

Middle East

# Point of View

Published by Deloitte & Touche (M.E.) and distributed to thought leaders across the region | Spring 2023

## Women thriving in tech & AI

Female representation in the digital world

## A gender-balanced economy

What challenges need to be considered?

## Rise of the untapped talent pool

Inspirational women take the lead

## That "double" glazed ceiling

The struggle is real

## The case for diversity and inclusion



**Deloitte.**



Spring 2023  
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# A word from the editorial team

The case for diversity and inclusion... a suitable theme to coincide with International Women's Day, a remarkable day of the year that is celebrated globally on 8 March. And while this holiday celebrates the amazing achievements of women all around the world, it also reflects on a moment in time to highlight the work that still needs to be done in the quest for gender equality and positive change. Harnessing the power of diversity and inclusion in this day and age should be self-evident, yet we still need to push for this ongoing and vital conversation.

In this latest issue of the ME PoV, we discover how "unlearning" might be just as relevant as "learning" when it comes to individuals playing a part in achieving positive change. In *Diversity unplugged: The new generation*, author Lamisse Muhtaseb explains that "The role of inclusion in the workplace is beyond that of diversity; it taps into the many components that contribute to the people experience."

*The power of emotional intelligence in a tech-savvy world* by Arati Marya and Zaynah Vohra posits that emotional intelligence (EQ) can have a powerful impact on an organization's measurable success and will continue to serve a critical role in ensuring diversity and preventing bias in technology moving forward.

In the article *Striving for a gender-balanced economy: What challenges does the Middle East need to consider in order to meet SDG 5 objectives?* author Daniel Gribbin looks at the strides the Middle East has made on the issue of gender equality, and how, compared to global markets, it still has a great deal to do.

In an enlightening interview with Irene Natividad, President of the Global Summit of Women, entitled *Women at the forefront: Holding the key to global economic prosperity*, we learn about the many issues faced by women in the workforce today and how this powerful clan can truly thrive in a gender inclusive and dynamic environment for utmost economic prosperity.

Author Saima Jalal looks at the problematic glass ceiling and finds that "despite gender equality being a topic well publicized, the corporate world remains a notoriously difficult arena for women to advance in, with many struggling to reach senior positions within their organizations," in *That "double" glazed ceiling*.

*The rise of the untapped national talent pool: Inspirational women take the lead* by authors Anna Maria Haddad and Layan El Hout find that while it is important to acknowledge that the shifts occurring in the Arab world regarding gender balance are not new, it is only until recently that "these nations have been reaping the fruits of the major legislative and social changes that they have been working incessantly towards."

Mia Buban injects her boost of optimism and positive energy in *Women thriving in technology and AI: How we, organizations, and society can drive to increase female representation in today's digital world*. She presents how "by nature, and by design, women have inherent strengths as leaders, nurturers, integrators, influencers, orchestrators, organizers, and innovators – attributes that women should proudly celebrate."

We are proud to offer you this important

issue of the Middle East Point of View and hope it instigates much needed conversations to forge forward and work for positive change.

## ME PoV editorial team

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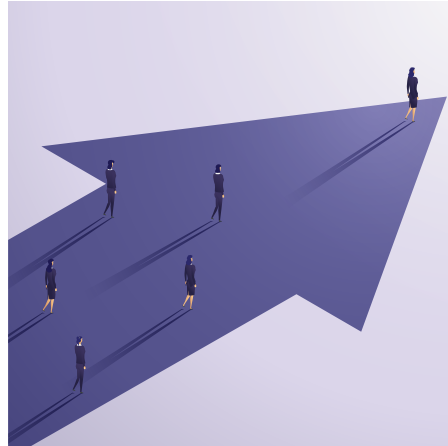
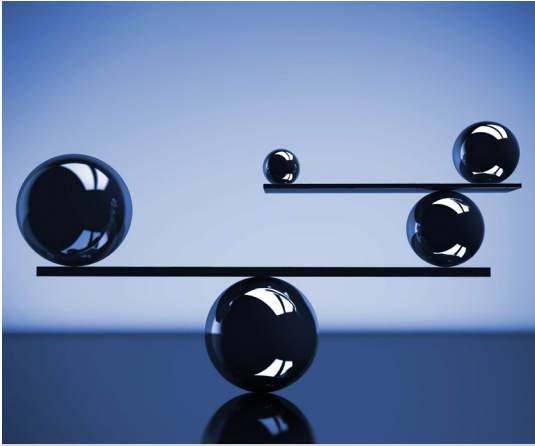
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Mia Buban



# Diversity unplugged:

The new generation

Though “diversity” in the mind of many creates the notion of gender diversity and female empowerment, the term itself characterizes a specific assigned group, whether gender, education, health, ethnicity or generational diversity, to name a few. In all these areas of diversity, a global corporate audience and new generations of talent are waiting for the balance to shift and show greater representation on multiple fronts. However, this newer generation is not just talking about representation and diversity. Deloitte’s 2022 report, *Gen Z and Millennials in the New World of Work*, found that in unsettling times, and as people reconsider the role that work plays in achieving their life goals, businesses should create healthy, inspirational environments where people can thrive and achieve not only their own purpose but that of the organization. Nearly two in five (37% of Gen Zs and 36% of millennials) say they have rejected a job and/or assignment based on their own personal ethical beliefs.

“Life is too short to be in an environment that makes you feel excluded. As a woman, I want my voice to always be heard and opportunities to always be fair, and I believe in the power of allyship for all. As we, the youth, go through the many troubles life continuously brings, it’s sometimes hard to imagine the perfect world, but here is mine: I want to be part of a world where everyone feels safe to be themselves despite their differences; a world where constructed barriers are torn down; a world where we can all be so accepting of each other; a world that I can proudly call home.” *Tiffany Batrouni, Culture and Inclusion Associate, Deloitte Middle East, Lebanon*

In all these areas of diversity, a global corporate audience and new generations of talent are waiting for the balance to shift and show greater representation on multiple fronts



The role of inclusion in the workplace is beyond that of diversity; it taps into the many components that contribute to the people experience. Let's take an example. Businesses face unprecedented challenges with a competitive talent landscape. A new light is shining on the fight for talent, and with that, the recruitment processes must adapt in nature, into a mutual interview, with companies having to come prepared to deliver answers on their diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) agenda, their societal consciousness, environmental practices, and the opportunities candidates will have to be part of to influence "the greater good."

#### Planning for gender equality

In 2015, the UN established 17 Sustainable Development Goals to achieve by 2030, with the fifth goal being Gender Equality. Hand in hand with government legislations, corporates have a key role to play in achieving this goal and must come together collectively to deliver gender smart programs, practices, and policies that create opportunities for women to seek support in career progression, many of which exist. These initiatives can also speak to the intangible set of values which serve as building blocks for a corporate culture that enables an equitable workplace and gender advancement in wider communities.


#### The lessons (un)learnt

Perhaps the time is right to reconsider diversity strategies and focus on behaviors that can drive them. At the heart of that is understanding our differences and amplifying our similarities. The desirability for an employee to feel more connected to their workplace, and have a strong sense of belonging, is increasingly evident and the

