



Diversity in Business Leadership

## WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY: FOUR LEADERS INSPIRING CHANGE

Profile Report

Report By

**Yasmine Omari**  
Executive Director,  
Pearl Initiative

**Shruti Sardesai**  
Programme Assistant,  
Pearl Initiative

**Sanjay Salu,**  
Junior Programme Assistant,  
Pearl Initiative

Translation

**Abu Bakr Al Ani**  
abubakr@thelingtwist.com

Visual Concept and Design

**Romy John**  
NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

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**Disclaimer**

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**H.E. Reem BinKaram**  
Director  
NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

“*How can we build a strong foundation that lays down a new road for women to follow? How can we trigger a cultural shift to rediscover the hidden potential and untapped growth that often lie concealed, as women – although representing half of the population, continue to remain on the fringes of the business community?*”

At NAMA Women Advancement Establishment, we have always stressed on the need to systematically peel away the barriers and cultural perceptions that prevent women from entering or advancing at the workplace, and take measures to create and promote a gender-diverse business ecosystem.

A key element for women's underrepresentation in the business arena stems from the lack of inspirational role models who can vividly showcase the varied routes to professional success, and the myriad opportunities available to women in enterprise. In partnership with the Pearl Initiative, I am pleased therefore to present to you



the second edition of Women in the Economy: Four Leaders Inspiring Change, a compilation of in-depth stories of 10 trailblazers in the Gulf Region who have scaled many obstacles and challenges to reach the pinnacle of success in their respective sectors.

Seven students have met with these influential businesswomen to record a varied range of voices and quality of ideas that bring to the fore personal examples of how they have individually risen in ranks or taken initiatives to acquire and hone new skills, overcome legal and cultural barriers, and balance family and business responsibilities on their journey to the top.

Just as having an ambitious mindset is traditionally seen as a positive entrepreneurial trait in male business leaders, stereotypical representations of women steer clear of sectors such as finance and technology. These case studies show that women can be at the centre of any business and are also endowed with strong leadership skills. Through the publication of this book, our future generations can rely on positive evidence that unveils the secrets behind the successes of these pioneering women, their beliefs, values and motivation while also acquiring a greater understanding of new ways of leading.

For young students, recognising the factors that affect or impede the success of women, will embolden them to take forward the business and economic case for gender diversity, to thereby shift the status quo and pave the way for a better business environment for women.

I would like to extend my gratitude to these inspiring role models who, by sharing their stories, are directly influencing a new generation to shape gender diverse and inclusive practices as a strategy to enhance business performance.

My sincere thanks to the Pearl Initiative for their continued support and collaboration in facilitating a fruitful dialogue on good business practices around gender diversity in the region. Together, we will continue our efforts to make gender diversity a pillar of the Gulf's Region's economy.



**Yasmine Omari**  
Executive Director  
Pearl Initiative

“*Diversity and inclusion in the workplace has been a topic of discussion across the private and public sectors over the past few years. Organisations are slowly acknowledging its benefits and embracing the changing social norms leading to extensive governance strategies and policies.*”

In line with the Pearl Initiative's ongoing efforts to advocate corporate best practices across the Gulf Region, and in collaboration with NAMA Women Advancement Establishment, I am pleased to present to you the Women in the Economy: 'Four Leaders Inspiring Change' report that brought together students and businesses to discuss and promote the case for diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

As the business leaders of the future, students hold the potential to initiate significant socio-economic change. Therefore, it is imperative to have students engaged in critical conversations regarding the importance of diversity in business and the umpteenth economic benefits that it could bring.



Through previous student engagements, we have seen that students require opportunities to learn from organisations taking the lead in adopting best practices, which leads to a more comprehensive business education. In turn, companies can also use this opportunity to pass the baton forward by inspiring the next generation of business leaders through insights on their internal business values and vision for the future.

This report provided us with opportunities to collaborate with leading universities and faculty, as well as inspirational students, across the Gulf Region. A total of four universities were engaged as part of the profiles Report, which saw the participation of seven students.

The profiles received from students focus on influential women business leaders highlighting factors that facilitated their careers and factors that acted as barriers to their advancement. The profiles also shed light on the changes that have taken place in the private sector over the years with regards to women's roles in the regional economy, and the advice they have for the business leaders of tomorrow to bring about positive change.

I would like to thank the women business leaders who invested both their time and efforts to share their professional accomplishments and histories with our student participants, as well as for sharing their astute perspectives on the way forward to achieve greater equality in the workplace.

Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to our programme partner, NAMA Women Advancement Establishment, who supports us in the shared belief that regional business and economic growth can rise exponentially by engaging women in the workplace through comprehensive diversity and gender equality policies.

With the continued support of both the business community and academia, I look forward to expanding the reach of our profile report in the future.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PROFILES

This report consists of four (4) student-authored profile reports on four (4) regional women leaders in business, their career progression, and their assessments of the need for increased gender diversity in business leadership.

Business Leader  
Ms. Alia Ali Busamra

Student Interviewers  
Rowan Bardicy  
Raihana Mohideen

University  
American University of Sharjah, UAE

### PROFILE 1: MS. ALIA ALI BUSAMRA

This profile report discusses gender diversity within the energy industry in the United Arab Emirates. It highlights the passionate and determined Chief Sustainability Officer at ENOC, Ms. Alia Ali Busamra. The purpose of the profile report is to showcase how the presence of diversity management - in the form of support systems within an organisation - enables women to thrive and reach their potential in the workforce.



Business Leader  
Ms. Rana Zumai

Student Interviewers  
Basma Alhamdan  
Razan Al Mohammad

University  
Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia

### PROFILE 2: MS. RANA ZUMAI

Ms. Rana Zumai is the Executive Manager, Corporate Communications of Nesma Holding. This report details her journey from a microbiology student to a leading Saudi voice on diversity, inclusion, and innovative marketing strategies. It also discusses the factors that facilitated Ms. Zumai's career achievements and her aspirations for a diverse workforce.



Business Leader  
The Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish

Student Interviewers  
Nawf Al-Manai  
Haitham Al-Omeiri

University  
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

### PROFILE 3: HONOURABLE LUJAINA MOHSIN HAIDER DARWISH

This report profiles Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish, Deputy Chairperson of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC. It discusses her achievements, the challenges she faced, and her observations on the evolution of diversity in the workplace. It also notes her views on the present obstacles hindering increased diversity, the solutions to facilitate workplace diversity, and her advice for the new generation as they prepare to enter the workforce.



Business Leader  
Ms. Jeyapriya Partiban

Student Interviewer  
Safian Mostafa

University  
Ahlia University, Bahrain

### PROFILE 4: MS. JEYAPRIYA PARTIBAN

Ms. Jeyapriya Partiban is Partner, Head of Risk Consulting at KPMG Bahrain. In this profile report, her background, initial career aspirations, and experiences at KPMG are detailed. It also notes her experiences becoming Partner and how she navigated the career ladder to the top.





PROFILE 1  
**MS. ALIA ALI BUSAMRA**

Profile Report by  
Rowan Bardicy and Raihana Mohideen  
American University of Sharjah  
United Arab Emirates

Subject Name  
Alia Ali Busamra

Position / Title  
Chief Sustainability Officer, Group Sustainability

Company Name  
ENOC (Emirates National Oil Company)

Location  
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Company Sector  
Energy and Environment

Number of Years Employed in Sector  
16 years

**Overview of the Energy Industry in the UAE**

The energy industry in the UAE has been experiencing a shift in its talent acquisition strategies. The sector is quite notorious for being dominated by men, a stigma that the UAE has come to realise needs to be altered. According to Gulf News (2016), less than 10% of employees across the energy sector around the world are women. Moreover, women in technical and field roles - which are highly likely to lead to career advancement and promotions - are especially scarce: only 15% globally (Catalyst, 2019).

