development, and above all, retain their cultural identity.

"Our nation depends on everyone – women and men. Emirati women must follow their passion. I've witnessed the journey of empowering women in the UAE. We appreciate the support given to us by our wise leadership that has helped Emirati women take up leadership positions. It's with their support that women's empowerment has become a true success story, celebrated globally," H.E. Al Kaabi said. ■







H.E. Ohood bint  
Khalfan Al Roumi

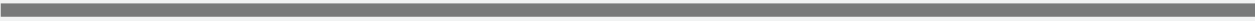
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UAE Minister of State for Government  
Development and the Future

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# The big agenda: gender balance and happiness



The government's focus on achieving gender balance and the National Happiness and Wellbeing Programme complement each other.

■ The UAE ensures equal opportunities for UAE nationals, both women and men, with the aim of supporting them to fulfil their ambitions.

“Achieving gender balance is embedded in the philosophy of the UAE leadership,” said H.E. Ohood bint Khalfan Al Roumi, UAE Minister of State for Government Development and the Future and former Minister of State for Happiness and Wellbeing, previously tasked with the responsibility of harmonising all government plans, programmes and policies, with the aim of building a happier society.

Equal opportunity for men and women directly contributes to the UAE's aim of being amongst the top five happiest countries in the world by 2021. The Happiness Index, which is a composite indicator that

measures an individual's assessment of their standards of living and satisfaction, is a key tool for assessing the country's performance in this area. In 2019, the UAE was close to meeting its happiness goals, and in turn, ensuring a cohesive, balanced, and healthy society.

“The announcement made by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, to establish a Gender Balance Council for empowering women at work and family worldwide, during the World Government Summit in 2015, reflects the priority given by the leadership to empower women,” she states.

H.E. Al Roumi commended the UAE Gender Balance Council's achievements, led by H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President

of the UAE Gender Balance Council, President of Dubai Women Establishment, and wife of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs.

Empowering women to play a leading role in various fields is good for society. Women bring their skill sets to the workplace, contributing to increased competitiveness, and enhanced business operations, production, and innovation.

“The UAE offers equal opportunities to all and promotes gender balance in all sectors. This is reflected in the increasing number of women in government, the Federal National Council, the private sector, academic and community institutions, as well as in leadership positions. We have the first woman president in the Federal National Council,



nine female ministers in the government, and hundreds of leaders in the government sector, as well as women entrepreneurs and investors in the country,” she said.

The government’s focus on achieving gender balance and the National Happiness and Wellbeing Programme complement each other in establishing a happy, motivating, and productive work environment

for employees that ensures good quality of life, leading to the ultimate goal of building the happiest society in the world. ■





H.E. Shamma bint Suhail  
Faris Al Mazrui

UAE Minister of State for Youth



**The young Emirati  
woman Minister  
inspiring governments  
and youth around  
the world**

The UAE government truly believes that youth are the most important factor in a country's ability to succeed in the global marketplace.

■ The UAE is proud to have a Minister for Youth, who is young herself. At the age of just 22 years, H.E. Shamma bint Suhail Faris Al Mazrui was appointed the UAE's Minister of State for Youth Affairs. She took up the position in February 2016 and made it into the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's youngest cabinet minister.

"This record is a tremendous honour because it represents a bigger story, which I am proud to be a part of. It represents an entire movement of nations putting young people at the helm to truly lead. It represents youth leading on behalf of youth and not just leaving it up to older citizens to understand and act on our behalf," said H.E. Al Mazrui.

The youngest Minister gained much prominence at a young age, but she has a huge responsibility of representing

a big part of the country's population.

In the UAE, 49 per cent of the population is under 35, and the number goes up to 60 per cent in the MENA region. The numbers alone represent the massive importance of taking youth employment, empowerment, and development seriously.

"The UAE leadership created my role to steward stronger development for all UAE youth (15-35 years old) across all areas of our lives. So, this award instils responsibility in me above anything else. It is a responsibility that is more illuminating than intimidating because it essentially reveals the vital role youth play in shaping our future," she explained.

Commenting on the "Youth 101" empowering the young, especially women in the country,

the young Minister said the movement gives true power to youth through information that can help them navigate changes and challenges from childhood to adulthood. The five major areas of transitions young people make between the ages of 15 and 35 include education, employment, starting a family, health and wellness, and civic engagement.

"Every turn in these transitions shapes the trajectory of a young person's life, and the life of their families, communities, and nation. Youth 101 offers young people classes, training sessions, data, community and critical information, and support to navigate these fundamental transitions. For instance, providing youth with the skills for the future job market empowers women with knowledge and foresight to know what jobs are available. This helps them prepare for their future

competitively.” Having become a role model for young women at a young age, H.E. Al Mazrui believes the essential attribute that makes a woman successful is empathy. “Empathy is an essential quality in a true leader, and women tend to embody that naturally. Empathy lends itself to selflessness and respect of all people. When we respect one another, put ourselves in others’ shoes, and pay it forward, everyone succeeds.