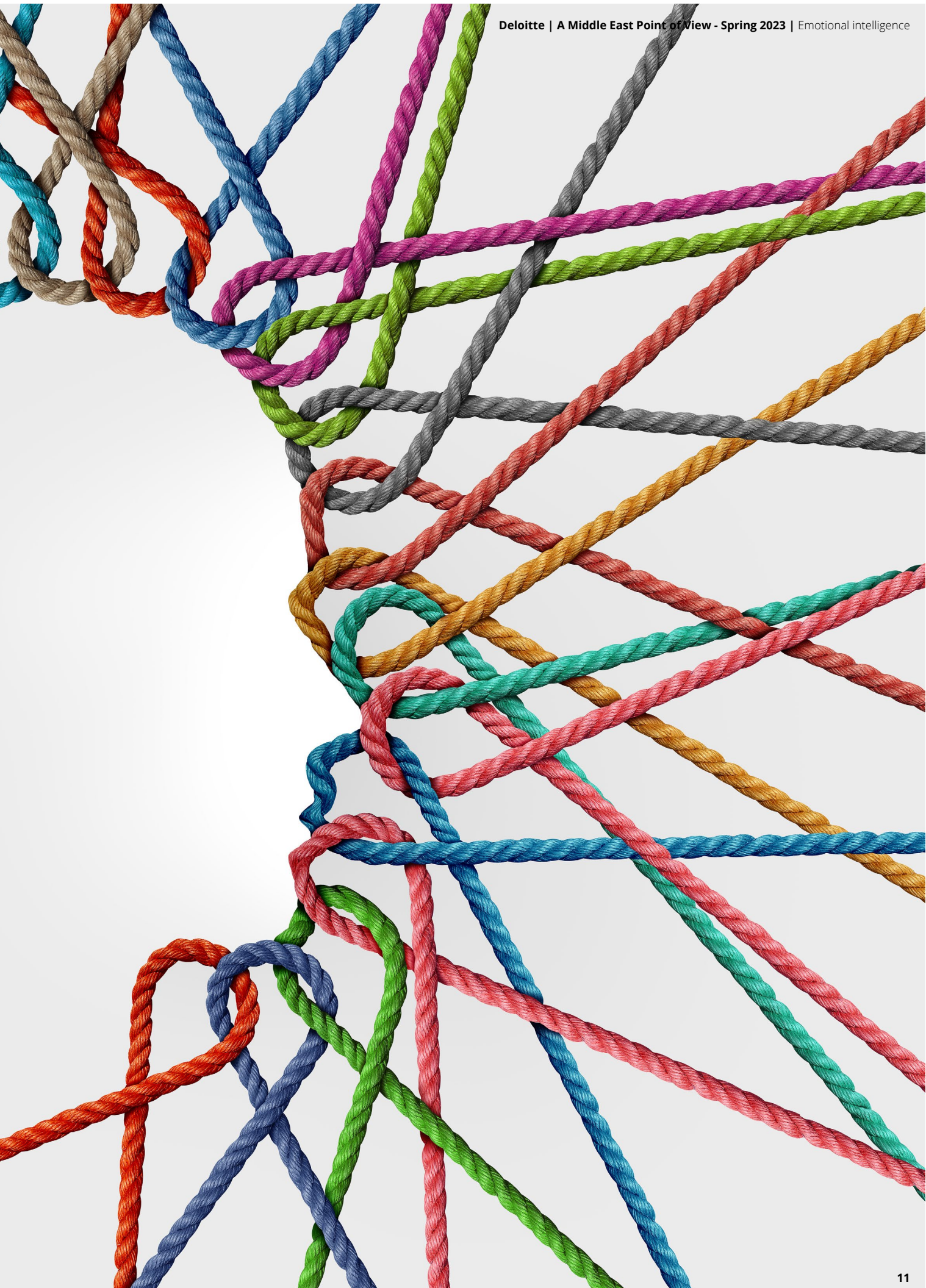
historical construct of the corporate world no longer serves the requirements of its people. It's safe to say "unlearning" is just as important as learning for all individuals to play a part in effectuating positive change and shifting the gender gear for the future generation of talent. ●

By **Lamisse Muhtaseb**, Purpose, Culture and Inclusion Lead, Deloitte Middle East

The role of inclusion in the workplace is beyond that of diversity; it taps into the many components that contribute to the people experience

The image features decorative elements of thick, braided ropes in the corners. In the top right, there are ropes in shades of yellow, blue, and red. In the bottom right, there is a red rope. The background is a light, neutral color.

# The power of emotional intelligence in a tech-savvy world



As we commemorate and reflect upon International Women's Day 2023, we choose to remember history speckled with important contributions from women all over the world, as well as look ahead to the future of technology and the critical role emotional intelligence (EQ), a metric traditionally viewed as "feminine," will play.

We sometimes forget that although there is an approximate 20% female representation in information technology fields nowadays, this was not always the case. Women coders made up the majority of the US and UK computing workforces in the 50s and 60s. In these early days of computer technology, these women worked as "human" computers, but also made strides in the development of the mainframe computer and programming languages. One such example is Grace Hopper, a pioneer and leader in the field of computer science, who in 1949 was one of the programmers of the Harvard Mark I.

An interesting fact: Grace Hopper is credited with popularizing the now common phrase "debugging" in the IT world when a moth literally got trapped in her Harvard Mark 1 computer!

Hopper was known for her groundbreaking work in computer programming and her advocacy for the development of user-friendly programming languages. Her work led to the development of COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language), a high-level programming language which is still widely used in business and finance applications today.

As they say, history allows us to learn from the lived experiences of our predecessors. We also embarked on our technology related careers years later. Having spent the formative years of our careers at Deloitte, we have had the opportunity to work with some of the most talented and inspiring men and women leaders in the industry. Throughout our experience, we have noted that the one common secret ingredient (or maybe not so secret, but

EQ refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others. Studies have shown that teams with higher levels of empathy are more productive and creative than those who lack it.

essential nonetheless) that ties the most successful of the leaders together is the high levels of emotional intelligence (EQ) demonstrated with both colleagues and clients. This empathetic leadership style is often overlooked in traditional leadership models; however, it is a crucial component of building a successful and inclusive workplace.

EQ refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others. Studies have shown that teams with higher levels of empathy are more productive and creative than those who lack it. When team members feel that their leaders are invested in their well-being and success, they are more likely to go above and beyond in their roles, take on new challenges, and come up with innovative solutions to complex problems.

Demonstrating high EQ is not always easy, especially in fast-paced and competitive industries like the professional services industry. It requires time to put ourselves in our colleagues' and clients' shoes and understand their perspectives and challenges. However, the benefits of empathetic leadership are clearly worth the effort with proven outcomes including:

- **Improved communication:** Leaders with high EQ are better able to communicate with their teams in a way that resonates with them. They can tailor their communication style to the individual needs of team members and provide feedback in a way that is constructive and supportive.
- **Better decision-making:** Leaders with high EQ are better able to manage their emotions and remain calm under pressure. This allows them to make better decisions that are not driven by fear, anger, or other negative emotions.
- **Stronger relationships:** Leaders with high EQ are skilled at building strong relationships with their team members, based on mutual respect and trust. This creates a more positive work environment and can lead to increased collaboration and productivity.

- **Improved conflict resolution:** Leaders with high EQ are skilled at managing conflict and finding solutions that work for everyone. They are able to listen to and understand the perspectives of all parties involved and find common ground.

- **Increased empathy:** Leaders with high EQ are able to put themselves in their team members' shoes and understand their perspectives and needs. This leads to greater empathy and understanding, which can create a more positive and supportive work environment.

- **Higher engagement:** When team members feel valued and understood, they are more likely to be engaged in their work. Leaders with high EQ can create a work environment that fosters engagement and motivation, which can lead to improved performance and productivity. ➤

Leaders with high EQ are skilled at managing conflict and finding solutions that work for everyone. They are able to listen to and understand the perspectives of all parties involved and find common ground.

AI is only as unbiased as the data used to train it. Data scientists and developers must be aware of their own biases and work to mitigate them when selecting and preparing data for AI algorithms. EQ can help individuals recognize their own biases and understand how they may be impacting the AI system.

But does the role of EQ stop at leadership styles and people management? Arguably, EQ extends to all areas of technological development. For example, the application of artificial intelligence (AI) continues to develop at an exponential pace, with the future pointing to a day when it will be embedded in all aspects of life. One of the most pressing concerns surrounding AI is the potential for bias. Bias in AI can have serious consequences, from perpetuating discrimination to making inaccurate predictions. This skill is critical in preventing bias in AI since it can help developers and data scientists recognize and address their own biases as they build and train AI algorithms.

Here are some ways that EQ can help prevent bias in AI:

- **Recognizing personal biases:** AI is only as unbiased as the data used to train it. Data scientists and developers must be aware of their own biases and work to mitigate them when selecting and preparing data for AI algorithms. EQ can help individuals recognize their own biases and understand how they may be impacting the AI system.
- **Building diverse teams:** Diversity and inclusion are critical in preventing bias in AI. EQ can help leaders build diverse teams that are better equipped to recognize and address potential biases.
- **Engaging with stakeholders:** AI systems are designed to serve specific purposes and populations. EQ can help data scientists and developers engage with stakeholders, including users and subject matter experts, to understand their needs and ensure that the AI system is serving them fairly and accurately.
- **Testing for bias:** EQ can help data scientists and developers design tests that detect and correct bias in AI systems. This requires an understanding of how different groups may be impacted by the system and a willingness to address any issues that arise.

- **Ongoing monitoring and maintenance:** EQ can help leaders and developers recognize when biases may be emerging in an AI system and take steps to correct them. This requires ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the system, as well as a commitment to continuous improvement.

In summary, EQ can have a powerful impact on an organization's measurable success, and it will continue to serve a critical role in ensuring diversity and preventing bias in technology moving forward. As AI continues to advance and become more integrated into our daily lives, it is imperative to prioritize EQ to ensure that these systems are serving us well.

