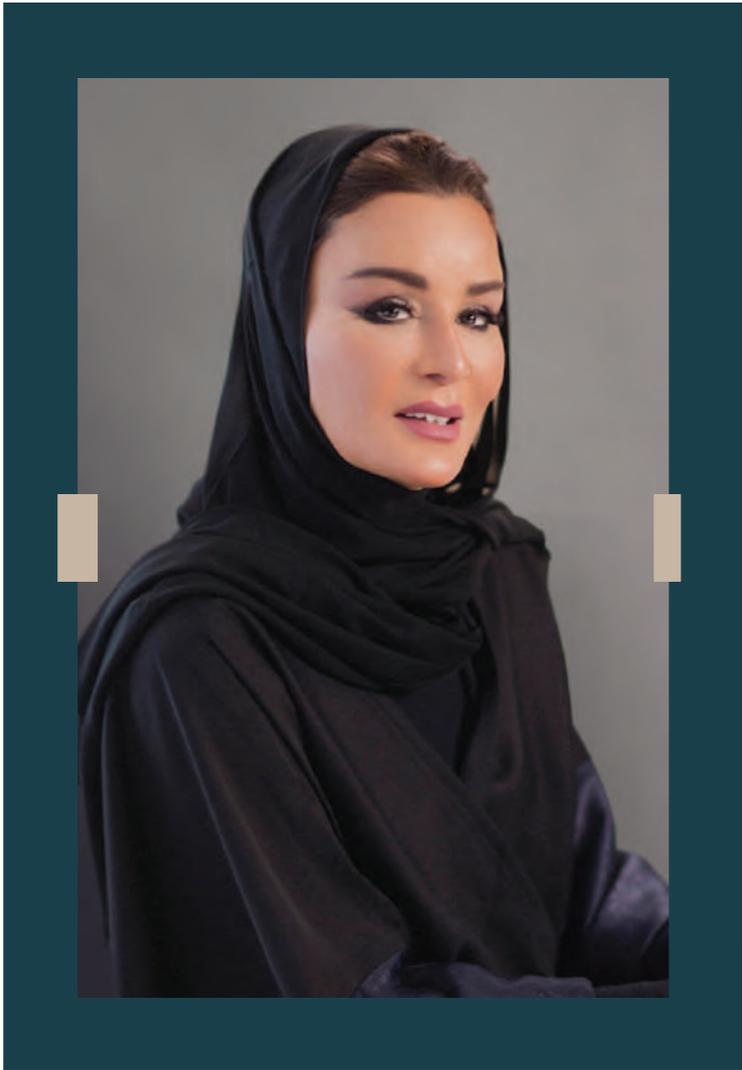


CAREERGuide

Celebrating *Women's* Career Success





“ Your generation faces great challenges, greater perhaps than ever before. But if you hold on to the fire within you, then I believe there is nothing you cannot achieve. As you follow your chosen path, it can be difficult to bear the burden, not only of your own hopes and dreams, but of those who came before you and those who will come after. I beg you not to allow the pressures of life’s challenges to blind you to your values and your belief in the possibility of a better world. Remain always true to yourself, your hopes, dreams, and ideals. ”

HH SHEIKHA MOZA BINT NASSER
CHAIRPERSON OF QATAR FOUNDATION

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WINGS OF
CHANGE

**AMNA
AL OBAIDLY**

Produced by Qatar Career Development
Center in collaboration with Qatar Foundation
Communication Directorate.



Career Guide app
available to download at:



THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT



This issue is crafted to inspire all readers, emphasizing that the power of career success and inspiration knows no gender. Gender equity is at the heart of career development, with every career ladder open to anyone who is willing to climb. The lessons from these incredible women are relevant for all readers, encouraging them to pursue their career goals to the fullest, regardless of age, gender, or aspiring field. At QCDC, we recognize the unique ambitions of Qatar's youth.

We remain committed to providing the knowledge, insights, and guidance necessary for making informed academic and career decisions that align with their aspirations.

We hope you find inspiration and valuable lessons in the stories of these remarkable women. Meanwhile, we look forward to continuing to be a part of your career journey with engaging and meaningful pieces in the future.

Editorial Team

Our esteemed readers,

In this special edition, we have taken a new approach by celebrating the achievements of nine inspiring accomplished women. These women, from diverse professional fields such as medicine, engineering, technology, entrepreneurship, sports, and arts, have carved their paths to success. Their stories of remarkable career success are a testament to the endless possibilities for women in the professional world. While women's empowerment remains a guiding principle, this issue takes a moment to honor the achievements of women across these varied fields.

In Qatar, women have consistently overcome numerous challenges, demonstrating their ability to contribute meaningfully to the nation's

progress. Today, women hold leadership roles across every sector, playing a crucial part in building a brighter future for Qatar.

We had the privilege of meeting with talented women from diverse sectors – medicine, engineering, technology, entrepreneurship, sports, aviation, arts, and leadership—who generously shared their experiences and advice to inspire our readers. Their stories offer insights into each woman's journey, challenges, resilience, and aspirations. We are also pleased to feature insights from accomplished women beyond Qatar, offering valuable perspectives on fields like technology and youth engagement on a global scale, broadening our readers' horizons.



PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) and Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC) have signed a working document to frame their cooperation in training, employment, and career rehabilitation for people with learning difficulties. The agreement aims to help integrate these individuals into national programs and events that align with their abilities and career aspirations.

The collaboration signifies the enduring strategic partnership between QCDC and MoL, which is focused on promoting inclusivity in training and employment. The long-term objectives include enhancing the qualifications of national talent, improving their readiness, and ensuring their adaptability in a dynamic job market.

In 2024, QCDC has expanded its national connections by signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with esteemed public and private sector entities, including the National Human Rights Committee, Retaj Group, and Renad Academy.



HIGH TURNOUT FOR MY CAREER MY FUTURE

In August of 2024, QCDC successfully organized the sixth edition of 'My Career My Future' in partnership with the Ministry of Labour. This five-day event provided over 80 high school students with practical experience and exposure to real work environments. It enabled them to explore various career paths within local organizations across public and private sectors.

Participating organizations included prominent names such as Qatar Airways, Qatar Red Crescent Society, Sidra Medicine, Equine Veterinary Medical Center, Mowasalat "Karwa," Vodafone Qatar, Retaj Real Estate Group, Sout Al Khaleej Radio, Doha Bank, Marble Medical Center, and Qatar General Insurance & Reinsurance Company.

The program's final day featured a university fair organized in collaboration with Qatar University, University of Doha for Science and Technology, Al Rayyan International University College, Qatar Finance and Business Academy, and Qatar Aeronautical Academy, providing students with valuable insights into their higher education options.



LITTLE EMPLOYEE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

The fourth edition of QCDC's 'Little Employee' initiative has seen a record level of participation, with over 40 organizations from both the public and private sectors joining since its launch in May of 2024. This initiative encourages employees to bring their children, aged seven to 15, to the workplace for a day of hands-on exposure to a real-world work environment. Through this unique experience, children gain valuable insights into various professions and learn about the significance of work and fundamental career concepts.

This year, the list of participating organizations from the public and private sectors included the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Qatar Foundation, Qatar Tax Authority, General Retirement & Social Insurance Authority, Qatar News Agency, Qatar Airways, Qatar Energy, Qatar Museums, the municipalities of Doha and Al Rayyan, Hamad Medical Corporation, Family Consulting Center (Wifaq), and Start Trading Services.



CAREER VILLAGE ATTRACTS OVER 1600 STUDENTS



QCDC organized the fifth edition of the 'Career Village' in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and KidZania Doha. The event brought together over 1600 high school students from 91 public and private schools across Qatar, offering a unique, hands-on exploration of various career paths within the country's evolving labor market.

The 'Career Village' featured engaging booths, dynamic experiential learning zones, and interactive workshops designed to equip students with practical skills and knowledge essential for their future success. More than 30 representatives from leading ministries and organizations across diverse sectors, including Medicine, Education, Finance, Government, Technology,

Aviation, Media, Hospitality, and Social Work, participated in the event.

On the event's final day, a panel discussion titled "Engaging High School Students with the Labor Market: A Pathway to Success" was held. It featured renowned experts in education and lifelong learning, including Hugo Pickford-Wardle, Founder and Chief Growth Officer of Startup SHERPAS; Jason Holt CBE, Founder of Metaverse Learning; Ben Mason, Founder and CEO of My Global Bridge; and Dr. Tajalsir Kardaman, Career Guidance Expert from QCDC. The discussion highlighted the importance of early career engagement and practical exposure in effectively guiding students toward successful professional futures.

QCDC BOOSTS INTERNATIONAL REACH



QCDC actively participated in two prominent international career development forums in 2024, proudly showcasing its unwavering commitment to advancing career guidance on a global stage.

In June, the center was present at the National Career Development Association (NCDA) conference in San Diego, California, USA. The annual event gathered career development practitioners, educators, counselors, and specialists from the United States and worldwide. During the conference, the QCDC team offered a detailed overview of the center's programs and services at both national and regional levels, sharing insights into Qatar's approach to career development.

The center also participated in the second edition of the Arab Career Development Conference (ACDC) in Alexandria, Egypt. The center delivered a session titled "Building Qatar's Unified Career Development Ecosystem: A Unique Blueprint for the Arab World," which highlighted QCDC's continued efforts to establish a national career guidance system and shared a vision for replicating this model across the Arab region.

By actively participating in international events, QCDC underscores its goal of fostering collaboration with global partners, adapting specialized knowledge to local contexts, pioneering innovative career development strategies, and prominently highlighting Qatar's significant progress in building a skilled and capable workforce.

QCDC JOINS FORCES WITH EDUCATION ABOVE ALL



The Education Above All (EAA) Foundation and QCDC joined forces to elevate the quality of career guidance and development for students at Assalam Schools, part of EAA's Together Project. Through this partnership, QCDC delivered comprehensive training for over 340 students and 77 teachers from four schools. Additionally, QCDC provided strategic support for career-focused events and expanded employability and internship opportunities, helping students at Assalam Schools prepare for their future careers with practical skills and real-world experiences.

EMPOWERABILITY PAVES THE WAY FOR INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS



QCDC introduced its pioneering 'EmpowerAbility' program to promote and foster inclusive employment by empowering participants with learning difficulties with essential employability skills. This year's edition focused on two integrated tracks to enhance professional and entrepreneurial capabilities.

The first phase centered on developing participants' communication and teamwork skills through workshops, interactive activities, and orientation sessions, preparing participants for seamless integration into Qatar's labor market. Participants also had the opportunity to apply some of these skills by supporting partner organizations during National Sports Day activities.

During the second stage, participants were guided through the early stages of entrepreneurial journeys.

QCDC collaborated with specialized institutions and successful entrepreneurs to provide insights into financial planning, marketing, and project presentation, offering a solid foundation for participants to embark on their entrepreneurial journeys.

The program's esteemed partners included Qatar Foundation, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Qatar Chamber, Qatar University, and other stakeholders.

