



IBTKAR

Developing leadership for women in Kuwait

Report
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WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Developing an environment that allows a woman to have a full, equal voice and take the lead is a vital and comprehensive vision for Ibtakar.

It is important to eliminate discrimination against women in all fields and enable and empower them to take on leadership positions.

Leadership is not just a position; to lead is to also empower, inspire, influence and motivate other young women who want to reach leadership positions.

Only a small number of women have come forward to take on leadership roles in Kuwait. This lack of empowerment of women leadership is a serious issue and it is fundamental that support for women leaders at all levels is provided.

There is a clear gender gap in leadership and true progress cannot happen without diversity.

According to the United Nations, “the proportion of women in national parliaments (single or lower house) globally was 13.2% in 2000 and as of 2017, it was 23.4%” meaning it has only grown in almost two decades (IPU, UN Women).

Kuwait has been ranked 129th in the Global Gender Gap report by the World Economic Forum (2017)

Despite high levels of education for women and female employees, there is still an absence of women in top positions in different sectors:

§ Women have yet to hold the position of a judge

§ Diplomatic and political participation is low, there is currently only one female MP out of 50

§ Governmental institutions and the private sector lack women in senior management positions

Over the last decade, seven (as of 2017) female ministers in Kuwait have assumed 18 different cabinet positions, though the percentage of women in leadership positions remains considerably low at only 12 percent (Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, Women in the Middle East, 2015)

It is important to facilitate women leadership in ministerial positions, parliament, civil services and the workforce.

Studies have shown that companies perform better with both male and female in leadership positions. A study on gender diversity for the Peterson Institute for International Economics points out that diversity leads to higher performance

Increasing gender diversity in leadership will improve and strengthen leadership team dynamics.

Data revealed that women in Kuwait occupied 8.55% of leadership positions in the public sector in 2009 and 6,57% in 2010. This figure increased to 10.3% in 2011 (Socio-political participation of Kuwaiti women in the development process, Ali Alzuabi, 2016)

In Kuwait, the percentage of Kuwaiti female employees in the public sector as of April 2017 was 44.59 percent of 252,580.

However, women leadership in the public sector still remains low at only 12 percent and 15% in the private sector as of 2015 (UNDP).

A lack of expertise, awareness and empowerment along with people's views of cultural 'norm's' regarding the role and status of women in Kuwait and the GCC may have contributed to the low percentage of women leadership.

Tackling these issues and overcoming these norms is essential to improve women leadership.

These are some of the issues that emerged when Ibtkar convened the AIWF 8th Annual Young Arab Women Leaders Forum with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs in October of 2016.

Women make up for half the population in the GCC and yet represent only 25% of the labor force (World Bank, 2017)

According to a report published by the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa in May of 2017, the level of participation of women in the workforce in the region remains low, despite levels of higher education among women being high, the gender gap in senior management roles is more than 70 percent.

MENTORING AND TRAINING

Mentoring and training women plays an important part in tackling this gender gap in leadership.

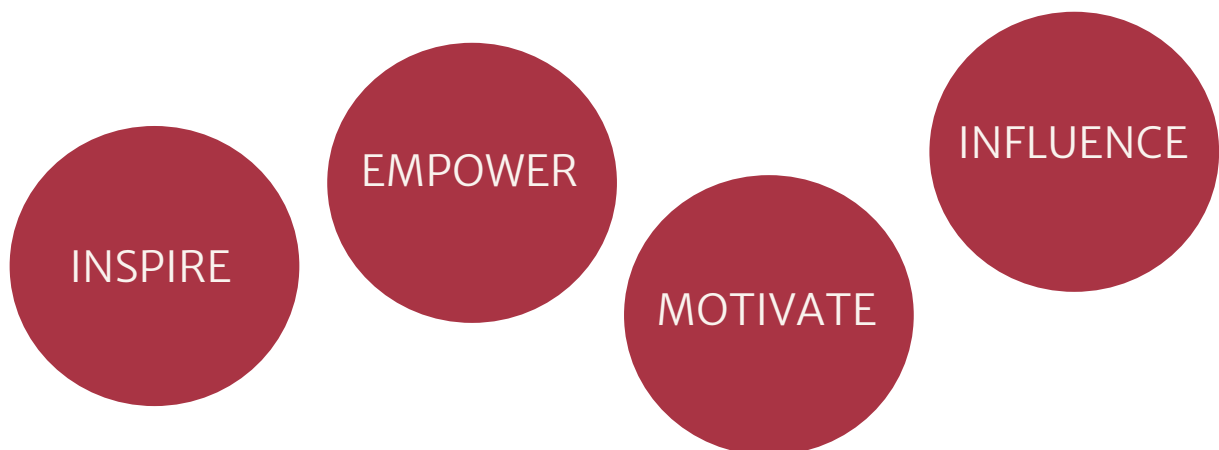
Acquiring women with leadership skills and knowledge as well as equipping them with strategies to compete in political, economical, social and cultural processes is necessary for them to reach their full potential.

Mentoring and training women to take on leadership roles will help strengthen their skills, boost their confidence and help them become more assertive as a leader. It helps coach, guide and support women.

Ibtkar has previously given seminars in institutions on Aspirational Leadership for women such as the International Bank of Kuwait focusing on the importance of leadership for women and obstacles that women face. Mentoring provides opportunities for women to interact, observe, learn and to be inspired to lead.

The goal is to help *empower* women in growing both personally and professionally.

Ibtkar creates tailor made training for diversity and inclusion in the corporate sector for companies such as Alghanim industries and assists in setting up NGO's that focus on women's leadership such as the Women Mentor Forum, which helps them to transform their vision into a reality. Structured leadership building programs for women are important and enhancing and empowering women to speak up and take the lead is our goal.



Empowering women to become successful in leadership positions and ensuring their effective participation is an important step to take in creating a fair and equal society while also improving Kuwait's economy.

Mentoring women gives them the opportunity to *learn, lead* and *excel*. Women feel supported, championed and empowered when they have a strong mentor to guide them into leadership

Hessa Al Ghurair stated:

“Understanding my professional potential was one of my biggest barriers earlier on in my career, as I did not have the confidence to take a seat at the table and make my goals known. My mentor at the time motivated me to push myself out of my comfort zone, and I quickly realised that I was limiting my possibilities before. Through self-assessment and feedback from others, I continued to make my career objectives known, and was able to overcome my barriers” (The National, 2017)

Leadership should not be limited to just men and it is time to recognize, empower and mentor women to take on leadership roles. It is time to raise a global generation of capable, ambitious female leaders.

Ibtkar is currently working on the EKWIP project to empower Kuwaiti women in Politics. Providing *expertise, guidance* and *effective training* for women to thrive and take on leadership roles successfully is an important factor and is a crucial and strategic investment for Ibtkar and mentoring them on developing their essential skills is an integral part of that.

In February of 2015, the UAE formed a Gender Balance Council and in 2016, eight new federal ministerial appointments were announced of which 5 were Emirati women.

The UAE became the first county in the Arab region and the second country in the world to introduce a mandatory female presence in the boardroom.

The UAE has shown a commitment to appointing women in leadership positions and in supporting their bid to achieve parity in the workplace. Ibtkar wants to be part of the process that ensures the smoothness of this approach for governments and companies in Kuwait and the rest of the GCC.

IBTKAR STRATEGIC CONSULTANCY

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