Clearly, we did not personally know Grace Hopper to say for certain that she was an empathetic leader with high levels of emotional intelligence; however, based on what has been written about her legacy, she was known to be a visionary leader who believed in the power of collaboration and teamwork. She worked to develop user-friendly programming languages that could be easily understood and used by non-technical users, which suggests that she was interested in making technology more accessible and inclusive. She was known for advocating for the participation of women in computing and encouraging their career development in the field, which indicates a level of empathy and concern for the well-being of others. It's probably safe to say that her leadership style, in a technical results-oriented field in the 1950s, reflected the high levels of EQ to which we should all - men and women - aspire to. ●

By **Arati Marya**, Partner and **Zaynah Vohra**, Partner, Audit & Assurance, Deloitte Middle East

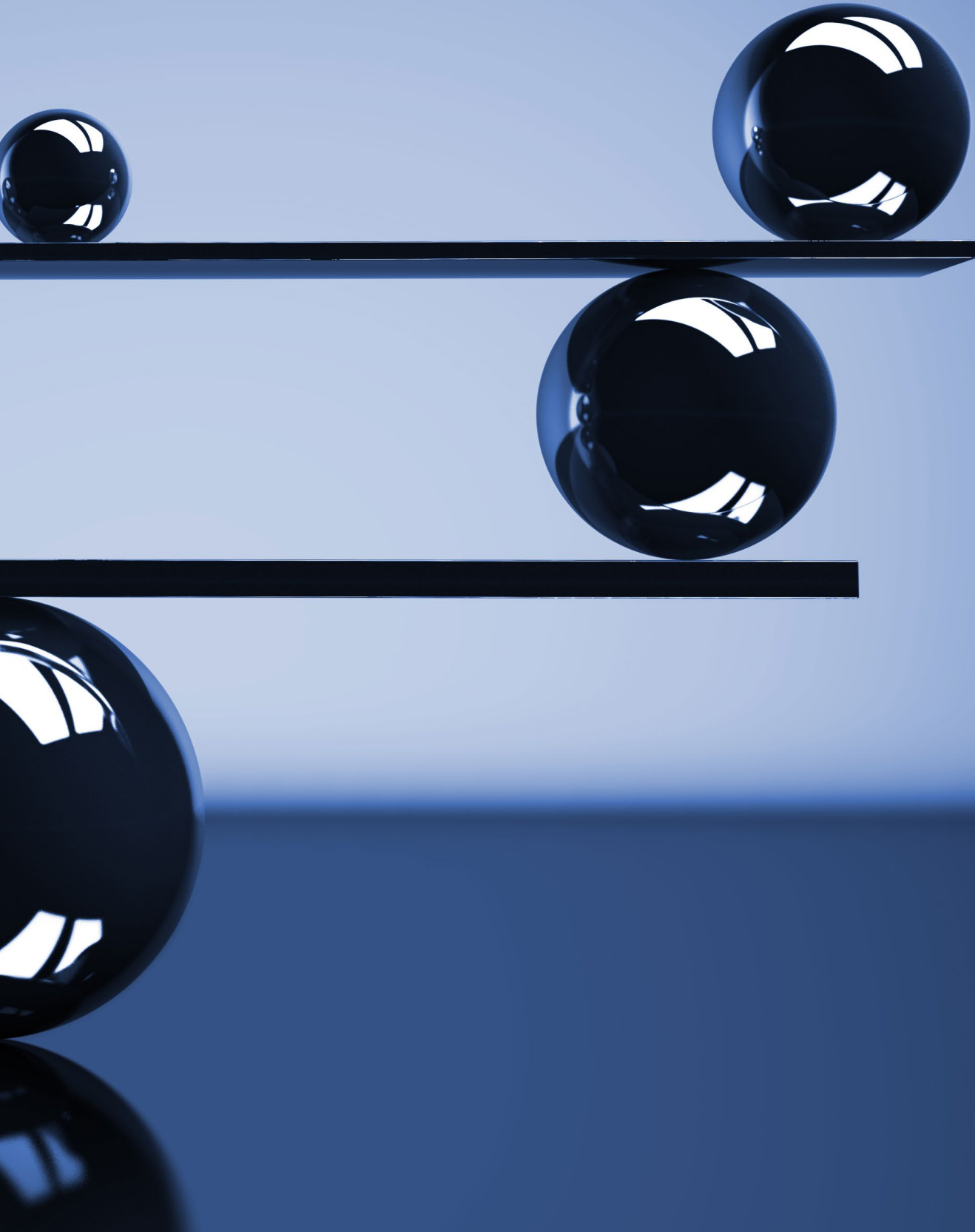
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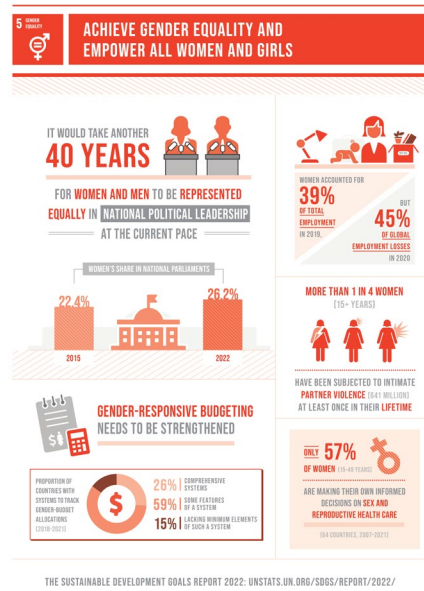
# Striving for a gender-balanced economy

What challenges does the Middle East need to consider in order to meet SDG 5 objectives?





The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also referred to as the Global Goals, are a collection of 17 interlinked objectives designed to serve as a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and into the future."<sup>1</sup> While all are important and require concerted efforts and focus with the impending 2030 completion date, one SDG needs particular focus: the SDG 5 – Gender Equality. It is an SDG that has suffered and anecdotal evidence shows – has gone backwards (particularly post COVID-19) in terms of achievement. And while the Middle East has indeed made strides with the issue of gender equality, when compared to global markets, it still has a great deal to do.



A good place to start is at the source, making a focused effort and creating mandates for gender split in relation to tertiary intake and recruitment activities

**2022 SDG dashboard for the Middle East and North Africa (levels and trends)**

	No poverty 1	Zero hunger 2	Good health and well-being 3	Quality education 4	<b>Gender equality 5</b>	Clean water and sanitation 6	Affordable and clean energy 7	Decent work and economic growth 8	Industry, innovation and infrastructure 9	Reduced inequalities 10	Sustainable cities and communities 11	Responsible consumption and production 12	Climate action 13	Life below water 14	Life on land 15	Peace, justice and strong institutions 16	Partnerships for the goals 17
Algeria	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ●	● ↓	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗
Bahrain	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● ↓	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↓	● →	● ●
Egypt, Arab Rep.	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↓	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↓
Iran, Islamic Rep.	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗
Iraq	● ↓	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● →	● →	● →
Jordan	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →
Kuwait	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● →	● ↗	● →	● →	● →	● ↗
Lebanon	● ↗	● →	● →	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ●	● ↓	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● ↗
Libya	● ●	● ↓	● →	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↓	● ↗	● ↓	● ●	● ↓	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● →	● ↓
Morocco	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● →
Oman	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● ↗
Qatar	● ●	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↓	● ↗	● ↓	● ↗	● ●
Saudi Arabia	● ●	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● →	● →	● ↗
Syrian Arab Republic	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ●	● ↓	● →	● →	● →	● →	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↓	● →	● →	● ↗
Tunisia	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗
United Arab Emirates	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ●	● ↗	● →	● ↗	● →	● →	● ↗	● →
Yemen, Rep.	● ●	● →	● →	● ●	● →	● →	● →	● →	● →	● ●	● →	● ↗	● ↗	● ↗	● ↓	● →	● ↓

● SDG achievement   
 ● Challenges remain   
 ● Significant challenges remain   
 ● Major challenges remain   
 ● Data not available  
↑ On track   
 ↗ Moderately Increasing   
 → Stagnating   
 ↓ Decreasing

Source: Author's analysis

### What needs to be done to help drive this agenda forward?

As we recently celebrated International Women's Day on 8 March, we need to acknowledge the initial steps that have been taken in the Middle East in recent times. In the UAE, we have seen a minimal increase in the percentage of female board members with the number of women on listed UAE boards rising from 3.5% in 2020 to 8.9% in 2022. While not at the speed many pioneering entities and NGO's have been looking for, several strides have also been taken to promote female participation in the workforce across the Middle East. This has coincided with a sharp increase of initial public offerings (IPOs) in the region and has changed governance requirements by the Central Bank of the UAE (CBUAE) through the Corporate Governance Regulations, which requires a minimum female representation of 20% on all boards.