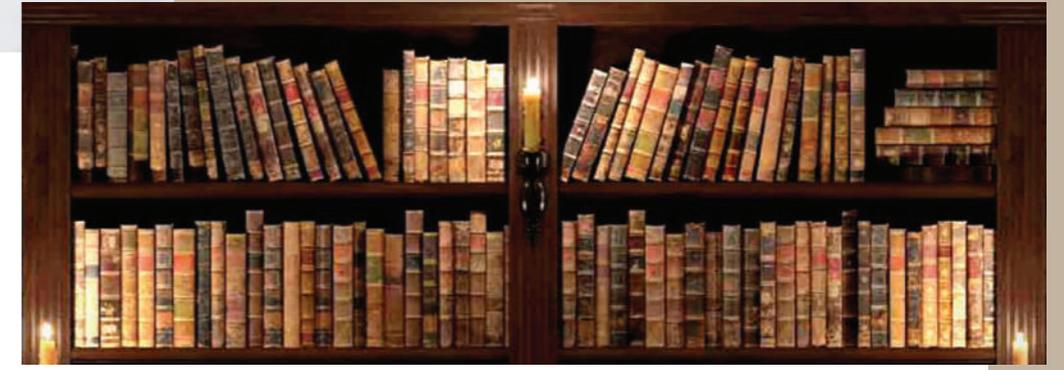
Highlighting QCDC's unwavering commitment to promoting inclusive employment and accessible career development, the 'EmpowerAbility' program ensures that individuals of all abilities can meaningfully contribute to Qatar's workforce.

THE CAREER COUNSELORS HUB WELCOMES OVER 250 CAREER COUNSELORS



In partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the US Embassy Doha, and Qatar Foundation's Student Life Department, QCDC organized the 2024 edition of the Career Counselors Hub at Multaqa, Education City. The two-day event successfully gathered over 250 career practitioners from across Qatar, providing a dynamic platform for learning, networking, and valuable knowledge exchange.

The Career Counselors Hub serves as a dynamic platform for career counselors, academic advisors, and practitioners to engage, share insights, and explore best practices and trends in career guidance. Through a comprehensive and engaging program of workshops, training sessions, and networking opportunities, the event equips participants with the essential skills to effectively support Qatar's youth and contribute to developing the nation's future workforce.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT TERMS

Mentoring

A professional relationship in which an experienced individual (the mentor) helps another person (the mentee) acquire specific skills and knowledge to enhance the mentee's professional and personal abilities.

Flexicurity

This term combines flexibility and security, referring to worker-support models that provide benefits, promote job security, and protect employee rights.

Scan the QR Code to access the latest version of the APCDA Glossary of Terms and learn more career development terms in English and Arabic:



This glossary was compiled by a team of career development specialists from the Asia Pacific Career Development Association, reviewed, and translated through collaboration between Qatar Career Development Center and the Translation and Training Center at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

AL-DILEELA

Your Career Navigator

As part of our commitment to guiding Qatar's youth on their professional journeys, QCDC launched Al-Dileela - an innovative program offering personalized career counseling sessions tailored to individual needs. This program supports participants in making informed academic and career decisions.

With a user-friendly online booking system, Al-Dileela serves a diverse audience, including high school students, undergraduates, alumni, job seekers, and individuals looking to transition careers.

Through in-depth sessions in Arabic, English, and French, participants can explore their interests, abilities, and goals while receiving customized guidance to effectively plan their academic and career paths.

The program is structured into five specialized phases, offering extensive counseling and essential tools for making informed career decisions. Sessions are designed to provide a supportive environment tailored to each participant's specific needs, age, and career stage.

The name "Al-Dileela," meaning "The Guide" in the Qatari dialect, embodies QCDC's dedication to serving as a guide and mentor for youth in Qatar throughout their professional journeys.

Need help figuring out your next career steps?



Al-Dileela will help you chart your path to success!

English Sessions



Founded by
Qatar Foundation | من إنشاء
مؤسسة قطر



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION ANNOUNCES ITS 2024-2030 STRATEGY

HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani inaugurated the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's 2024-2030 Strategy under the slogan "Igniting the Spark of Learning."

During the inauguration ceremony, HE Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al Nuaimi, former Minister of Education and Higher Education highlighted the main goals of the strategy, which aligns with Qatar's Third National

Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030 as it addresses all levels of education—from pre-primary to post-secondary and continuing education.

The initiative aims to elevate Qatar's education sector through high-quality inclusive education, continuous professional development for teachers, and a supportive environment embracing modern teaching practices. By doing so, it seeks to cultivate a resilient generation equipped to tackle future challenges.



ESTABLISHING THE COLLEGE OF SPORT SCIENCES AT QATAR UNIVERSITY

Qatar University launched its new College of Sport Sciences, which offers two Bachelor of Science programs: Sports Coaching and Management. These programs, open to both male and female students, are set to welcome an initial intake of 40 students each for the 2025/2026 academic year.



HAMAD BIN KHALIFA UNIVERSITY OFFERS THREE NEW ENGINEERING PROGRAMS



Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), a member of Qatar Foundation, has launched new undergraduate engineering programs through its College of Science and Engineering (CSE) at Education City. The college warmly welcomed its inaugural cohort for the Bachelor of Science programs in Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical Engineering.

VCUarts QATAR INTRODUCES BFA IN KINETIC IMAGING WITH CONCENTRATION ON GAME DESIGN



Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts Qatar (VCUarts Qatar), a partner university of Qatar Foundation, announced the start of a new Bachelor of Fine Arts in Kinetic Imaging for the 2024-25 academic year. The new undergraduate program is designed to meet the increasing demand for art and design education that incorporates new technology and media. Students will explore various areas of study, including game design, 3D modeling and animation, creative coding, sound, and interaction design, preparing them for exciting careers in the evolving creative landscape.

UDST UNVEILS SEVEN NEW PROGRAMS



The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) introduced seven new programs in the fall of 2024. These programs include an MSc in Process Safety, a BSc in Nursing, an MSc in Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Cybersecurity, a bilingual BSc in Digital Communication and Media Production, a Bachelor of Business Administration in Logistics and Supply Chain Management, and an MSc in Digital Marketing and Entrepreneurship.

UKM OPENS FIRST OVERSEAS CAMPUS IN DOHA



Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim inaugurated the new Doha campus of the National University of Malaysia (Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM) in Lusail. Established in Qatar under the patronage of HE Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Khalifa bin Abdul Aziz Al Thani, Chairman of the Board of Trustees and CEO of the Regional Group Company. UKM is one of Malaysia's premier research universities. The Doha campus offers bachelor's programs in Accounting, Information Technology, Software, Computer Science, and Actuarial Sciences, with plans to expand into additional fields in the future.

EFFORTS CONTINUE TO NATIONALIZE PRIVATE SECTOR JOBS



The Ministry of Labour has introduced Law No. (12) of 2024, a significant step towards the nationalization of jobs in the private sector, recently enacted by HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. This legislation is aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly the human development pillar, and aims to facilitate strategic investments and create employment and training opportunities for Qatari citizens.

Supporting the Third National Development Strategy, the new law seeks to transform Qatar's labor market by focusing on high-skill jobs and building a more productive economy. This transformation will be driven by a highly skilled Qatari workforce while also attracting foreign talent with specialized expertise.

The Ministry has announced the development of a comprehensive job nationalization plan aimed at enhancing Qatari employment in the private sector. This plan will categorize private sector entities based on size, workforce, and job types, enabling targeted policies for training, employment, qualification, and university scholarships. Key Aspects of the Job Nationalization Law have also been highlighted, as these provisions tackle long-standing challenges in nationalization efforts. By establishing clear conditions and procedures, the Ministry aims to make private sector careers more appealing to Qataris and the children of Qatari women, supporting their professional and career aspirations in alignment with Qatar's vision for sustainable growth.



QATAR FOUNDATION LAUNCHES CREATING PATHWAYS PROGRAM

Qatar Foundation announced the official launch of the Creating Pathways Program, a pioneering initiative aimed at developing sporting talent among girls. Olympic gold medalist Sifan Hassan was announced as the program's Brand Ambassador, signifying the celebrated Dutch long-distance runner's commitment to inspiring young female athletes.

The Creating Pathways Program, launched as part of Qatar Foundation's (QF) FIFA World Cup legacy plans,

aims to encourage activity in sports for girls aged 12-16. Local mentors and trained coaches will lead the sessions, driving home to young people the importance of exercise, nutrition, and overall well-being.

Led by Olympic medalist Elizabeth McColgan, Director of Athletics at QF's CEO Office, the Women's Track and Field Program is the first of five elite sports programs to be launched through this new sporting pathway.

OUQOUL PLATFORM TO FACILITATE JOB SEARCH FOR UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

The Ministry of Labour, in partnership with Google Cloud and Mannai InfoTech, has launched the Ouqoul platform - an innovative, AI-powered tool designed to support university graduates and private sector employers in Qatar. Ouqoul streamlines the job search process by matching graduates' skills with career opportunities, enhancing alignment between candidate qualifications and private sector needs.

QATAR MOVES UP IN WORLD COMPETITIVENESS RANKING



Qatar came 11th in the 2024 World Competitiveness Ranking, issued by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland. The report ranked Qatar fourth in economic performance, compared to 67 countries, with the highest rankings coming in key indicators such as the unemployment rate, youth unemployment rate, and terms of trade index, where it emerged as the global leader. The Gulf country also achieved seventh place in government efficiency, and 11th in business efficiency.



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NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY DISTINCTIONS



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Awarded the titles of both "Research University of the Year" and "Modern University of the Year" of 2023 by the daily mail

43th

Northumbria University is Ranked 43rd in the UK University Rankings 2025 League table



Crowned "University of the Year" of 2022 by Times Higher Education

INSPIRING WOMEN

The story begins...





FROM ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVEMENT

Dr. Muna Al Maslamani's Remarkable Journey in Medicine

Dr. Muna Al Maslamani, Medical Director of Hamad General Hospital and Chief Executive Officer of the Communicable Disease Center, has established herself as one of the most influential figures in Qatar's healthcare sector. Dr. Al Maslamani's career exemplifies the remarkable progress of Qatari women, particularly in healthcare, from seeking equal opportunities to becoming leaders and change-makers. Her journey of success is a testament to her talent, perseverance, and the growing opportunities for women in Qatar.

Over the last three decades, Qatar has witnessed significant transformation, with women assuming leadership roles across various sectors.

Their invaluable contributions to healthcare are undeniable, with pioneers like Dr. Al Maslamani driving innovation and significantly enhancing patient care. Her remarkable success represents not only a personal achievement but also a broader societal shift toward empowering women and fostering excellence in the healthcare sector.

In an exclusive interview with Career Guide, we dive into Dr. Al Maslamani's inspiring journey as she reflects on the challenges she overcame and the important lessons she learned.

Early Struggles That Shaped a Vision

Pursuing one's dreams often involves facing challenges head-on, especially at the outset. How one navigates these obstacles plays a crucial role in shaping one's future. Dr. Al Maslamani experienced this firsthand. In her interview with Career Guide, she reflected on the pivotal moments that sparked her passion for medicine, offering insights into the determination and resilience that have defined her path to success.

"Losing my father at a young age was a painful experience that left a lasting imprint on me. He deeply cared for our family and dreamed that one of his children would become a doctor. Unfortunately, my siblings did not share that same academic ambition. After his passing, my mother became our rock; she was everything to us, bearing the weight of his absence with unwavering strength and responsibility. At the time, none of us were older than eighteen, and we were still grappling with grief and uncertainties. From that moment on, my mother became the constant in my life, guiding us through both joyous and challenging times. As I grew older, so did my sense of responsibility toward this extraordinary woman. I became determined to bring happiness to her heart, and for me, that meant excelling academically. Becoming self-reliant in my studies was not just a personal goal—it was my way of honoring my father's dreams and my mother's resilience."