With the increase in competition and sustainability, the industry is widening its pool of talent to include a market that is yet to reach its full potential: women in the energy sector. The UAE is known for being one of the leading supporters of causes relating to women's empowerment and is now venturing into women's inclusion in the energy industry. By opening more opportunities for women, new perspectives and different classes of thoughts are introduced to the market, offering the UAE a new competitive edge. This is because women can come in with a unique thought process, and with the current industry projection, such fresh insights would elicit and induce more innovative and sustainable approaches.

**About the Profile Report**

The Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) was founded in 1993 and is one of the leading oil and gas providers in the UAE. Through different initiatives and programmes, ENOC is a firm believer in women's empowerment.

Alia A. Busamra is the Chief Sustainability Officer at Group Sustainability, ENOC. The team conducted an interview with Ms. Busamra where she expressed her unwavering passion towards two main issues: achieving sustainability and offering support to future women leaders in ENOC. The latter will be the focus of this case study. Her passion towards gender diversity is evidently shared by ENOC through their current initiatives, such as the ENOC Women in Energy Awards and the ENOC Women's Committee.

The initial expected outcome of the interview was an analysis of how hard it was to rise the ranks at ENOC through an inspiring story carved from hardship and strong willpower. Whilst the story is inspiring, it is not littered with hardship or obstacles. It was clear throughout how ENOC shares the UAE's vision of including and empowering women within its business. All the way through the interview, it was apparent how ENOC deploys a system of diversity management when it comes to departmental hiring and initiatives. Ranging from the support Ms. Busamra received from her superiors, to the simple yet effective recognition and award systems held at ENOC, the organisational culture and diversity management are something to be praised and talked about.

**About Ms. Alia Busamra**

Ms. Busamra has an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering, an International Diploma in Environmental Management, and a Master's in Environmental Sciences. Above all, Ms. Busamra is imbued with fiery passion and boundless enthusiasm for the Energy and Sustainability sector. Ms. Busamra believes that her passion and love for work is what inspires her to have the courage to face the challenges of studying and starting a career in a discipline that has traditionally been strongly dominated by men. As a woman in a leadership position at ENOC, Ms. Busamra is a role model for young girls and women in the UAE who share her aspirations. A Pearl Initiative study (2018) revealed that knowing about women role models who paved the way encouraged women's career progression by 22%. Hence, sharing Ms. Busamra's story of how she moved from an entry-level employee to a senior management position will certainly send a meaningful and inspirational message to future women leaders.

Straight out of university, Ms. Busamra was hired to continue and enhance her senior graduation project. Ms. Busamra's journey at ENOC began in 2003 with an entry-level position in the Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) Directorate.



She worked as a Junior EHS Compliance Officer. Here, she demonstrated her technical capabilities and skills, passion, commitment and was given many responsibilities and varied tasks. Ms. Busamra soon moved up the ranks and became an Environment Compliance Officer for ENOC group.

In 2008, ENOC's management made a strategic decision to combine the Energy Efficiency and resource management functionality with the Environment section under EHS Directorate, following the success of the various environmental protection projects implemented by the section. Ms. Busamra's work on energy and resource management and optimisation under the leadership and guidance of her manager had helped ENOC save more than AED 3 million each year. This was quite a milestone in Ms. Busamra's career as it set forth her future and path in sustainability at ENOC. This was the tipping point in her career path: the support and training from her manager enabled her to gain the skills and competencies to flourish in the workplace, gain more visibility and recognition, and ultimately gain rewards through promotions.

In 2015, ENOC's management decided to launch a Sustainability Office as a new department at ENOC. Since Ms. Busamra was consistently demonstrating leadership skills, teamwork, initiative, excellent technical expertise, intelligence, and the ability to deliver ground-breaking and positive results, she was appointed as the Chief Sustainability Officer for ENOC group. Under her leadership, the department is flourishing and has made incredible strides towards diversification and sustainable development. Ms. Busamra and her team improved ENOC's practices and operations, which enables them to save a whopping AED 11 million each year. She feels quite rightly triumphant about the fact that these great achievements were accomplished by a women-led team in a typically male-dominated field who played a catalyst's role in the organisation to enhance the savings across the group. Ms. Busamra also pointed out that the true credit for all energy savings achieved by ENOC, goes to ENOC business units who implemented these projects. These are their achievements and she appreciated their efforts very much.

Just as Ms. Busamra thrived when she was supported, she has now become the spark. By following a similar leadership style as her superiors, she was able to replicate the overall culture and team spirit amongst her own cohort.

This proves how sustainable and crucial is the work environment in cultivating a drive towards not only receiving help, but also offering it. The team was privy to Ms. Busamra's future organisational expansion plan for her cohort. One could not help but notice her enthusiasm towards adding more colleagues to what is already a passionate and driven team. The futuristic organisational chart she displayed for Group Sustainability Office was inspiring. Her plan was to match each sub-cohort with women leaders who come from backgrounds like environmental and chemical engineering. Though her diversity management plan comprised of offering equal opportunities for both males and females, she was quite inclined on making sure women get hired.

Ms. Busamra attributes her accomplishments and success to the supportive organisational culture at ENOC, the training and wisdom from her managers, and the active efforts of ENOC to improve women's roles, engagement, and advancement in the workplace. The office culture was evident from the start upon entering the headquarters where a mix of laughter and general cheerfulness presided. The endearment in Ms. Busamra's tone regarding her superiors' support was refreshing.

However, it was her mentor, the backbone that she attributes her success to. "My achievement is you, Alia" was his constant motto whenever recognition and awards were bestowed. All the aforementioned factors enabled Ms. Busamra to succeed through ENOC's organisational hierarchy. The organisational culture created a support system that empowered her to excel in her career and attain a high leadership management position. A study conducted by the World Petroleum Council and the Boston Consulting Group on gender diversity in the oil and gas sector revealed that 36% of the female participants identified lack of support and commitment from leaders and managers as a factor that hindered their career advancement (2017).

According to Ms. Busamra, the support system involved her manager giving her visibility by assigning her to different projects that enabled her to gain recognition and rewards. The support system also involved her manager helping her develop a well-rounded skillset by assigning her technical projects as well as administrative tasks. Additionally, the administrative tasks enabled Ms. Busamra to make strong connections of government representatives to add to her network which helped her gain more recognition and visibility.

She was also required to wear coveralls and as a UAE national who wears the traditional Abaya, it proved to be another challenge of its kind. The site workers were also not used to a woman having the technical skills and competency to work alongside them. It was up to Ms. Busamra, a recent graduate at the time, to overcome these obstacles and prove herself to be technically competent when it came to very specific measurements, details and information regarding the site work. As highlighted earlier, her mentor believed Ms. Busamra to be a capable valuable addition to ENOC and proceeded to give her support whenever she required it.

As a woman, Ms. Busamra is no stranger to the barriers and challenges to career advancement that many women encounter in their workplace. She always believed that the highest position that she would ever be able to climb up to was Senior EHS Compliance Officer. This was because the Energy and Environment sector is risky and volatile; there are unfortunate occasions where emergencies arise (sometimes in the middle of the night), and senior management would have to rush to the site. At the time, Ms. Busamra wondered how she would be able to cope with the demand to respond to emergencies as promptly as the situation would require her to. Hence, it was plausible to believe that such a job is heavily dependent on its figurehead being a man who can be up and leave the house in the middle of the night for an emergency on-site.

There lies a fundamental truth about the workforce, i.e. when women join the workforce, they do so according to men's terms. Women in the workforce have had to shape themselves to the existing values and masculine standards of what is considered professional and competent workplace behaviour. So, while the demographics of work have drastically changed in the UAE, the workplace is still generally dominated by men.

Circling back to the support system, Ms. Busamra was able to overcome her challenges through her own persistence and passionate drive, as well as the support provided from the organisational culture and her leaders. ENOC made Ms. Busamra realise that, to be a leader, one doesn't have to have the same roles and duties that a male leader would have. She realised that men and women can be equally intelligent, skilled, and competent leaders – they just happen to lead in different ways. It's all about ENOC empowering women to become leaders and advance in the workplace by providing women with the necessary resources and tools to compete on an equal footing with male peers.