### Are quotas the answer?

Many across the Middle East know the efforts to date, but at the current pace, these are never going to be sufficient to meet SDG 5. Various interventions have been tried and tested and solutions continue to be thought through. One such solution that has been widely discussed is the topic of quotas. Although there is no cure-all, with the population mix of around a 2:1 ratio of males to females in the overall Middle Eastern society, there are added challenges and cultural sensitivities that make the job the more difficult.

A good place to start is at the source, making a focused effort and creating mandates for gender split in relation to tertiary intake and recruitment activities. Incorporating equal male to female ratios in graduate intake processes or university applications is a key gateway to achieving an increased level of female participation in the workforce – but this must be combined with better gender ratios in the recruitment process. For those seeking to drive investment from western countries where the issue is at the front of most companies' minds, this is voluntarily done, although in the GCC, the most effective way to make

change is certainly through the regulatory environment.

In discussing this topic with a senior head of sustainability for a large financial institution, it was noted that quotas are good in giving both the private and public sectors "a kick in the right direction," but if not aligned with other structures for change, the result could be governments and private businesses complying or ensuring the minimal requirements are met without necessarily bringing about the systemic and/or institutional change needed as a society and underpinning the purpose of SDG 5 and the SDGs as a whole. Much of what has been done through nationalization and the incorporation of In-Country Value (UAE) or In-Kingdom Total Value Add (KSA) requirements can potentially be leveraged to assist in this process.

### Promoting flexibility and returning to work

One of the key challenges in the Middle East is the role women play in developing and nurturing their children. The introduction of an extended parental leave was recently initiated by companies to help support, attract, and retain female employees. There is also a more recent drive to change the traditional norms to which households operate. More and more men are happy and supportive of being the primary caregiver or to increase their duties at home. This change needs to be reinforced by government backed labor laws to allow men the option of being a primary caregiver and also to support women who choose to return to work sooner than historically and traditionally expected. This change should be promoted in order to aid in removing the gender stereotypes that so often plague our society.

### Bringing men to the table to discuss diversity issues and challenges

In my opinion, an area that currently needs significantly greater focus in the Middle East is the topic of bringing men into the forum to discuss and become more aware and educated on the issues, challenges, and

opportunities of increased gender diversity within an organization. Exposing them to the pain points, the challenges, and also let's not forget the success stories, creates awareness on such issues. Too often, companies set up diversity committees and working groups which are mainly attended by females who are trying to force change. Having an inclusive, diverse dialogue and improving awareness amongst male leaders will only strengthen companies and bring about change that is meaningful within organizations. There is a great need to teach men about the negative impacts of unconscious bias and the positive impacts of a diversity of thought and opinion. This can only be accomplished if male leaders truly believe the statistics about how diverse workplaces bring about strong returns and a more sustainable entity, are open to be challenged and change, and are willing to listen and act.

### There is no silver bullet

With only seven more years to achieve the SDGs, the Middle East and the world at large has a monumental task on its hands with respect to achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls in the workplace and society. There is no silver bullet solution that will address all the challenges we face, but I hope that a combination of regulation, amended societal norms and education, awareness, and openness to change will be the key pillars needed to meet this crucial target and unlock the power of diversified organizations. ●

By **Daniel Gribbin**, Director, ESG Risk Advisory, Deloitte Middle East

### Endnotes

1. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

# Women at the forefront

Holding the key to global economic prosperity





## Interview with Irene Natividad, President of the Global Summit of Women



### **Irene Natividad**

President, Global Summit of Women of GlobeWomen Research and Education Institute

As we explore the many topics related to diversity, gender balance, and women in the workplace in this issue of the Middle East Point of View magazine, it only made sense to bring attention to the relevance of the global businesswoman. In this eye-opening interview with Irene Natividad, President of the Global Summit of Women, the premier business and economic forum for women globally, she reflects on the many issues faced today by women in the workforce and offers her insight into how this powerful clan can truly thrive in a gender inclusive and dynamic environment for utmost economic prosperity. The 2023 Global Summit of Women, which will be held this year in Dubai, UAE, from 4 May – 6 May under the theme “Women: Leading a New Climate of Change,” was created to link the public, private, and non-profit sectors and aims to expand the economic opportunities for women globally by sharing strategies and solutions. Deloitte Middle East will be involved in the Summit as a knowledge partner and contribute to their Corporate Women Directors International (CWDI) report in regards to women representation on boards.

### **Can you tell us about GlobeWomen and the ambition of the Summit this year?**

I always wondered why women didn't have their own business forum that crosses borders - to connect and discuss how to advance their careers and speed up their economic progress. That's why the Summit was founded 33 years ago with a focus on solutions, rather than problems. How many ways can you say women aren't paid as much as men? I want to know what companies and countries are doing to make pay equity happen, so at the Summit, we have exchanges on what works.

The Summit tries hard to be truly global – I want women to be players and leaders in the global market. Speakers come from all over the world - because no one country has all the right answers to the challenges women face. Some of the best solutions come from Africa, from South Asia, because when resources are limited, people are forced to be creative; you tend to do more with less. We rotate annually to different continents to make it accessible to women everywhere, instead of being restricted to one place.

This global gathering has not been to the MENA region for some time, so holding the Summit here in the UAE enables the talented businesswomen in this economy to be showcased. There are still stereotypes of the region and its people, so I'm hoping that at least among the hundreds of women planning to come to the Dubai edition, they will come away with a different impression. Above all, the Summit fosters business alliances, and there will indeed be a B-to-B meeting organized by the Vietnam delegation with members of the Emirates Businesswomen Council. Others will form such alliances informally among the delegates they will meet from over 60 countries.

The 2023 Global Summit of Women, which will be held this year in Dubai, UAE, from 4 May – 6 May under the theme “Women: Leading a New Climate of Change,” was created to link the public, private, and non-profit sectors and aims to expand the economic opportunities for women globally by sharing strategies and solutions

**Reflecting on the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) journey, what have been the key developments in this space from your experience and what do you think we can expect to see happen over the next 1-2 years?**

Over the past few years, I have seen a greater appreciation among corporate and government leaders for diversity as a key to economic growth. There are now over 100 'business case' for gender equity reports - some from MENA countries - that the Summit has collected over the years, echoing what many of Deloitte's clients already know: gender diverse workforces correlate with more financially productive companies. How many more studies do we need to keep proving what's really simple math? You can't grow an economy with one hand tied behind your back and with half the talent underutilized and unrecognized. That said, there's nothing like a crisis to make change happen. There's no denying that the #MeToo movement, which began in the US and has since crossed borders to other countries, has triggered a wake-up call to business and government leaders to examine their policies and programs regarding women. Greater attention to gender relations in the workplace emerged, as well as initiatives to advance women into leadership roles. Quotas for women on boards are mandated in 40 countries including in the UAE, Egypt, and Morocco. One positive outcome from the COVID-19 lockdowns was a greater appreciation that caregiving, now undertaken by both parents trapped at home with their children, must be addressed by the public and private sectors. Unless parents - women and men - are supported in the care of the next generation of workers, economies will not grow.


**DE&I is gradually being integrated into businesses and moving away from being an HR project. How can we continue that momentum and amplify DE&I in all/other aspects of business practices?**

Very simply, it's important to keep hammering on the economic value of diversity. A few years ago, Sodexo, a

## Quotas for women on boards are mandated in 40 countries including in the UAE, Egypt, and Morocco

food services and facilities management company, meshed their personnel data with their internal financial data to see what made for productive teams. Their study found that the most diverse teams were indeed the most productive, and this finding was shared with all managers, driving home the bottom-line impact of diversity.

It's also important for companies to examine who their baseline customers are. In the US, the majority of car buyers and influencers are women. If they're buying cars, they're also buying services, tires, and insurance, so there's a multiplier effect. What do they look for? Not color, but fuel efficiency and safety. It turns out that it's men who want red sports cars! Look, in the industrialized economies, women make the majority of buying decisions, so I always wondered why companies selling large and small kitchen appliances only had men on the sales floor? It wasn't so long ago that companies, whose products only women would buy, had few women in their senior ranks.

A few years ago, I had invited the CEO of Albertsons, a US food and drug retailer, to join me in the release of a report we did on 'Women Directors of the Fortune Global 200' because his company had a female dominated board. A reporter asked him why this was the case and he said: "No matter how smart my marketing men are, they cannot enter the minds of the women who are the majority of our customers." I wanted to clone him! 

**There is so much effort around gender diversity, however, progress remains at a snail's pace. What should companies do differently?**

You know the old saying - What gets measured gets done - well that needs to be proactively adopted by companies. Targets, goals, and timetables must be put in place for gender equity in the workplace to happen. Feel-good mission statements are no longer sufficient. Someone once asked me "why are there so many women on boards recently but still so few women executives?" The answer is simple - it's easier to helicopter in high achieving women to board seats than it is to grow them internally with an actual strategy.