Dr. Al Maslamani's journey was not solely about pursuing her dream but also about fulfilling her late father's wish. "I was driven by the desire to achieve what my father had envisioned," she recalls. "I have always had a passion for science and a thirst for knowledge. I knew I wanted to work in a field where I could make a difference in people's lives. After careful thought, medicine was the obvious choice, aligning seamlessly with both my ambitions and my wish to honor my father."

After excelling in high school, she was eager to take the next step toward her dream. However, Qatar did not offer any medical programs at the time, leaving Al Maslamani with only one option: studying abroad. Yet, her family, particularly her older brother, firmly opposed the idea.

"At seventeen, I faced my first real battle for independence. My older brother, who took on a fatherly role, was understandably concerned, given the time and circumstances. It was not easy, especially since none of my siblings had ever traveled abroad for education, and I was the first woman in our extended family even to consider it. But I stood my ground, and eventually, I convinced them. From that moment on, my family's support never wavered."

She enrolled at King Faisal University in Dammam, Saudi Arabia (now Imam Abdulrahman bin Faisal University). While the experience proved invaluable, it came with its share of challenges—ones she still regards as some of the hardest in her career.

"Being away from home was incredibly difficult," Dr. Al Maslamani admits. "The isolation was overwhelming, and adjusting to life without my family was exhausting. I would be lying if I said I did not think about quitting. Every time I returned to Qatar during breaks, the thought of not going back to Saudi Arabia crossed my mind. To make matters worse, many of my close friends and classmates who had come with me from Qatar decided to return home, unable to handle dorm life or the emotional toll of being so far from their families. And medicine is definitely no easy field."

Despite the overwhelming hardships, Al Maslamani remained committed to her studies, driven by a profound sense of responsibility for her dream and decision. Eventually, her persistence paid off, and she proudly earned her medical degree.



Before the establishment of Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar in 2001, students aspiring to study medicine had to travel abroad. Qatari female students often chose to study in neighboring GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia or Bahrain. In 2014, Qatar University established its first national medical college, which graduated its inaugural class in the summer of 2021.

The Road to Leadership

After returning to Qatar, Dr. Al Maslamani began her career as a resident physician, specializing in internal medicine. The following four years involved grueling work, continuous exams, and long hours, but the demanding journey was made more manageable with her family's support.

Driven by her passion for knowledge, she later pursued a fellowship in infectious diseases, a field that was understaffed and significantly lacked in female representation. Encouraged by a colleague, she embraced the challenge. "Infectious diseases was a rare specialty, especially for women, but I knew I wanted to make a difference in a critical and under-resourced field," she explains.

Dr. Al Maslamani then sought advanced training in the United States, specializing in Transplant Infectious Diseases, an emerging field at the time.

In 2017, after years of dedication and hard work, she was appointed CEO of the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), the region's first facility of its kind. Under her leadership, the CDC has become a regional leader in diagnosing and treating communicable diseases, while driving critical research and improving public health education.

Leadership in Crisis

Dr. Mona Al Maslamani believes that leadership challenges are the same for both men and women, despite the common perception that they differ. Throughout her career, she has never experienced bias or discrimination based on her gender. Instead, she attributes her pleasant experience to Hamad Medical Corporation's commitment to equality, where leadership roles are earned through performance and results, rather than any other factor.

"Qatari women are reaping the rewards of decades of state-led empowerment initiatives," says Dr. Al Maslamani. "Our society is built on the contributions of countless women who have played essential roles across various sectors throughout history. In healthcare, for instance, we have an abundance of highly qualified female doctors, administrators, and nurses working alongside their male counterparts, giving their all. These women deserve recognition and appreciation for their great efforts and have rightfully earned their place at the table."

As 2019 ended, the global healthcare system faced an unprecedented challenge—COVID-19. The pandemic brought immense pressure to curb the virus's spread while simultaneously maximizing hospital capacity and safeguarding healthcare workers. Qatar's healthcare system was no exception, and the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) found itself at the heart of the nation's response. Teams worked tirelessly around the clock to monitor the latest developments, research, and scientific studies on the virus.

Qatar's healthcare sector rose to the challenge of the pandemic, outperforming even some of the world's leading healthcare systems. Dr. Al Maslamani credits this success to the government's substantial investment in infrastructure and the development of an integrated healthcare system that delivers world-class services to all citizens. "Our achievements are the direct result of the state's commitment to building a comprehensive healthcare system," she explains. "It aligns with the National Health Strategy, which focuses on developing national talent across medical fields and investing in medical education, scholarships, and training programs."

For Dr. Al Maslamani, teamwork and seamless coordination were the key to navigating the crisis. "We had to work as one unified team, with experts from all



disciplines, day and night, to tackle an enormous challenge. As the death toll rose and the pressure on the healthcare system increased, the hardest part was maintaining our composure and providing the community with hope that we could overcome this together."

She adds, "Achieving this level of coordination required a leader capable of grasping the full scope of the crisis, making quick, innovative decisions, and keeping the team's morale high. A good leader ensures harmony and collaboration among the team."

In addition to her leadership at the CDC, Dr. Al Maslamani is an Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine at Qatar University and Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar. Her work with students has made her optimistic about the future of medicine in Qatar, driven by the passion and energy of the country's youth. She encourages students to consider a medical career, emphasizing the dedication and sacrifices it demands.

Her message to aspiring medical professionals is clear: "Our community needs qualified healthcare professionals across all specialties. Today, you have access to world-class medical education right here in Qatar without the need to leave your families behind. You no longer face the same challenges we did. Our country has given us the best and deserves nothing less than our best in return."

Dr. Al Maslamani attributes her personal and professional successes to the unwavering support of her family. She believes her academic and career journey can be summed up in two words: responsibility and teamwork.

"No personal or professional success can happen without a deep sense of responsibility and love for what you do. Dreams, too, must be fueled by this commitment. In the workplace, no one can succeed alone. There is always a team working as one. It is the collective spirit and sense of unity and belonging within that team that creates the conditions for success."

For those looking to thrive in leadership roles, Dr. Al Maslamani offers the following advice:

Prioritize effectively

Adapt to changes

Manage your time efficiently

Work as a team

Communicate clearly with your team members

Focus on developing the skills and abilities of individuals

Think strategically



WHY THE WORLD NEEDS TO INVEST IN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

ABBY FINKENAUER

Exclusive interview with the U.S. Department of State Special Envoy for Global Youth Issues on youth empowerment, the importance of cross-cultural conversations, and public service.

**"The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow."
– Nelson Mandela**

In 1990, South African leader Nelson Mandela made this timeless statement during a visit to a high school in Boston, USA. The Nobel Peace Prize-winning political activist delivered a speech to a group of students, urging them to focus on learning, emphasizing the role of education in creating a better future for youth.

According to United Nations estimates, the global youth population aged 10 to 24 stands at a staggering 1.8 billion. With over 50% of the world's population under 30, these numbers represent an unprecedented demographic shift in human history. When Mandela made his famous statement, he referred to the problem of school dropout rates among American youth. However, the biggest challenge for their peers in other countries may be simply obtaining a quality education or even finding a school.

Challenges like unemployment and unequal access to healthcare are urgent and demand immediate attention. The younger generation often faces additional hurdles based on their geographical location, including violence, wars, and challenging economic conditions.

These challenges place enormous responsibilities on governments to support their youth by investing in education and healthcare and setting policies and strategies that enable them to build a future aligned with their aspirations and capabilities.

Such efforts should give youth opportunities to contribute to their countries' economic development. To achieve this, young people must overcome a crucial challenge: participating in decisions that shape their future. In most countries worldwide, youth representation in decision-making and leadership roles at the political level still needs to be improved.

How can we bring about change? Can young people make a meaningful impact if given the opportunity? How can we empower them? These are the questions that we asked Abby Finkenauer, the U.S. Department of State Special Envoy for Global Youth Issues, during her visit to Doha, where she met with a group of students who took part in a student exchange program under the Middle East Partnership Initiative.

Finkenauer, only 35, has had a long and inspiring career in public service, politics, and diplomacy. Her role as the official representative for the Office of Global Youth Issues has allowed her to meet young people from around the world, listen to their stories, aspirations, and dreams, and understand the challenges they face.

Every Global Issue is a Youth Issue

Finkenauer firmly believes that every global issue is a youth issue. Whether it is education, climate change, unemployment, or any other issue, they have a crucial role, and their voices must be heard in all these matters. They are not merely the leaders of tomorrow, but also the driving force of today.

"Every single voice matters. Never underestimate the possibility that one young voice somewhere in the world could make a global impact. I have witnessed this firsthand in many places.



The Office of Global Youth Issues manages and coordinates youth-related programs encompassing a wide range of initiatives aimed at empowering young people worldwide through education, leadership development, and civic engagement. Among these initiatives is the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), which focuses on promoting political, economic, and social reforms in the Middle East and North Africa by supporting civil society organizations, empowering youth and women, and driving economic development through grants, training programs, and partnerships.

For more information about the Middle East Partnership Initiative, scan the code:





Take climate change as an example. Through my work, I have realized that some of the best ideas to tackle this issue came from young people on the ground rather than governments. To face global challenges, we will not only need the efforts of people from all sectors and fields of expertise to collaborate. The efforts of youth are essential in finding solutions that can save our world," she says.

Today, social media platforms provide young people with a space to be involved and express themselves, yet there are still obstacles that may make some refrain from sharing their thoughts and ideas. One of the main barriers is the prevalence of hate speech on many platforms. Finkenauer advises young people not to let such acts silence them. Instead, she urges them to use social media as a tool for positive change and to bring people together for constructive goals.

"To encourage young people to step forward and get involved in global issues, and to ensure their voices are heard, we need to make greater efforts to create support networks that keep them safe and provide them with the proper environment for participation. This requires concerted efforts from governments and civil society," she adds.

Finkenauer was born to a working-class family in Sherrill, a small town in eastern Iowa. She was a voracious reader with a keen interest in global affairs and politics, aspiring to work in public service one day. When her parents noticed this, they continuously

supported and encouraged her until she became the first in her family to earn a university degree. She pursued a bachelor's degree in public relations at Drake University in Des Moines, the capital of Iowa, which allowed her to stay close to her local community while simultaneously pursuing her aspirations and dreams.

In 2015, at the age of 25, she was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives, marking a significant milestone in her political career. Four years later, she became the second youngest woman to join the U.S. House of Representatives and the youngest female to represent Iowa.

Throughout her career, Finkenauer has advocated for crucial issues such as equal pay, public education, infrastructure funding, and voting rights. She also believes that fields like public service, politics, and international relations urgently require more youth participation as their voices can make a tremendous difference. However, she advises those who aspire to succeed in these fields to be driven by a desire to help their communities, rather than seeking fame, prestige, or fancy titles.

"I wanted to do real work that benefits the people I care about. I wanted to give back to my community, my family, and my friends. I also wanted to show young people in small communities that they can see themselves represented in government, participate in public service, and make a positive impact," she says.

Embrace Change

Young people worldwide face immense pressure when planning their career paths, as the world of work rapidly evolves, largely driven by the huge impact of emerging technologies. While some professions have uncertain futures, new careers and specializations are emerging every year.

Finkenauer believes the best way to guide young people toward career paths that align with their capabilities and ambitions is to ensure they are well-informed about all available career paths and opportunities. Equally important is cultivating a mindset of adaptability, helping them understand that they may need to shift career paths during their professional or educational journey, especially if they discover a field where they believe they can truly excel.

"We need to encourage young people to think creatively and provide them with the right environment to explore other career paths related to their areas of interest. This may require breaking traditional barriers in certain industries, even if they have not seen someone in similar circumstances succeed in them. They should be confident in their ability to be the first to do so, while also understanding that the future career they might excel in may not even exist," Finkenauer explains.