Ms. Busamra reiterates that the leadership commitment and support system at ENOC towards training and developing women to pursue career advancement and engagement, was crucial to her accomplishments and rise towards becoming the leader of Group Sustainability, ENOC.

### Promoting Diversity

The team considers Ms. Busamra as quite fortunate since conventional obstacles and hindrances that she would have otherwise faced were not present. The robust support system enabled her to shed any doubt in her abilities and exploit her potential to the fullest. However, the challenges that Ms. Busamra appeared to face were her own personal inhibitions about how women are perceived in the technical male world and how (if even possible) could she progress and develop her career in one. Never once did she imagine she could be the Chief Sustainability Officer!

During Ms. Busamra's first tasks at ENOC, she was required to visit field locations where she was quite literally the only woman present. Being on site among field workers made her feel uncomfortable.



**Words of Wisdom from Ms. Busamra**

- Ms. Busamra's skills, competency, passion, intelligence, innovation, and leadership capabilities have enabled ENOC to be more sustainable, energy-efficient, and save up to AED 11 million each year. With more women in the workforce and more women in leadership positions, imagine how much better organisation results would be. The Peterson Institute for International Economics reports robust evidence that women leaders at the C-level (CEO, COO, CFO, etc.) can increase organisational profitability (Noland, Moran, & Kotschwar, 2016). Moreover, a study conducted by The World Petroleum Council (WPC) and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) revealed that achieving gender balance and diversity in the oil and gas industry would improve problem-solving, creativity, and reduce risky decision-making (2017). Therefore, having more women in the workforce with more roles, opportunities for engagement and opportunities for leadership positions can help organisations be more successful.
- Support systems and organisational cultures that empower and support women in their career advancement and leadership positions are crucial. They can enable women to overcome the barriers and challenges that hinder their development in the workplace, especially for women pursuing careers in typically male-dominated fields. The WPC and BCG study in 2017 (previously mentioned) on gender diversity in the oil and gas industry where they surveyed over 38 global companies revealed that the reason for the lack of women in senior management is because 57% of women get less support than men and 36% of women lack support from senior managers entirely (WPC & BCG, 2017).
- Having support systems for women in organisations would potentially resolve many of the roadblocks that women face along the path of career advancement. For instance, some of the biggest obstacles that women face over the course of their career is lack of support from supervisors and senior leaders, reduced awareness of career opportunities, and being overlooked for promotions (WPC & BCG, 2017).

Ms. Busamra was able to reach a senior management position because the support system at ENOC improved her skills, gave her avenues to gain recognition and rewards, and made her aware of career advancement opportunities. Therefore, having support systems in place can help women thrive in the workplace as their managers give them opportunities to shine and gain recognition. It can also change the perceptions of the men in the workplace about women's qualifications and abilities to reach senior positions.

- It is also important to consider internal support systems of family and friends towards an individual's career advancement. A recent study indicates support, encouragement, and advice from families can significantly influence Emirati women's career paths, especially given how Arab societies are typically collectivistic (Kemp & Zhao, 2015).
- Ms. Busamra always remembers the words of her manager and mentor when she was promoted to a higher position than him: "Alia, my achievement is you. If the organisation can recognise you, then they have recognised my achievement. Because my achievement is you, Alia." These words have stuck with her and have motivated her to become a supporter as well. Ms. Busamra wants to be a representative of qualified women in a senior leadership role who can inspire other women to be unafraid of pursuing careers in male-dominated industries. She wants to be a reminder to them that it is possible for women to be successful and reach high positions in the oil and gas industry. Ms. Busamra says that the youth population should make sure the organisation that they choose to work in has a supportive organisational culture and a support system to empower them to reach greater heights.



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PROFILE 2  
**MS. RANA ZUMAI**

Profile Report by  
Basma Alhamdan and Razan Al Mohammad  
Prince Sultan University  
Saudi Arabia

Subject Name  
Ms. Rana Zumai

Position / Title  
Corporate Communications Executive Manager

Company Name  
Nesma Holding Co.

Location  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Company Sector  
Venture Capital & Private Equity

Number of Years Employed in Sector  
1 year and 6 months

**About Ms. Rana Zumai**

Currently serving as the Executive Manager, Corporate Communications of Nesma Holding, Ms. Zumai is the face of the promising female workforce in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia that is rising both in capacity and quality.

Ms. Zumai was born in Al Khobar city to a working family as both her parents were busy professionals. Ms. Zumai's father held a position at King Fahad Airport, while her mother was among the first graduates of the Sewing and Tailoring first college in Saudi Arabia.

She describes her family as her main source of inspiration. Since an early age, Ms. Zumai has developed a sense of responsibility and drive for success, a path that was mostly influenced by her late mother. Ms. Zumai's mother brought out the leadership skills in her and pushed her and her sisters to excel and thrive in their careers. Her mother always encouraged her to seek solutions for whatever problems she faced in life, and never accepted slacking or frail excuses. A firm believer in hard work herself, her mother nurtured in her daughters' leadership skills from a very young age and strove to raise them to be future leaders capable of creating change and adding value to their communities.

**History and Background**

In school, science was Ms. Zumai's favourite subject, and in the pursuit of this passion, she chose microbiology as a track of choice at King Abdulaziz University (KAUST) in Jeddah while joining the university's basketball team as part of their extra-curricular activities.

Although she got married in her second year of college and was pregnant with her first son on her fourth year, this did not stop her from finishing her degree. Upon graduation, job opportunities were scarce and Ms. Zumai was faced with only two options: either work as a teacher or hold a position at a hospital. Ms. Zumai chose to be a stay-at-home mother, which she embraced with full energy. With extra time on her hands, she took to volunteering work such as creating subtitles for famous TV series.

Overcome by a need to assume responsibilities within the workforce, Ms. Zumai approached the workforce bureau looking for a job opportunity. Her efforts paid off when she was able to secure a rather demanding teaching position which she occupied for one year, in spite of the long commuting hours and the low salary. Her teaching experience came to a halt when she started experiencing difficulties during her second pregnancy and was forced to quit her teaching job. Other factors, such as the lack of a good monetary reward and other incentives, also drove her to quit her position. Although teaching was a passion for Ms. Zumai, limitations overpowered her, and she parted ways with the school she was teaching at.

During that period, Ms. Zumai's husband was sick, and she found herself and her family struggling financially. Jobless but refusing to rely on financial support from her family, Ms. Zumai turned around a dire situation into a positive one by looking for job opportunities to support her children. Her desire of being independent and need of a stable income source, coupled with minimal expectations from others, pushed her to leave no stone unturned in her quest for employment.

Fearless and eager to put her capabilities to work and earn an income for her family, Ms. Zumai took the advice of her younger sister who suggested applying at Nesma. At that time, Nesma was looking for a marketing representative for a small subsidiary with a workforce of forty young women with disabilities engaged in electronic embroidery. The company needed a marketing specialist to help advertise and sell the products, and although Ms. Zumai's background was science, she knew she would excel at this new venture because she believed she had strong selling and persuading techniques that would enable her to tackle this new position. Her interview at the company was a hallmark in her career path as she quickly got smitten by the new work environment and felt inspired and truly wanted to be a part of it. She was hired and took it upon herself to spread the word about her organisation, went to exhibitions, conducted marketing campaigns, and brought business to her company. She earned the respect of her colleagues with her zeal and willingness to think outside the box, revolutionising the company in the process.



She was the first employee within the company to structurally design key performance indicators, set goals, and discuss performance evaluations. Ms. Zumai was extremely zealous, shooting for higher performance levels and striving to turn things around to boost the company's sales numbers and help it earn recognition and status. Breaking the status quo, Ms. Zumai brought a new meaning to the company's operations and daily activities, revolutionising how work is done at the company by stepping outside the comfort zone, tapping into new territories, and altogether bringing about fruitful change.