I was in Australia in 2018 when a major bank announced that its management had reached gender parity, which they announced on the occasion of the bank's 200-year anniversary. It took the company 10 years through two CEO tenures to make that commitment happen with actual goals at every level of the business, with mentoring and sponsoring initiatives in place, plus financial incentives to all managers. Bottom line, they were intentional and their message was: it takes time, but it's doable.

**How can we help boards overcome barriers to enrolling more women in executive leadership roles?**

Well, a board's role is to provide direction and oversight to management. It can't direct senior execs to develop and to implement a proactive DEI policy when its members are not diverse in themselves. So that's the first rule: bring women (not just one or two) into the inner sanctum of the board room. Unless there are government quotas in place, this is not easy to do. The tenure of most board members is too long, and few companies have age or term limits that would create openings for new directors to refresh a board.

There is also an increasing move on the part of some boards to ask HR officers to report directly to its members, as a consequence of the #MeToo movement, when boards were found to be unaware of the sexual misconduct of senior officers. Given an increasingly diversified workforce and consumer base, such reporting should be mandatory.

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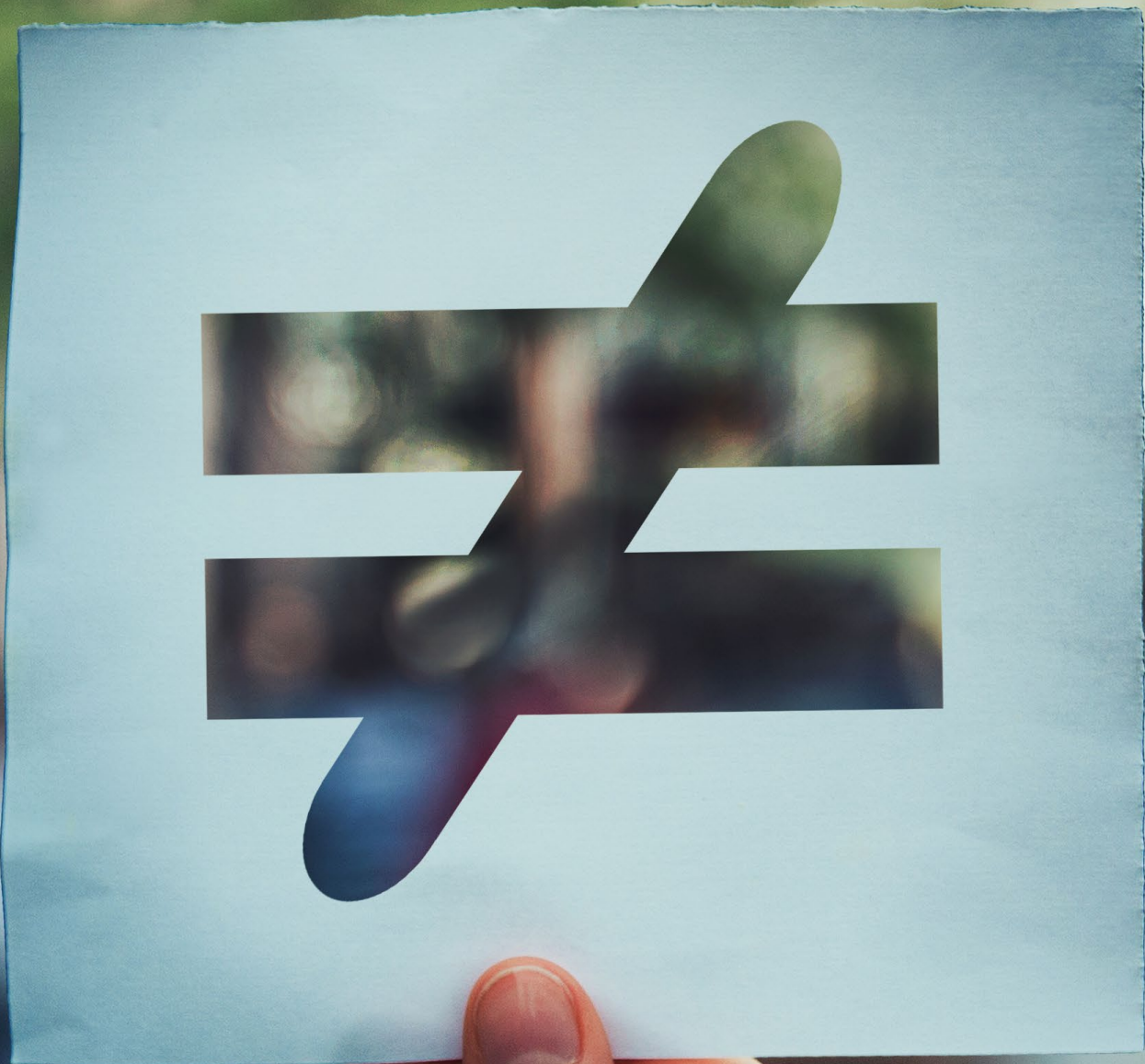
**Based on your experience, how can women make more room for peer women in the workspace?**

They already do. I was so bored with the misperception that women don't bring other women along, so with the Summit team, we undertook a study to look at what happens when women are in charge. We researched the number of female board directors and senior execs in women-led companies in 36 countries, and what we found was that in companies where the CEOs were women, the percentages of women on boards and in senior management were double that of peer companies. We also juxtaposed their data with those of their predecessor CEOs (all male), and again, women CEOs did better in bringing in more women. In other words, it was their actions that created the change. It's not as if these CEOs were women's rights activists, but whether based on their own experiences or they were merely blind to gender when looking for talent, their senior teams had more women no matter which country we examined. For example, take a look at the UAE science team that sent a probe to Mars - one of only five countries to do so. It was 80% female and led by a woman, the current Minister of Science.

So, while the world has made great strides in improving women's economic participation over past years, there is still a long road to be travelled. As women take their stance globally in leading roles on the economic forefront, the rest of the world needs to welcome and encourage more diversity and inclusion for the sake of overall success and prosperity. ●

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# That “double” glazed ceiling



March brought us International Women's Day... the speeches, the panels, the cookies and the pledges, but despite gender equality as a topic being well publicized, the corporate world remains a notoriously difficult arena for women to advance in, with many struggling to reach senior positions within their organizations. This is especially true for working mothers, as your early 30's (which is typically the time to invest in career advancement) coincides with the age when many women decide to have a family.

While there are many factors at play, including systemic sexism and biases, there are a number of unique issues that can specifically impact a mother's ability to advance, factors which organizations have tried to tackle with policies and dialogue but still need more thinking and more efforts to really change the dial.

#### **The maternity penalty**

Maternity leave can have a significant impact on a woman's career progression. Research suggests that taking a 12-month break can put women almost three years behind their male colleagues in terms of career progression. This often translates to lack of promotion opportunities, less visibility in the workplace, and fewer opportunities to develop new skills. The race to "catch-up" may deter the best of female talent from taking on such a challenge.

More structured efforts are required for returning mothers to not only provide flexible working arrangements, such as part-time work or job sharing, but to also ensure that they have the same opportunities for training and development as their male colleagues and that their career progression is reflective of contributions they are making to the business.

#### **Childcare, all 16 years of it**

Women are still more likely than men to take on the majority of caring

responsibilities for their children, including school runs and taking care of sick children. School hours do not align neatly with the working day, and as children go through the school system, there is a myriad of extra-curricular activities, dress up days, and other responsibilities working parents have to handle. In a job where you have somewhat fixed hours, this is a challenge, but in the organizations where the "9-5" is really an urban myth, these additional responsibilities can limit career progression.

Whilst employers can support working parents by offering flexible working arrangements, we have to go beyond well-meaning policies and really probe into whether or not parents are getting fair access to these arrangements and that there is a careful monitoring of any bias. Mothers should make their family commitments unashamedly clear to juniors and seniors – simple steps such as blocking times on the calendar for a school run can avoid rescheduling meetings or even fair dialogue on sharing the responsibilities with a spouse can make a huge difference.

There is also an opportunity to influence institutions beyond the corporate world. A dialogue with schools over flexible pick up times and after school library sessions for older children may help reduce the stress and anxiety of working parents having to handle staggered school pick up times, which can sometimes lead to hours on the road in the middle of the day.

#### **Travelling overseas and racking up the air miles**

Many senior positions require frequent travel, often overseas, especially in regional offices such as Dubai. This can be particularly challenging for women with caring responsibilities who may have to leave their children behind or arrange additional care while they are away, especially in places where there is little extended family support. This can be seen as a barrier to career progression, as women are perceived to be less suitable for certain roles that require frequent travel.