In the UAE, so many look up to H.H. Sheikha Fatma bint Mubarak, the ‘Mother of the Nation’, who has the most beautiful attributes and values. Her dignity, selflessness, and generosity are like no other. She has created a nurturing environment that uplifts other women. This helped women believe in themselves and become confident in their essential role in the nation’s development for 21<sup>st</sup> century success,” said the young leader.

H.E. Al Mazrui is proud to see many ministers and successful women in different fields, from armed forces to healthcare to artificial intelligence and technology, and STEM. “What stands out to me about them is

that they ‘follow their bliss’ as Joseph Campbell would say; they invest in their passions and pursue them wholeheartedly.”

Al Mazrui believes Emirati youth have been entrusted to shape the future of the country. “The UAE government truly believes that youth is the new primary asset to succeed in the emerging global market. They believe that the youth do not need to wait until they are 40 to add and create value, shape culture, or strengthen the economy. We want youth to lead right now, from where they stand, and we are committed to giving them a stronger ground to stand on.

The message is *Join the movement*. Share your voice, your talent, your needs, your creativity, and your ideas. Tell us what you need to succeed and be part of coauthoring the UAE’s future. It doesn’t have to be perfect; your genuine engagement will change lives and the trajectory of our nation. There is no greater invitation from your country than that!” she emphasised. ■







Women  
empowerment  
**organisations**

PART

4

“Society should esteem work as a cornerstone of its development. It should endeavour to ensure employment is available for citizens and train them so that they are prepared for it.”

UAE Constitution, Article 20









الاتحاد النسائي العام  
GENERAL-WOMEN'S UNION

4.1

## General Women's Union

■ The General Women's Union (GWU) is one of the oldest organisations focused on supporting women in the UAE. H.H. Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak established the GWU on August 27, 1975, bringing together all women associations in the UAE to encourage their entrepreneurial participation within the UAE. This platform helps women serve in various local, regional, and international positions.

The GWU actively participates in international women's conferences and encourages the political participation of Emirati women. Since 2004, strengthening the role of women parliamentarians has been one of the most important objectives of the GWU.

Right from its inception, the Union has addressed various challenges faced by women, and it continues to run various literacy programmes and

vocational training seminars, and provide family meditation services and health campaigns.

GWU runs a 'Know Your Rights' project to educate women on local and federal laws and regulations, to familiarise them with the rights guaranteed by the UAE Constitution.

Women's economic empowerment is at the core of the GWU. The National Productive Families Project was designed to create suitable work-from-home jobs for women. It also helps women embrace and keep up with new technologies.

The Women in Technology (WIT) project was launched in 2006 to focus on professional development training, business planning for sustainability, information technology training using the Microsoft Unlimited Potential curriculum, women's professional development, networking opportunities,

professional exchange, and capacity building. Based on its research, the Union suggests new laws and amendments to existing ones.

The Union considers the various roles that a woman plays and how each is critical for her wellbeing. It provides specialised health and psychological services that support the role of women as mothers, educators of generations, and partners in the development process.

Another initiative that was launched by the GWU in 2013, was 'Be Prepared'. As the name