"I experienced this firsthand. Ending up in the congress at the age of 29 was not a traditional path I could have envisioned at the age of ten, but I just tried to keep taking advantage of opportunities that were put in front of me. I did not necessarily know exactly where they were going to lead, but I knew my why, the reason I was doing it, and so, I continued to learn and grow," she adds.

The Power of Conversation

Many young people, while interested in specific fields, may lack the knowledge of where to start. Finkenauer advises them to actively seek internships, volunteer experiences, and relevant events or activities to gain exposure and practical experience. She recommends seeking advice and mentorship from experienced professionals in their desired fields.

"If you are passionate about any topic and cannot figure out how you can be involved in it, keep trying to be around it, find people who are already doing what you aspire to

do, and start conversations. Ask them questions. Don't hesitate to seek their guidance and mentorship. You might be surprised at how excited they can be when they share what they know and lift you up or support you. But remember that not everyone you approach is going to be friendly about it or will be willing to share. If that happens, don't let it discourage you from approaching others," she says.

Finkenauer understands the value of engaging in meaningful discussions and the importance of young people mastering constructive dialogue with others. Teaching them these skills early on enhances their ability to start conversations and keeps their minds open. Growing up, Finkenauer's family encouraged her to follow her passions and included her in discussions around the dinner table with family members and friends. They discussed matters ranging from politics to community issues to global affairs. These robust discussions helped shape her drive to pursue a career in politics and taught her the power of conversations.

"I learned that we could have differences, but we can still respect and love each other. This fact stuck with me throughout my entire career and allowed me to work with people who may not agree with everything I believe in, but still willing to find common ground," she says. The U.S. politician believes that programs that bring together young people from different parts of the world to discuss their local issues are essential for both youth development and global progress.

"Such programs offer young people a chance to engage in meaningful conversations and learn from one another. Interacting with individuals from diverse regions and backgrounds helps break down stereotypes and fosters mutual understanding. I encourage the youth to share their stories and personal experiences because you never know what will resonate or forge a connection. In these exchanges, they often discover common ground. Such conversations are vital for shaping the future and promoting global peace. By continuing to facilitate these dialogues, we can inspire the kind of positive change that truly makes a difference," she concludes.

To learn about all the programs and initiatives offered by the Office of Global Youth Issues, scan the code:





Inspiring
Fusion of Art
and
Technology

Muna Al-Bader

The IT Engineer Who Mastered the Canvas

In recent years, Qatar has seen a cultural renaissance, especially in the fine arts. Doha currently boasts some of the world's finest museums, offering visitors a gateway to diverse artistic worlds. Each year, the city hosts exhibitions showcasing both local and international talent, while its streets and public spaces have transformed into an open-air museum adorned with mesmerizing artworks.

This artistic surge is propelled by strong state support for cultural institutions and a focus on educational and training programs that aim to elevate public art exposure and nurture local talent. These efforts have fostered a new generation of young artists who, empowered by this supportive environment, have emerged as influential figures enriching Qatar's art scene.

One notable example is Muna Khalid Al-Bader, whose name has become synonymous with artistic excellence in Qatar over the past two decades. Originally trained as an Information Technology (IT) engineer, Al-Bader embarked on a successful career in technology. Yet, her profound passion for the fine arts led her to create captivating works that uniquely showcase Qatar's heritage and history.

We spoke with this inspiring artist about her dual career in IT and fine arts. How has she balanced these two demanding fields? What challenges has she faced, and how did she overcome them? What advice does she have for young people aspiring to enter the world of fine arts?



A Talent Unveiled and a Pivotal Decision

Al-Bader's artistic talent emerged early, though it was hardly surprising as her father and much of her family shared the same gift. Despite her impressive achievements in international art competitions representing her school, young Muna's remarkable

talent was not fully recognized by those around her, or even by herself. She was unaware of the extraordinary gift she possessed. Her passion for art was matched only by her fascination with technology, often disassembling computers out of sheer curiosity to understand their inner workings.

This passion continued to grow throughout high school, eventually leading to a significant dilemma: whether to pursue a future in the arts or in technology. After careful consideration, she chose to focus on IT, motivated by Qatar's evolving labor market and her desire to contribute to the country's economy. However, she refused to abandon her artistic talent, remaining confident in her ability to nurture and develop it in her spare time.

Despite her firm decision, her pursuit of technology presented its obstacles – her academic record was not strong enough to secure admission into local university IT programs. Undeterred, Al-Bader enrolled in a diploma program while gaining practical experience in the field. Although some found it unconventional for a young woman to work in IT, Al-Bader remained resolute.

After earning her diploma, she pursued an advanced diploma, all the while keeping her dream of attending university alive. Her commitment to self-improvement and hands-on experience eventually led her to secure a scholarship to study IT at a British university, where she later graduated with a bachelor's degree in IT Engineering.

After a wealth of academic successes, Al-Bader began to climb the career ladder, excelling from a Technical Support Engineer to Section Head and ultimately to a Department Manager. It was not an overnight achievement but rather the culmination of years of hard work and perseverance, during which she overcame numerous challenges. That is why Al-Bader encourages young people to remain resilient and not be discouraged by the first obstacle they face.

"My journey was full of challenges," she says, "but the experiences and events I went through helped shape my skills and made me more engaged and influential in my environment. I didn't start my career in the job or position I had always dreamed of. For many, that could have been a source of disappointment. However, I embraced the challenge with a positive mindset. I worked hard to turn each obstacle into an opportunity to learn and gain valuable practical experience. I learned that steady progress in one's career, even if slow, is far better than giving in to frustration.



not go unnoticed in the art community. Seasoned artists admired her work, offered guidance, and encouraged her to pursue her artistic journey, reaffirming her potential.

Al-Bader's first major breakthrough came when she won an award in an open competition for Arab artists. This success was soon followed by two more awards from the prestigious Sotheby's auction house in the United Kingdom, where one of her paintings was sold. Later, her work gained acclaim at exhibitions in Qatar and abroad, culminating in her first solo exhibition which was a resounding success. This pivotal moment cemented Al-Bader's belief that she had something valuable to offer to the world of fine arts, boosting her confidence to immerse herself further in her artistic pursuits.

A Journey of Creative Evolution

Al-Bader's artistic journey has been a continuous ascent, marked by significant achievements that have profoundly shaped both her style and creative maturity. Each stage of her career reflects the depth of her experiences and the wealth of knowledge she has accumulated along the way. Early in her career, she captivated audiences with a series of wedding-themed paintings that beautifully captured the joy of traditional Qatari celebrations. As her career progressed, she ventured into a wide range of projects, eventually gaining widespread recognition for her focus on the color blue – a distinctive style through which she expresses the intricate depths of human emotion.

Known for her bold experimentation, Al-Bader consistently pushes the boundaries of her craft, constantly embracing new techniques and challenges. Her vivid imagination has expanded her creative horizons and truly resonated deeply with art enthusiasts and collectors alike.

Over the years, Al-Bader has exhibited her art in a variety of solo exhibitions and participated in prestigious local and international art shows. Her pieces now grace the walls of many prominent governmental and private institutions across Qatar. She has collaborated with public and private sector organizations on various artistic initiatives, demonstrating her versatility and commitment to advancing the local art scene. Al-Bader's contributions extend globally, with her works featuring in major exhibitions around the world, each success fueling her passion to create even more remarkable art. Throughout her career, she has received numerous accolades, including recognition as a cultural ambassador for Qatar by esteemed international organizations like

UNESCO. Her influence was particularly profound during the COVID-19 pandemic when she launched the "Art of Resilience" initiative to support local artists in navigating the crisis. During this challenging period, Al-Bader also launched the "Art Stay Safe" initiative, organizing Qatar's first virtual art exhibition, which featured over 1,000 pieces from 80 local artists. Another defining moment in Al-Bader's career came in 2019, when she was selected for the Fire Station's artist residency program. This unique opportunity allowed her to dedicate all her time, focus, and energy to various artistic projects, further cementing her spot in the art world.

A Unique Style Rooted in Tradition

Al-Bader is renowned for her distinctive style, which seamlessly blends traditional and contemporary elements. Drawing inspiration from Qatar's rich environment, its people, and its vibrant streets, she captures the beauty of Qatari heritage, with the hope of preserving it for future generations. While she takes pride in each artwork she creates, Al-Bader's greatest achievement is inspiring young minds to explore the world of fine arts and nurture their talents. This personal mission drives her to participate in initiatives that aim to discover new talent and raise public awareness about the importance of art in society.

Al-Bader believes that art is a universal visual language transcending cultures and communities. It communicates messages and emotions that words alone cannot express. Reflecting on Qatar's evolving art scene over the past two decades, she attributes it to the state's firm commitment to nurturing young and local talent, and promoting Qatari art on the global stage.

"Art is a bridge between civilizations," she affirms, "and Qatari art has been widely appreciated wherever it has been showcased. Audiences around the world have admired its diversity, quality, and unique spirit. Qatari artists have garnered significant attention by presenting outstanding works that reflect our national identity and cultural values. Qatar's cultural exchange policy has enriched our artistic expertise and global knowledge, and it has positioned Doha as a significant hub in the global art movement, attracting artists and art enthusiasts from all corners of the world."

A particularly memorable moment in Al-Bader's career was her participation in the Qatar-USA 2021 Year of Culture. During this cultural exchange, she painted a mural at the University of Houston in Texas, USA. The

experience of interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and witnessing their appreciation for her art was truly rewarding.

Limitless Ambition

Despite her success, Al-Bader never entertained the idea of pursuing art full-time. The Qatari artist credits her ability to balance her professional and personal life to effective time management and a clear sense of priorities. Her mornings are dedicated to work, while the rest of the day is reserved for her passion for fine arts.

Currently, Al-Bader serves as the Vice President of Corporate Communications at Milaha. She earned a master's degree in business administration, and is pursuing a PhD in Entrepreneurship and Women's Studies. With a multitude of personal and professional ambitions still in sight, she reflects, "Life is a continuous learning journey. Knowledge and education are the most potent forces for change and development. I started with nothing, but through relentless dedication, I gradually honed my abilities and skills to align with my aspirations. There should be no limit to ambition. Each time I achieve one goal, I set my sights on the next by devising new plans, setting fresh objectives, and working tirelessly to achieve them."

Al-Bader's Advice for Aspiring Artists

-  **Never stop practicing. Create art, try different techniques, and stay updated on the latest trends to develop your unique style. You must stay consistent if you want to understand your strengths and weaknesses.**
-  **Enjoy the process of producing art and express your creativity freely to refine your skills and deepen your artistic instincts.**
-  **Read about art to discover new horizons and be inspired by various creative styles.**
-  **Learn from the experiences of other artists. By studying their journeys, you can uncover valuable lessons and draw inspiration.**

Visit Muna Al Bader's official website for more information about her career journey and artwork by scanning the QR Code:



A REMARKABLE JOURNEY IN ARCHITECTURE

BADRIA KAFOOD

The Story of Qatar's First Female Engineer

In the bustling Doha neighborhood of Al Mansoura, Eng. Badria Kafood sits with her team in the meeting room of her Architecture and Interior Design firm, meticulously reviewing the progress of their latest projects. Attentive to every detail, she engages in discussions with the team, ensuring no aspect is overlooked. By the end of the meeting, she suggested needed adjustments to some project plans and assigned new tasks to a few team members.

