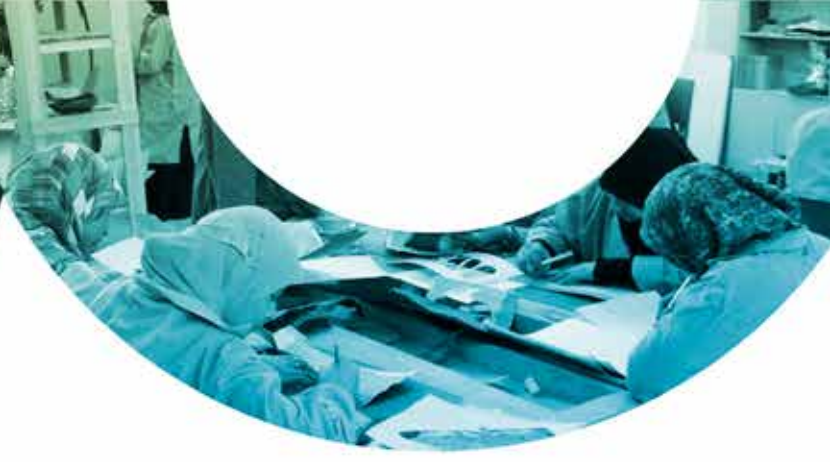


Women Entrepreneurs. Women Empowered.





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Designed by red hot 'n' cool

Foreword

Women are increasingly contributing to the economic development of their countries, while continuing to provide for their families. A Chinese proverb says that “women hold up half the sky” and, to help them realize their full economic potential, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) provides women in developing and transition countries with knowledge, skills and technologies so they can engage in productive activities. This is part of UNIDO’s effort to achieve inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

Through its Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) programme, the UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office (ITPO) in Bahrain empowers women to seize economic opportunities. It provides training and coaching to encourage self-employment and enterprise creation. There is no limit to what women can achieve, and these success stories of women who attended the EDIP are very strong testimonials to what a nurturing environment can help develop.

Expanding the economic opportunities available for women is vital for poverty eradication and requires a strong emphasis on gender-sensitive employment creation and the provision of productive resources, such as land, credit, technology and skills. The EDIP focuses on transferring skills and technologies to assist women to either enter the formal labour market or become self-employed.

The UNIDO ITPO Bahrain has accumulated over 20 years of expertise in women entrepreneurship development, using various tools and mechanisms, such as capacity-building at policy, institutional and enterprise levels; creating an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs by strengthening business support services; and helping women entrepreneurs gain access to financial resources.

Women represent half of the world’s population, and we must therefore increase our efforts to ensure equal rights and opportunities. If women are provided with credit to invest in business ventures, are able to access markets to sell their products, and are given the knowledge needed to expand their businesses, diversify and undertake value addition, they will be in a position to better contribute to economic growth and development.



LI Yong
UNIDO Director General

Table of contents

FOREWORD	1
INTRODUCTION	4
MISSION	6
UNIDO ITPO BAHRAIN'S HISTORY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT	8
Khulood Abdulqader	10
Nawal Al-Sabbagh	11
Huda Janahi	12
Frederica Williams	13
Humu Knox	14
Gladys England	15
Nourah Shaaban	16
Mona Al Zayer	17
Naziha El Koush	18
Samar Itani	19
Rim Siam	20
Edith Lewela	21
Lingling Li	22
Ayat Abdulaziz	24
Haifaa Mohammed Hassan Eltayeb	26
Manal Mustafa Hassan Ali	27

Introduction

Based on the 2010 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) report “The World’s Women 2010: Trends and Statistics”, the rate of women’s contribution and participation in the global economy in 2001 was estimated at 55.2%.

In the East and the Pacific, the rate was 70%, in South Asia 43.6%, and in Latin America and the Caribbean 42%. However, only roughly 29% of Arab women participated in the national economies of their region. Coupled with a

global unemployment rate of women, estimated at 17.1 per cent for women compared to that of men at 10.6 per cent for men, the situation calls for an overall restructuring of programmes for the economic empowerment of women, one to be launched through the support of UNIDO and various stakeholders in order to bridge the gap which the Arab region is facing.

In his commemoration of International Women’s Day in 2014, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said:

“Gender equality and women’s economic empowerment are essential to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development to achieve inclusive growth leaving no one behind. It is the right thing to do and the smart thing to do: Gender equality is a matter of basic human rights and women’s economic empowerment can generate huge gains for human development, economic growth and business.”

The economic empowerment of women, to succeed and advance economically and to make and act on economic decisions, is a cornerstone of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the past two decades, there has been progress in closing gender gaps, especially in education and health. Yet there still is much to do to achieve the full and equal participation of women in society and in the economy.

The status of women varies from country to country, and in fact it varies even within these countries themselves. To address these divergent gaps, programmes for economically empowering women have to be addressed at four levels: the public sector, the private sector, the multinational organizations and the non-governmental organizations. The UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office (ITPO) in Bahrain, part of a larger global network of UNIDO ITPOs, works at precisely this nexus.

The Investment and Technology Promotion Offices were established under joint agreements between the host country and UNIDO. Their main aim is to facilitate investment flows and technology transfer in support of inclusive growth and wealth creation in developing countries.

The UNIDO ITPO Network carries out its mandate through partnerships, fora, capacity building, advisory services, and business matchmaking. The first UNIDO ITPO was established in 1980. Currently, eight UNIDO ITPOs operate throughout the world, in Bahrain, Beijing, Shanghai, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria and the Russian Federation, with more on the horizon.

Realizing the mounting pressures from the growing Arab youth population and the need to create 170 million jobs for Arab youth by the year 2020, UNIDO ITPO Bahrain together with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) embarked on a major study about the major challenges limiting the economic empowerment of Arab youth in Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. The study concluded that although the Arab region has various positive attributes towards economic empowerment, a specialized and focused organization is necessary to share best practices and develop an environment conducive to entrepreneurship development.

Accordingly, under the banner of South-South cooperation, the Bahraini and Indian Governments established the Arab Regional Center for Entrepreneurship and Investment Training (ARCEIT) under UNIDO ITPO Bahrain in 2001, which was transformed into the Arab International Center for Entrepreneurship and Investment (AICEI) in 2013. This publication compiles the success stories of the female entrepreneurs who participated in this centre's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) Programme.



Mission

The mission of UNIDO ITPO Bahrain is to mobilize resources (finance, technology, know-how, managerial) from Bahrain and the Arab region to developing countries and economies in transition. UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's entrepreneurship development work is housed under AICEI which conducts programs and courses such as the Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion (EDIP) Programme. The EDIP is a package approach aimed at developing the capacities of potential entrepreneurs, both male and female, in order to assist them in developing their own private businesses. The programme is multifaceted in the sense that it not only assists in developing start-up entrepreneurs (Enterprise Creation Programme) but also represents an important mechanism for upgrading and expanding existing enterprises (Enterprise Growth Programme).

Moreover, it facilitates and promotes domestic investment which undoubtedly leads to the attraction of foreign direct investments mainly through the linkage with the UNIDO ITPO Network, thus leading to job creation and a more diversified economy. The mission of AICEI has seven features which also complement the larger work of ITPO Bahrain.