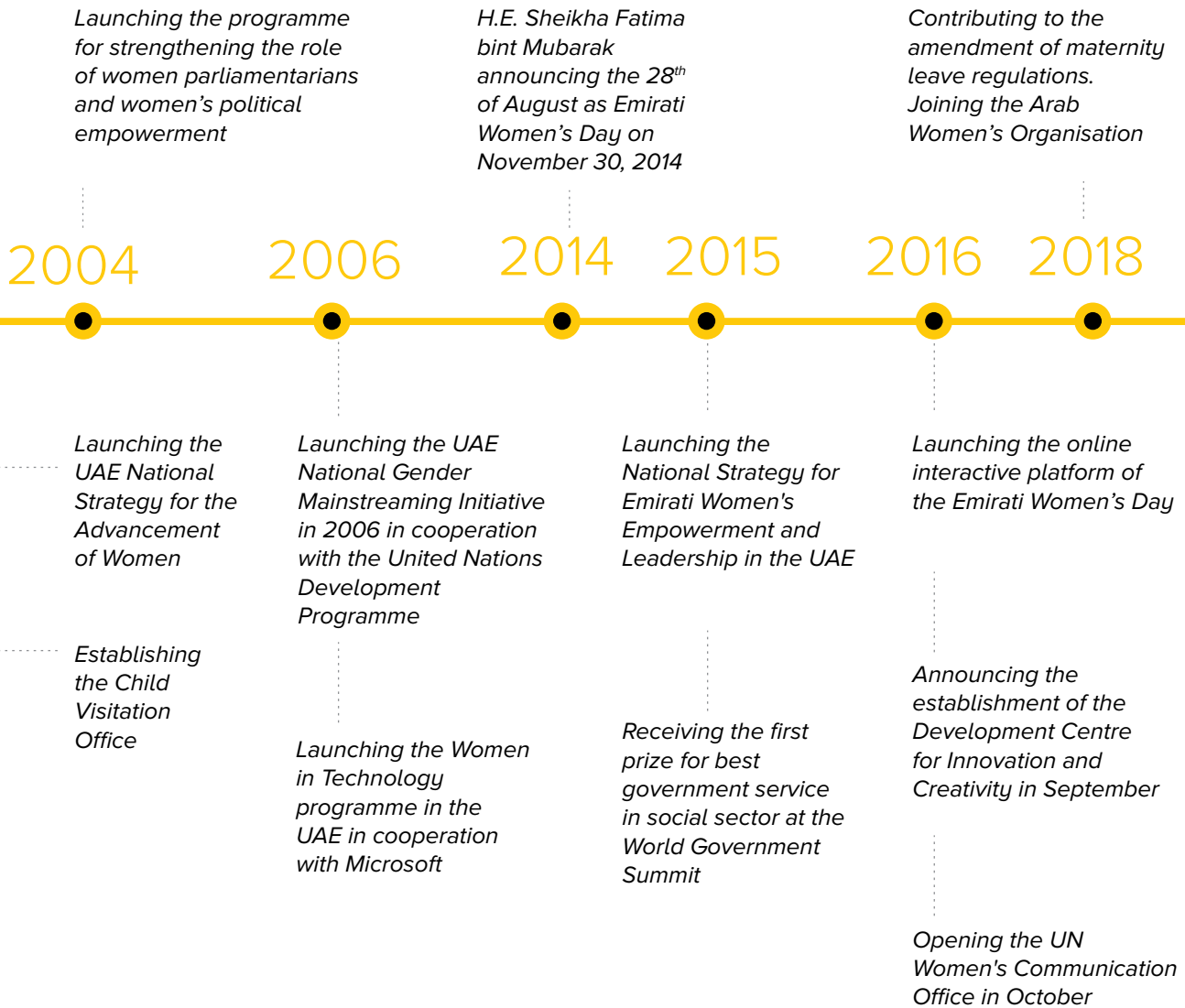
suggests, this programme focuses on empowering women and developing their skills in emergency, crises, and disaster management.

The National Campaign for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer was also launched during the same period in cooperation with the Health Authority Abu Dhabi, the Dubai Health Authority, Tamm Group for Social Volunteering, and the Emirates Medical Association. The GWU also works on programmes that help combat the spread of smoking among children and adolescents. It also runs projects

on food awareness and school gardens, in order to promote healthy lifestyles. ■

## Highlights of the GWU's





## 4.2

# The UAE Gender Balance Council

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■ The UAE government adopted a decision to establish the UAE Gender Balance Council in May 2015 to ensure that Emirati women continue to play a leading role in the development of the country. The Council is charged with overseeing the implementation of best practices and processes to ensure federal institutions achieve their gender balance targets, which supports the UAE's vision to become one of the world's top 25 countries for gender equality by 2021.

Awareness of gender imbalance does not inevitably produce change. It is the intervention of dedicated and skilled leaders, formulation of the right organisational policies and practices, and implementation of laws that bring about a change in societal norms. These are the vital factors that provide the necessary momentum to create a society where men and women are treated equally.

Achieving gender balance is an integral part of the UAE's Vision

2021, which strives to place the country amongst the top 25 for gender equality by the year 2021.

This was the basic premise that led to the inception of the UAE Gender Balance Council in 2015. H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai, described the formation of the Council as a new step towards empowering Emirati women.

Under the guidance of the country's wise leadership, the Council aims to grant women wider and equal social and economic opportunities.

The Council is chaired by H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of Dubai Women Establishment and wife of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs.



- ① H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan and H.H. Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan exchange ideas at the opening session of the UAE Gender Balance Council



Since its establishment, the Council has liaised with various government entities to help implement policies that are conducive to change. It also constantly reviews existing practices and legislation, and recommends new policies that support women, which it has been successful in getting implemented.

- Reviewing current legislation, policies and programmes, and proposing new legislation or programmes in order to achieve gender balance in the workplace.
- Recommending the implementation of laws,

regulations, resolutions, and international agreements related to gender balance in order to ensure non-discrimination against women.

- Studying and monitoring international competitiveness reports and developing programmes, plans, and policies aimed at reducing the gender gap in the UAE.
- Submitting periodic reports to the Council of Ministers on the Council's progress, initiatives, projects, and requirements to achieve its goals.

