



Post-Event Report

Women in the Economy: The UAE Outlook

Date: 30 September 2019

Location: Sheraton Beach Hotel and Spa, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Word of Thanks

The Pearl Initiative would like to extend their gratitude to all the event attendees, and particularly the speakers who unconditionally shared their time and expertise to make this event a success:

- **Dima Alashram**, Senior Advisor on Sustainability and Social Investment, Sustainable Square;
- **Hind Alowais**, Vice President of International Participants - International Organizations and Non-Official Participants, Expo 2020;
- **Lucy Chow**, Senator, World Business Angels Investment Forum, UAE and Director, Women's Angel Business Network (WAIN);
- **Rana Nawas**, Creator and Host, When Women Win, and
- **Nesreen Osman**, Partner, Pinsent Masons.

It is heartening to see the commitment and passion that is extended in the support and promotion of the business case for diversity in leadership.

We would also like to thank **NAMA Women Advancement Establishment**, our programme partner, for their support of our efforts to promote increased diversity and inclusion in the regional economy.

Programme Overview

Embracing diversity
as a business
imperative

02

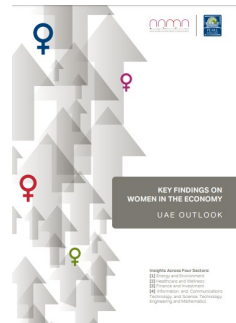
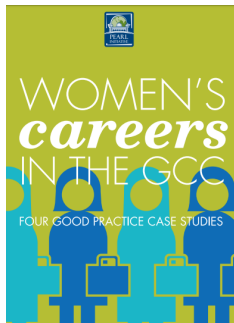
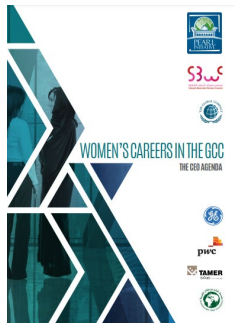
Diversity in
Business
Leadership

Activities:

Publications and Resources – Delivering research and practical guides to enhance knowledge on, and implementation of, diversity and inclusion initiatives in organisations.

Videos and Infographics – Filmed in collaboration with leading regional entities, subject matter experts, and organisations to promote the business case for diversity in the workplace.

Workshops and Roundtables – Sharing knowledge and insight about the value of diversity in business activities and settings.



Programme Partner:



Event Overview

Women in the Economy: The UAE Outlook

As part of the Pearl Initiative's commitment to promoting the business case for increased diversity in the workforce, an interactive roundtable session was held in Sharjah, UAE, in collaboration with our programme partner, **NAMA Women Advancement Establishment**.

This roundtable brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss the findings of our 2018 report, *Women in the Economy: UAE Outlook*, and the path forward for businesses to improve their support for women in their workforces.

This roundtable was **designed** to address the concerns that affect women's advancement in the workforce, and

The **goal** of this roundtable was to discuss the structural and social challenges that limit women's career growth, and to have a constructive discussion on the steps that organisations can take to ensure the professional development of women employees for a robust and egalitarian economy.

Key Information

Number of Attendees: 33 Attendees

Profile of Attendees: Small business owners, CSR and sustainability executives, mid-level executives, and students

Attendee Feedback:

- Event quality: Excellent (68.75%)
- Registration process: Excellent (87.5%)
- Content: Excellent (60%)

Strategic Objectives

The objectives of this event were to:

- Discuss the findings of the Women in the Economy: UAE Outlook Report in a roundtable setting
- Engage industry leaders and professionals in a conversation on the importance of promoting diversity in the workplace, with an emphasis on women's economic participation
- Promote the ongoing Women in the Economy 2 (The Gulf Outlook) programme and research

Opening Remarks

Yasmine Omari, Executive Director, Pearl Initiative



Yasmine Omari introduced Pearl Initiative to the audience, and identified the business case for diversity in business leadership across the Gulf Region.

She introduced the Diversity in Business Leadership programme and elaborated on why diversity and inclusion as a component of best business practices is now a business mandate across the world.

Ms. Omari noted that Gulf Region organisations are taking progressive steps towards supporting women in their organisations in line with global standards, but that much remains to be done to support women's entry and retention in the regional economy, as women and organisations continue to report hurdles in the path toward women's representation in organisations across all economic sectors.

She then spoke at length about the current research that the Pearl Initiative is conducting with NAMA Women Advancement Establishment on the nature and extent of women's participation in the regional economy, including the upcoming launch of two new reports to fill the regional data gaps in this field.