- Contribute to the economic empowerment of youth and women regionally and internationally;
- Unleash and stimulate the spirit of entrepreneurship through various awareness-raising and support programmes for women and youth;
- Assist in developing eco-systems for the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through capacity-building programmes, technology transfer, financing and incubation systems;
- Share and disseminate best practices for the development of value-added services to entrepreneurs through local support institutions;
- Institutionalize business counselling and mentoring programmes aimed at facilitating enterprise growth;
- Establish and maintain business incubator systems as they play a key role in the development and growth of MSMEs through a range of services;
- Develop linkages between financial institutions and entrepreneurship programmes.



UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's history of women's empowerment

The 6th Forum for Businesswomen in Islamic Countries:

in Bahrain, December 2012, attended by around 150 participants from 36 Member States, representatives of Islamic Development Bank Group (IDB) and International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group and some other local and international institutions, producing the Manama Declaration 2012 on "Women and Youth Economic Empowerment in Islamic Countries."

Women Economic Empowerment Centres:

in Abu Dhabi, UAE, enhancing potential women entrepreneurs' capacity to conceive, develop and implement entrepreneurial/income-generating activities, and enhancing and/or expanding the performance and growth of existing women-owned enterprises; in cooperation with the Family Development Foundation.

2012

2012

2012

2012

Entrepreneurship Centre at the Royal University for Women:

in Bahrain, a career orientation centre on entrepreneurship provides value-added services to potential women entrepreneurs/students. Twenty professors from the Royal University for Women trained in enterprise development and investment promotion.

Banks of Innovation:

in Bahrain, Sierra Leone, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Sudan and Yemen, which provide microfinancing schemes without collateral to potential women entrepreneurs, to help them in boosting their business and hence moving from the informal to the formal sector.

UNIDO ITPO Bahrain offers the non-financial services, and the banks provide financial services to potential entrepreneurs. UNIDO ITPO Bahrain, in cooperation with the Bank Al Khartoum and the Family Bank in Sudan, is in the process of developing a non-financial unit in both banks.

Riyadat:

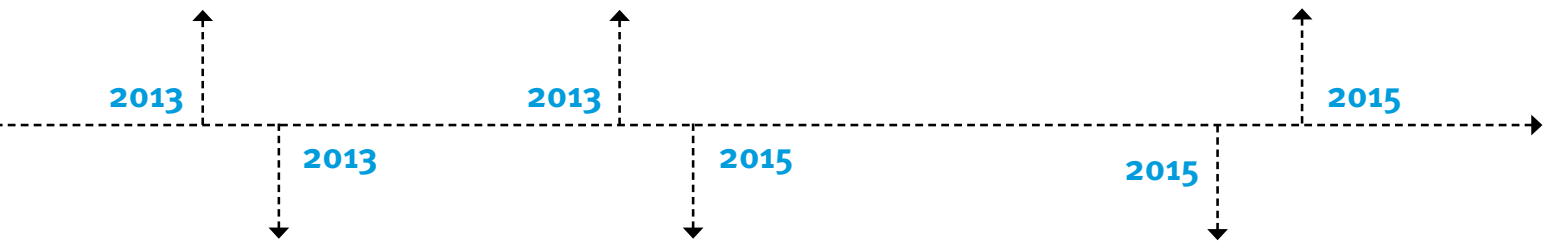
in Bahrain, launched in 2013, the first women incubator/mall allowing its entrepreneurs to display and sell their products and services.

The 7th Forum for Businesswomen in Islamic Countries:

in Iran, October 2013, attended by 350 businesswomen and followed up by the development of a women economic empowerment centre in Tehran.

The 5th International Women Entrepreneurs Summit and Exhibition on “Economic Empowerment through Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development”:

in India, May 2015, addressed the best practices for the economic empowerment of women in addition to creating linkages between Indian, African and Arab women entrepreneurs; attended by 250 women entrepreneurs from 19 countries, granted the Indira Gandhi “Priyadarshani Award 2015” to a number of women entrepreneurs, including three Bahraini entrepreneurs in recognition of their achievements and their major roles in the area of corporate social responsibility.



Boutique 33:

in Kuwait, launched February 2013, unique incubator that encompasses all the services of a business incubator yet maintains the features of a shopping mall. The business counsellors were trained by UNIDO ITPO Bahrain and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and United Nations Development Programme Kuwait in the business development phase of start-up and growth, hence facilitating the process of migrating entrepreneurs from micro to small, and eventually small to medium enterprises, or to an expansion phase of the business.

The Arab-African Businesswomen Council in the International Entrepreneurs Investment Forum:

in Bahrain, January 2015.

The 63rd FCEM World Congress (Femmes Chefs d’Enterprises Mondiales):

in Bahrain, March 2015, attended by 400 women entrepreneurs from around the world, served as a platform to encourage networking and the creation of new business partnerships across borders and sectors. 350 bilateral meetings were organized, leading to the signing of 40 letters of intent, with an estimated investment of US\$110 million in various sectors, namely, manufacturing, tanneries, gold processing, food, health and agriculture.

Khulood Abdulqader, Bahrain

Gem of a success story



Khulood Abdulqader is the founder of Curve, a boutique jewellery atelier whose work combines the best of Bahrain's pearling heritage and the narrative of contemporary Bahraini women's empowerment through education and social support.

Ms. Abdulqader made the transition from government employee to entrepreneur in a stunning leap of professional empowerment, supported by her background in gem and jewellery science. The former officer in Bahrain's Ministry of Commerce and Industry's Gems and Pearl Testing Laboratory, was the first Bahraini woman to qualify at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA).

In her words: "At first, I worked from home and showcased my creations at ladies' associations and bazaars attended by influential ladies. Soon orders started coming in and I decided to strike out on my own. I was content with the fact that my reputation was growing and I was making about US\$5,000 to US\$8,000 a month in profits. But UNIDO ITPO Bahrain raised the bar for my ambitions. I learnt to professionally channel my talent and gained valuable technical knowledge on how to run a business."

Today, Curve has an annual turnover of US\$1 million a year and a net value of US\$3 million.

Abdulqader remarks, "When I started, I had the technical skills from my work at the Ministry's gem lab and my study at the GIA. I had the flair and creativity that could get me clients. But it was my training with UNIDO ITPO Bahrain that taught me to prioritize my growth and business development. The programme helped me to leverage my skills to get bigger loans for my business expansion, for example."

"Establishing my business was the first step. It was through the exposure at regional exhibitions that I was able to see and understand current industry trends and promote my own creative vision. I am now working with the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain team to transform my business into a franchise concept in the region. It is a big step in an industry that is dominated by brands with centuries of fashion history."

Abdulqader has become well-known for her unique jewellery designs, inspired by Bahrain's compelling scenery, its rich history, Islamic designs and Arabic calligraphy.

In a 2016 interview with UNIDO she stated, "Joining UNIDO's programme was, and still is, the most important step in my business career. It is through their support that my company is now ranked among the largest in Bahrain by one of the most significant awards for Bahraini entrepreneurs."