Since the need for travel has reduced somewhat post-COVID-19, this is not the case for all careers. A slightly longer-term view of a mother's ability to travel should be considered and efforts should be made to ensure that she is getting the right level and mix of experience during a time when she has this constraint. Whilst this point may be seen as "special treatment," we must remind ourselves that according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, it will take another 100 years to achieve gender equality based on the current rate of progress, and therefore, a little bit of "special treatment" could go a long way.

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**Agreeableness**

Research has shown that women tend to be more agreeable than men in the workforce, which can impact their willingness to push for salary increases or promotions. Specifically, women may be less likely to negotiate their salary or ask for a promotion, which can limit their career progression.

Employers can address this issue by transparency in pay and ensuring that promotions are based on merit rather than an employee's ability to negotiate. Given it is unlikely that corporate organizations are going to publish pay scales and statistics in the near future, the onus is then on senior leadership and HR to self-regulate and probe where necessary to ensure fairness.

Additionally, if self-promotion, assertiveness, and negotiation are the key to progression in the corporate world, employers should provide training and support to help women build their confidence and develop requisite skills to manage more proactively or factor these personality traits into their performance management processes.

**The emotional quotient**

Women tend to take criticism more personally than men and research shows they may be more likely to dwell on negative experiences. This can impact their confidence and motivation, which in turn can limit their career progression.

In corporate environments where there is a high degree of competition, pyramid structures, and a race to the top, the jostling and elbowing that is needed to succeed can impact women more negatively than men.

Bias associated with the "aggressive" woman who is merely trying to assert her position, often exhibiting the male-like characteristics that she is observing around her, can leave women emotionally exhausted and wanting to just give up.

For the relatively small number of women that make it to senior management, employers must try to filter the bias from the feedback and narrative associated with the "strong woman" and need to support women with coaching to help them develop their skills, confidence, and emotional resilience to navigate inherently male behaviors.

In conclusion, women still face a range of barriers to reach senior positions in the corporate world. Whilst huge progress has been made and every year we see a fresh cohort of ambitious and successful women chipping at that glass ceiling, there is so much more employers and individuals need to do in taking steps to support working mothers in order to create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture.

By addressing these issues, we can create a more equitable and diverse workforce that supports the career progression of all employees, regardless of gender. ●

By **Saima Jalal**, Partner, Value Creation Services, Deloitte Middle East

Whilst huge progress has been made and every year we see a fresh cohort of ambitious and successful women chipping at that glass ceiling, there is so much more employers and individuals need to do in taking steps to support working mothers in order to create a supportive and inclusive workplace culture



# The rise of the untapped national talent pool:

Inspirational women take the lead



Breaking the glass ceiling has been a challenge for women around the globe, for societal standards and legislative frameworks have hindered a woman's ability to thrive and prosper in decision-making and leadership spaces. The once alien notion of gender balance is being prioritized in the political and social agendas of the Arab world, with the UAE being among the first countries to take major legislative decisions towards integrating national women in leadership and non-conforming gender roles across the private and public sectors.

This article will focus on the UAE and KSA, as both are high growth markets and have had significant impacts on gender balance and reformative action in the region. The success stories of multiple Emirati and Saudi women are contributing to the change and growth of various sectors and industries, in return influencing other women to step forward and thrive with confidence within their careers. National women are breaking stereotypes and are now acknowledged to positively impact nations' economic growth.<sup>1</sup> The scope of this article will encompass the legislative impact in societal reforms when making equality an integral part of the national agenda and transition into discussing its effect on inspirational leadership in different sectors. To ensure the continuity of women empowerment and inclusion, organizations across industries must take the necessary steps to empower and enhance the attraction of talented national women and help facilitate their career growth and personal development. Organizations are to adopt a transformative approach that taps into the needs of national females, while most importantly adopting and integrating societal values within the values of the organization.

### Legislative impact

To begin, the legislative impact has been colossal; first in the UAE, and recently in the KSA. The influence of governmental reform has been favorable to social change in the GCC region, where the public sector

regulations influence the private sector. Laws in the UAE have been enforced to ensure women have equal rights to economic resources, access to ownership and control over property, inheritance, and financial rights.<sup>2</sup>

As per the late H. H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a law was passed to enforce a 50% seat occupation by women in the Federal National Council's (FNC).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, regulatory requirements have been set to ensure the presence of at least one female board member on each listed company.<sup>4</sup> That is a great step for the UAE considering that the progress at a global level is still considered slow with 19.7% of board seats held by women.<sup>5</sup> To ensure and continue enhancing the leading role of Emirati women in the development of the country, the UAE established the Gender Balance Council, which guarantees the implementation of best practices by federal institutions to meet their gender equality goals. The laws enforced by the UAE ensure protection of women rights, decent living, and equal job opportunities in sustainable domains, which makes gender equality on the UAE's priority list.<sup>6</sup> The KSA has also been gradually loosening laws that previously restricted women's mobility and employment. It has lifted the ban on female drivers and is allowing women to travel without a male guardian. This is with the intention of increasing the employment of national women.<sup>7</sup> Hence, with the reforms occurring at a governmental level, social change is becoming more favorable.

### Societal impact

Major shifts in legislation are used as an instrument of change in shaping social institutions. The launching of the National Strategy for Empowerment of Emirati Women in the UAE for 2015-2021 by Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak positioned the UAE amongst the countries most advanced in women empowerment. The creation and implementation of the strategy establishes a framework for the government, private sector, and civil society organizations to practice women

empowerment in their daily activities.<sup>8</sup> In return, the UAE became the first Arab country to increase maternity leave to 3 months and launch a workforce gender balance index.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, the KSA has recently implemented various measures to expand the economic inclusion of women, including changes in family law. This aligns with the KSA's goal of Vision 2030: to empower Saudi women and expand participation in the workplace after recognizing the magnitude of the untapped talent pool.<sup>10</sup> Hadeel Biyari, a Saudi national women leader in Indirect Tax at Deloitte Middle East, confirms that: "The Saudi government has implemented several initiatives to support women's employment, including providing access to new industries and taking on leadership positions." Additionally, with the rise of the nationalization agenda, the question of whether specific quotas should be set for national women on top of the overall nationalization target is raised.

To ensure the continuity of women empowerment and inclusion, organizations across industries must take the necessary steps to empower and enhance the attraction of talented national women and help facilitate their career growth and personal development



### Education and shifts in academic interests

While legislative and social impact are crucial, fostering the younger generations to lead is also vital. Education builds the leaders of tomorrow, and so ensuring gender balance is integrated in educational systems is necessary. In 2016-2017, the percentage of Emirati females enrolling in public and private secondary schools was 46.1% to 53.9% respectively. Additionally, 56% of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) course graduates at government universities in the UAE were women.<sup>11</sup> Also, the KSA documented 38% of their STEM graduates to be women. As per UNESCO, women occupy 59% of all students studying computer science in the KSA, compared to 16% in the US and 14% in the UK.<sup>12</sup> This highlights the parallels drawn between both the education and civil transformations towards gender balance in the region and further demonstrates women's capability to thrive, drive change, and greatly contribute in economic, societal, and political growth.

### Rise of women in the public and private sectors

With laws and regulations necessitating the appointment of women amongst the ministries of governments and education equipping them with the tools to challenge gender norms, women are empowered to climb up the ladder within the public sector sphere. Jazala Hamad, one of Deloitte Middle East's Audit & Assurance UAE female partners, states that she has "a personal passion for being a role model and developing the Emirati talent of the future – who can go on to lead in their respective fields, making a wider impact." Accordingly, a contributing factor to the rise of national women is the group of inspirational female leaders at the forefront of this change. As per a study carried out in 132 countries, the UAE ranks as the first-place region for females in leadership positions.<sup>13</sup> Research has shown that women participation in the UAE cabinet is amongst the highest in the world, with women making up two thirds

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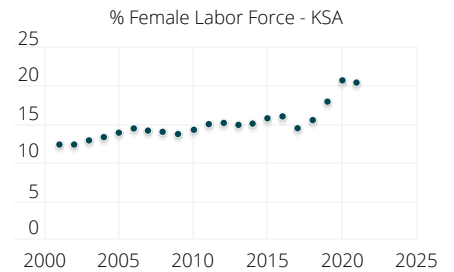
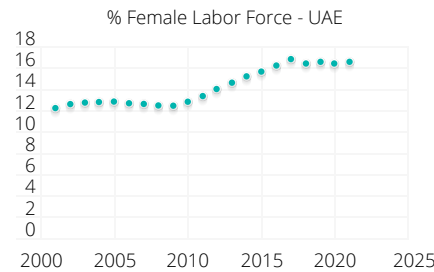
of the public sector workforce, 30% of leadership roles, and 27.3% of ministerial seats.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, national women have been appointed diplomatic roles since 2009 and are currently occupying 30% of the diplomatic corps in 234 positions.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the KSA has recently appointed two women in the senior governmental positions of Deputy Secretary General of the Saudi Cabinet and the Deputy Minister of Tourism.<sup>16</sup> The relatively large change in numbers portrays the output of heavily investing in national women leaders. This highlights the fruits of fostering political inclusion for national women in the public sector. With education, empowerment, and the right resources, more women can come forth to lead and be empowered to do so.