## Goals

### VISION: "UAE is a world model for gender balance"

*The Council has a set of objectives that can help facilitate the realisation of the UAE's vision.*

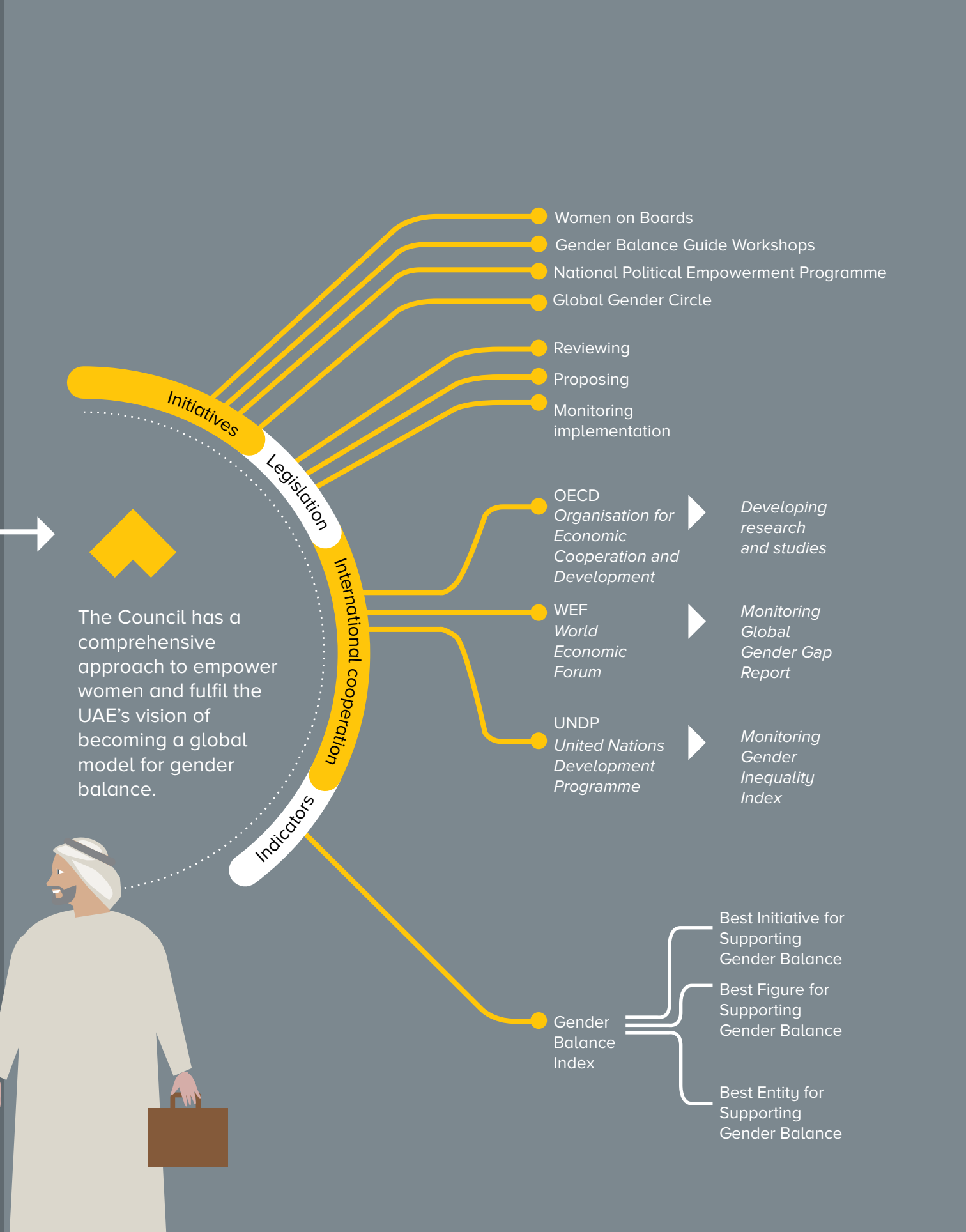
Reducing the gender gap across all government sectors in the UAE

Promoting the UAE's status as a benchmark for gender balance legislation

Establishing the UAE as a role model for gender balance

Enhancing the UAE's gender balance ranking in global competitiveness reports





For example, a review of the UAE Maternity Law was initiated in 2016 on the recommendation of the UAE Gender Balance Council. This resulted in an extension of maternity leave from two months to three months for female federal and government employees.

Besides working on various issues on the domestic front, the Council has also helped establish the UAE as a model for gender balance in the international arena. It regularly participates in global conferences; hosts international events and invites officials to promote gender parity; welcomes partnerships and collaborations; and organises sessions that promote this mission.

In 2017, The Council launched its 'Global Gender Circle' initiative, at the United Nations' sixty-first session of the 'Commission on the Status of Women' (CSW61) in New York. The initiative was launched to reduce the gender gap in women's economic contribution; recommend innovative initiatives to support the global gender agenda; issue and publish white papers on gender policy recommendations; and establish a database of gender experts, by providing a key platform for thought leaders from across the world to develop new ideas and progressive solutions.

The same year, the Council hosted the first United Nations Secretary General's High-Level Panel (HLP) meeting on Women's Economic Empowerment which brought together international government representatives and leaders in business, education, and civil society.