Nawal Al-Sabbagh, Bahrain

Bouquet of triumph



Nawal Al-Sabbagh runs one of the best-known florist and chocolatier shops, Nawal Flowers, in Bahrain. Her clients include royalty and some of the most discerning and wealthy families who value her artistry and quality finish. Her unique story was not always so rosy though – rather, it was a rose garden with its share

of thorns. A failed partnership in an earlier business and the urgent need to provide for her children as a single mum fuelled her determination to rebuild her business. As Al-Sabbagh says, “I come from a family where we were not entrepreneurial but we were very independent. From childhood I was taught to find ways to solve challenges and this stood me in good stead when I faced the issue of re-starting my business.”

“We Bahraini women have a long history of independence and entrepreneurship but it needed to be re-shaped to fit the 21st century context.”

Al-Sabbagh’s inspiring story of business reconstruction began when she found her earlier partnership falling apart just when she was also in the midst of a personal life crisis. “Many of my former clients from the earlier flower business contacted me and asked me to handle their special event décor but I was unable to do so because I needed capital for flower and chocolate. I did not want to overload myself with loans although family and friends wanted to help. I am an artist and in all the turmoil I had turned to painting to calm me. I sold these paintings to raise the capital and contacted my old suppliers. To my delight, they were happy to extend credit and help

me to start again because they believed in my ability to succeed.” In mid-2016, she told UNIDO that the loyalty of her customers and suppliers has been the most rewarding experience of her florist and chocolatier career. Initially, Al-Sabbagh worked from her home, supplying tastefully arranged flowers and gifts of top-quality chocolates to VIP clients. Her big break came when she went to the Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (BBK) to negotiate a bank overdraft. It was Ramadan and the PR department was preparing to place an order of Eid sweets for VIP customers. Al-Sabbagh persuaded them to use her artistic talent to create a custom-made Eid greeting and also her chocolate supplies.

“Entrepreneurs must always watch for opportunities. I was able to convince BBK of my reliability as a supplier and as a good SME client. I never used the overdraft but got a great client in BBK!” The three secrets to business success, according to Al-Sabbagh, are to build trust in customers and suppliers because both are your partners in success; to offer quality at a reasonable price always and to always believe in oneself.

“UNIDO ITPO Bahrain’s structured approach to enterprise creation and growth means that we have access to counselling and global exposure. This makes UNIDO ITPO Bahrain successful in its nurturing of women entrepreneurs and stimulating economic empowerment of women,” says Al-Sabbagh who is currently working with UNIDO ITPO Bahrain to expand and enter the franchise business for her florist and chocolatier brand. Al-Sabbagh is currently working with UNIDO ITPO Bahrain to expand and enter the franchise business for her florist and chocolatier brand.

“You have to explore ways of reinventing your business. In this business, nothing smells sweeter than success!”

Huda Janahi, Bahrain

A true ambassador of entrepreneurship



Fifteen years ago, Huda Janahi started her business, Global Cargo and Traveller Services, with start-up capital of 1,000 Bahraini Dinars (around US\$2,650 at today's exchange rate). She ran the business single-handedly from an office in a small rented space in Muharraq, Bahrain's third largest city.

For the first year, all progress was blocked because her application for a commercial registration was rejected by the Ministry of Commerce. She was told that women could not receive a commercial registration to operate in the cargo industry. Undaunted, Janahi refused to accept "No" for an answer, and she joined UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme. In 2001, after graduating from it, she applied again for registration and her application was finally accepted. Janahi still views it as one of the most rewarding moments.

Within a few years, Janahi built up her company into a huge, successful enterprise and, in 2008, she signed a merger worth US\$3m with the Kuwaiti cargo company, Global Logistic Company, which serves the whole Middle East region. Currently, she owns eight businesses in services, retail, media and manufacturing employing 85 staff, and her net worth is estimated at US\$25 million.

Today, Janahi is an award-winning businesswoman, and one of the most influential women in the Arab world according to Forbes magazine. With her father's and husband's confidence in her abilities as the main inspiration, Janahi has, against all odds, thrived in this male-dominated industry and is now hailed as a role model for budding female entrepreneurs across the Persian Gulf region.

Huda Janahi has received numerous awards and recognitions including the Mohammad bin Rashid Award for Young Business Leaders for the "Best Arab Start-up Business in the Arab World for the Year 2005", "Investor of the Year Award in the Category of Young Innovative Entrepreneur for the Year 2006", "the GCC Young Entrepreneur Award for the Year 2008" at the Women in Business Conference held in Oman, the first "Leader Entrepreneur Award" by UNIDO in 2008, and most recently, the Indira Gandhi "Priyadarshani Award 2015" in Delhi. Furthermore, in 2013, as part of the G8 Summit held in UK, she was awarded a "Certificate of Appreciation as a Woman of Achievement" by the G8 UK Presidency for the Deauville Partnership.

According to Janahi, "Entrepreneurs (should) reach out and share their ideas and problems with other established international entrepreneurs."

Frederica Williams, Sierra Leone

A stylish path to self-development



After graduating in Economics from the University of Sierra Leone in 1997, Frederica Williams found that high unemployment rates meant her job prospects were dim. While waiting for the right job and in between interviews, she turned to her hobby of designing clothes and sewing to keep her spirits up and

to bring in some modest income. What started as a part-time occupation soon blossomed in 1998 into her full-time business, J&F Fashion Design, as demand grew for her stylish cuts and drapes, for her unique fashion sensibility.

More than the monetary success, Williams says, it was a turning point for her self-confidence, “when I began to realize I have a skill that is unique.” In 2000, she decided to further enhance her talent by taking an apprenticeship with a designer in Nigeria for two years. In 2002, after returning home, she started her business properly and set up operations legally in 2005. In 2012, she became a member of the Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (OWNERS) a project of the African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone and the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women. Here she gained valuable business management skills under UNIDO ITPO Bahrain’s Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme.

“This was really the second turning point in my success as an entrepreneur,” Williams says, “I gained the practical training to match my theoretical university knowledge. It helped me to manage her business clients and staff more efficiently. Specifically, I learnt a lot about customer care and financial management as a sole proprietor.”

However, her passion remains the art of fashion. In a 2016 follow-up, Williams stated that she particularly enjoys working with traditional fabrics from Sierra Leone.

Inspired by the traditional and cultural designs, she creates contemporary and sophisticated styles that can be appreciated and sold both locally and internationally. When asked what the special strengths of women entrepreneurs in Sierra Leone are, she had this to say: “personally for me, I have the focus, passion, integrity and perseverance to succeed at all costs. The challenges, however, are numerous for an entrepreneur to overcome and succeed in this environment. Some of us start with such over-zealousness but obstacles come, and we either fail or give up. We lack the know-how, capacity training and funding. Particularly in my sector, I need more exposure to broaden and expand on my ideas and creativity as fashion trends are dynamic. Social media I found very helpful – though we have the challenges of slow and costly internet services.”