She concluded by introducing the keynote speaker for the event.

Keynote Address

Rana Nawas, Creator and Host, *When Women Win*



“Diversity is having different people in the room and inclusion is asking them to dance. Diversity is useless without inclusion.”

Rana Nawas

Rana Nawas began by introducing herself, and prefaced her address by noting the continuing necessity for supporting women in all socio-economic spheres.

She presented current statistics on the strategic necessity for diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the business world, and the positive effects of implementing active D&I policies in organisations.

This was followed by a discussion on what cognitive diversity means, its components, and how gender diversity fits under its umbrella. Ms. Nawas explained why gender diversity in organisations translates to improved economic outcomes, and compared data points from multiple sources to drive home the point that D&I policies mean good business.

Ms. Nawas then discussed how gender inequity plays out at a global and regional level, and compared data points on the two. She elaborated on the ways in which gender inequity could be addressed in the Gulf Region, and how different stakeholders could implement varied solutions to holistically achieve gender equity.

Ms. Nawas spoke at length about the barriers that prevent women’s success in the workforce. Noting that the burden of care is disproportionately placed on women, she offered suggestions on how policies and procedures could be modified to shift this burden, prevent burn-out, and promote women’s economic engagement.

Finally, Ms. Nawas spoke about practical solutions to support gender equity on personal and organisational levels, ensuring that the audience was left thinking about constructive ways in which they can make a difference within their respective organisations.

Moderator and Panelists



Dima Alashram, Senior Advisor on Sustainability and Social Investment, Sustainable Square

Dima's passion lies in building community-centric operations and translating the concept of Creating Shared Values to transform organizations. Dima has worked with organisations to set sustainability strategies, diversity & inclusion programs, social investment frameworks and manage stakeholder engagement.

Hind Allowais, Vice President of International Participants - International Organizations and Non-Official Participants, Expo 2020

Ms. Hind Allowais is the Vice President of the International Participants Department at Expo 2020 Dubai where she oversees the presence and participation of International and intergovernmental organizations and a wide range of stakeholders at Expo 2020 Dubai.

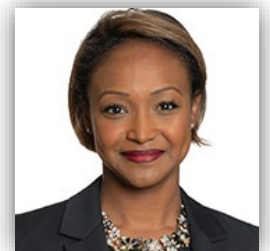


Lucy Chow, Senator, World Business Angels Investment Forum, UAE and Director, Women's Angel Business Network (WAIN)

Lucy is focused on the innovation space, both in terms of supporting founders and as an investor. She is a Director of WAIN (Women's Angel Investor Network) and was appointed Senator (UAE) at the Grand Assembly, World Business Angel Forum (WBAF) and is a Board member of the Global Startup and Women Executive Committees.

Nesreen Osman, Partner, Pinsent Masons

Nesreen is a Partner at international law firm, Pinsent Masons LLP. Nesreen specialises in construction and infrastructure disputes, acting on behalf of employers, main contractors, sub-contractors and members of the design team. She is also an active member of the Pinsent Masons Middle East Female Future Forum.



Panel Discussion



The panel discussion, moderated by Dima Alashram, began with an introduction to the three panellists.

Ms. Alashram asked panellists what the main challenges were in their organisations when it came to recruiting and retaining women. The panellists offered perspectives from the fields of law, entrepreneurship, and the public sector, and spoke at length about **the leaky pipeline effect**, wherein women enter the workforce in large numbers but do not become senior level employees at the same rate. Panellists also offered suggestions to equalise the playing field in the workplace, such as **gender-responsive budgeting, HR policy formulation, and maternity and paternity leave**.

The construction then shifted to what the panellists thought of the state of progress – in terms of gender equity – in the UAE and wider MENA region. Panellists noted progress in terms of women’s representation in government, which creates an example for the Private Sector to follow and live up to. In this way there is a ripple effect, where positive policymaking creates advancements in business practices. There was also a note that social change and business change go hand in hand.

Panel Discussion

A discussion also took place on the necessity – or lack thereof – of **quotas for women in hiring**. It was noted that while the goal is to ultimately hire the right candidate based on merit, at present the playing field is uneven and not a meritocracy, which is why qualified women are not given opportunities to succeed.

