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Expo 2020 Dubai partnered with the UAE Gender Balance Council. Under the leadership and guidance of HH Sheikha Manal bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Council will host an array of sessions at the Women's Pavilion.



Women in Arabia and Islam: On Women Making the Desert Bloom

During our Women in Arabia and Islam event, we had the opportunity to discuss the food-climate nexus in the Middle East and North Africa, one of the most food insecure regions in the world. In collaboration with the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA), a UAE based international centre of research excellence on the subject, we gathered a group of female frontrunners working towards agricultural transformation and technological innovation to provide food and livelihoods to their communities in the UAE, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia respectively.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Tarifa Alzaabi, the Deputy Director General of ICBA, reminded the audience of the important role that women play in agriculture and food production, securing food for families and communities through farming, as well as in research and innovation. Although women were fundamental contributors to the 80% food production increase observed since the mid-1960s, gender disparities in this field persist until this day. As Dr. Alzaabi highlighted, the agricultural sector is an example of how gender inequalities undermine the efforts to achieve food security. Smallholder farmers, both men and women, provide 80% of total food in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, but women more than men face obstacles to access resources, services and trainings. If women were to have equal access to opportunities, they would increase the yield of their farms by 20% to 30%, thereby reducing by up to 150 million the number of people suffering from hunger in the world.

The session also hosted several fellows of the Arab Women Leadership Award (AWLA) program,

Sherrine Fahmy Mansour (Egypt) were joined online by Dr. Hashida Harak from Marrakech (Morocco). They gave their insights on topics ranging from how local communities are managing the fallouts from the climate crisis to addressing food security in the region and ensuring livelihoods for local farmers. Their stories are a testament to the urgent need to fill the gap between technological innovation and agricultural transformation in the region, and an example of women's contributions to making the region more food secure and climate resilient in the future.



Women's World Majlis: From Farmer to Boss Lady, Developing a Gender-Equitable Agricultural Sector

In our Women's World Majlis, we applied a gender lens to the agricultural value chains in the Global South. Skillfully moderated by Dr. Suzie Newman, we first discussed the policy needs and desired actions around access, participation and leadership in the agricultural sector, with our panelists Jamie Beyer, Dr. Marie Lisa M. Dacanay and Lauren Phillips. With combined expertise ranging from managing a modern farm in Minnesota, to knowing the ins and outs of the global landscape of food and agriculture, as well as the specifics of the Asian context, our experts tackled questions around challenges and opportunities in the sector, as well as their individual hopes for the future.

With regard to the needs of women in the agricultural sector, plenty remain. The gender gap persists, due

from machinery to quality seeds, decision-making power, access to credit and food security. These gaps persist despite a context where in many places, the actual job of farming has become a lot more female-friendly, due to an ongoing shift from heavy physical work to working with computer-driven software programs. Looking ahead at 2030 and keeping in mind the objectives of “zero hunger” and “zero poverty”, our panelists expressed their hopes for more flexibility in agricultural organizations, for women in agriculture being more recognized stakeholders, for a better balance between paid and unpaid work, and for having women well-represented in all elements of the value chain. Not just as producers, but also for example as marketeers and owners.

The second panel of our Women's World Majlis focused on land rights, smallholder farming, and ways to support women in these endeavors. Dr. Varsha Bhagat-Ganguly stressed three main ways to advance women's ownership rights and access to land. First, by coming together through collective farming, women can engage in corporate farming, ensure their participation and ownership rights. Second, advancing women's skills on land leasing, and particularly on contracts, can enhance women's participation and rights. Third, the SDGs and their institutionalization across countries can function as a platform to expand the rights of women around land ownership.

At her turn, Elizabeth Nsimadala observed how population growth in Africa compounded with cultural aspects and land tenure systems that discriminate against women, continue to limit women's land ownership and access to land. To overcome this situation, concerted action is needed to activate institutions from the family, to policymakers, the police, international organizations, lawyers, religious leaders, but also philanthropic organizations, donors, CSOs, cooperatives and farmers organizations whose roles are different and yet very important to empower women and ensure sustainable farming and livelihoods.

The *She Feeds the World* program by PepsiCo Foundation, represented in the discussion by Silvia Cruz-Vargas, is one example of how we can provide opportunities for female smallholder farmers to come together, get access to trainings, markets, finance, and cooperatives, in order to open possibilities and raise women's profile in this sector. More than 700,000 women and their families have been involved in Uganda, Egypt, and Peru through this program. The success of this program was linked to virtual methodologies that provided enhanced opportunities to connect even during the Covid pandemic, but also to trainings of men and children. The success also hinged on recognition of the need to raise awareness within the communities where women farmers operate to show how enhancing women's role can benefit everyone by enhancing food security.

The panelists concluded the discussion by looking at the future. Change is needed to support women farmers and to transform them into boss ladies. First, by guaranteeing access to land and ownership to women in a way to normalize equal roles of men and women in this field. Second, to institutionalize

VISIONS AND JOURNEYS

In this intimate series of fireside chats with prominent personalities from across the globe, we discussed visions and personal journeys towards a more gender equal future.



Her Excellency **Xiana Margarida Méndez Bértolo**, Spanish Secretary of State for Trade, spoke about how she uses facts and figures to convince others of the need for targeted policy to empower women and achieve gender equality. One of the strategies she employs to do this, is ensuring that women with talent and expertise do not go unrecognized. She finds visibility to be one of the most important ways to tackle gender barriers, as it dispels stereotypes and inspires future generations. HE Méndez Bértolo also looks closely at existing trade policies, and why women often do not benefit from these. She believes every policy and every plan needs to have a gender responsive approach, and uses her position as Secretary of State for Trade to create and promote trade policies that acknowledge women's current position and their potential for the economy and society.