Besides her official duties as a marketing representative, Ms. Zumai got herself involved in the in-depth operations of the company by visiting the factories in Jeddah to ensure the quality of the products, which helped improve sales substantially from 2011 to 2012. Due to her diligence, the management gave her new responsibilities as a trainer to women employees in the factory. While Nesma Embroidery was a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative for Nesma, the project was so successful that Ms. Zumai had to seek funding from other sources to support the training and other expansion activities in the factories as well as aligning with the Netakat requirements.

Shortly after filling in for a manager who was on a leave of absence, Ms. Zumai was promoted to acting manager as she had what it took to serve that position. Besides the qualities she possessed which were displayed at work, such as honesty, integrity, strong work ethics and complete dedication to her job responsibilities, Ms. Zumai went above and beyond in serving the organisation, investing her time and efforts in improving the working conditions of her employees. Ms. Zumai continued to thrive and in 2013, she became general manager, expanding the scope of her responsibilities.

One of Ms. Zumai's major accomplishments came about in 2013 when appointed central manager, adding more to her plate as a leader and raising her responsibilities to unprecedented levels. Shortly after, she opened three embroidery plants and started a day care as a way of helping her colleagues within the company. Higher management took notice of Ms. Zumai's efforts and approached her regarding introducing and implementing her model in other subsidiaries.

Fully embracing the new responsibilities, Ms. Zumai took to her new role with excitement while standing her ground. Ms. Zumai was climbing the corporate ladder rather fast with utmost

confidence, backed by all of her accomplishments and a strong support system within the company. She was one of many Saudi women who walked the talk and made a difference in women in leadership positions in Saudi Arabia. The career challenges Ms. Zumai faced in her life would inspire those who encounters her including her co-workers, managers, students, and trainees.

Ms. Zumai is a firm believer in equality. Being impartial, inclusive, giving back, and treating people equally is her motto, as she is certain that what goes around comes around. When the question was raised about whether she faced any biases in the workplace, she did acknowledge that it does happen with colleagues who are resistant to change or felt threatened by her zealousness and confidence.

Ms. Zumai believes that good leaders care about the well-being of human capital before anything. She reiterates that leaders need to prioritise their environmental sustainability; support diversity and inclusivity of people of all backgrounds and abilities.

Sheikh Saleh Al-Turki, President and Chairman of Nesma Holding, and a role model that Ms. Zumai learned a lot from and admires for his management and leadership styles, approached her asking if she would occupy the position of Nesma Executive Corporate Communication to handle all the company's communication and to be a member of the Corporate Social Responsibility committee. These new responsibilities transferred her from operational level to executive management level and she accepted this promotion with pride and gratitude. When Vision 2030 came about, Ms. Zumai was already embracing many of the principles the Vision calls for such as diversity, hiring more women, increasing the employment rate of Saudis, and enforcing more accountability and integrity, among others.

Ms. Zumai considers patience as one of her qualities and a necessary characteristic in paving the way toward successful leadership. She takes pride in what she has achieved so far and is always striving to hone her skills and improve her capabilities beyond her current achievements. Presently, she serves as a member of the Governance Board at Majed Society Company as well as a member of Government Technical College, besides providing consultancy services and guidance to entrepreneurs in various industries. She is currently a pioneer consultant in designing and launching manufacturing plants in Saudi Arabia.

She claims that facing challenges is a natural part of conducting business and it is about how you live up to each challenge and overcome barriers with the dedication and accumulated expertise and skills one has developed over the years. By virtue, Ms. Zumai was able to overcome all of her personal and professional barriers, create a work-life balance, and rise above whatever life brings with the help of her professionalism and perseverance. As she mentioned, "Leadership does not come by coincidence", it is a trait that is nurtured and polished by experience and life challenges. It is the effort of overcoming barriers that defines true leaders, and Ms. Zumai has proven she has what it takes to be a strong leader when she not only supported her family financially in times of need but also created opportunities for others, improved their current work conditions, launched successful marketing campaigns and brought more business to her company, improving its prospects and increasing its outreach.



**Ms. Zumai and the Present State of Diversity in Business**

Ms. Zumai says women are now more empowered and companies are interested in promoting qualified women in alignment with Vision 2030. Because of Ms. Zumai's leadership, Nesma has been ahead of the curve in diversity initiatives, with many of the Vision 2030 goals already achieved. Nesma does not hire women for "show". Nesma is committed to hiring qualified and deserving women.

Although Ms. Zumai was the first in her industry, she looks forward to seeing more qualified women in the industry and using her influence to promote more women. She does this by volunteering at the Technical College and coaching and mentoring young women interested in the industry. She has made the decision to volunteer on Fridays when she would otherwise spend time with her family. She partly does this for the love and memory of her late mother, whom she lost in 2018.

One of Ms. Zumai's women in diversity initiatives was to change Nesma's Women's Forum into the Diversity and Inclusion Forum, in order to be more inclusive of everyone within the organisation. In supporting inclusiveness, Zumai maintains an open-door policy to remain approachable to all employees.

Ms. Zumai believes that acceptance of diversity starts at the top. It is the responsibility of the organisation's leadership to empower and promote women across all areas. Women now have many leadership roles within Nesma and seeing women in leadership has become more common. Because she had supportive leadership, she forged her way. In the previous decades, there were socio-cultural and stereotypical challenges which women faced in certain positions. However, Nesma Holdings' leadership has been very positively supporting her to reach where she is now.

Ms. Zumai identified herself as a courageous, ambitious and hard-working person, which helped in her leadership progression in the former male-dominated workforce in Saudi Arabia. Prior to Vision 2030, she observed gender-based biases as barriers for women's participation and engagement in the workforce. The societal expectations of women, along with cultural gender stereotypes, resulted in structural barriers in the corporate world and the Saudi economy at large.

However, she has observed many positive changes and is glad to have been at the forefront of change. She sees many positive changes in women's empowerment and entrance in the workforce and is glad she was empowered to work years earlier.

Saudi Arabia has gone through huge social transformation processes related to globalisation, modernisation, and openness to other cultures, and this has enabled the concept of diversity in the workplace to be more inclusive over the years, including gender diversity. Finally, the Saudi government Vision 2030 has transformed, pushed, and catapulted the Saudi woman into different sectors and significant corporate responsibilities in a short time. Both the government and the private sector are now cutting-edge in diversity policies and practices on women's empowerment and supporting their full potential and economic participation.

Although women now constitute a good number in the workforce in many sectors, they are not fairly represented in higher management. Their careers in management are often hindered by macro-social and organisational obstacles due to the absence of policies that protect women from any biases at workplace. Some sectors of the economy would have more structural barriers for women's participation than others. In investment companies, the barriers would most likely be in the higher management's commitment to gender diversity. Ms. Zumai was lucky to have joined Nesma Holdings, a venture capital and private equity company, and have a manager who introduced her to the Hail Chamber of Commerce, where she was the first Saudi woman to discuss business investment opportunities with Nesma. At that time, there were few women with appropriate experiences and professional qualifications in Saudi Arabia, but that is changing, with more women now being professionally qualified.

In Saudi Arabia, many organisations are now promoting and supporting women in the workplace in accordance to the diversification strategies that Vision 2030 is endorsing and promoting. Ms. Zumai strongly believes that the economy, industries and companies can prosper from inclusion, as diverse businesses are stronger, more competitive, and more successful. The company has a strong culture that supports women in the workforce, because the leadership has a strong commitment to women's participation and engagement in the workforce.

The introduction of Vision 2030's diversity initiatives and women's empowerment has helped make it easier for companies to implement diversity in the workplace.