After the meeting, Badria returned to her computer, made a few edits to one of the designs, saved the file, and turned her attention to us. We were there to learn about her remarkable 40-year career, during which she became Qatar's first female engineer and solidified her reputation as an architecture pioneer. Her journey has been instrumental in



changing societal perceptions of women in non-traditional fields. Throughout our conversation, she shared the key lessons she learned, discussed the significant challenges she overcame, and offered invaluable advice to young people aspiring to build successful careers in engineering.

Will Power

When Eng. Kafood graduated from high school, Qatar's education landscape was vastly different, particularly regarding women's education and employment opportunities. Female students could only study abroad on government scholarships if accompanied by their husbands. Eng. Kafood met this condition while traveling with her husband, who was assigned as the medical attaché at Qatar's Embassy in London.

As a young girl, she always dreamed of becoming an engineer, a vision primarily influenced by her father. He often took her to work in real estate and land development and allowed her to help with simple tasks. Her passion for architecture and engineering slowly took shape, fueled by her father's constant praise of her skills and intelligence. She had a clear vision of the career she wanted, but there was just one major obstacle. At the time, women in Qatar were not allowed to pursue careers

in engineering, as it was considered an unsuitable field for ladies. She decided to study medicine, but it was not among the options available in London. She was left with two choices: jewelry design or interior design. She chose the latter, believing it was the closest she could get to her true passion.

After weighing all her options, she enrolled in a four-year interior design program at the American College in London. However, just one semester before her graduation, she received a phone call from the cultural attaché at the Qatari embassy, delivering shocking news: her university was not recognized in Qatar. Once again, the young lady was left with two choices: to return to Qatar and seek employment with her high school degree or start over at a new university.

Her father was determined that she would complete her final term, covering the costs himself so she could earn her bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, he petitioned the Minister of Education, seeking an exception for her to study architecture. Supporting his case was a letter from an architecture university addressed to Qatar's cultural attaché in London, confirming that Badria was more than qualified to pursue a degree in the field. His persistence paid off, and she was approved to become the first Qatari woman to study architecture.

She joined the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA), a prestigious institution known for its innovative and experimental approach to architectural education, with a strong emphasis on fostering the students' creative thinking and practical experience. Among its notable alumni is the late, celebrated Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid. After three more years, she encountered yet another setback. The embassy informed her that her new university was unrecognized in Qatar. She was at a familiar crossroads once again and had to start all over.

"I refused to return to Doha. Instead, I transferred to Westminster University, known then as Polytechnic of Central London. Determined to achieve my dream of becoming an architect, I persevered. After years of hard work, I earned my bachelor's degree and returned to Doha with my family, proudly as an architect, after 15 years in the UK," she recalls.



Her Career Journey

Despite finally becoming an architect, new challenges awaited her. Opportunities in her field were scarce, which was unsurprising given the historical barriers women faced when studying engineering. She was offered a teaching position that she quickly declined, determined to work in her chosen discipline. After a long wait and persistent appeals to the authorities, she was finally appointed as an architect in the Building Engineering Department at the Ministry of Industry.

"I was the first woman to work in the ministry. Everyone was surprised. For them, engineering was a man's world. They tried to dissuade me, exaggerating the difficulties I might face. But I was determined. I left no room for arguments, and in the end, they had no choice but to hire me," she says.

The next challenge came in the form of field assignments. Eng. Kafood was assigned projects far from Doha, which she saw as another attempt to push her toward resignation. "They gave me projects far away from Doha, like constructing a transmission station and building a cemetery wall in Al Shamal. I could only work on these projects thanks to my husband, who drove me daily to the sites. Once again, I pushed to change the situation, and requested a driving license. I was persistent. To my surprise, I received a special approval, becoming one of the first women in Qatar to be allowed to drive," she excitedly explains.

The young engineer quickly demonstrated her talent, gradually taking on more responsibilities and achieving remarkable success in developing several projects.

Balancing her career aspirations with her family responsibilities as a mother and wife made her journey even more challenging. Through resilience and perseverance, she navigated every obstacle, reaching one milestone after another. Her inspiring story and achievements made her a role model for aspiring female students eager to pursue careers in fields once deemed unconventional for women. Eng. Kafood's dedication earned her a transfer to the Minister's Office. There, she was tasked with overseeing the development of municipal projects and took on additional responsibilities across other important initiatives. She also made a significant internal impact by implementing new operational procedures within the Ministry. She endured multiple cabinet changes, but deep down, her passion for architecture remained strong, eventually transitioning back to her true calling by joining the engineering department, now known as 'Ashghal.' And once again, she left her distinctive mark by leading the development of various major projects.

A New Beginning

Having spent years working on government projects, Eng. Kafood boldly decided to step away from the government job and pursue her long-held dream of establishing her own architecture and interior design firm, where she can build projects that reflect her unique vision. It was a daring risky move, but she was confident in overcoming any challenges.

The process was frustrating and slow. She nearly despaired at times, but her resilience never wavered. After months of waiting, she finally secured the license to launch her business.

Starting with just one employee in a small office, she gradually built a diverse team of specialties, expanded the business, and moved to a larger space. Over nearly a decade, she ensured that every design bore her distinct artistic and architectural touch.

Early Guidance Is the Key

Throughout her career, Eng. Kafood deeply valued education and lifelong learning. This belief drove her to instill a love of knowledge and a strong work ethic in her children, encouraging them to pursue their passions and never abandon their ambitions. She firmly believes that family support is crucial for career success.

"My father was a real estate trader, and he used to take me to his workplace, allowing me to help with simple tasks. He encouraged me and praised my abilities when he noticed my excellence in mathematics and love for engineering. From that moment, I knew I wanted to become an engineer. Throughout my academic and career journey, the support of my father, husband, and entire family played a crucial role in overcoming challenges and advancing my career. I wouldn't have achieved anything without their support and encouragement," she says.

"Schools also play a vital role in discovering students' talents at an early age and guiding them to explore career fields they are passionate about, in line with their capabilities. Investing in the youth's potential and utilizing it effectively is key to building a prosperous future for Qatar," she adds.

On Engineering

There is a growing demand for engineers in job markets and other Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) specializations. Governments have been trying to promote these fields and make them more appealing to students, recognizing their significant impact on future economic growth. Eng. Kafood believes that an excellent way to attract students to engineering is by introducing them to its various specializations early on. If they show interest in a particular field, they should be given opportunities to gain hands-on experience working alongside real engineers. This approach helps them get a clearer picture and better determine whether their passion for the field is genuine.

Eng. Kafood suggests that: "youth centers could implement such activities during the summer, similar to how they organize art or sports programs. Students could explore fields like mechanical engineering through visits to equipment or car repair workshops and hands-on training."

Meanwhile, the veteran architect cautions students against choosing a career in engineering solely for its social status. She asserts that without passion for the field, they will lack the motivation to keep learning and overcome the challenges they may encounter. She also encourages young engineers to actively seek well-rounded practical experience early in their careers.

"What you learn from books alone is not enough. If you don't work with your hands, engage in fieldwork, learn to solve on-site problems, and understand every detail of your job, you won't be able to develop as an engineer. You shouldn't seek comfort in offices or chase administrative positions right after graduation," she says.

Additionally, she believes universities should put more effort into instilling a love for hands-on work among students. At a personal level, her field experience and time spent on-site helped her advance her career and equipped her with the necessary expertise needed to run her business efficiently. "I still draw, design, and oversee every detail in our projects. Architecture is the world where I truly find myself and realize my ambitions. When I sit down to work on a design, I become completely immersed and lose track of time. It's a passion that never fades," she adds.

Today, Eng. Kafood's office boasts a solid client base, yet her dreams remain boundless. She hopes to expand her business further and elevate her firm's ranking to work on larger projects that carry her distinctive architectural touch and leave a lasting legacy.

Scan the QR Code to watch Eng. Badria Kafood telling her inspiring story during an interview with Al Rayyan TV in 2013:



WINGS OF CHANGE

Captain Amna Al Obaidly's Trailblazing Journey

On what could have been just another routine training session, Captain Amna Al Obaidly skillfully navigated an Airbus A350 through simulated turbulent skies, executing a flawless landing at Hamad International Airport. Beside her sat the First Officer, with an instructor observing from the jump seat. Al Obaidly's remarkable skill and finesse were a true reflection of years of dedication and mastery. This masterclass in piloting unfolded inside Qatar Airways' state-of-the-art flight simulator, a device so advanced it mirrors every nuance of the aircraft it replicates.

Once the plane touched down smoothly, the feedback session began. As they debriefed her performance, it was clear: Captain Al Obaidly had already secured her place in aviation history as Qatar's first female captain.



Ascent to the Cockpit

Al Obaidly's achievement goes beyond a career milestone; it stands as a testament to the power of ambition and perseverance, showing just how far they can take you. When she first donned her captain's uniform, it was more than a personal victory; she was shattering glass ceilings and setting a powerful precedent for what is possible. This historical moment was the culmination of a 17-year odyssey that saw her logging over 7,000 flight hours, transitioning across various aircraft models, and mastering the craft of piloting.

To outsiders, a pilot's uniform might seem like the epitome of glamour—an emblem of sophistication and world travel. Al Obaidly is quick to dispel that myth. "People often see a pilot's uniform and are captivated by the image, thinking the job is easy and glamorous," she explains. "But they do not see the demanding journey behind it—the years of intense training to earn that uniform and the great responsibility of piloting an aircraft. Every pilot goes through countless hours of grueling training, continuous learning, and regular testing, not to mention the thousands of flight hours accumulated as both a second and first officer before they can even think about becoming a captain."

For Al Obaidly, and indeed for every pilot at Qatar Airways, the road to success was paved with rigorous training, demanding assessments, and a relentless commitment to excellence. Before taking command of a flight from Doha to Dubai as Qatar's first female captain, she had to earn her stripes—every one of them.

When you meet Captain Amna Al Obaidly, her infectious optimism and confident smile are immediately striking. Unsurprisingly, she has become a true beacon of inspiration for many young women in Qatar, especially after she made history in 2006 as the first Qatari woman to earn a commercial pilot's license and rise to the role of First Officer.

Despite the remarkable accomplishment of logging over 7,000 flight hours, Al Obaidly vividly remembers the early days of her journey into aviation. Like many young women of her generation, her post-secondary school options felt limited. Teaching was the most common career path for women in Qatar at the time, so she initially enrolled in Qatar University's College of Education, majoring in English.

Fate, however, had different plans. Two years into her studies, Al Obaidly's younger brother graduated from high school and began exploring university programs. In a twist of fate, he stumbled upon an opportunity to study aviation at Qatar Aeronautical College in Doha. Curious and intrigued, Amna accompanied her brother to the college, where a session with the instructors opened her eyes to the thrilling world of aviation.



"I never knew that women could work in aviation before that," she recalls, thinking back to that day. "I always wanted a career in a non-traditional field because I knew deep down that I wanted to achieve something different. When I chose to study English, my options were limited, and I lacked guidance on career planning and the opportunities available. So, when my brother decided to enroll at Qatar Aeronautical College, I seriously considered following suit and began working toward it."

By enrolling at Qatar Aeronautical College, Al Obaidly was venturing into uncharted territory. The three-and-a-half-year program was rigorous, combining theoretical studies with hands-on training on all facets of aircraft operation, including take-offs, landings, automated flight systems, night flying, and handling various weather conditions and emergencies. The curriculum covered essential aviation theories, including aerodynamics, aircraft systems, meteorology, navigation, and air law, while honing skills in decision-making, leadership, teamwork, communication, planning, problem-solving and workload management.