Williams also pointed out that more training, refresher courses, counselling and funding is needed to acquire the necessary skills to become a successful entrepreneur. She herself attended a tailored training course and Women’s Networking Conference organized by GE, focusing on understanding and communicating your brand, negotiating for success, hiring the right talent, performance management and being a talent champion. She suggested the establishment of an Entrepreneurship School and Business Incubator with UNIDO support which will be very useful in improving the growing entrepreneurial culture in Sierra Leone.

Today, Williams has become extremely confident and takes her lessons to a wider audience, talking about her business on national TV which resulted in promotion and increase in sales due to the nationwide publicity. Her clientel base has increased by 35% and her sales by about 20%. She now has about 15 employees and plans to expand in the next couple of months by opening a front end showroom for her designs.

Humu Knox, Sierra Leone

A flavourful entrepreneur experience



Humu Knox's success story displays the ability to breed a culture of good business, just like her flavorsome yogurts. Imbued with a passion for baking and preparing fruit and flavoured yoghurts and cupcakes, she started out by doing extensive market research and tasting. Not finding anything that matched

her creativity and taste standards, she was convinced that she had found a niche for top-quality flavoured yoghurt and baked snacks.

Knox's first hurdle was that she had no specialist training in making these products commercially. Armed with some work experience under her sister who had trained in a specialist school, she researched through trial-and-error and developed recipes for quality yoghurt and cakes. She started producing and selling commercially in 2010.

To understand the basics of becoming an entrepreneur, Knox became a member of the Organization of Women Entrepreneurs (OWNERS) a project of the African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone and the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women. Here she attended UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme. She acquired valuable business skills in quality management, customer care, financial management, leadership and entrepreneurship skills. She also had a mentor in food services who helped her develop skills in preparation and presentation of food and standard hygiene methods.

This has enabled her to market her new business, Kol Hat Frozen Yogurt, efficiently. Between August 2013 and January 2014, Knox's sales grew by 15% thanks to a strategic location of her outlet in Jui. She now keeps better records of her business transactions than previously. She has also started getting contracts to supply flavoured yogurt for parties. The increase in production has led to her employing two more staff. Despite the Ebola crisis in 2014 which saw business slow down, she has managed to hold on to her existing distribution outlets.

Knox believes her strengths as an entrepreneur, and of most women entrepreneurs, are courage, perseverance and tenacity to go for her dreams. She believes women in general draw strength in numbers, be it team or partnership to start a business. However, sustainability is hard to achieve, and she observes that women entrepreneurs are still easily daunted by obstacles and quit easily.

"I have been doing this business for more than five years now and despite the challenges and obstacles, I have not given up hope to succeed. Key to my development were my lessons in business management and access to mentors and a food industry network that helped me to stabilize my quality."

She advises her fellow entrepreneurs to ensure quality standards in their products, get the right manpower, deliver goods in a timely manner and meet the required standards in production. For the future she plans to increase her distribution outlets and buy additional machinery to help grow her business. She believes that ongoing training, counselling and funding will be beneficial for her to grow and succeed in her business.

Gladys England, Sierra Leone

An oasis of success



Gladys England is the proprietor of Oasis Juice Bar and Café located in Murray Town, Freetown. Prior to owning her own business, she worked for the non-governmental organization, World Relief, which is helping in Sierra Leone's post-war reconstruction. She was also a part-time student studying

Business Administration at the University of Public Administration and Management. Like most entrepreneurs, England remembers that she was always business-oriented, even as a child. At school and even while working, she used to buy and sell anything that earned her a second salary. The idea of a juice bar came to her during the course of her NGO work when she travelled through Sierra Leone and saw large amounts of fruits wasted and unsold daily, along the roadsides each day. England saw this as a business opportunity to enter the juice making business. As a first step, she drew up a business plan and applied to the Sierra Leone National Business Plan competition, Business Bomba, organized by the African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone in 2009. Her idea was ranked in the top 25 and she won prize money of US\$6,000. So the first challenge was partly resolved. However, England found that she didn't have experience managing a team or a budget. Moreover, she realized that her business idea was more capital-intensive than she had thought. She was encouraged by her friends and colleagues to start on a small scale. "I researched juice bars and then modified my business idea and in February 2011, the Oasis Juice Bar was born," she says, "The name Oasis represents heavenly beauty, creativity, calmness - ways to describe how the juices make you feel."

England partnered with two expatriate colleagues, and they decided to concentrate on that niche market as they knew a large number of people in that target market. They knew what the market wanted and gave technical advice on how to cater to it. At this stage, England benefited from UNIDO's partnership with the African Foundation of Development (AFFORD) through the Organization for Women Entrepreneurs (OWNERS), a project of the

African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone and Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, of which England is a member. Through UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme, she has gained valuable advice, capacity-building, mentoring, networking and technical support.

Today, a confident Gladys England has expanded into renting rooms for guests and expanded into a duplex next door to the Oasis Juice Bar where she rents out the rooms. She employs 15 staff. However, she stressed that the challenges are by no means over for her and for other Sierra Leonean women entrepreneurs. "Personally I believe perseverance, even in times of trouble, is what has kept me going. It is so easy to give up when problems arrive as I found out during the Ebola crisis this past year. Things are doubly difficult for women entrepreneurs who have very little funding support in the form of grants and low interest loans particularly for start-ups. As a woman in business, there is a challenge of not being taken seriously, of staff not respecting women at the helm and not wanting to take orders. I have found out that one has to be assertive and strong especially in decision-making." Despite these trying times of the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, she has managed to be creative in her niche market which has sustained her business thus far. She has gained great respect from her community on how she is managing to sustain her business and she is currently providing mentoring for other women with business aspirations. Constantly looking for new opportunities, Gladys England stated: "Towards the end of 2015, we noticed that there were a lot of requests for meeting venues and Oasis responded accordingly. We reconstructed the basement to provide additional space and are now conducting regular meetings and workshops for a number of non-governmental organizations. The business is growing so rapidly that we are again discussing further expansions."

When asked about the most rewarding experience, she said: "A full booking of the property in May 2016 for an engagement party with an attendance of 160 people. We catered the event and helped decorate our garden to make the soon-to-be-wedded couple's dreams come true."

Nourah Shaaban, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Training entrepreneurs for success



In 2003, a thoughtful and ambitious Saudi woman, Nourah Shaaban, decided to do something that would expand the horizons of her fellow countrywomen and create an environment where they could blossom to their fullest potential.

“I noticed that there were no avenues for women’s development – just the usual social activities. I started laying the foundation for an Awareness Development Project for Women to help them to fine-tune their skills, change to new thinking and discover their energies.” On that basis, she established Ebdaa Exchange (Innovation Exchange), a company which provides training workshops for personal and professional skills development.

To prepare herself as a trainer of leaders, Shaaban extensively studied self-development techniques and communication skills by attending regional conferences, workshops and programmes. She also networked with distinguished achievers and soon became a trusted figure amongst them in international and local forums. One of the first things that Shaaban did was enroll in the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain programme called “Training of Trainers for Enterprise Creation and Investment Promotion Programme.”