Nesma Holding is involved in many social projects and initiatives throughout the society which embodies gender diversity as well as inclusivity for all. Different women role models are found in Nesma, and Ms. Zumai believes women should have more diverse jobs and wanted to see more women in IT or pilots, which are both available at Nesma Holdings. The Chief in Nesma Holdings is a woman, Nesma has also appointed the first Saudi female pilot on their team at Nesma Airlines. Lastly, the Head of Corporate IT at Nesma Holding is also a woman.

Ms. Zumai agrees that the increase in the roles of women in her company and the industry of venture capital and private equity has contributed to its success, and strongly believes that the leadership of her organisation is committed to supporting women's engagement and progression in the workplace. Along with continuing the annual Diversity and Inclusion Forums at Nesma Holdings, Ms. Zumai is involved in participating in Women in Diversity Initiatives in the GCC, as well as in expanding the factories employing women with special needs around the country.

Ms. Zumai stated that at Nesma Holdings, the concept of diversity is very broad and includes nationality, gender, age, personal experience, physical abilities, and other factors that make the workforce unique. Ms. Zumai leads an all-woman workforce that work in the Nesma factories in different parts of Saudi Arabia. In fact, when women could drive in Saudi, she saw this as a business opportunity to introduce innovative luxury car products for the women drivers to add a personal touch to their cars. She also mentors many young women in different organisations as a role model who has moved up the leadership ladder with dedication and commitment.

● **Lessons Learnt**

At the end of the interview, Ms. Zumai advised that women should embrace their differences and uniqueness because although there are more job opportunities, competition is getting more intense. Ms. Zumai also strongly believes in being healthy in order to be productive in your career as well as the society at large.



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PROFILE 3  
**HONOURABLE LUJAINA MOHSIN  
HAIDER DARWISH**

Profile Report by  
Nawf Al-Manai and Haitham Al-Omeiri  
Sultan Qaboos University  
Oman

Subject Name  
Honorable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish

Position / Title  
Joint Deputy Chairperson

Company Name  
Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC

Location  
Muscat, Oman

Company Sector  
Automotive, electronics, engineering products

Number of Years Employed in Sector  
25 years

**About Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish**

Honourable Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish is the Joint Deputy Chairperson of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, which is a group that has had a strong impact on Oman's economy since 1987. Hon. Lujaina Mohsin Haider Darwish is one of the most powerful women in Oman because of her position in the public and private sectors and her contributions to Omani society. She is one of the first women to be a member of the MajlisA'shurra, and she became a member of the State Council with a Royal Decree since November 2015 and was re-appointed in 2019 for a further term of four years. Moreover, she has been honoured as one of the strongest women in the Arab world since 2005 by receiving several awards at the global, Arab and Gulf level.

**History and Background**

Hon. Lujaina Mohsin Darwish was born in 1969 in Wilayat, Muscat. Her father Mohsin Haider Darwish was the founder of MHD group, and he was her main supporter. She is the oldest daughter in the family. She grew up in a typical Omani environment where she enjoyed unlimited love by virtue of her parents and sisters' support.

She received her high school certificate from a public school in Muscat. Subsequently, she graduated from Sultan Qaboos University with a degree in English Literature. She then worked as a lecturer at the same university, and later joined her family business.

She began her career as an employee in the Human Resource Department in MHD as an employee and started to climb the ladder till she headed HRO division. While she worked in the company, she was elected twice to Majlis A'shurra for the Wilayat Muscat in 2005. She was one of first two women to be elected in this position.

In November 2015, she was chosen by Sultan Qaboos as a member of the State Council and re-elected for another term in November 2019. According to her political experience she noted that,

“It has always been my dream to be at the forefront of socio-economic and charitable activities in the country. While I have held positions of influence in several local and international organisations, my association as a MajlisA'shurra member for 6 years and as a State Council Member since 2015, have deepened my insight and experience of the core issues being faced by Omani society in general, and women and children in particular. Being a part of various committees and working groups has resulted in the assimilation of large amounts of data leading to the development of strategy formulation and implementation. Besides, it has also enabled me to network with other senior members to resolve many of the socio-economic and political concerns.”

**Honourable Lujaina's Accomplishments**

Hon. Lujaina was elected to be the chairperson for the MHD group from 2015 to 2017, as a part of the corporate governance adopted by the group. Her father was a source of constant guidance in her career. He had given her the strength and direction in all her endeavours. She is the principal shareholder of MHD, which was established half a century ago. The family proprietary business was converted to its present form of a corporate entity in 1987. Over the decades, the company has witnessed phenomenal progress, helped by strategic planning and professional management.

Hon. Lujaina is a member for various government bodies, such as the Advisory Committee for the National Leadership and Competitiveness Program (NCLP), designed and launched by the Diwan of the Royal Court. It is an initiative by the Public-Private Partnership Taskforce (Sharaka). The programme prepares Oman's public sector leaders with the analysis and delivery capabilities to leverage the Sultanate's emerging macro and microeconomic opportunities. She is the Chairperson of The Omani-Italian Friendship Association and the Omani-Chinese Friendship Association. Hon. Lujaina also led the Sidab Club, the first Omani women to lead football club. She is also a member of the GCC Women Forum.



She was previously a member of several other remarkable organisations, such as the Arab International Women's Forum, the board of the Oman Chambers of Commerce & Industry, and the board of the Omani Center for Investment Promotion & Export Development. Furthermore, she was nominated as Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum in 2005. In the voluntary service sector, she was a Board Member to Dar Al Att'a, a charity association formed in 2002.

In 2001, Hon. Lujaina won the 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' award in 2001, and the 'Flame of Excellence' award in 2002. In 2005, she was labelled a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum and became one of 250 leaders around the world. Also, selected as a leading woman in the GCC region by Amwal magazine in France amongst eighteen businesswomen in the Gulf. In 2006, she was nominated as one of the 27 Leading Women in Oman by the Ministry of Social Development.

Hon. Lujaina has been featured in Forbes Middle East frequently.

- She was ranked 13th in the top 50 most powerful businesswomen in their first-ever listing; in 2008, she was ranked 21st in the same category.
- In 2013, she was ranked the 18th Most Influential Arab Woman from Government and Family Businesses.
- In 2014, from amongst 200 Most Powerful Women in Family Business, she was ranked 24th.
- In 2016 and 2017, she was also featured as one of the 100 Most Powerful Arab Businesswomen.
- Recently she has been ranked 34th Power Businesswomen by Forbes Middle East in 2020.

Hon. Lujaina has proudly represented Oman & GCC Women at various global & regional summits in Muscat, Geneva, Dubai & Sweden. In 2018, she spoke at the WTO public forum in Geneva, where she delivered a lecture titled "Leadership Beyond the Veil" on the significance of Omani women leaders. She has also addressed the Opening Plenary of the IRU World Congress 2018 in Muscat. In 2018 she attended the Middle East Women Leader Award by the World HRD Congress and the Hall of Fame by Al Maraa Excellence, to her list of prestigious awards and achievements. Following this, in 2019, Hon. Lujaina won The Top Global Retail Minds Award, 2018 Businesswomen Leader Excellence Award by ME Excellence Awards and the Inspirational Woman Award from Oman Women of the Year 2019. She was recognised and awarded as the Arab Women of the year for "Achievement in Business" by London Arabia Organisation in 2019 which focused on women who fear reprisals by honor killings not just in the Arab world but across

the globe followed by Gold Award Winner as Business Leader of the Year 2019 for Business Brilliance Award, London and a Finalist at Middle East Economic Digest (MEED) under Female Leader of the year 2019.

### Challenges Faced

Hon. Lujaina was supported by her father, who inspired and encouraged her to continue and succeed from the very beginning of her career. Her most significant challenge was creating a balance between her professional life and her social life and meeting the burden of expectation arising from being the daughter of a legendary business leader.

She is not only a daughter and sister but also a wife and mother, like many businesswomen. The environment was the source of her strength, and she overcame the challenge of co-managing her professional and domestic lives by being fiercely determined and patient. Also, she has strong multitasking abilities that would enable her to balance business and household responsibilities. A strong interpersonal skill is another key ingredient in the success formula.