The UAE Gender Balance Index was launched to recognise individuals and entities who have made significant strides in embedding gender balance within their institutions. The three categories of awards include: the Best Figure Supporting Gender Balance, the Best Federal Authority Supporting Gender Balance, and the Best Gender Balance Initiative.

The Council's strategic action plan for 2019 focuses on further enhancing women's participation in national development with several initiatives. In December 2018, H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the UAE Gender Balance Council, announced a strategic action plan to establish gender balance as a national priority, strengthen the UAE's position in international competitive indicators, and further the country's global influence. ■





Members of the Gender Balance Council with H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai



Global Women's  
Forum Dubai  
2020

## 4.3

# Dubai Women Establishment

■ Dubai Women Establishment (DWE) was formed in 2006 under Law No. 24 by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. DWE is headed by H.H. Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, President of the UAE Gender Balance Council and wife of H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs. As a statutory body of the Dubai government and as per its founding decree, DWE aims to encourage and facilitate the participation of Emirati women in the workforce and society.

Notable initiatives launched by DWE since its inception include the UAE Women Leadership Programme that provides custom-made programmes for training and developing potential Emirati women leaders.

Its mandate includes extensive

research into identifying and quantifying the status of women in the workforce of Dubai, as well as initiatives to further enhance women's development.

The Establishment's Five-Year Strategic Plan (2017-2021) was announced in February 2008 to increase women's contribution to the economy. In line with DWE's vision and objectives, the strategic plan serves as the foundation for the next phase in the Establishment's ongoing work to enhance the participation of Emirati women in social, economic, and political fields, and their influence across various sectors.

The strategy is built on four key pillars, each of which features a number of pioneering initiatives designed to support DWE's mission and goals over the next five years. The four pillars are:

- Catalyst for change: DWE provides recommendations to shape policies and develop

new initiatives to enhance the participation of Emirati women across the workforce.

- Research and knowledge hub: DWE conducts in-depth research and studies, data profiling, and knowledge exchange to drive the engagement of Emirati women across various fields and sectors.

- Representation and strategic partnerships: DWE fosters strategic partnerships across the public and private sectors and works to increase the representation of Emirati women through integrated, high-impact initiatives.

- Development and capacity building: DWE develops customised, interactive programmes in partnership with leading institutions around the world to enhance the skills and capabilities of Emirati women, and foster the next generation of women leaders. (Government of Dubai Media Office, 2017) ■



مؤسسة نهضة المرأة  
NAMA WOMEN ADVANCEMENT ESTABLISHMENT

س3

IRTHI

إرتي

التعاون والتكاتف بين المرأة والرجل  
لبناء مجتمع أفضل وأكثر وعياً

## 4.4

# Nama Women Advancement Establishment

■ Nama Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA) was founded in 2015 by H.H. Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Member of the UAE Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and is chaired by H.H. Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, wife of H.H. the Ruler of Sharjah.

Nama helps create an environment to advance gender equity, and focuses on inclusive economic and social growth. Through its three affiliates – Sharjah Business Women Council, Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council, and Badiri Education and Development Academy – the Establishment designs and implements initiatives that support women across the economic, professional, and social sectors.

Badiri Education and Development Academy aims to boost, reward, and showcase the spirit of female entrepreneurs and enhance their theoretical and professional acumen.

The Academy fulfils these objectives by offering aspiring and established entrepreneurs a platform to share experiences and develop their skills so they may realise their full potential.

Academy members have access to knowledge, capacity building, and skills development through a range of programmes and initiatives, including workshops, entrepreneurship and soft skills training, online e-learning platforms, and digital resources, as well as access to incubation pods.

The Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council aims to empower women socially and economically through international commercial collaborations aimed at the revival and modernisation of traditional crafts, and the creation of a sustainable future for these crafts and the artisans practising them.

The Council provides a fresh narrative for women artisans across the Middle East, North

Africa, South East and Central Asia regions by developing their technical and vocational skills through social development and regional skills exchange programmes.

The Council also seeks to preserve traditional Emirati crafts and develop the next generation of artisans and designers by engaging the youth and providing them with training and mentorship.

It also engages with grassroots and international organisations as part of its comprehensive approach towards developing an ecosystem in which women can realise their full potential. (Irthi, 2019) ■



4.5

# Women's Business Councils

■ The UAE boasts of several prominent women's business councils. The councils help ensure effective action to maximise women's contribution to economic growth.

## **Abu Dhabi Business Women Council**

The Abu Dhabi Business Women Council (ADBWC) came into existence in 2001 pursuant to the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI) Board of Directors' Decision No. 62 of 2001, to help women become strategic partners in Abu Dhabi's comprehensive development.

The Council provides women with all the necessary tools and training opportunities to help them evolve as business women, entrepreneurs, and creative forces in the private sector.

The Council provides consultancy services for removing barriers facing business women and entrepreneurs, and promotes a culture of women's entrepreneurship in a competitive business environment. It also focuses on scientific research and development in the field of entrepreneurship.