“With this programme, I broadened my horizon of work through different experiences and multiple international relations with UNIDO in Lebanon, Tunisia and Bahrain. This network helped me to build bridges to connect with qualified individuals and institutions, and that helped to amplify my voice as a woman from Saudi Arabia and

an entrepreneur and use it for the benefit of women everywhere – but especially in the Middle East and North Africa region where I was closest to the culture and the feminine career challenges.”

One of the most remarkable learning experiences for Shaaban was a forum that her organization hosted and in which UNIDO participated. She says she was able to see at close quarters the way such forums stimulated and raised awareness among young girls about leadership, entrepreneurship and its benefits.

“Training programmes like the one I participated in empower women in our countries by exposing them to global ideas, modern entrepreneurial concepts and enabling them to activate their knowledge and skills and create impressive success stories,” Shaaban remarked. “In the case of Saudi women, we need this wider vision because, although we have a great deal of talent, patience and accomplishments, we also face plenty of challenges from conservative society and laws that make entrepreneurship a difficult path for women.”

In 2016, she proudly told UNIDO that through Ebdaa Exchange more than 10,000 attendants have benefitted from programmes in self-development, communication skills and public speaking, among others.

During her career of over 20 years, she has received various awards and official recognitions. Most recently in 2014, she was named by Forbes Magazine as the most creative entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. However, for Saaban, the most rewarding experience is the ability to represent her country in over 50 international and regional events.

Mona Al Zayer, Kuwait

Accessorizing her ambition with UNIDO



Mona Al Zayer has always been creative and interested in designing stylish and affordable accessories with crystals, beads and chains. Her story is one of searching for the correct ‘all-season’ market that would fulfil her business plan for an uninterrupted income and self-development.

In the beginning, she would purchase beads, chains and crystals wholesale and use her imagination to create a wide range and collection of accessories. She sold these creations at private exhibitions. Al Zayer saw that demand was cyclical and seasonal – usually more during the last week of the month when people get their salaries or during wedding seasons, for example. In her search for a more viable income source, she learned fancy gift-wrapping and rented a shop to practice gift-wrapping and special designs for weddings, anniversary boxes and other packaging. The project was successful and compatible with her hobby, but unfortunately, capital costs were high, and this too was a seasonal business. So her hunt began again for an all-year business idea.

Around this time, she attended a conference of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship in Kuwait organized by UNIDO ITPO Bahrain. It was an eye-opener because it taught her the importance of strengthening her ideas with a proper business plan, and a clear capital and cash-flow assessment for long-term success. Al Zayer was also put in touch with services that could be utilized for the development of her project. She was then able to participate in a capacity-building programme in

collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour in Kuwait. This programme opened the door to more training and she was provided with a unit at the Women Economic Empowerment Centre “Boutique 33”.

By now she has created her business plan for the perfect year-round business – chocolates. The rationale behind the idea was that Kuwait is a country where food is central to social life. Kuwaitis visit each other regularly, and they always show up with sweets, cakes and pastries or dishes for dinner or any occasion.

“Everyone loves chocolates” Mona Al Zayer says, “and our chocolates are favoured for their range and quality.”

While her personal favourite is milk chocolate, her customers are drawn to her rich, dark chocolate variety. Recently, she even launched a line of diabetes chocolate, the new success story in her community.

Al Zayer’s study for the project lasted almost two years. First, she studied machinery in terms of efficiency and cost. Next, she had to choose a reliable and high-quality chocolate raw material supplier. Finally, she looked for a suitable site for her factory.

Al Zayer’s chocolate factory, Choco Chef, is now running successfully. It has been a challenging journey, and she remarks that she is still learning right and wrong. Al Zayer says, “I am blessed that I was able to create a business based on my hobbies and market needs. I would advise all would-be entrepreneurs to participate in networking events and training courses in order to hone their skills and realize their dreams.”

Naziha El Koush, Lebanon

Upcycling to entrepreneurial excellence



Nigerian Naziha El Koush's journey to entrepreneurial success in faraway Lebanon is the story of how a skilful artist transformed seemingly useless recyclable into objects of art for interiors and won herself a reputation for craftsmanship that led to a shop in Hamra called Tasmim.

El Koush was able to combine her innate artistic talent with the business skills that she learnt through the Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme, such as drawing up a business plan, doing a feasibility study and making a business budget. At the legal level, UNIDO ITPO Bahrain helped El Koush to establish her business officially and taught her to market her creations. Through her training and newfound connections, El Koush was able to access exhibitions and events where she could showcase her creations and build her brand. Appalled by the growing amount of thrown away materials, considered waste by some, El Koush took it upon herself to transform these objects into useful and unique art pieces. In her own words, "I developed my talent by studying interior design and took recycling as a theme for my project. I transformed all non-useful things into art and décor objects or into utility items."

"My favourite creations are the scented soaps. I particularly enjoy the process and the end products' versatility as a decorative house item, give-away or present."

Through EDIP, we learnt about the process of starting our own businesses, how to manage our projects, how to market our products and lots of other important things that we continued to learn about in counselling sessions. Counselling is a continuous support and a follow-up for all entrepreneurs to solve business problems and find solutions" she said, The programme helped us to develop our business differently, i.e. from a professional perspective, and is always there when help or support is needed."

El Koush's husband Walid is also a UNIDO beneficiary entrepreneur and when he arrived in Lebanon from Nigeria, the couple decided to pool their skills and business acumen to expand the family project. Today, they have roped in their children and El Koush's mother and sister into a profitable line of customized art stationary. This second project reflects El Koush's efforts to expand in Lebanon. A true indicator of El Koush's success is the fact that her income has risen from a mere US\$100 to US\$2000 a month. She currently employs six female staff.

"Lebanese women entrepreneurs are very strong and may be present in the market even when working from home. They are fighting all kinds of competition from foreign labour which threatens their existence in the local market. But entrepreneurship is a joyful and challenging voyage, especially for women. I started out as an entrepreneur to fit my ambition and my available time – I was a mother of three children with free time in the mornings only. Today, I have graduated from running a small home business to running a successful family business that nurtures my creativity and brings in good income."

She added, "I advise entrepreneurs to take the risk. Those who participate in EDIP should grab each and every opportunity and follow the step-by-step action plan they put in place with the help of the counsellor."

Samar Itani, Lebanon

Playing with the sands of success



Samar Itani's idea was simple and beautiful: she collected sand from the seashore and used it to make creative and decorative art objects, or she tinted it in various colours and bottled it in eye-catching layers to decorate a home interior.

Growing up in a sea-side house in the Lebanese city of

Byblos, she has always been mesmerized by the ancient Phoenician legacies and the beautiful treasures found within the sea. Yet, what began as a mere fascination soon turned into a love for creation. At first, she worked on her own from home, and her business was a hobby where she made money by selling her creations to family and friends. Today, Samar Handicrafts is a flourishing art business that yields an income of US\$140,000 annually and an atelier with 28 women helping her to meet the monthly demands she has to deliver. Itani is also teaching in Fabiano College, and she is a partner in an art college-gallery. She also runs a training centre through which she mentors other women entrepreneurs and passes on the lessons she learnt in the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme.