Another challenge the Hon. Lujaina faces is to change the view that success and action do not depend on the family background but on the continuous and relentless effort of diligence, determination, and patience (Halualwisal 2018). She concluded by harkening back to her experiences and stated that that,

“ In my opinion, success is a relative term. Success is largely due to determination, visualisation, and hard work. As someone once said, and I quote, 'The harder I worked the more successful I became.' Success in life is determined by what you do every single day. This is why I am a big believer in working hard every day: success is long-term and can only be acquired.”

### Hon. Lujaina's Opinion on the Present State of Diversity in Business

Hon. Lujaina believes that Omani women in particular faces several challenges when it comes to integration in labour markets. These include women's awareness of themselves, looking for quick success, creating a balance between work and family duties, societal and cultural barriers and finding financing for their projects. This process implies a movement from self-understanding to collective action.

Rowlands (1995) argues that empowerment has three dimensions: the personal level, in intimate relationships and on a collective basis. The empowerment of women in economic activities and their high participation in the labour market leads to many economic gains, including access to employment opportunities that provide a permanent source of income, as well as to the optimal utilisation of human resources available at the national level, leading to higher economic growth rates. Women entrepreneurs make a substantial contribution to national economies through their participation in start-ups and their growth in small and medium businesses (United Nations, 2006). Also, it increases the competitiveness of women in the labour market in light of market economies, privatisation,

globalisation and the reduction of unemployment rates.

From many years of experience, Hon. Lujaina describes Omani women's efforts in the field of entrepreneurship as more than a match for their men counterparts. His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said has led the way by encouraging and initiating several reforms, particularly through education and employment opportunities. The opinions of women are being increasingly solicited, and their voice is now given much more importance. Professional education is now a natural progression for Omani women – more so than their male counterparts. Given that Omani society has been increasingly appreciative of the role played by Omani women, it is a matter of time before women match their men counterparts step for step.

The first step to women's empowerment economically is raising women's awareness. Women must know their rights and ability. Motivating women to entrepreneurship is an important aspect to women empowerment. Women need to be more independent and accomplish more. For some women, the incentive for entrepreneurship arises from circumstances and their thirst for success and independence. There are some motives that drive women to entrepreneurship, such as the desire for additional income, current job dissatisfaction, and to continue their family businesses (i.e. through inheritance).

Looking for quick success is a mistake made by young entrepreneurs today. Hon. Lujaina believes that success in life is determined by what you do every single day. Having a passion to learn helps everyone broaden their horizons and understand the world better. Hon. Lujaina, as an entrepreneur, believes that taken decisions and not losing in what we intended to achieve, we all make mistakes, but what actually helps you to move towards your accomplishments is the fact that you learn from these mistakes and then work on it to achieve your goal.

Hon. Lujaina believes that co-managing family and business demands is the principal challenge faced by women in the workplace. Women sometimes find themselves restricted at home by the social construct that her primary duty is and should be motherhood. Women find it challenging to create a balance between housework and office work. Family members, especially fathers and husbands, should understand their roles in creating this balance, as this support is important and necessary for women to perform their work without pressure or errors.



Societal and cultural barriers historical challenges affect the women's participation in the workforce. The working environment and gender relations in the Arab world are different from the Western countries. Societal customs (urf) and Islamic culture (Shari'a) control women rights to work, as women labour rights in markets depend on Shari'a law, which provides for the protection of women and the creation of an ethical work environment. There are many cultural practices concerning the roles of gender, social ties, and work. The most important role of women according to the Arab culture is being a housewife and a mother, and thus women enjoy a limited appreciation because they often have relied on men in the financial, legal and social aspects. There are also restrictions on women in moving within their country, and some countries do not let women travel without first obtaining her male guardian's permission to travel abroad. However, most of these historical challenges have been sorted out and overcome after HM, announced the renaissance which granted equitable and fair rights to women to play a significant role in the country development as a partner in the renaissance era.

Promoting diversity by increasing women's empowerment depends on many factors, such as education, raising social awareness, and enforcing government regulations in the workplace. Education is the main factor in increasing knowledge of women's rights and capacity to manage challenges, as it helps develops skills and self-confidence in women.

Women's empowerment can be achieved by taking steps to eliminate inequality between men and women as soon as possible by:

- 1 Establishing regulations for equal participation of women in all political, educational, social and professional aspects,
- 2 Paying attention to women's education, skills development, training, employment and health by eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, and
- 3 Adopting policies to improve and raise the quality of life for women, especially in traditional occupations.

#### Lessons Learnt

We learn from Hon. Lujaina that ambitions and belief in oneself are the core factors for women to achieve success in business. Women must believe in themselves in order to solve gendered problems and challenges. Success comes only from continuous hard work & dedication, and education is important at all levels. Finally, Women should be encouraged to utilise the available opportunities for their self-development and women empowerment.



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PROFILE 4  
MS. JEYAPRIYA PARTIBAN

Profile Report by  
Safian Mostafa  
Ahlia University  
Bahrain

Subject Name  
Jeyapriya Partiban

Position / Title  
Partner, Advisory and Head of Risk Consulting

Company Name  
KPMG Bahrain

Location  
Manama, Bahrain

Company Sector  
Professional Services

Number of Years Employed in Sector  
26 years

**About Ms. Jeyapriya Partiban:**

Originally from Malaysia, Jeyapriya Partiban first arrived in Bahrain on a two-year secondment to start her role as a Senior Manager within the Risk Consulting practice with the added responsibility of setting up the RC practice for KPMG in Qatar. Within the first year, she was promoted to a Director and her secondment period was extended by an additional 9 months when, recognition of her contribution to the practice's growth and overall performance led to a promotion to the partnership at the age of 33, making her the first woman and youngest individual to be promoted to a partner, in the local practice at the time. In March 2016, Ms Partiban was appointed as a Board member of KPMG Bahrain.

**Ms. Partiban's Support Networks:**

**Personal:** Ms. Partiban embarked upon her career purely by chance when an opportunity presented itself. While no one in her family had ever worked in the audit field or an audit firm previously, it was her father who encouraged her to give the Big 4 (KPMG practice in Malaysia) opportunity a chance, and that was the start of her journey within KPMG. Armed with solid experience and strong support from her parents, she moved four years later to the KPMG Bahrain practice.

**At Work:** Ms. Partiban stated that that a huge part of her inspiration came from within the firm, i.e. her colleagues and superiors at work, and the managing partner. It was also the support she received from cooperative clients who gave her a head start towards building a positive reputation from the challenges and opportunities she handled.

**Academic:** Ms. Partiban was a part of an unorthodox articleship (in internal audit) with a large conglomerate in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which included the opportunity to engage with over 200 companies across a number of sectors, i.e. shipping, real estate, gaming, education, insurance companies and many more. This organisation not only sponsored her education, but also offered her with the much-required paid study-leave during her education. She progressed through her education through the self-study stream while continuing to work through her articleship and completed her ACCA within 3 years.

She commenced her career with KPMG after completing 7 years with the conglomerate. This played a significant role in her growth given that it provided her with the opportunity to study while gaining her work experience simultaneously.

**Workplace Challenges:**

During the early period of her moving to Bahrain, both the firm and client organisations were primarily male-dominated particularly in senior leadership positions. This was a both a challenge and an opportunity she leveraged. Given the nature of the marketplace in Bahrain, very often one Board Member was also interconnected with a number of companies in various roles. The ability to create a good impression enabled her to build her professional reputation within the marketplace with referrals to additional clients and opportunities, by a network of senior professionals. However, this also enhanced the level of caution and diligence she applied in her work, considering that a simple error could have a ripple effect within this network and affect clients' trust and her professional reputation.