The Council's Integrated Innovative Business Incubators initiative intends to support innovative and creative projects in the areas of science, technology, and services.

ADBWC participates in different international summits and conferences that focus on women's empowerment.

*Mubdiaa*, another programme by ADBWC, supports home-based businesses for women, by providing loans, guarantees, or

equity investments, as well as training, marketing, and technical assistance.

ADBWC's Strategic Five-Year Plan (2015-2019) aims to enhance women entrepreneurship and create a culture of creativity and innovation. Its 3<sup>rd</sup> National Campaign on Entrepreneurship 2017 helped motivate female entrepreneurs and owners of creative and innovative projects, including graduates of universities and higher institutes and female entrepreneurs, to initiate new ideas and projects.

## **Dubai Business Women Council**

Established in 2002 under the umbrella of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Dubai Business Women Council (DBWC) is led by its President H.E. Dr. Raja Easa Saleh Al Gurg.



Above: Board members of the Abu Dhabi Business Women Council. Opposite page: Workshops and talks organised by Dubai Business Women Council.

DBWC is part of a cohesive group of women's business councils formed under the auspices of the Federal Chamber of Commerce to advocate for and nurture local women and young entrepreneurs who are new to the world of business.

The nonprofit organisation is a leading platform for the personal and professional development of working women in Dubai. It provides education, training, and networking opportunities to aid UAE-based businesswomen in achieving holistic development and meeting career aspirations. The DBWC helps identify key issues, provide information, pool resources, encourage leadership, and advocate responsible action to address the wellbeing of

women as entrepreneurs and employed individuals.

The membership database of DBWC grew by 10 per cent in the first quarter of 2019, increasing the total number of members to 949 from 864 at the end of 2018.

The significant increase in membership reflects the important role played by the Council in supporting businesswomen in enhancing their competitiveness in the country's labour market.

This improvement is yet another catalyst for attracting more businesswomen in Dubai and contributes to the development of their managerial, leadership and strategic skills, and highlights



how women are an integral part of Dubai's diverse business environment and key players in its economic growth. (DBWC, 2019)

### **Sharjah Business Women Council**

The Sharjah Business Women Council (SBWC) was established in 2002 to support the integration of women in Sharjah into the global economy.

SBWC contributes to the economic and social development of the emirate by supporting full integration of women in the economy and assisting them in maximising their potential.

The Council helps potential and existing businesswomen and

professionals in establishing and realising their ambitions in both traditional and nontraditional sectors in the UAE.

SBWC provides one-on-one business counselling to members to help them expand their business knowledge; backed by quality business training and technical assistance. (SBWC, 2019) ■



H.E. Dr. Amal Abdullah Al Qubaisi

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Former Speaker of the  
Federal National Council

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# **Full representation: Women in parliament**

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Women are now key leaders, advisors, and trailblazers in various policy-related arenas including government and parliamentary leadership, in addition to family development and community wellbeing.

■ Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi, former Speaker of the Federal National Council (FNC), made history in 2015 when she became the first woman to be appointed to the high profile role.

“I am truly honoured that I was the first member to be elected to the FNC in 2006, and the first woman to be elected as a speaker of the parliament in the Arab world in November 2015,” she said.

Emirati women are increasingly choosing public service, including becoming members of parliament.

“Women represented 22.2 per cent of the total number of FNC members in the elections in the 14<sup>th</sup> legislative term, 17.5 per cent in the 15<sup>th</sup> legislative term and 22.5 per cent in the 16<sup>th</sup> legislative term. Their

representation reached 50 per cent of the total FNC seats in 2019.

In 2019, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, issued Resolution No. 1 regarding the increase of women’s representation in the FNC to 50 per cent, and it came into force during the 17<sup>th</sup> legislative term of the Council,” said Dr. Al Qubaisi, speaking on the increasing presence of women in positions of power.

The FNC Speaker believes these young women who have joined the FNC have a big mission to accomplish. “Joining the Council is a big responsibility as well as a national duty. Members of the Council, whether men or women, should work to build a better tomorrow in line with the UAE Vision 2021 and UAE Centennial 2071. They must convey the

ideas, aspirations, and ambitions of the younger generation to the Council, engage in discussions, make recommendations, and participate in decision-making that serves the interests of the country.”

Not only have women in the FNC proven competence in positions of power and leadership, but their great success has inspired and motivated women and young people to pursue their goals. Furthermore, women who are members of the Council should also become the best ambassadors of the UAE.

While participating in various regional and international parliamentary activities, women council members must engage in parliamentary diplomacy to defend the state and its position on various issues, Dr. Al Qubaisi added.



Including women in leadership positions is central to effective policy-making in all fields.

Today, Emirati women are well represented in the country's vital sectors. This process was started by the founding fathers of the UAE, who fully supported Emirati women so that they may become equal partners in building and developing the nation.

According to Dr. Al Qubaisi, women's empowerment in the UAE went through three stages:

First, women in the country were given full access to education. This helped develop their skill-sets thus qualifying them to enter the workforce.