As the only woman in her graduating class of eight, Al Obaidly faced scrutiny and skepticism from a society not yet accustomed to seeing women in such roles. Undeterred, she leaned on her family's firm support, especially the encouragement from her brother, who was also training at the college. "My brother was always there to support and motivate me, giving me the energy to keep going, especially when things were tough in the beginning," she says. "I faced astonished looks from many who could not accept a Qatari woman as a captain, even though some might accept a foreign woman in the same role. Many tried to discourage me, but the support of my family, brother, and most of the trainers and colleagues gave me the motivation I needed to push through. It was a personal battle against the very winds that sought to ground me."

The Road to Captaincy

After earning her wings, Al Obaidly joined Qatar Airways, initially as a second officer. Her journey up the ranks was deliberate and steady—each promotion brought her a step closer to the captain's seat. She specialized in Airbus aircraft, moving from the A320 to the A330, and ultimately to the giant A350.

When she finally donned the captain's uniform for her first flight in 2023, she felt an overwhelming sense of pride. "It is a moment I will never forget. I was not afraid—I was happy that my dream had come true," she reflects. "I was proud of my country, proud of myself for what I had achieved after 17 tiresome years, and grateful to everyone who supported and encouraged me throughout my journey."

What It Takes to Succeed in Aviation

For Captain Amna Al Obaidly, the allure of aviation lies in its refreshing departure from ordinary routine. Her career allows her to explore diverse countries, immerse herself in new cultures, and continually expand her horizons. Yet, this dynamic profession is not without its hurdles. For Al Obaidly, the most significant challenge is balancing her role as a working mother with the demanding nature of her job. With flights ranging from short-haul to transcontinental, long periods away from home are inevitable. Despite this, she diligently strives to balance her professional and personal lives, cherishing the time spent with her family during weekly breaks.

Throughout her inspiring journey, Al Obaidly has learned the importance of commitment, patience, and precision. Her advice to the next generation of pilots is humble yet profound: "To succeed in any field, you must possess determination and persistence in reaching your goals. No matter how challenging the field you enter, you will find the strength and ability to overcome any obstacles. I assure you that studying aviation is not as daunting as it may seem; it requires focus, dedication, effort, and perseverance, much like any other academic discipline." However, she emphasizes a crucial point: "Be cautious not to let financial gain or social status be your primary motivators for studying aviation. Instead, let your passion for the field and your intrinsic desire to succeed be your driving forces."

Al Obaidly also urges parents to support daughters who wish to pursue a career in aviation, despite lingering perceptions that it is a high-risk field. She asserts, "Safety standards in aviation today are higher than ever, with minimal risks comparable to any other profession. The field is characterized by stringent safety and security measures, and weather forecasting has become increasingly reliable. Technology has significantly advanced this sector, which is founded on decades of science, theory, and experience; there is absolutely no reason to fear."



Captain Al Obaidly's ascent is not just her story; it is a testament to the evolving role of women in Qatar. Concluding her reflections, Captain Al Obaidly acknowledges Qatar's substantial progress since she began her aviation career. "The perception of women in aviation has evolved dramatically. What was once viewed as contrary to our traditions is now accepted and celebrated. This shift is largely thanks to Qatar's efforts to empower Qatari women, enabling them to enter a wide range of professional fields and sectors. Today, Qatari women have demonstrated their ability to achieve their aspirations, excel in any profession, and contribute alongside men to the nation's development."

About the Al Darb Qatarization Program

In part, Al Obaidly's journey was made possible by Qatar Airways' Al Darb Qatarization Program. This initiative goes beyond scholarships; it is a comprehensive program offering eight diverse educational and training pathways designed to nurture local talent and build a sustainable national workforce for Qatar Airways and the broader aviation sector. In addition to pilot training, the program offers specialized tracks in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering, Airport Operations, Aviation Management, and External Station Capability Development. Each year, the program provides several scholarships for Qatari nationals and children of Qatari women under specific conditions and criteria.

For more information, scan the QR code:





THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF MEDIA

Veteran Radio Presenter

Buthaina Abdul Jalil

The media industry has long been a driving force in modern societies, playing a crucial role in informing the public, documenting history, shaping public opinion, and raising awareness. Aspiring professionals in this field must recognize the significant responsibility they bear. To succeed, they must have the right skills and talent, a solid commitment to accuracy, adherence to ethical standards, and the ability to quickly adapt to a constantly evolving media landscape.

In this issue, we sat down with veteran radio presenter Buthaina Abdul Jalil, a media expert who has achieved remarkable career success. She has made it her mission to ensure her work consistently informs and enlightens her audience. With a career spanning over three decades, she shared valuable insights from her journey, offering advice and guidance for aspiring media professionals.

Life's Unexpected Turns

When Abdul Jalil began her career, she never imagined she would achieve such success in the media industry. She was on a different career path, initially choosing to study plant sciences after high school. She earned a bachelor's degree and a master's in genetics. Passionate about her work, she spent hours daily in the laboratory, and her career seemed to be moving in the right direction.

Despite her lifelong passion for media, she never considered a career change. Her late husband, however, recognized her potential for success in this field. He pointed to her knowledge, eloquence, and strong conversational abilities, persistently encouraging her to take the leap. Inspired by his encouragement, she began to educate herself by reading extensively about the media and enrolling in relevant courses to develop her skills. Eventually, she fully embraced her new path.

To this day, the veteran broadcaster views this bold change as the most significant decision in her career. She began her journey as a television presenter before transitioning to radio, where her unique style—shaped by her television experience and passion for fieldwork—became her trademark.

This approach was especially apparent in her interactions with guests and her dedication to delivering radio shows in a way that allowed listeners to envision scenes unfolding before their eyes. She credits this as a critical factor in her long and successful radio career, during which she hosted numerous popular shows, including Mafateeh Al-Hayat (Keys to Life), Masa'a Al-Doha (Doha Evening), Safha Jadeeda (A New Page), Huna Qatar (Here is Qatar), and, most recently, Hadeeth Al-Iqtisad (Economic Talk).

Media Success

Abdul Jalil believes that building a successful career in media requires passion, patience, and resilience, as the industry presents unique challenges, especially in television or radio, where work schedules often shift according to programming plans. "You need to stay passionate. If you lose your enthusiasm, you will not be able to endure the challenges of this demanding profession, and it would be better to seek a different career path," she affirms.

Despite spending years studying science and building a promising career in genetics, Abdul Jalil never regretted her career shift. She realized that true success often requires a change in direction. Confident that everything she learned would contribute to her professional growth, she believes it would benefit her in one way or another.

For this reason, she encourages young graduates to focus on honing their skills through education and training early in their careers. "Continuous learning is essential for any successful career. When I transitioned to media, I attended several training programs in this field and earned a diploma in modern media. I also took courses in other subjects just to broaden my knowledge. Every course I completed opened new creative horizons for me," she says.

The Art of an Interview

Many factors contribute to the success of a media professional in television or radio presenting. Abdul Jalil believes that the most important are charisma and the ability to acquire knowledge in various fields. "Media professionals cannot control whether people like them or not. The audience makes that decision. They can control how hard they work, the training they receive, and their continual skill development to create a unique style that resonates with their audience."

"What they can control is knowledge and education. Media professionals must be well-versed in various subjects, even if they specialize in just one, such as sports, health, or economics.

I have loved reading since childhood and always had an appetite for knowledge. My late father taught me to never leave a page unread. I firmly believe that every piece of information I acquire, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, could be useful in the future," she adds.

Conducting exceptional interviews is the ultimate goal of a media professional. Abdul Jalil offers the following tips to achieve this: "First, you must deeply understand the topics you will discuss with your guests. Then, thoroughly research the guests themselves and every detail about them. During the interview, listen carefully. An experienced guest can quickly tell whether the presenter truly understands the topic or is simply moving from one question to the next. When guests feel that the presenter is genuinely interested, they will enjoy the conversation and openly share all the information, stories, and even secrets. This is what makes for an outstanding interview," she says.

She encourages aspiring presenters to always put themselves in the listener's shoes by seeking clarification whenever a guest gives a brief or unclear answer. Abdul Jalil developed these skills through various challenging situations during her career.

One encounter she vividly recalls was when she hosted renowned space scientist Dr. Farouk El-Baz on the Masa'a Al-Doha (Doha Evening) program. The interview was set to last 15 minutes, but Dr. El-Baz answered all her questions in just three minutes. Fortunately, she was well prepared. Alongside her knowledge of his work with NASA on lunar exploration and the Apollo program, her academic background in geology gave her insight. She asked him how the Apollo mission's lunar landing sites were selected. Impressed by her knowledge, Dr. El-Baz became more engaged, and the conversation developed into a deeper discussion about geology and related topics. It was an unforgettable interview for her.

"Presenters must leverage their knowledge, preparation, and research to build trust with their guests and earn their respect, all while exploring every possible angle during the interview," she says.

In today's digital age, we live in a world of information abundance, but for media professionals, this abundance presents a unique challenge. They must stay informed about every update in their field while verifying the credibility of each piece of information. The process has become more challenging than ever.



Scan the QR Code to visit QCDC's YouTube Channel and watch the full interview with Buthaina Abdul Jalil:



"I currently cover economics, a rapidly-changing field, so I need to keep up with the latest news, developments, and global crises."

"At the same time, I must ensure the credibility and accuracy of every piece of information, no matter how insignificant or small. In economics, publishing incorrect information, even minor details, can destabilize an organization or an entire financial market. It is a huge responsibility, and media professionals must be prepared to face this," she explains.

Radio Remains Resilient

Some argue that radio has lost its relevance amid today's digital media revolution and fast-paced lifestyles, but Abdul Jalil confidently believes that this is far from true and will not change. She points out that global research shows a strong resurgence of radio as a preferred source of news and entertainment. With limited free time, many people spend extended hours in their cars, making radio a convenient medium. Radio has also evolved, with diverse content now available in various formats on digital platforms, including social media, where audiences are highly active.

The veteran presenter also sees no threat from podcasts, viewing them as complementary to radio. While podcasts typically focus on specific topics in longer sessions, radio offers a broader experience, covering a wide range of topics in scheduled programs that follow a structured programming map.

For Abdul Jalil, radio's true strength lies in its focus on local affairs, often serving as the primary source people

turn to for news and updates on local issues. Beyond merely reporting and analyzing news, radio provides a wide range of diverse content that helps raise awareness of topics impacting the daily lives of the local community. Moreover, it encourages listeners to engage with their reality and consider the bigger picture, fostering positive change.

First Step to Success

Achieving success in the highly demanding field of media was never easy for Buthaina, who had to take on the roles of both mother and father to her two children following her husband's early passing. She emphasizes that setting clear priorities was essential to achieving the right balance across aspects of life. She offers the following advice for working women: "It is important to understand that perfection in all areas of life—family, work, and social life—is impossible. You should view them as parallel lines, not intersecting ones. I put my family first, then my career, and everything else after that. I set aside dedicated time for each and made sure work never overlapped with family time."

"Perhaps the most valuable advice I can offer any working woman is not to bring work home. At work, you are a presenter, doctor, or engineer, but at home, you need to focus on your family's needs," she concludes.