Panellists discussed personal stories of being sidelined at work for being women, being passed over for promotions, or taking on the work of colleagues who are men. These stories fuelled dialogues on how women can be supported by **improved internal policies** within organisations. Panellists talked about specific successful forums and policies that are currently being implemented in the Private Sector.

The discussion also looked at how organisations could remove obstacles for women in their workforces, and the gendered conceptions of “leadership” as being comprised of traditionally masculine-coded traits. Panellists recommended that both individuals and organisations should examine their conceptions of gender and gender roles to ensure equity is achieved sooner rather than later.



Quotes

Specifically for the UAE, we are leading by example for women in leadership. It sends a strong signal to the country as a whole and to the Private Sector.

When you set quotas...you are changing the face of what it means to be a leader. You are getting people accustomed to being in a boardroom with 30% women.



Hind Alowais



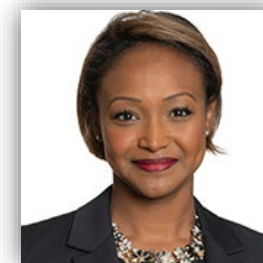
Lucy Chow

In entrepreneurship, the start-up world is not forgiving. The very idea of a three-minute pitch is very masculine, and I have been on judging panels as the only woman.

We always try to take an active board role when we invest...we want to make sure that...hiring more women is part of their thinking.

At Pinsent Masons in 2014, 70% of new lawyers were women, but only 20% made partner. The issue isn't bringing women into law, but about what happens in the middle and getting them to partner level.

(Targets are) not about only promoting women, it's about looking at why women are not being put forward, why are they at levels below...



Nesreen Osman

Group Discussion

The group discussion covered a variety of topics relating to the business case for diversity and inclusion.

Audience members and panellists discussed the following:

- How women can understand and navigate power dynamics in the office
- The role of quotas and hiring for diversity
- How men can support women and promote gender equity in the workplace
- Negotiating for equal titles and pay in the office, and obtaining the support of colleagues in the process
- The policies and procedures organisations can implement to enforce gender equity



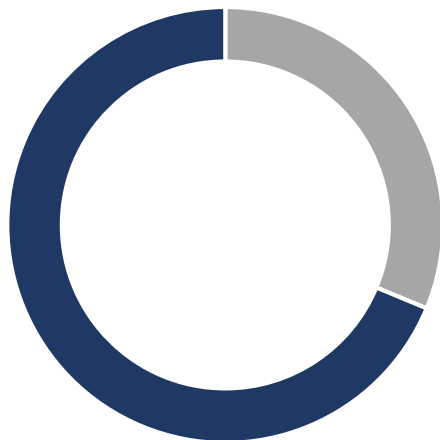
Attendee Feedback

Based on event feedback forms collected by Pearl Initiative, the **overall event experience** was described as Excellent, with 68.75% of attendees rating it as such, and 31.25% rating it as Good.

The **registration quality** was described as Excellent by 87.5% of attendees, and Good by 12.5%.

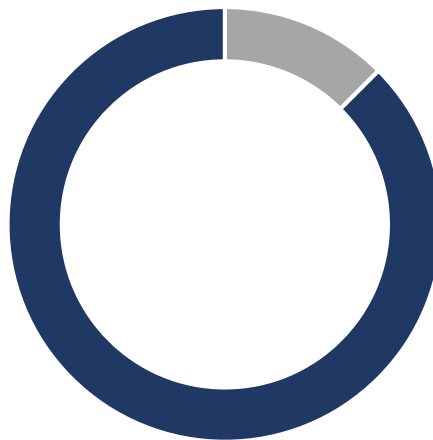
The **content** was described by 60% of attendees as Excellent, and by 26% of attendees as Good.