Second, the government ensured that Emirati women were hired in roles that suited their skills and competencies. The leadership also supported women in taking up senior positions within government institutions and helped advance gender equality in the job market.

Third, many resolutions and initiatives were adopted that greatly contributed to the success and social empowerment of Emirati women. The legislature and the constitution of the country guaranteed equal rights to women.

This led to the establishment of the General Women's Union

(GWU) in 1975, the creation of the roles of President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood in 2003, and the Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation (FDF) in 2006. The strategy developed in 1975, along with a number of annual programmes, plans and initiatives, aimed to eliminate illiteracy and educate women, thus contributing to reducing illiteracy levels from 27 per cent in 1985 to less than 1 per cent in 2013.

Institutions like the GWU and the Ministry of Education collaborated to push for a distance learning system to help women who could not regularly attend college. A police school was created to allow girls to join the police force and the Khawla Bint Al Azwar Military School was established to train women to join the UAE Armed Forces.

Various businesswomen councils were also established over the years to hone the skills of women as business leaders and entrepreneurs.

One of the most important initiatives was the establishment of the UAE Gender Balance Council by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The Gender Balance Guide, issued by the Council, is an essential reference for public and private institutions

in the country seeking to narrow the gender gap in accordance with UAE Vision 2021. Today, Emirati women are well represented in the federal government, occupying 64 per cent of leadership positions. They also occupy 72 per cent of jobs in the health sector; 69 per cent in education; and 51 per cent in ministries and federal entities.

There are nine women ministers in 2020 comprising 27.3 per cent of the UAE Cabinet. These women ministers are making progress in areas like foreign policy, culture and youth, food and water security, advanced technology, and community development. ■



H.E. Sheikha Lubna bint Khalid  
bint Sultan Al Qasimi

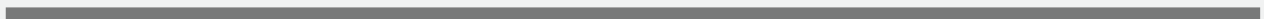
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Former UAE Cabinet Member and former  
Minister of State for Tolerance

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# Challenging gender discrimination



Take charge. Fight for what you believe in. Respect men as equal partners with whom you can and want to coexist on equal terms rather than compete with.

■ Change is sweeping the world. Systemic barriers to gender equity are being confronted, and women are increasingly taking control of their lives.

It's the need to take control and stand up for yourself that drives gender balance globally, says H.E. Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi, former Minister of State for Tolerance.

"There is no such thing as a 'magic pill' that could be distributed to achieve gender balance. If there is one thing that surely needs to happen on the road to gender equality – women need to make it happen. Our equality, our empowerment, cannot be a gift of well-minded men. It is our right to be regarded as equal and to hold larger shares of power. Women should unite and demand a share of

power where men refuse it," she points out.

H.E. Al Qasimi believes quotas do help and are at present essential to incentivise both genders to work towards equality. However, quotas are just one path to empowerment and women need to strive towards excellence and rewards based on merit. Men must recognise female excellence, but it needs to be recognised independent of gender.

Women's empowerment comprises of two elements, according to the former Minister. The first is the element of 'process' – a progression from gender inequality to gender equality; the second is that of 'agency' – where women need to take the lead. "If women's empowerment appears as a gift

or a donation from men, it cannot be considered empowerment," she said.

Unfortunately, most countries do not meet the mark on gender equality. The 2019 SDG Gender Index found that, with just 11 years to go until 2030, nearly 40 per cent of the world's girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries that have low levels of on gender equality. It is only through collective action and shared ownership that change is possible.

Empowerment and inclusion are keys to meeting the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, H.E. Al Qasimi said, and the UAE is working towards it by transforming its economy to focus on and encourage knowledge, innovation, research, and technology.



Citing the example of ‘Blue Zones’, a term coined in 2005 by Dan Buettner, an explorer and award-winning journalist, H.E. Al Qasimi emphasised the benefits of women’s equality.

Studies on longevity in Blue Zones (where people live significantly healthier and longer lives than elsewhere, many reaching and exceeding the age of 100 years) have identified not only nutrition and an active lifestyle as being significant, but also the social fabric of the community. Whether they looked at Italy, Greece, Japan, or California, women were empowered in all communities with extraordinary longevity. This is a clear indication that empowering women is vital to creating healthy, happy, and long lives for people in any society. This is true of the UAE or anywhere else, she said.

She mentioned the statement of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Founder of the

UAE: “Women are half of the society; I am on the woman’s side”. Following “in his footsteps, the UAE leadership continues to realise this vision, launching national and global strategies and initiatives.”

The leaders are paving the way to empower women, and H.E. Al Qasimi wants to see young girls become the agents of change.