You can listen to all episodes of Buthaina Abduljalil's Hadeeth Al-Iqtisad (Economic Talk) and other interesting programs by visiting the Qatar Radio official website:

www.qatarradio.qa

THE FUTURE IS TECH

**Technology Expert
and AWIT Founder**

*Nancy
Wang*

**On leadership,
entrepreneurship,
and fixing the
broken rung**



The "glass ceiling" has long been a metaphor for the invisible barrier preventing women from securing job opportunities or advancing to senior roles. The term suggests that women can see opportunities but are unable to reach them due to factors such as discrimination, bias, social norms, or unfair policies.

Another term that more accurately describes this situation has emerged: the "broken rung." Simply put, if we view a career path as a ladder that employees must climb to attain higher positions, broken rungs inevitably hinder their ascent.

This term was coined during a five-year study conducted by McKinsey & Company in collaboration with Lean In and its founder, Sheryl Sandberg. The study analyzed data from over 600 companies in the United States, culminating in the "Women in the Workplace 2021" report. The report highlighted that women face greater challenges in securing promotions than their male counterparts, particularly in the early stages of their careers. It attributed this disparity to factors such as gender bias and discrimination, the absence of clear systems mandating promotions based on individual ability and merit, and a lack of access to mentorship and opportunities that help build skills and advance careers.

Despite progress in many sectors, the technology sector continues to see the widest gender gap. While most sectors see 86 women promoted to senior management positions for every 100 men, this number drops to a startling 52 in the technology sector. This gap is critical in a field accounting for over 10% of the U.S. GDP and providing more than 12 million jobs.

The various challenges women face in the technology sector prompt many to exit the field, disrupting potential talent and career trajectories. This, in turn, reduces female representation at decision-making levels, which can influence the future of organizations or even entire industries.

Nancy Wang has dedicated herself to changing this reality through her work in cloud computing and cybersecurity, as well as her leadership roles at major technology companies like Google and Amazon. We met the U.S. technology expert during her visit to Doha to uncover the secrets behind her career success, discuss her experience as an investor in the technology sector, and explore her journey with Advancing Women in Tech (AWIT).

An Inspiring Career

Nancy Wang was born in Pennsylvania, USA, to a family of Chinese immigrants. Her parents, despite financial difficulties, were determined to provide a good education for her and her sister. Wang's passion for learning motivated her to pursue a career in technology, and she eventually earned a scholarship to study engineering at the University of Pennsylvania, where she specialized in computer science.

After graduating, Wang gained valuable experience in several roles across different companies, before joining Google as a product manager. She then moved to Rubrik, a company specializing in cloud data management and data security, where she served as a cloud product manager. Her success at Rubrik caught the attention of Amazon Web Services (AWS), where she was appointed Director of Product and Engineering, and later promoted to General Manager for AWS Data Protection.

After over four years of significantly contributing to AWS's development and growth, Wang decided to focus on consulting in cloud computing and cybersecurity, alongside her venture capital investments in tech startups. In 2016, having gained extensive knowledge of the barriers women faced within these major companies, Wang founded the nonprofit organization Advancing Women in Tech (AWIT). Through AWIT, she sought to help women build careers in the technology sector, overcome the "broken rung," and ascend to leadership positions within their organizations. She wanted other women to have access to the same kind of mentorship and career guidance that had helped her build a successful career.

Cloud Computing

An emerging technology that has firmly established itself over the past decade, revolutionizing IT infrastructure. The term originates from the "cloud" symbol used to represent the Internet in early computer network diagrams. Cloud computing enables individuals and businesses to access infrastructure solutions, software, and applications via the Internet. These services are hosted in data centers owned by cloud service providers, offering a practical, cost-effective, and secure option to store and protect data. Additionally, it grants clients access to the latest software and applications that contribute to the growth of their businesses. Amazon, Google, and Microsoft are among the leading companies offering these services.

AWIT initially hosted in-person workshops in the United States and Europe but shifted to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization now offers over 100 hours of course instruction on engineering management, product management, and cloud product management through the Coursera platform. Designed by experts in education and engineering, these courses have benefited more than 40,000 people worldwide, including many women who have successfully secured jobs in the technology sector, advanced their careers, and become executives in tech companies, or even started their own companies.

Wang believes that the tremendous advancement of the Internet and its associated technologies has greatly enhanced the online learning experience, making it more advanced than ever. She notes that it now rivals the quality of in-person education offered at universities, prompting institutions worldwide to offer full academic programs online.

The U.S. tech expert takes pride in her initiative's impact over the past seven years. "I was very fortunate to have received a full-ride scholarship to study at the University of Pennsylvania. Otherwise, my parents' financial situation would not have allowed me to attend college. That personal experience makes me passionate about ensuring that others have equal access to opportunities. I am a firm believer that education and knowledge are a right, not a privilege. This belief drove me to establish

AWIT, as everyone deserves access to quality education and high-quality content at affordable prices," she says. AWIT's success led Wang to join the University of Pennsylvania's board for online education, which became the first Ivy League university to offer a fully online master's degree in engineering through its Master of Computer and Information Technology (MCIT) program, available through the Coursera platform.

Product Manager

The role of a product manager has become critically important, especially in technology companies. A product manager is responsible for setting the overall strategy for a product, whether it is a software program, application, device, service, or any digital product. Product managers collaborate with teams across various disciplines, including engineers, designers, marketers, and researchers, to develop a product roadmap. They oversee every stage of the process, from concept development and planning to execution, launch, and ensuring the product's success in the market.

Investing in Tech

Wang shared with us her experience in entrepreneurship and her strategy as a tech investor, offering valuable insights into what venture capitalists look for in startups. She prefers to invest in the early stages of startups, whether by supporting an individual or team with a promising idea or a prototype, or by funding a company that has already launched a promising product and is just starting to gain market traction, build a customer base, and attract further funding.

During these early stages, most startups lack the financial data that investors typically rely on to make informed investment decisions. Wang compensates for the lack of such data by evaluating the project and its founding team, relying on the vast experience she has gained throughout her career.

"The founding team plays a crucial role in my decision-making. Domain experience, such as a technical degree in the field they have chosen for their company, is a plus but not always essential. What matters most to me is their

passion and dedication to the project. Their willingness to sacrifice to solve problems and overcome challenges is key. It is about grit and perseverance," she says.

Wang also emphasizes the importance of technology choice in startups. There are countless opportunities for startups worldwide, particularly in fast-growing technology fields like data security, cloud services, and artificial intelligence. She focuses on key questions: How does the team view the market and competition? Where do you stand relative to your competitors? What sets your product apart? What will compel customers to choose it over others, especially those offered by larger, more established companies?

"To answer these questions, the team needs to demonstrate a solid understanding of the problem they are solving for customers. If they have good answers, which will become evident during the pitch conversation, then they have a company that piques my interest and I would want to invest in it," Wang explains.



Venture Capital

Venture capital is a type of private equity where investors provide funding to early-stage startups in exchange for owning a share of the company's equity. This type of investment supports innovation and the growth of the entrepreneurial sector, helping founders avoid the difficulties of securing funding from traditional financial institutions or relying on high-risk personal funding. Known as "venture" capital due to its inherently high-risk nature, investors accept the possibility that the startup may not succeed, while also recognizing the potential for substantial returns if the company grows into a major brand.

Tips to succeed in the Tech World

Wang advises anyone looking to build a successful career in the technology sector to focus on fast-growing fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and other emerging technologies that can contribute to human advancement. "In these fast-growing fields, you will learn the most and find the greatest opportunities to advance your career. Most founders of major tech companies began this way. Stay focused, persevere, and work hard; you might develop a new technology or launch a company or platform that becomes a major brand," she says.

The technology expert encourages young people to stay ambitious and persevere in reaching their goals, no matter the obstacles they encounter. Reflecting on her own experience overcoming career hurdles, Wang shared, "Before landing my first job at Google, I was rejected from over 50 jobs I applied for, including twice by Google. After each rejection, failure, or misstep, you must keep going—that is the power of grit and perseverance."

Wang encourages those striving for leadership roles not to shy away from taking responsibility, even in the face of fear, because you do not know if you will succeed until you try. She emphasizes the importance of viewing one's professional journey as a long-term investment. "When I think about anyone's career path, I like to borrow the concept of compound interest from finance. If you invest in yourself by continuing to learn and build relationships with mentors and sponsors, eventually the principal, the interest, and the dividends will pay out what you are today. It will reward you in the long term and lead to both professional and personal growth," she concludes.

To learn about the programs and courses offered by AWIT, scan the QR code:



BREAKING BARRIERS

LULWA AL MARRI

The Qatari Woman Who Conquered the Ironman

“During the race,
I disconnect from
everything around me
and immerse my mind
in my world. I focus
solely on envisioning
myself crossing the
finish line.”

“To achieve this, you need more than just physical strength. You must reach the right state of mind. Over time, your body will signal to your brain to stop, and the thought of quitting may cross your mind. Controlling your thoughts is crucial. Your mind will wander through the past, present, and future, so mastering self-talk is essential. For hours, you are entirely alone, with just your thoughts, unable to talk to anyone or listen to music. You need to stay fully focused and be able to draw out the passion from within you.”

Through these words, Lulwa Al Marri describes her experience participating in the 2023 Ironman European Championship in Hamburg, Germany, where she made history by becoming the first Qatari woman to complete a full Ironman distance. The Ironman race is one of the toughest tests of mental resilience and endurance for any athlete.

The race begins in the early morning hours with an open-water swim of approximately four kilometers. Competitors then transition to a 180-kilometer road cycling phase, followed by a 42.2-kilometer run—equivalent to a full Olympic marathon! In total, these three races cover more than 226 kilometers, with participants allowed up to 16 or 17 hours to complete the course. Most professional athletes can cross the finish line in around eight hours.

The Road to Glory

Lulwa began practicing sports at a young age and quickly became an integral part of her daily routine. While she experimented with various sports, she was particularly drawn to the most challenging ones, such as mountaineering, hiking, and trail running. It was weightlifting, however, which she ultimately came to enjoy the most.

As her aspiration for a professional sports career grew, Lulwa recognized the need for long-term stability. To extend her future options, she pursued a degree in biomedical sciences at Nottingham Trent University in the UK, graduating in 2019.

Throughout her university years, Lulwa dedicated time and passion to weightlifting. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, her training was disrupted as gyms closed under new restrictions. Lulwa was unable to continue with her training, so she shifted her focus to running and cycling—sports more accessible at the time. With this newfound interest, her coaches encouraged her to pursue triathlon. Despite her limited experience in swimming, she decided to embrace the challenge.



The Ironman race is a more challenging version of the Olympic triathlon, which comprises a 1.5-kilometer swim, a 40-kilometer bike ride, and a 10-kilometer run. Professional athletes typically finish these three stages in around 3 or 4 hours

Scan this QR code to visit the Qatar Triathlon Federation website, where you can learn more about the sport and find opportunities to participate in triathlons in Qatar:



"I wanted to break barriers and pave the way for other women in Qatar to follow their dreams and become the best version of themselves. I also wanted to prove to future generations that nothing is impossible and show the world that Qatari women are capable of conquering the most challenging athletic endeavors," she expresses. On 29 August 2021, Lulwa embarked on her historic journey to Hamburg. After 13 grueling hours, she crossed the finish line. She still remembers every little detail of that day.

"It was a moment I will never forget, one of overwhelming pride and accomplishment, of joy and satisfaction, knowing that all my hard work and dedication had finally paid off. As the first Qatari woman to compete in a full Ironman distance race, I felt tremendous pressure and responsibility to represent my country in the best way possible. These feelings motivated me and kept me pushing to reach the finish line," she recalls.