This political inclusion acts as a foundation to initiate an inevitable snowball effect, fostering the active participation of women in managerial and entrepreneurial positions. As per the Dubai Women Establishment, 23,000 women lead on AED50 billion projects in 2020, accounting for 10% of the total private sector.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in 2020, the KSA documented the joining of 51,000 Saudi women to the job market, as well as an increase of 50% in the number of female entrepreneurs in 2019, therefore highlighting the rise of women in the private sector as well.<sup>18</sup> ➔

**Rise of women across industries**

Women in the UAE are growing across different industries, and “bring to the table an Emirati woman’s perspective and understanding of the UAE national culture,” which is essential to the success of the business, as stated by Jazala Hamad. Emirati women make up 15% of technical and academic roles,<sup>19</sup> comprise at least 35% of employees in the health sector, 20% in social affairs, and above 40% in education.<sup>20</sup> In the companies listed under the Dubai Financial Market and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, the number of board seats held by women increased by approximately 2.6 times since 2020.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, in February 2018, 15 Emirati women joined the UAE’s first Women’s Firefighting Unit at the Sharjah Civil Defense, which has been a regular occurrence since.<sup>22</sup> In fact, women are playing an active role in key sectors like oil and gas, leading in large national companies like the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC). By the end of 2022, ADNOC was committed to having at least one woman on the board of each ADNOC group company. In June of 2022, ADNOC had 3 female chief executives and 16 women were already seated on its 18 boards, highlighting the impact women are leaving on the growth of these sectors and industries.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the KSA is appointing women on the boards of Saudi Aramco, Saudi Arabia’s stock exchange, and the Public Investment Fund.<sup>24</sup> Hadeel Biyari highlights that as a national woman leader she can bring several edges to the table as she has “in-depth experience in multiple sectors, including FSI, oil and gas, retail, and EPC,” which makes her agile and able to develop innovative solutions. Hence, women are occupying industries that have been traditionally male-dominant in the past. In fact, between 2017 and 2022, there was an increase of 5.9% (14.5% to 20.4%)<sup>25</sup> in the percentage of females in the KSA labor force, and a mild decrease of 0.3% (16.9% to 16.6%)<sup>26</sup> in the percentage of females in the UAE labor force. An increase in the total female labor workforce aligns with the legislative and societal changes affecting the increase in national female workforce too.

**Labor force, female (% of total labor force) - UAE<sup>27</sup> and KSA<sup>28</sup> respectively**



Source: The World Bank

Evident improvements in the number of female board members and women occupying various industries and sectors have been observed, however, there will always be room for more equality and equity with the rise of new everyday challenges. Therefore, in parallel with the nation’s transformative steps taken to alleviate the gender gap, organizations must continue to play a role in women empowerment.

**Key takeaways**

In conclusion, it is vital to acknowledge that the shifts occurring in the Arab world regarding gender balance are not necessarily novel. Nonetheless, it is only until recently that these nations have been reaping the fruits of the major legislative and social changes that they have been working incessantly towards. Evident improvements in the number of female board members and women occupying various industries and sectors have been observed, however, there will always be room for more equality and equity with the rise of new everyday challenges. Therefore, in parallel with the nation’s transformative steps taken to alleviate the gender gap, organizations must continue to play a role in women empowerment. The key is for organizations to echo, leverage, and integrate societal values within their organizational values. This is through creating an inclusive work environment built on inclusion, equity, and equality. Women are capable and usually have the tools to succeed in becoming leaders. However, they are not always given the chance to, whether that be having seats at the boards of listed companies or being seen and heard in hybrid work environments in comparison to their male counterparts. Jazala Hamad states:

"I was fortunate, throughout my career at Deloitte, to have had both formal and informal mentorship opportunities, which have had a huge impact on my career development and growth." Similarly, Hadeel Biyari adds: "We have a strong network of female leaders who act as mentors and role models, and we encourage flexible working arrangements. This enables women to thrive in their careers while also balancing their family responsibilities." Policy changes are vital, but it is action over policy that makes the true impact.

Organizations have a big role to play in promoting the driving gender parity in the workplace by:

- Fostering a sense of purpose and impact;
- Nurturing a psychologically safe and inclusive environment;
- Helping women feel seen, heard, and equal to their male counterparts;
- Creating flexibility, equality, and equity in a hybrid workspace;
- Sponsoring and mentoring high potential women talent;
- Rewarding and recognizing performance equally to their male counterparts; and
- Adapting and personalizing policies to the lifestyles and working preferences of women.

It is not only organizations that have a role to play, but women leaders too... in creating a culture of fellowship and empowerment for other younger women to lead and leave an impact. ●

By **Anna Maria Haddad**, Senior Manager, HR Transformation and **Layan El Hout**, Associate, People and Purpose Center of Excellence, Deloitte Middle East

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# Women thriving in technology & AI

How we, organizations,  
and society can drive to increase  
female representation in today's  
digital world





### Nature

I have been invited to enough panels and discussion forums to observe how the first questions asked are usually about the challenges women face, especially working in technology. Let me start by first highlighting the biggest realization I have at my age: women rock! By nature, and by design, women have inherent strengths as leaders, nurturers, integrators, influencers, orchestrators, organizers, and innovators – attributes that women should proudly celebrate. I do not subscribe to the notion that women are victims; instead, we are products of nature and nurture. Women need to confidently show and liberate these natural strengths, while society needs to nurture these innate qualities that raise the cradle of our civilization.

### Nurture

One of the challenges I (and many working women) constantly face is having to earn a seat at the table and prove our worth repeatedly... with almost always a burden of proof hanging over us every time we undertake new roles. Most women do not get to assume competency, despite many years in the business, to belong in leadership circles and to assume authority until having effectively demonstrated their capability, unlike perceived impressions that most men are sometimes automatically granted.

Along my journey, I have fortunately received confidence building boosters from mentors, encouragement and motivation from leaders acknowledging my accomplishments, and the trust and heightened responsibility that gradually comes from a job well done. As a career mom, having a sense of balance through active shared parenting with my husband and the support system enormously help, as is the leverage you get from a supportive work team. Putting in time for personal care, health, and well-being is also critically important.

### Early STEM education

The number of women in STEM is

increasing, and we are seeing more women in executive and board positions in STEM companies. Whilst improving numbers in universities and industry are great, it is not fast nor impressive enough, and significant gender imbalance remains. Gender bias and stereotyping around STEM careers being more suited for men persists and this needs to stop. Leaders of such organizations need to serve as role models for future generations. Exposing kids early to STEM education is crucial too, and it starts with leaders and teachers capturing young girls' curiosity and harnessing this thinking into a fun, enjoyable, and inclusive learning process.

### Power of allyship

Many women say allyship is key and most refer to lack of role models, learning, and skills development. Organizations have a responsibility to address these areas if they are to gain grounds in increasing women in the workforce.

From my perspective, allyship is proactive support from male peers and leaders to encourage women to be successful. A couple of months back, I watched Black Panther: Wakanda Forever where the main characters had positive male role models. Princess Shuri, the tech expert sister who is the innovation brain of Wakanda, said she grew up with a brother who encouraged her interests in technology, whilst the character who played an MIT prodigy (who invented the vibranium tracker) said that growing up, her mechanic dad allowed her to freely play with toolsets in the garage.

Although portrayed in a film, there is truth in that when someone has male allies, be it a father, a brother, or a friend, it boosts confidence and insinuates females can also thrive in such areas. I can call out three distinct male allies who were instrumental in my professional growth and put me in leadership roles where I discovered I can do things I initially doubted I could. It really does make a difference when male leaders recognize female potential and help them to see their best through encouragement

and active coaching to give new roles a try.

### Maintaining a top agenda

Diversity at all levels should remain a top agenda for any high performing business with clear and concrete key performance indicators (KPIs). While this may seem obvious, progress is not rapid enough; however, if we care any less, then we risk stalling and business outcomes will exhibit a decline in performance fast. Company initiatives need to be bold, perhaps even controversial, or push the boundaries of possibility like we do with technology. Ultimately, companies should not dare slip into inaction.