“Take charge. Fight for what you believe in. Respect men as equal partners with whom you can and want to coexist on equal terms rather than compete with. There are plenty of examples of young girls changing the world. You only need to think of Malala Yousafzai, the young Pakistani education activist, who opposed the Taliban, who was shot but survived to continue her struggle for female education, and who became the youngest Nobel Prize laureate ever. For girls and women who take charge and steadfastly pursue their goals, the sky is the limit.” ■



H.E. Abdulla Nasser Lootah

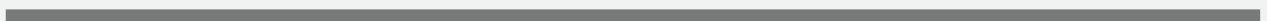
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Director-General of the Cabinet's Presidency Office  
at the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, UAE

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# Using data to drive women's economic empowerment



The strategy of the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (FCSA) is to work closely with entities that use data to build policies that serve the interests of Emirati women.

■ The FCSA is the UAE's official entity dedicated to collecting and analysing data, which is then used to support partner entities in designing evidence-based and socially responsive policies and programmes. FCSA has worked closely on the gender balance agenda across government, both to inform policy development and ensure the UAE remains competitive and innovative on the global stage.

"Data reflects undisputable facts on the ground. Our strategy is to work closely with entities that use our data to build policies that serve the interests of Emirati women. I am proud to serve as a board member of the UAE Gender Balance Council, an entity that regularly looks at our data and delivers great programmes and policy proposals," said H.E. Abdulla Nasser Lootah.

"According to the latest labour force data, 66 per cent of

the UAE federal government employees are women. This indicates the preference of Emirati women to choose the government sector as a career path. Policy-makers take a close look at this data to answer various questions such as: 'Are Emirati women opting for government because of better benefits or working hours or because of the lack of opportunity in the private sector?' Research data helps understand preferences better for effective policy setting and execution," he added.

Data is extremely important in policy-making. "Policy-makers require data to not only justify their policies but also to validate, test, enhance, and reform it. This is why we have a very strong relationship with key policy-makers in the country, and we ensure that the data we produce and disseminate is accurate, representative, and reliable.

And that cannot be achieved without making sure that our teams are aware of the latest global practices, guidelines, and methodology," emphasised H.E. Lootah.

The Director General is a firm believer in the importance and necessity of gender balance.

"To achieve gender balance in an equitable fashion, the strategy must be driven by merit. While keeping close tabs on the balance gauge, we need to make sure the needle does not skew towards one gender at the expense of another," he says.

The FCSA was the winner of award for the Best Entity that Supports Gender Balance in the UAE, underlining the organisation's deep commitment to bolstering a culture of gender balance in the country.

The FCSA was the first federal

entity to set up a Gender Balance Lab in 2016, an internal initiative aimed at activating gender-balance programmes and initiatives within the organisation.

The FCSA collects both qualitative and quantitative data, including administrative data, from ecosystem partners such as the ministries of health, education, and economy, and through surveys such as the labour force survey. The FCSA collects administrative data, which are public records such as civil records and other data from the ecosystem partners such as the ministries of education, health, economy, and other entities. The FCSA also collects gender data from various surveys that are conducted on a regular bases, such as labour force surveys or household income and expenditure surveys.

The organisation also carries out qualitative data collection projects and surveys, independently or jointly with other organisations. For example, the FCSA liaised with the Emirates Youth Foundation to carry out a youth survey, and conducted a happiness

survey, jointly with the Minister of Happiness and Positivity in 2016.

Additionally, the FCSA carefully monitors and analyses international organisations' indices and reports. These reports provide a valuable comparative view of where the UAE ranks on important indicators including gender-specific ones. Analysis is then used to inform recommendations for new policies and programmes to bolster or sustain rankings.

While empowering women and girls, H.E. Lootah wants young men and women to take up "shared responsibility. Today's young boys and girls are tomorrow's leaders, who will work together to move our beloved nation forward on the path set by our wise leadership to become the best nation in the world by 2071." ■







# Conclusion

## The way forward

■ The report on gender balance, produced by the UAE Gender Balance Council, highlights the firm commitment of the UAE government and its institutions to implement recommendations and execute legislation and practices to achieve real progress in achieving gender parity.

Going forward, this report can be used as a guide by companies in the country to develop best practices and commit to increasing gender balance across the hierarchy. By highlighting the work done by the institutions that are devoted to this cause, this report proposes them as role models. The next report on gender parity will include more companies, especially from the private sector, that can serve as examples to others.

The UAE Gender Balance Council hopes that this report can be used as a reference by governments and organisations to develop and implement gender-responsive policies and related programmes in their respective sectors.

One special area that needs to be addressed by companies relates to offering a more conducive work environment for women so they are not deterred from coming back to work due to their family obligations. We expect more companies to offer onsite childcare services and remote working options for women.

With the establishment of various business councils and the support provided to entrepreneurs, we expect

more women to set up small-to-medium-sized businesses in the country. The private sector should also increase the number of women employees and ensure they have better maternity leave. They should also invest in them by offering training services to women to better equip them for the challenges of the digital age.

We hope this report will impact all entities, and that they will commit to a sustainable future by substantially increasing the number of women at all levels including leadership positions. We seek to encourage all UAE citizens and residents to embrace the change and progress necessary to achieve gender parity. ■



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