Event Quality



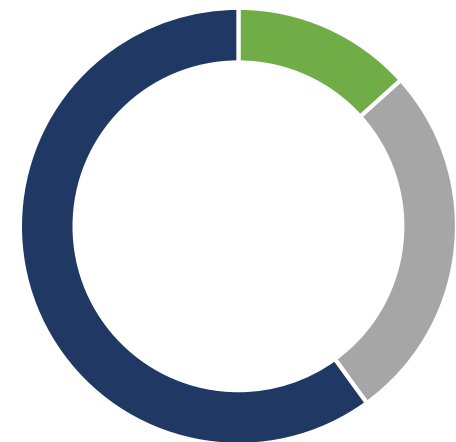
■ Good ■ Excellent

Registration Quality



■ Good ■ Excellent

Effective Content



■ Average ■ Good ■ Excellent

On-Site Impressions









Appendices

Appendix 1

Event Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
08:30 AM	Registration and Welcome Mixer
09:00 PM	Introductory Remarks Yasmine Omari, Executive Director, Pearl Initiative
09:15 PM	Keynote Address Rana Nawas, Creator and Host, <i>When Women Win</i>
10:00 AM	Panel Discussion: Women in the Economy <i>Panellists:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Hind Alowais, Vice President of International Participants - International Organizations and Non-Official Participants, Expo 2020;▪ Lucy Chow, Senator, World Business Angels Investment Forum, UAE and Director, Women's Angel Business Network (WAIN);▪ Nesreen Osman, Partner, Pinsent Masons <i>Moderator:</i> Dima Alashram, Senior Advisor on Sustainability and Social Investment, Sustainable Square
11:00 AM	Group Discussion
11:45 AM	Concluding Remarks Yasmine Omari, Executive Director, Pearl Initiative
12:00 AM	Coffee and Networking

Appendix 2

Social Media Coverage

A comprehensive social media campaign was rolled out for two months by the Pearl Initiative on our social media accounts in both English and Arabic. Here is a selection of our posts:

30 سبتمبر 2019

موقع Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 صباحاً - 12:30 ظهراً

النتائج الرئيسية لدراسة المرأة في الاقتصاد
دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

انضموا الى حوارنا السنوي حول التنوع الوظيفي في مكان العمل والتجربة السنوية في سوق العمل الإماراتية.

شاركوا الخبراء وقادة الأعمال في المنطقة لمناقشة سبل ضمان الشركات لتقدم الأعمال واستدامتها من خلال دعم المرأة وتعزيز التنوع في مكان العمل.

30 September 2019

Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 AM - 12:30 PM

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY
The UAE Outlook

"Diverse teams outperform non-diverse teams on every metric. Enough said."

Rana Nawas
Creator and Host
When Women Win

30 September 2019

Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 AM - 12:30 PM

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY
The UAE Outlook

"Diversity in the workforce is important because it ensures that a company has the benefit of a variety of different skills, characteristics and, most significantly, perspectives. This ultimately manifests itself positively in the company's decision making, performance and reputation."

Naem Osman
Partner
Pwnter Advisors

30 September 2019

Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 AM - 12:30 PM

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY
The UAE Outlook

"Diversity, whether it is in the boardroom or at the bottom rung of the corporate ladder, makes business sense. Companies need to employ people that reflect their customers, fans, followers etc. Bringing women into a company early is important as you need to have a pipeline of talent that can eventually rise to the top."

Lucy Chow
Senior, World Business Angels Investment Forum, UAE
Director, Women's Angel Business Network (WABN)

30 September 2019

Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 AM - 12:30 PM

WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY
The UAE Outlook

"The conversation on diversity is really picking up and becoming more sophisticated. We can all benefit by standing behind this narrative and demanding changes in our work environment that cater to the promotion of truly diverse work environments."

Dima Alashram
Senior Advisor on Sustainability and Social Investment
Sustainable Square

30 سبتمبر 2019

موقع Sheraton Beach Resort, Sharjah

08:30 صباحاً - 12:30 ظهراً

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Appendix 3

Digital Press Release #1

[Wamda press release](#) (29 October 2019): “Pearl Initiative & NAMA present the business case for increased women's participation in Gulf economy”

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Programme Team

Diversity in Business Leadership



Yasmine Omari

Executive Director

yomari@pearlinitiative.org

An expert in governance for family firms, Yasmine joined the Pearl Initiative as Head of Programmes, and became Executive Director in 2019. She has experience in the implementation and operation of governance systems, as well as business performance and risk management capabilities for private companies and family offices. Prior to joining the Pearl Initiative, Yasmine was a Senior Manager at Deloitte and supported clients in navigating the business challenges faced by entrepreneurial families in business. Yasmine has a legal background and holds a degree in Law and Arabic from SOAS, University of London.



Shruti Sardesai

Programme Assistant

ssardesai@pearlinitiative.org

Shruti has a background in international relations, particularly in humanitarian practice, gender, and research. Prior to joining the Pearl Initiative, she held internships with international organizations such as the World Food Programme, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, and the Association for Women's Rights in Development. Shruti graduated with a Masters in Global Affairs from the University of Toronto, and holds a BA in International Relations (magna cum laude) with minors in Women's Studies and History from the American University of Sharjah.