OUTLIER SERIES

This series reflects the rich variety of partnerships of the Women's Pavilion as we bring together stakeholders from a wide range of sectors and geographic areas.



Sharjah Business Women Council, a NAMA Women Advancement affiliate, hosted **Pearl Quest** at the Women's Pavilion, providing the opportunity to 7 aspiring businesswomen to pitch their business ideas for a chance to win funds to grow their business. After following intensive training, the participants pitched their business ideas to a panel of 'judges', who chose three winners based on: originality; sustainable

was Rashmi Elmodaeni with her idea 'Maternity+', a platform catering to maternal mental health needs during women's motherhood journey. In second place came Muna Aldhabbah with her app 'Hala Jary', an online platform to connect neighbours and cater to community needs. The third place was won by Mouza AlDarmaki and her daughter Al Dhabi Al Mheiri, who at only 7 years old is the youngest Emirati publisher and entrepreneur, with their educational aids and book selling platform 'Rainbow Chimney'.



Prominent Nigerian creatives spoke about their roles in both the preservation of Nigerian fabric and fashion traditions passed down through generations as well as how they are ensuring they remain relevant on the present-day global stage. The panelists addressed the challenges they face, from access to opportunities in fashion education, to resource management and increasing local production options. They also spoke about how traditional Nigerian patterns have risen in popularity, particularly the *adire* print, and how designers have been using them to communicate global issues while also encouraging the consumer to utilize fashion as a form of self-expression.



Three inspirational football players from the **Manchester City women's team** spoke about the "#SameGoals, #SamePassion" initiative, which aims to encourage more young women around the world to pursue their passions. It does this by breaking prejudices and challenging stereotypes, and by walking the talk. The club promotes and invests in women participation in football, and hopes that by doing this more girls will be able to have the opportunity to make a career out of the sport they love.

The Norwegian Pavilion organized a session on 'how gender diversity creates innovation increases revenues and sustainability'. Norway's Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy, Bjørnar Selnes Skjæran, emphasized in his keynote speech that gender equality is 'good business'. It makes economic sense for all businesses to diversify and achieve gender equality, because ultimately it positively affects the bottom-line. Thereafter, the Norwegian business community highlighted historic achievements in Norway, in terms of gender equality and women empowerment in the workplace. However, they also warned that the country still presented a mixed picture, with the private sector notably lagging. So: no room for complacency.



Ewaa, the Abu Dhabi Centre for Sheltering and Humanitarian Care, which is affiliated with Abu Dhabi's Department of Community Development, celebrated the successful awareness programs and 'bowling pin exhibition' at Expo 2020 Dubai. An interactive artwork, the bowling pin exhibition features human-sized pins bearing images of women who are survivors of human trafficking.

The Sustainable Menstruation Coalition (SMC) tackled the taboo topic of periods, highlighting that the stigmas attached to it exclude women and girls from social, domestic, and educational activities on a monthly basis for a large part of their lives. The stigmas can also contribute to poor period hygiene, which can cause serious physical health risks. The SMC advocates for adoption of sustainable menstrual hygiene products, and at this event convened its partners to raise awareness on this topic as well as present several solutions. One such solution was the use of a menstrual cup, which is environmentally- as well as budget-friendly because it is reusable. SMC highlighted that breaking the taboos and talking about periods reverberates through society: it can reduce women's and girls' exclusion from society, improve their physical health, and increase their access to education. Providing sustainable menstrual hygiene can tackle both period poverty and reduce the impact on climate change.



Female Fusion, in partnership with MasterCard, hosted a workshop for women entrepreneurs on growing their business. Focusing particularly on the ‘messy growth phase’, experienced entrepreneurs spoke about funding, people, technology, and mindset in this context. On technology, the need for building connections and keeping in mind timing and context was emphasized. On people, both attracting and retaining talent were covered, and the need for providing employees with a sense of purpose especially in the context of the Great Resignation. The opportunities of technology for a young business, particularly with regards to marketing, communication, and data insights, were also covered. Data insights, when used correctly, can offer entrepreneurs with valuable information about where they need to invest more or less time and money, with regards to both client engagement and product development. The session concluded with a talk on mindsets: the need to be passionate about your product and remembering the purpose of your endeavor are the most important to seeing your business succeed.



The increasing reliance on storing, processing, and exchanging data on electronic devices, whether it is data for individuals or institutions, leads to exposure to the risk of change, destruction, theft, or exploitation by others. **The General Women's Union (GWU)** organized a workshop to spread awareness about these risks, and the protection one can take to ensure the preservation and security of information. GWU emphasized the importance of being aware of the danger of storing or transferring information without taking protection measures, whether they are private or related to work, as this may pose a danger to personal or work life. Likewise, exposure to an attack on information requires knowledge of the procedures to be followed to reduce the damage that results from the attack, and to enable the control and investigation authorities to reach the criminals. The workshop emphasized real-life examples such as theft of credit card data or personal photos, informing participants on the risks and solutions to storing information.

Download The Women's Pavilion Programme Pack

The Women's Pavilion and its key partners, Cartier and the UAE Gender Balance Council, would like to thank all the speakers and visitors throughout the month of February 2022.



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