Lulwa's achievement in Hamburg garnered widespread acclaim both locally and internationally. She was honored by the Qatar Cycling and Triathlon Federation and the Qatar Olympic Committee, and subsequently joined the Qatar Triathlon national team. She was also selected as a FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Ambassador and signed sponsorship deals with prominent sports brands like Whoop.

You might wonder why a sports competition is named "Ironman" while women also participate in it. "Ironman" has been the registered trademark of the competition since its inception in the 1970s. Despite the name, women are given equal opportunities to participate and compete for equal prize money to ensure the inclusivity of the IRONMAN Pro series, which includes the Hamburg race.

"I was confident in my ability to improve my performance step by step, learning along the way. I did not rush into it, and I did not go hard on myself. I learned from my previous experience in sports that it is okay to fail, as long as you use what you have learned to grow closer to your goals," Lulwa says.

With each triathlon race, Lulwa's confidence soared, and she yearned for a more formidable sporting challenge. "I have always been passionate about pushing my limits and testing my capabilities. I wanted to challenge myself both physically and mentally. The Ironman race was the ultimate test of this. I felt ready to chase my new dream," she explains.

Balancing a demanding full-time job at Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar with rigorous Ironman training was no small feat. It required months of regular intensive training under the guidance of a professional coach. Without the financial support of a professional club, she had to cover the costs of coaching, equipment, travel, and participation by herself. Her determination never wavered, and she even decided to raise the bar by making her Ironman debut at the Hamburg European Championship, one of the most prestigious Ironman races in the world.

Secrets of Success

Lulwa credits her ability to balance work, family time, and intense daily training to her careful planning, clear goals, and efficient time management. Her supportive family and friends have been instrumental in her success, understanding the importance of sports in her life. Contributing to this solid support network, her coach has been a guiding mentor throughout her athletic journey, tailoring her training schedule and intensity to align with her race commitments throughout the year.

Lulwa encourages young people to leverage Qatar's significant investment in sports and world-class infrastructure by pushing themselves toward new horizons in their athletic pursuits. She also hopes her achievements inspire young girls to follow her path and embrace sports with dedication. Her advice to aspiring athletes is simple yet profound: "Everything is in your hands. You control your destiny, and there is nothing you cannot achieve. Start by setting your goals, work hard to

achieve them, and make sports an essential part of your daily life to enhance both your physical health and focus. Practice discipline, perseverance, and teamwork. These lifestyle changes will improve your time management and communication skills. Soon you will begin to see the positive impact it can have on your life."

Despite her remarkable achievements, Lulwa still considers herself a learner and believes there is always room for growth and improvement. She aims to build on her accomplishments to achieve even better results in the future. With heartfelt gratitude, the Qatari champion acknowledges the role of her mentors and her country in her journey: "I have been fortunate enough to have multiple role models who have inspired and guided me through different stages of my life, both personally and professionally. I want to thank them for supporting me on my journey to becoming the first Qatari woman to complete an Ironman. I also want to thank my beloved country for encouraging young women to pursue sports, contributing immensely to my growth and development."

Lulwa's Tips for Young Athletes

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone: Embrace new challenges, knowing that real growth only occurs when you push yourself to new heights.

Make Steady Progress: With proper planning and continuous training, you can achieve any goal, no matter how difficult. Keep moving forward, even with small steps, and aim to improve every day, even if it is just by one percent.

Stay Disciplined: Discipline is essential for progress in any field. Prioritize regular training, regardless of obstacles or setbacks. One of my favorite sayings is: "Success occurs when your dreams get bigger than your excuses."

Protect Your Mind: Your mental strength is vital if you want to achieve anything in sports. Be mindful of what content you consume, especially in the age of social media. Focus on positive and uplifting messages to stay aligned with your goals.

Enjoy The Journey: Be kind to yourself and understand that performance consistency is not always possible.

Learn to Self-Motivate: Do not rely on others for encouragement, but do not let anyone limit your ambitions or box you into a specific framework.

Accept Setbacks: Understand that facing setbacks is normal. Learn from them and always strive to improve.

Value Teamwork: Even in individual sports, success is the result of collective effort. Coaches, medical staff, nutritionists, performance analysts, and many others contribute to an athlete's achievements.



STORIES FOR THE DEAF



Amal Al-Buainain

The young innovator striving to create a brighter future for Qatar's deaf community

Amid the vibrant atmosphere of the children's section at the Doha International Book Fair, a group of curious youngsters gathers around a young woman holding a tablet. On the screen, Noura, a virtual character, uses sign language to narrate the story of "Treasure Island" by Qatari author Lina Al-Ali. The children are captivated, their faces lit up as they follow Noura's vivid gestures, fully immersed in the unfolding adventure. The story follows a young girl who embarks on a thrilling journey with her grandfather to explore Bin Ghannam Island, located on Qatar's eastern coast.

Most of the children in the audience are deaf, though a few hearing children sit among them, equally captivated by the story. They watch Noura's hand movements, curious about what these silent signs could mean. Amal sees herself in these children, moved and grateful to witness their inclusion and joy as part of a community that values and celebrates them—something she longed for in her own childhood.

Noura is the virtual face of young Qatari entrepreneur Amal Al-Buainain's project, "Stories for Deafs," an app that translates children's books from Arabic into Qatari Sign Language. Amal demonstrates to the children how to use the app to scan both illustrated and written stories, instantly receiving translations from Noura. "Every time I participate in a reading workshop and present the Stories for Deafs app to the children, their reactions fill me with immense joy. What makes me even happier is seeing the excitement of the hearing children as they try to mimic Noura's signs and communicate with their deaf peers. Their enthusiasm motivates me to keep developing my project, hoping to foster a generation where deaf and hearing individuals can effortlessly connect through sign language; a glimpse of the future that makes this journey more exciting."

A Brighter Future Through Storytelling

Amal believes her project has the potential to transform the future of Qatar's deaf community. She is keenly aware of their challenges, especially the limited proficiency in Arabic among deaf individuals, particularly in writing—a gap compounded by the lack of high-quality, tailored content for the deaf. Furthermore, the information they receive is often incomplete or unclear, limiting their access to essential knowledge and resources.

Stories for Deafs helps deaf children learn Arabic by linking written words to their corresponding signs in a fun and engaging way, encouraging them to continue learning. Essentially, it acts as a visual dictionary that enhances their written language skills through sign language. This allows them to read more books, expand their knowledge, and foster cultural awareness. At the same time, the app offers hearing children the chance to explore and learn sign language, promoting better communication between deaf and hearing communities, and ultimately improving the quality of life for people

who are deaf or hard of hearing. Amal understands the profound impact of mastering reading on a deaf child's life.

Reading has been her passion since childhood, starting with illustrated stories that sparked her imagination. Over time, her curiosity expanded to a wide range of topics, with a particular interest in Qatari history and heritage, through which she developed a deep appreciation for her homeland's beauty. Amal is also drawn to psychology books, driven by a desire to understand human behavior better and learn about personal development. Inspired by similar applications in foreign languages, Amal sought to innovate by creating an app with a virtual character that embodies Arab identity and can translate from Arabic into Qatari Sign Language. These are two key topics that rippled throughout her mission today.

From Vision to Reality

Although she had a clear vision, Amal realized that having an idea and conducting some initial research was not enough. She still had unanswered questions: Where should she start? What technologies and tools were needed to develop the app? She continued searching for answers until a friend told her about Mada – Assistive Technology Center and their support for projects to improve accessibility to information technology.



Amal met with experts from Mada, who expressed great interest in her idea. As a result, Stories for Deafs became one of the first projects adopted by the Mada Innovation Club initiative, launched in 2022 under the center's umbrella. This initiative aims to enhance the capabilities of creators with disabilities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It empowers them to turn their innovative ideas into solutions that address societal needs and improve accessibility to information and communication technology.

Club members are selected after carefully evaluating their ideas and gaining access to an environment that fosters innovation. They can also collaborate with experts from various fields, including consulting, research, technology, entrepreneurship, and project management. These experts help them develop comprehensive plans to transform their ideas into successful projects.

"The initial stages of development presented a unique set of hurdles," Amal explains. "But thanks to the invaluable expertise of Mada, we were able to overcome them. A crucial aspect was designing and developing a virtual character that children could interact with. We meticulously designed Noura to embody a distinct Qatari identity, paying close attention to every detail, from her facial features and clothing to her lip movements."

Amal continues collaborating with Mada to develop the app further, ensuring it has a lasting impact on deaf children in Qatar and the broader Arab region. She firmly believes that rapid technological advancements hold the key to unlocking more innovative solutions, enabling deaf individuals to communicate better with society, refine their skillsets, and tap into their creative potential.



A Long Way to Go

Despite Amal's progress with her project, she believes that the true potential of the deaf community in Qatar will only be realized once their challenges are fully addressed. One key issue, she explains, is the lack of educators equipped with specialized knowledge, methods, and techniques for effectively teaching deaf students. This deficiency leaves students without proper educational guidance and behavioral support necessary to advance their career development.

Another significant challenge is the disparity in high school diplomas awarded to deaf students compared to their hearing peers. "This restricts our access to universities and ultimately hinders us from pursuing the careers we are passionate about. We are not offered the same options or equal opportunities as hearing students. Finding a solution to this issue is not impossible. Many Arab and foreign countries accept deaf students into universities and allow them to study a variety of disciplines. I hope this changes in the future, as it would allow deaf students to pursue careers that align with their ambitions and capabilities," she says.

Amal actively collaborates with various institutions to raise awareness about the issues and challenges faced by the deaf community. She passionately participates in community events and activities, where she teaches sign language to children and shares stories through her Stories for Deafs app. Amal remains optimistic about the future of the deaf community in Qatar, and she explains why:

"Social gatherings and community events always fill me with immense joy. They serve as a powerful reminder that I am not alone in this journey and that we are moving toward a more inclusive future together. I believe Qatari society has become more aware of the challenges facing people with disabilities and recognizes the

enormous potential within this group. I have noticed a growing interest from young men and women eager to engage with the deaf community, whether as supporters, collaborators, or volunteers. Their enthusiasm for integration and communication is truly inspiring."

"Some people still look at us differently, driven by misconceptions about the deaf community and our abilities. To challenge these stereotypes, it is essential to integrate deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals into national events and social gatherings. Organizing more cultural seminars about the deaf community and sign language workshops can significantly raise awareness, promoting a deeper understanding of our community and language. This will pave the way for a more inclusive society where deaf individuals can fully participate," she adds.

Amal encourages Qatari youth to engage with deaf associations nationwide. This interaction will drive a deeper understanding of the deaf community, their capabilities, and their needs. She believes that such connections will strengthen integration among all segments of society and help propel young people from diverse backgrounds forward. Amal also urges them to learn sign language and consider pursuing careers in sign language translation, as this would play a crucial role in amplifying the voices of the deaf community and providing a valuable service to society.

The young entrepreneur hopes to inspire Qatari youth to follow in her footsteps by developing projects that serve their community and contribute to building a brighter future for their country. She offers them the following advice: "You are bound to face challenges at the beginning. Remove the word 'impossible' from your vocabulary and never give up, no matter the obstacles. Keep pushing forward and remember that success often grows from the seeds of failure."



Mada – Assistive Technology Center was founded in 2010 to promote digital inclusion and build a technology-based community that meets the needs of persons with disabilities in Qatar. Today, Mada is the world's leading Center of Excellence in digital access in the Arabic language. For more information about the center, its services, and programs, scan the QR code:



You can reach out to the Qatar Cultural Center for the Deaf to learn more about their activities and programs, including sign language courses, by scanning this code:



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