"I went into business on my own in order to support my family through additional income, before becoming the only breadwinner for three teenage boys," she recalls. "I started from home creating artistic projects until I felt the need to learn new hard skills to reshape my talent. So I went to an art school and studied art and design."

"I started to go deeper into my business, and I started to teach art as well. But it was at the the EDIP programme in Lebanon which I attended through the Hariri NGO where I realized how much goes into a successful business. We got soft skills training and learnt about cost analysis, pricing, marketing and more. Counselling sessions followed to bring things together, to complete the picture of a business that turned into a career."

Through EDIP, Itani learned to improve the way she ran her business and streamline it for success, expansion and profitability. Itani was able to re-brand her business and learnt to think big and turn her ideas into a smart business. As a first step, her mentors in the programme helped her to assess the market and come up with a redefined product line that met market needs. The programme helped her to gain the hard skills support by giving an opportunity to needy housewives to work with her and get paid depending on their productivity and at the same time meeting her customer commitments. The support from EDIP enabled Itani to expand from Lebanon to the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, especially after she participated in the UNIDO women entrepreneurs' forum in Bahrain. As a member in the Artisan League, Itani helped to establish EDIP - Lebanon Entrepreneurs' Market, a permanent exhibition with the support of the Ministry of Industry.

Itani says, "Lebanese women entrepreneurs are good fighters; they are struggling to survive in a male-dominated society. I advise ntrepreneurs to focus on their businesses so they can finally start and grow their own dream."

Rim Siam, Egypt

Mentoring women for the future



Rim Siam is an ambitious Egyptian woman entrepreneur who has succeeded in making a mark as far afield as the UAE and Asia and who has reached out to women entrepreneurs globally through the creation of an internet-based women's marketplace called WEBB International Middle East Ltd.

This offshore company offers a wide spectrum of business and consulting services in order to develop cross-cultural connections and cross-border business relations. From the beginning, Siam showed signs of great leadership. She chose a line of business completely different from her family business – antique dealing. “To be an antique dealer was not easy in the beginning. I was living in a conservative society and working in a market that was male-dominated without any experience and with little capital of my own,” she recalls, “but I loved antiques and was very determined. I first started working on a consignment basis. Next, I started attending international auctions and learned how to become a bidder. Soon I made the transition from dealer to manufacturer of detailed reproductions.”

In 2004, Siam's new business of reproduction of antiques entered the Gulf market when she opened a branch of the company in the Ras al Khaimah Free Trade Zone in the United Arab Emirates. Since then, she has marketed her products through exhibitions and gained visibility and success. She has also pioneered a new line of business – the restoration and recreation for value of traditional oriental handmade carpets by adding hand-painted features and using them as interior décor statement pieces. Throughout her journey to success in business, Siam observed the interaction between different nationalities and how they worked to gain competitive advantage in the global market. She channeled her ambition and her observations into various professional bodies such as the Egyptian Economy Businesswomen's Council/the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce of which she is Founder-President; the Asian-Arab Chamber of Commerce of which she is the Director in Egypt, and the Hot Mommas Project affiliated to the George Washington University School of Business of which she is Regional

Country Manager. She has also won several awards for her work as a businesswoman and mentor.

A strong believer in giving back to the community, Siam has been a mentor for women entrepreneurs globally. She believes that women make excellent entrepreneurs, so playing an important role in connecting them by using the internet as a springboard to economic participation is a great use of resources. Through her women's business e-marketplace, WEBB International Middle East Ltd., Siam has created an offshore online business platform that brings together female entrepreneurs to form a powerful economic force. Siam embarked on an ambitious mentoring outreach program in association with UNIDO ITPO Bahrain. She is participating in the “Empowering 20,000 Women and Youth by 2020” project. In this project, UNIDO ITPO Bahrain will work through 200 leaders in Arab and African countries to build a network of Training of Trainers (TOT) leaders. These trainers will provide entrepreneurship training to women entrepreneurs, helping them to translate their idea from “image to income.” The training lessons reach the maximum number of would-be women entrepreneurs through the TOT. The leaders will be building capacities to gain quality management knowledge and expertise. Each leader will be responsible for sponsoring the training of 100 women and youth in their countries. As a member of the core 200 in this project, Siam lends depth and credibility to the ambitious target of 20,000 beneficiary women entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa region by 2020. As a trader in local and global market, Siam's advice to entrepreneurs is “Do not count what you have lost. The past never comes back but sometimes the success and the future can give you back what you have lost even more than the early losses. Remain committed to your dreams. See what you have now and continue to trade-off between benefits and risks until you achieve your dreams.”

When asked about one of her most memorable experiences, she said: “In November 2015, WEBB received support from UN Women and the UN Global Compact. This allowed us to take action in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) and the Women's Empowerment Principles by creating the first women's business enterprise platform.”

Editha Lewela, Kenya

Putting the community first



Edith Lewela's life has always been a quest for success, governed by her twin passions of personal ambition and the urge to mentor other women and youth in order to help them to find their true calling. Her first successful business was unusual because it dealt with transforming people through her knowledge and using her persuasive powers to

open new channels of business and profits for the common folk. In her hometown of Taita Taveta, there was an abundance of gemstones, notably red garnets. However, Lewela saw that the benefits of this rich natural mineral wealth did not reach the people. Instead, the poor were made to believe that red garnet gems were associated with evil and told to sell their gemstone-rich land for throwaway prices. At that time, Lewela was employed by the Ministry of Agriculture's Range Management Division in her hometown. She believed strongly that the wealth of gemstones in Taita Taveta must be used to improve the lives of the poor. Even after she got married and moved to Nairobi, Lewela kept thinking of how she could help the poor in Taita Taveta. The first step was to challenge the government to use the gemstone wealth of the place for the poor there. This caused much talk because Lewela was married to a Kenya Air Force officer, so other officers' wives challenged her saying that "your husband is in the military, and you are challenging the Government." But Lewela was undeterred. She read up on the Mining Act of 1946 and assessed its bottlenecks. She approached the Ministry of Mining and some organizations, and they supported her ideas of sensitizing the communities about mining. She also involved the Government and human rights organizations in order to change the parts on the Mining Act which were not suitable for the community. The Ministry and organizations cooperated and worked together to rectify the Mining Act.

Now that the poor had access to the gemstones, what could they do with it? Lewela started training them in handicrafts and in marketing of their crafts as well as in tourism. Her volunteer efforts were recognized by organizations such as the Kenya Investment Authority and the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JUKAT). In 2009, the Kenya Investment Authority recommended Lewela to attend a capacity-building programme, namely the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain

Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme in Bahrain. She describes this experience as an eye-opener for her. Upon her return to Kenya, Lewela consolidated her volunteer work to make a formal platform of work. She wrote to the Kenyan President to request the establishment of a Mining University, and this was done. Next, she wrote a proposal to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology to train small-scale miners. This too was well-received and in 2011, seven women and eleven men graduated in gemology from this course. The logical next step was to establish a gemstone centre for value addition. The centre, which is currently being constructed under Lewela's supervision, will act as a one-stop centre for a variety of gemstones and as a tourist destination. It thereby serves the greater goal of facilitating employment and wealth creation. In addition, the centre will train people with disabilities to utilize the gemstones to perform faceting and artwork. Since then, she has received training in empowering women entrepreneurs through grassroots incubation projects, attending a course jointly conducted by JUKAT and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Following this, Lewela was elected to be a trainer-of-trainers, and she has reached over 3,000 women and youth to encourage them to follow their dreams and achieve entrepreneurial success.