**Diversity at KPMG:**

The typical working hours within the professional services sector tends to be long and can get strenuous depending on the busy season. Ms. Partiban believes that this is a key reason as to why women may not be drawn towards careers within the professional services industry. However, this is also a major concern for the firms within the sector, as they struggle to engage, retain and groom woman professionals to senior levels. It is vital to have a highly engaged and diverse team who support and collaborate proactively to ensure they can balance the workload while they still grow through the firm with each other's support. KPMG believes in an effective work-life balance model wherein the firm provides their people with the flexibility to work from home or remotely when necessary and relevant, shorter working hours during off peak season, sabbatical etc. and the firm trusts their people to use this flexibility to the benefit of the individual and the firm.

As a woman and a partner with KPMG, Ms. Partiban believes in the significance of work-life balance and balancing work and family commitments, with proper planning and prioritisation.

**Evolution of Diversity at KPMG:**

Ms. Partiban noted that both she and the recruitment team within KPMG in Bahrain put in considerable efforts towards attracting well-qualified and experienced women to join the firm. KPMG is an inclusive employer and provides equal opportunity irrespective of gender, nationality, race, age, etc. and constantly seeks towards welcoming people from a range of diverse background and skillsets.

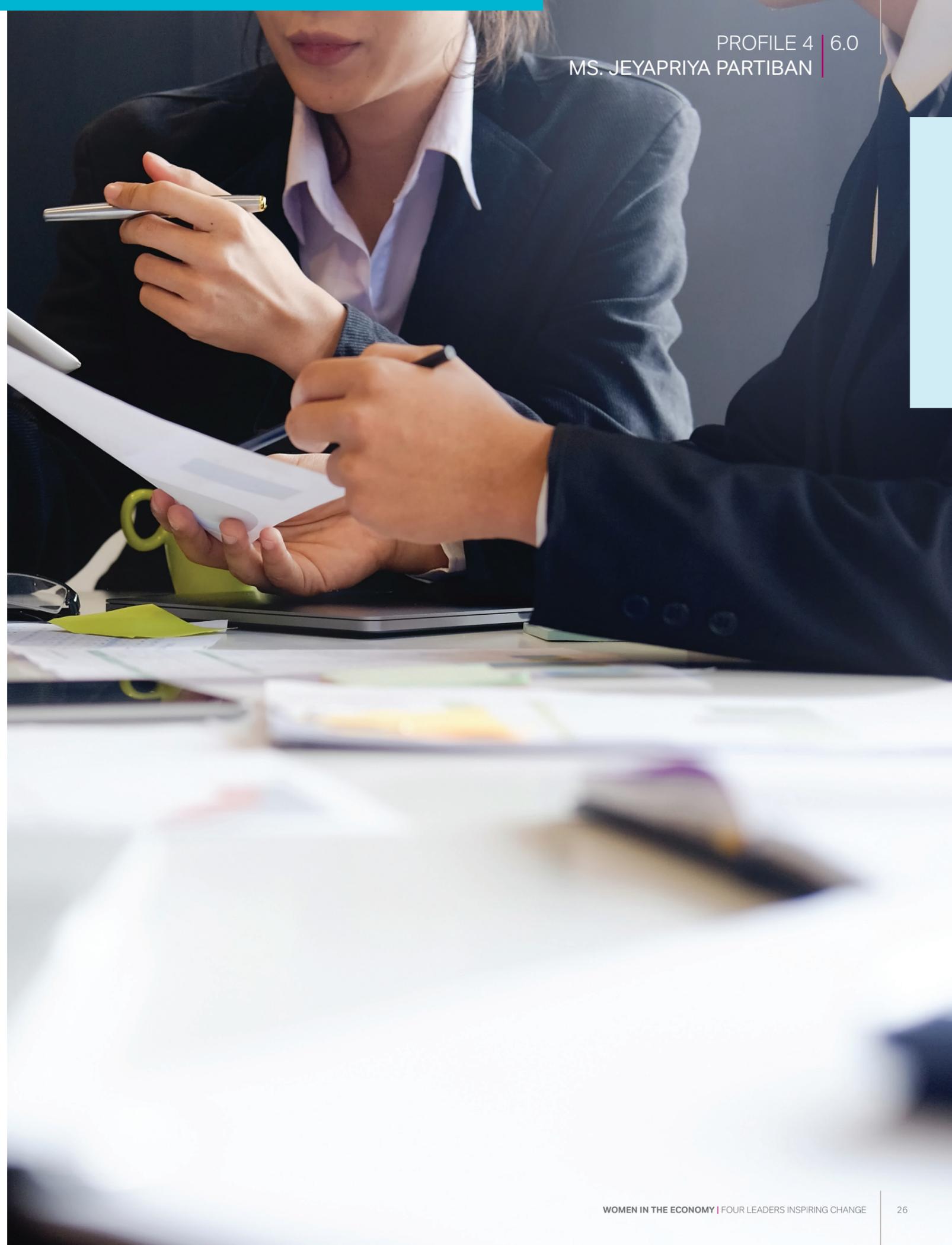
Historically, KPMG only hired accounting graduates; however, today they hire from a range of specialisms including experts from - Digital, Marketing, HR, IT, Risk, Forensics, Sustainability, etc. – all of whom come together to deliver quality services towards client expectations.

Over the recent years, the firm has seen an increase in the number of fresh graduates including women, joining the firm. The duration in terms of career progression for women has also seen considerable reduction over the years, and there is a renewed desire to attract ambitious, highly skilled and well qualified women professionals from within the young technology-oriented generation.

Ms. Partiban encourages women to play an active role in the industry and take on challenging opportunities whilst also balancing their career with family commitments. She believes with self-perseverance and commitment along with support from family and fellow professionals, a woman can excel in any career of her choice.

**Conclusion:**

Ms. Partiban's career and leadership is a true testament for inspiration and leadership. It is also evidence of KPMG's commitment toward diversity and work-life balance. The professional journey of women leaders like Ms. Partiban should be shared more widely by organisations to celebrate their leaders while also building opportunities and structures within their organisations for supporting women professionals. This case study demonstrates how a supportive workplace nurtured a talented woman employee into a leader and, supported her growth and success professionally and personally, in a bid to give back to the firm in terms of skills, value and inspiration.





## VISION

AN EQUITABLE WORLD FOR WOMEN

## MISSION

TO PROVIDE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN TO ACCESS KNOWLEDGE, SERVICES, SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND RESOURCES, THROUGH A DEVELOPMENT NETWORK THAT ADVANCES THEM TO REACH THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL.

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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

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

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

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

## OUR AFFILIATES



### SHARJAH BUSINESS WOMEN COUNCIL

Since its inception in 2002, Sharjah Business Women Council (SBWC) has dedicated its efforts to drive full integration of businesswomen in the economy and promote a culture of sustainable female entrepreneurship in the Emirate of Sharjah - UAE.

The Council's holistic approach to supporting female-owned and led businesses includes assisting businesswomen in the process of setting up their businesses in Sharjah, forging partnerships with government and private organisations in the UAE and abroad, and offering various exposure opportunities to engage potential and established businesswomen in Sharjah.

Sharjah Business Women Council is one of three affiliates of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment.

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



### BADIRI EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

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 to enable them realise their full potential.

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

The Badiri Education & Development Academy is one of three affiliates of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment.

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



### IRTHI CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS COUNCIL

Irthi Contemporary Crafts Council engages with women artisans across the UAE, Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, Central Asia and South East Asia regions to empower them economically and socially through vocational training and upskilling programmes. In doing so, the Council has been ensuring the preservation of indigenous craft heritage.

A hub of global crafts collaborations, the Council ensures the modernization of traditional crafts, and creates new market opportunities for local craftswomen by partnering them with international designers and artists, merging Emirati crafts and artisanal techniques with cutting-edge design and innovation to produce Emirati crafted products reflective of the culture today.

The Council seeks to create a valued women-artisan economy by creating a sustainable market in which re-contextualised traditional crafts and crafted products exist. Its collections have been staged on coveted global platforms like the London Design Fair, Maison d'Exceptions at Premiere Vision Paris and Dubai's Downtown Design.