### Increasing women leaders

Increasing representation is also driven through increasing women role models at the top. It is not about making statements about "breaking the glass ceiling;" it is conveying an assurance that it is possible and not as daunting as many may think it to be, that the view is fantastic up there, and that there is no shame in admitting and celebrating that accomplishment.

### Technology in the workplace

Technology plays an important part in breaking down barriers for women. It allows women to increase their flexibility and have the option to work remotely or hybrid whilst balancing childcare. This has been proven during the pandemic when careers in technology were least affected due to technology enabling us to continue to work; women were also able to continue and pursue their STEM careers.

### Women representation in tech and AI

As the world increasingly embraces digital, and everything metaverse, technology designs that promote diversity (e.g. women in different shapes and sizes represented in avatars) balance the notion that only men can play in the virtual world. I once played in Dreamscape, an immersive and virtual reality experience, with my twin girls and my son who was accompanied by his friends for a birthday celebration adventure. I was fascinated with how my

girls loved having their female avatars doing what the boys were doing and pushed them to feel they can enjoy adventures as much as the boys and be active participants, not just bystanders. By peeling back the intimidating exterior or impressions built around STEM or anything tech, we can encourage girls to pursue STEM interests.

### **Government role in enabling women in tech**

Governments have a huge role in promoting and encouraging women to thrive in technical jobs. One way is to promote funding for women in tech and digital start-ups, guiding and mentoring their developments, and celebrating their successes publicly. Government programs like scientific space projects where there are female line-ups are so awe-inspiring for the youth. Conscious female representation in departmental or ministerial leadership line-ups and STEM programs also speak volumes. Merits also come with government sponsored events tackling technology and innovations showcasing women expert speakers.

Governments have a huge role in promoting and encouraging women to thrive in technical jobs. One way is to promote funding for women in tech and digital start-ups, guiding and mentoring their developments, and celebrating their successes publicly.

### **The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the future of work**

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is transforming how and where work is done. For today's 1.8 billion global youth who are between the ages of 15 and 29, this revolution is significantly shaping their roles as the future workforce. Automation, digitalization, AI, and robotics mean businesses should rethink how and where work is done. What this implies is that men and women are to embrace working with technology and digital – it is no longer an option, it's a must.

With the integration of technology into our daily lives, getting more technical and digital is increasingly becoming a way of life. Most school curriculums, even outside STEM, have digital educational toolkits making digital learning and application of technologies a norm. I truly believe that technology is a great parity equalizer and it will only be a matter of time when more women become very adept at it.

Technology organizations, such as Deloitte, can help encourage women to pursue careers in technology by taking away the stigma or notion that it is an area mainly for men. This can be accomplished by putting the spotlight on Women in Tech, celebrating their achievements, and showcasing how it can offer a fulfilling, enjoyable, and rewarding career.

For example, Deloitte and The Female Quotient (The FQ) are in a strategic alliance dedicated to helping advance inclusion in the workplace by developing client solutions and creating a community where thought leaders can engage in inspirational dialogue, brainstorm solutions for change, and collaborate to share real experiences for women in IT. Women in data science and analytics careers and creating a space for female data scientists to network, share experiences, and be part of a supportive community are additional areas highlighted. Deloitte is actively driving internal and external marketing of Women in Technology such as Women in SAP,

Women in Cyber, Women in Analytics & AI, Women in Cloud, and so many others. Finally, Deloitte is also collaborating with Girls Who Code to help inspire the next generation of female leaders and is dedicated to providing access to STEM fields and skills necessary for the future through scholarships and programming.

### **Advice to my younger self and the young girls choosing their future path**

I would say to my younger self who took a lot of convincing to take up computer science – you go girl! Fast forward to today, it has brought me a whole new world of possibilities and put me at the forefront of conversations on developing and emerging technologies and innovations that can impact society for the better. For young girls, I would say enjoy taking arts, music, and ballet, but also try to learn how to play chess, build with Legos or robots, and learn how to code. For parents of girls, to expose them to wider learning options, not just those considered feminine. Finally, I advise growing girls not to allow themselves to be boxed-in; whatever path they choose to take, to boldly and confidently soar high and spread their wings as the future looks digital and bright! ●

By **Mia Buban**, Head of Enterprise Technology & Performance Portfolio, Consulting, Deloitte Middle East

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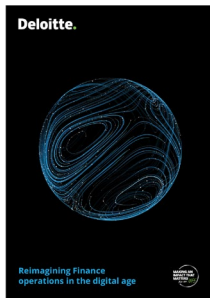
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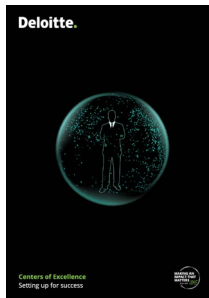
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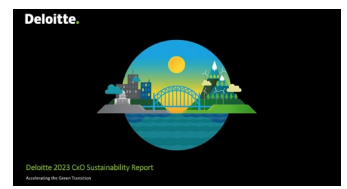
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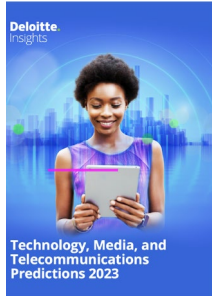
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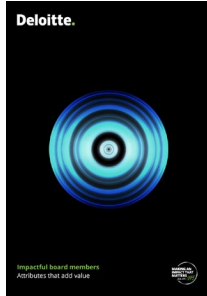
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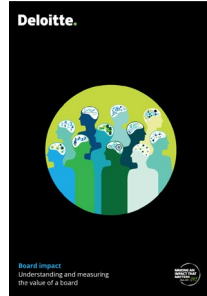
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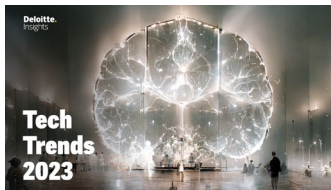
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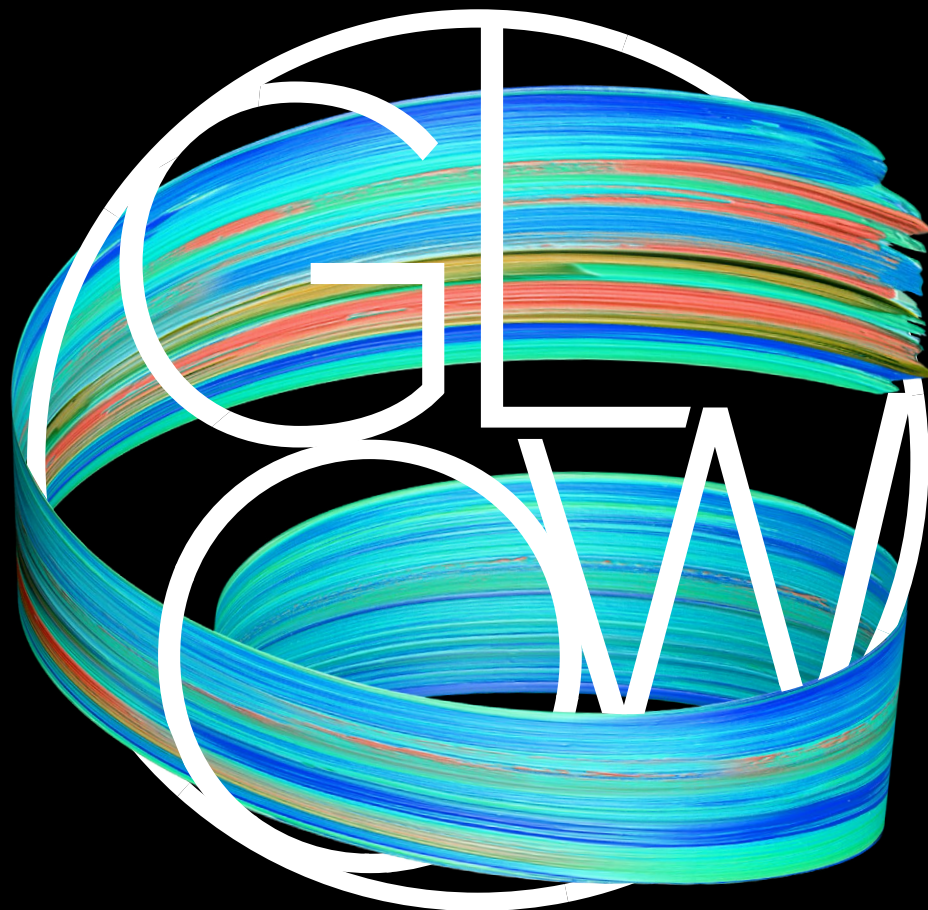
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