Lewela remarks, "I have always been confident and capable. But after participating in the EDIP programme, I developed a corporate vision and my entrepreneurial zeal was polished. In addition, I was able to communicate my skills and lessons learnt to other women and youth, thus multiplying the benefit of my work. Today, I own land where I grow fruits, hibiscus and herbal tea and spices. I own livestock and grazing land. I own eight mining locations where gemstones, industrial minerals and agro-minerals are available. I am proud that I have broken many stereotypes in Kenya – I own my farmland unlike many working farm women. I am actively involved in the mining sector, and I generate employment in communities. I am not afraid to push for legal change of the system. I participated in the drafting of the Mining Bill, and I was founder of the Kenya Chamber of Mines – Coast Chapter. I was elected as a Chairperson of Community Development Tourism. I was also elected and officially announced by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources as Women's Representative on the Larger Taita District Environment Committee". Today, she continues to mentor women and youth.

Prof. Dr. Ing. Lingling Li, China – Shanghai

Unleashing the power of entrepreneurial mentoring



Prof. Dr. Ing. Lingling Li is the head of Tongji University's Entrepreneurship Education Research Centre, a trainer for UNIDO ITPO Bahrain and an official expert on the Ministry of Education's Entrepreneurship Training Steering Committee. She founded and lectures at Tongji University's Entrepreneurship

and Disciplines, Drive and Control of Entrepreneurial Energy.

Apart from her very hands-on classroom lectures, she also has a solid and popular online course presence. In 2012 her course was filmed by China's biggest digital library provider, Chaoxing Group. This course included interviews with successful entrepreneurs and was made available to college students all over the country. That same year, she cooperated with Beijing's Tsinghua University professor Lu. With a network meeting system funded by the Cisco Group, they realized a virtual Silicon Valley, connecting Beijing and Shanghai through weekly lectures using the new conference system, which can serve thousands of people.

"What first inspired me," she says, "was the global vision of Dr. Hussein, Head of UNIDO ITPO Bahrain. It was he who inspired me to teach and help my students to adopt a similar, hands-on and practical approach to achieving success."

She has created the online group Entrepreneurship Frequency Harbour to interactively reach the students of national colleges and universities through China's WeChat app. Professor Li gives a live audio seminar once a week, followed by a lengthy question and answer session where she acts as the students' mentor and offers personal guidance. Each seminar attracts over 500 participants and is also followed up on her Sina blog.

She uses these various platforms to sow the seeds of innovative entrepreneurship. Part of her success is that established successful entrepreneurs and students from previous years are invited to present and lecture to new classes of eager entrepreneurs-to-be. These stories and the students' interaction with real experiences compose a highly effective teaching method. Her students have successfully fanned out into agriculture, environmental monitoring, entertainment and retail.

In her own words: "In 2005, I won a tender advertised by the Shanghai Education Commission to provide 1,500 schools with 45,000 educational games. At that time, I didn't have any background in marketing, sales or publishing educational games. I just relied on my desire to let the children play and learn. This success put me on the path I am still walking on: I started teaching entrepreneurship courses to help students become successful entrepreneurs and senior directors, then the rest followed."

"China has a strong tradition of entrepreneurs. Having your own business is accepted and widespread here. On the other hand, China's tradition says women first need to take care of the people around them, without regret or complaint: there is no one to cheer for them, no one to comfort them when they are down.

On top of that, men and women really are very different, with different needs and problems. That makes it a challenge for Chinese women to be successful entrepreneurs. They must deal with these issues, and they must have a strong desire for inner growth and self-education, to find the balance in being a woman and perhaps a mother and an entrepreneur. I've found that meditation works well to achieve that balance to stay on course, to stay energized and motivated towards your entrepreneurial goals."

“My own preparation came from being a mother, a teacher, a scientist and an entrepreneur. I have devoted myself for more than 25 years to the quality of education. As a scientist I wanted to know, to understand the reasons of entrepreneurial success and failure, and how to change the latter into the former. That resulted in my PhD thesis in management sciences, which in turn opened new doors for me.”

“UNIDO ITPO Bahrain crossed my path in 2010, when I was honoured to be invited by Mr. Lee of the the World Eminence Chinese Business Association (WECBA), China’s leading business association, to participate in the first of Bahrain’s training programmes here. They stressed that igniting passion is the first step of successful entrepreneurship. They also used the same approach I do during the course in Bahrain, which I was very happy to attend: successful entrepreneurs shared their experience with us students, a positive, direct infusion of entrepreneurial knowledge and energy.”

“To turn your dream into a real success requires great entrepreneurial spirit. To have that you need global ambitions. You must be creative and you must be brave. That’s where UNIDO ITPO Bahrain comes in. They will encourage you and you will understand that being able to share and pass on entrepreneurial energy is the key to your success.”

“My personal advice to entrepreneurs is that you have to change the way you think. Flip the spiritual switch, so to speak, to open the door to make your dream come true. My mission is to help others promote health, happiness and entrepreneurial energy. My reward is their entrepreneurial success, and through that the success of my own business. My approach is winning because all these students are motivated by my courses. They feel full of energy to do, to accomplish the things they had only dared to dream about before.”

“It is seeing the entrepreneurs become braver, more creative and filled with positive energy, which makes this such a rewarding experience,” Professor Li explained to UNIDO in 2016.

Ayat Abdulaziz, Sudan

Harvesting success as an agropreneur



Sudan has a pool of bold and fearless women who have made a mark for themselves with their strength, innovation, creativity and success. Their relentless zeal, incessant thirst for success and willingness to walk the extra mile have broken all myths about the limitations they are born with, which were supposed to

be major roadblocks. These women entrepreneurs inspire other women with dreams of founding startups. However, there are still many challenges that female Sudanese business-owners face because of their gender. In addition, they have to wear many hats, from businesswoman to family woman, as well as to balance raising families, and running their businesses.

It is here that the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain's Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Programme comes into its own because it sustains the aspirations of these women and shows them new ways to reach their business goal and grow their business.

One such person is young Ayat Abdulaziz. Inspired by her parents who had long been in the agricultural business, Abdulaziz completed her University studies in the area of Forestry and Range Management at age 27. She decided to become an entrepreneur by taking a loan from Sudanese microfinance institution and going into the fodder business. She began by renting 10 feddens of farmland (1 feddan = 0.42 hectares) and began alfalfa farming. She made just enough to get by and support her family, but her business required gruelling hours.

"I had to be at the farm by 5:00am and would close at

11:00 pm. It was hectic and I had no time whatsoever with my family," Abdulaziz says.