A platform that preserves and protects the heritage and legacy of crafts, the Council ensures the documentation of craft heritage and creates publications that serve as a reference to a culture that relies heavily on story telling. Its latest efforts have led to Sharjah's recognition as a city of Crafts & Folk Art for the craft of Talli in 2019 by UNESCO's Creative Cities Network.

Irthi is an affiliate of NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA) and operates under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikhha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, wife of His Highness the Ruler of Sharjah and Chairperson of NAMA.

For more information, visit [www.irthi.com](http://www.irthi.com)



OUR PURPOSE

Fostering a Corporate Culture of Accountability and Transparency in the Gulf Region

Founded in 2010, the Pearl Initiative works across the Gulf Region to improve corporate accountability and transparency. It is a regionally-focused growing network of business leaders committed to driving joint action, exhibiting positive leadership, and sharing knowledge and experience in order to positively influence regional business and student communities towards implementing higher standards.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Established in Cooperation with the United Nations Office for Partnerships

Strategic Partnership with the United Nations Global Compact

OUR PRESENCE

The Pearl Initiative operates across the Gulf Region of the Middle East.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Gulf Region Focus
- Drive for Competitiveness
- Non-Profit Organisation
- Created by Gulf Business, for Gulf Business

KEY TOPICS OF INTEREST:

GOVERNANCE BY THEME

- Anti-Corruption Best Practices
- Diversity in Business Leadership
- Corporate Reporting Best Practices

GOVERNANCE BY SECTOR

- Governance in Micro, Small and Medium-sized Businesses
- Governance in Family Firms
- Governance in Philanthropy
- Governance in Tech

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

- The Business Pledge
- Executive Education

The Pearl Initiative believes strongly in the power of collaboration and its ability to have a multiplying impact in promoting a thriving economy in the Gulf Region underpinned by a Private Sector that embraces good governance as a pillar of sustainable growth.

The Pearl Initiative works with regional and international companies operating in the Gulf Region and other international organisations to foster greater insight and appreciation of the business case associated with the implementation of corporate governance.



WHAT WE DO:

To reach and influence business and student communities, the Pearl Initiative:



SHARES INSIGHTS:

We develop and publish reports, insights and good practice references to help businesses independently enhance their capabilities.



CREATES NETWORKS:

We bring together business, government and civil society decision makers to share best business practices and help maximise the economic opportunities available in the region.



BUILDS KNOWLEDGE:

We help build knowledge by bringing experts together with businesses, and host a series of complimentary workshops, roundtables, focus groups and training sessions.



INSPIRES ACTION:

Our focus on impact and collective action guides what we do to ensure we are working together with the community to inspire action and expand opportunities for all.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS:

As of April 2020

177 ★★★★★

Events and workshops across the Gulf Region

29 📄

Regional Insight reports and publications

40 🏛️ 🏛️

Universities engaged across the Gulf Region

413 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤 👤

High-level regional and international speakers

8,667 👤

Event participants from across the Gulf Region

7,337 🎓

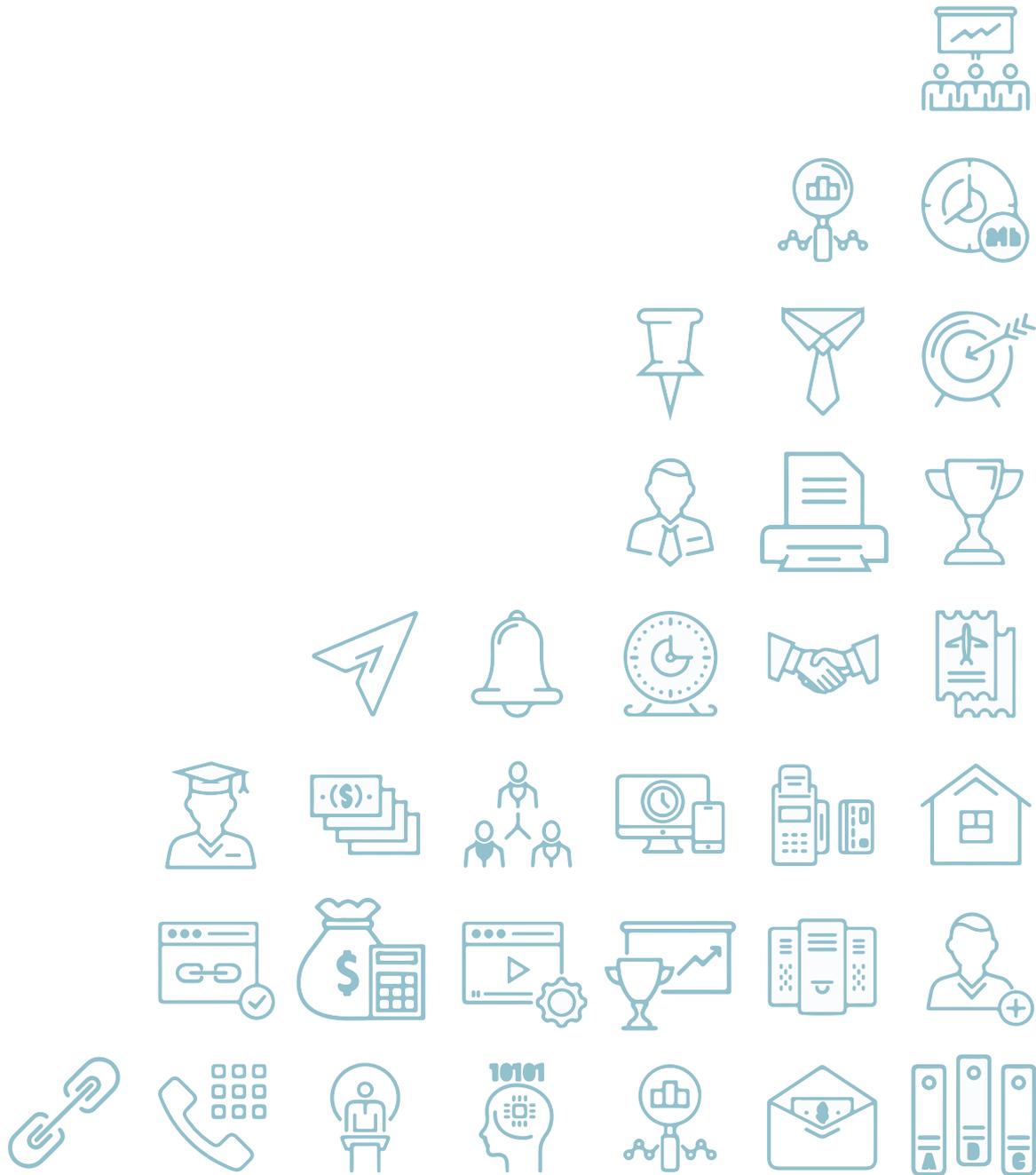
University students reached and engaged

PEARL INITIATIVE'S PARTNER LIST

As of January 2021

Please get in touch if you would like to become a partner company of the Pearl Initiative at [enquiries@pearlinitiative.org](mailto:enquiries@pearlinitiative.org).





مؤسسة نماء للارتقاء بالمرأة  
NAMA WOMEN ADVANCEMENT ESTABLISHMENT

NAMA Women Advancement Establishment

T +971 (6) 594 1262  
F +971 (6) 523 9339  
ص.ب. 2334  
الشارقة، أ.ع.م. | Sharjah, U.A.E.  
info@namawomen.ae  
www.namawomen.ae

@namawomen

#نماءالمرأة  
#NamaWomen



Pearl Initiative

T +971 (6) 779 2672  
F +971 (6) 515 4066  
PO Box 26666  
Sharjah, U.A.E.  
enquiries@pearlinitiative.org  
www.pearlinitiative.org  
@pearlinitiative

#PearlInitiative