Abdulaziz began looking for ways to make extra money and decided to try sheep farming. But she was disappointed when her first offspring performed poorly. At this low point, she attended EDIP with other members of her youth group. Her inspiration came after completing 30 days capacity-building programme which is the first step to EDIP. It served as a turning point and an eye-opener to her.

As a first step to success, Abdulaziz put together a proper business plan to invest in mixed farming benefiting from the continuous counseling services provided by the programme. Next, she moved from working in the informal economy to the formal sector by officially registering her business, Ayat for Agriculture and Animal Production, and acquiring an official registration certificate. These steps helped her to expand her cultivated area from 10 feddens to 40 feddens. Now, alongside her mixed farming plan, Abdulaziz began to explore several ancillary businesses: she started to formulate, produce and sell organic fertilizer to farmers in her village; she provided them with technical advice; she expanded her animal production by increasing sheep herd from 18 to 36 animals and she also established another business line in the areas of nursery and landscaping. Since the launch in 2014, her landscaping business has extended well outside of the city of Khartoum where she designs both public and private gardens.

As a mark of recognition, Abdulaziz was selected by the Omdurman National Bank as a leader in a youth employment project targeting youth in the agricultural sector. It focuses on making agriculture business attractive. Her role is to teach other youth in her area about agriculture production technologies, improved compost preparation and sustainable insect and pest management using local botanicals.

Abdulaziz believes that Sudanese women are as good as men when it comes to hard work, intelligence and leadership. “The new generation of Sudanese women has overcome all negative notions and they have proved themselves beyond doubt in all spheres of life including the most intricate and cumbersome world of

entrepreneurship,” she says, “I am trying to encourage Sudanese women to get into agribusiness since it is an especially good venture. I started with a loan equivalent to about US\$1,000 and today my annual net income is about \$25,000. I believe that EDIP helped me turn my business, my life and perspective around. It gave me clarity and helped me to reorganize my business on more profitable lines and also supported me in maximizing my potential as a farmer by introducing me to new lines of farming activity.”

In 2016, Abdulaziz told UNIDO that, one day, she hopes to operate her agricultural production and animal farming business on a global scale.

Haifaa Mohammed Hassan Eltayeb, Sudan

Teaching the rules of success



From the time she was a young schoolgirl, Haifaa Mohammed Hassan Eltayeb remembers admiring her teachers at the Italian convent school that she attended in Sudan. She recalls that when she came home from school, she would line up her text books as imaginary students and imitate her teachers.

“As far back as I remember, I wanted to become a teacher and I qualified accordingly. My favourite subject has always been English, given that I consider it to be the foundation for all subjects. I graduated from University of Khartoum, Faculty of Arts, did my Master of Arts in English Language, got a Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) from the University of Cambridge, and a mini Master in Business, Knowledge Management and Lean Six Sigma. I started teaching and gained valuable experience in the British Curriculum. I worked at many schools in Sudan, such as Cambridge, the ABC Language School, the Alruya Bilingual School, as well as abroad in KSA-Riyadh at Al Kanar- Alolyia teaching for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). I was appreciated by the school management everywhere for my abilities as a good teacher and praised as a valuable asset to the schools. I was even promoted to be an academic manager at the Cambridge Training Center and Cambridge International School. But always in my head, I nursed the ambition to have my own business, be my own leader and accept the risk. My problem was that I did not know how to start.”

“Coincidentally, in December 2011, there was an announcement in the newspaper about the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain Enterprise Development and Investment

Promotion Programme. My husband and I attended this programme where we were taught to translate our dreams and ideas into working reality. The course leaders taught us how to make our plans, to prepare the feasibility study which can guide us and to nurture our entrepreneurial spirit. This is where the idea of starting a school in the Jubara area of Sudan originated. The region lacked an English-speaking school. We called it Alruya Bilingual School. To start with, I had just the equivalent of US\$1,100 to invest and to this we added our savings and insurance and rented the house for the school. We bought the assets and equipment in installments. I started my school as a kindergarten in June 2014 with 60 students.” In 2016 she proudly told UNIDO that “there are currently around 60 pupils enrolled in kindergarten and around 150 pupils in the Alruya Bilingual School.”

“Upcoming development plans include merging the two schools and expanding the primary and secondary segments with the hope of, one day, providing my students with a college-level education.”

“I am currently working on the training centre that provides training for language and soft skills and entrepreneur courses in home packages for individuals and corporates, based on the requirements. I conclude that UNIDO must continue its valuable work of empowering women entrepreneurs in Sudan. The need of the hour is awareness of our strengths and of the proper way to run a business. I humbly suggest that UNIDO ITPO Bahrain should stretch its resources by twinning with universities and also bring the message of effective entrepreneurship to youth. I always tell Sudanese youth to stay and make something in their country and not to emigrate. It is programmes such as EDIP that will help us to empower our women and youth and give them the strength and knowledge to participate in the progress of our country.”

Manal Mustafa Hassan Ali, Sudan

The sweet taste of success



Although she has a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the Sudan University for Sciences and Technology, Manal Mustafa Hassan Ali's first love was making sweets and cookies.

“When I was young, I used to stay with my grandmother during the summer holidays. It is from her that I inherited both the gift and recipes.”

After marriage, she started making sweets and cookies for friends and family, to keep her busy while looking for a job.

Support from some friends and family, and an abundance of positive responses to her sweets and cookies, made her decide to take the entrepreneurial leap and follow her heart to the world of sweets and pastries. Her humble business beginnings in her kitchen built her reputation for excellence and unique taste. She joined the UNIDO ITPO Bahrain Entrepreneurship Development and Investment Promotion Programme which was conducted in Khartoum in November 2005. The Programme helped her put together a professional business plan, which was a stepping stone for her to benefit from UNIDO's Technology Tie-up Programme. She travelled to China, India and Bahrain to see how sweets and biscuit/cookie businesses were run and returned with a much wider vision for her business: Al Baroon Cookies.

Upon her return, Ali expanded her original business and today produces a wide variety of delectable pastries, daily fresh pizza, cakes, tarts and other delicacies. Since her focus has always been on the best quality and the use of the highest quality raw ingredients with no added preservatives and at the best possible price, she

has a well-deserved reputation and a fine brand name in Khartoum city. One of her main trademarks is that she consistently seeks out and creates new ingredient mixtures and designs. From cooking up batches of sweets and cookies in her kitchen with her maid's help, Ali today employs 32 women workers and has a fully equipped production system, including two vans for transporting her products and cope with demand.

“When I started, my biggest challenge was marketing my products and funding my business. To get some money to fund my business I received a sum of US\$ 1000 as seed capital as a gift from my husband. Since I do not like the idea of borrowing money from financial institutions, I worked with this tight budget. As for marketing, I was not very confident when I first started my business, but with the help of EDIP I was able to overcome the fear of marketing my products,” Ali says.

Today her business capital is US\$1 million, and her annual net income equals US\$120,000. This successful businesswoman offers the advice for those who would like to follow in her footsteps: “Attend training sessions and workshops and ask for business advice from experts. Being positive and believing in oneself is very important to function as an individual and a woman entrepreneur.”



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