

WOMEN WITHOUT BORDERS
CHANGE THE WORLD.



Bridging the Gap

Empowerment Strategies for the New Female Arab Leadership



supported by Hewlett-Packard



Welcome to Women without Borders!

Today, women are competent as never before: educated, ambitious and ready for action. At the grass roots level they have always made major contributions, holding up family networks and knitting communities together.

Women have long been appreciated for their emotional competence, but now they are recognized as capable professionals, high-flyers in the world of business and science, and prominent players in civil society.

This is the big chance for the new generation of women, which already impressively gained ground within the education section over the last decade. In natural sciences, technology and economy the young courageous, inquisitive generation of women has to reach a critical presence and make their voices heard. Why? Because societies will benefit from competent women co-shaping the positive trends in their countries.

And although within the last years high numbers of highly educated, committed women in the Middle East are struggling for a more active role, there is still a long way to go. This is a globally shared experience: The histories of women are often excluded as the women themselves, resulting in a pronounced imbalance in social representation and a weakening of the social bases of a knowledge-oriented economy.

Women without Borders tries to bridge the gap through research-based activities making the female potential in the Arab region visible and aim to overcome the digital gender divide by providing access to information and ensuring freedom of expression for the development of a more socially balanced and prosperous world.

Let's work together for a gender-just future!

Yours
Edit Schlaffer,
Chairwoman WwB



About Women without Borders

Include Women – Involve Women – Invest in Women

Women without Borders is an international research-based advocacy and PR organisation for women in politics and civil society, based in Austria. Women without Borders supports women all over the world as they strive towards the participation of women in all levels of decision-making. We uphold positive politics that advance the specific inclusion of women in public life.

Women without Borders stands for peaceful conflict resolutions in countries of transition and reconstruction. We promote a future without fear, suppression and violence. Through global dialogue, targeted information, with model projects and the creation of alliances with international partner organisations, Women without Borders empowers women towards positive change. Women without Borders has grown into a well recognized voice standing for positive alternatives and creative solutions.



When women get involved from education to economics, from faith to family, from credit to credibility and from governance to good will – everything just gets better.

Living in these critical times, societies need to tap into the talents and energies of all their citizens. Women need self-confidence and to trust in their competence to join in this new vision and bring balance into public sphere.

So we call on all decision makers to include women, for women to involve themselves and for communities to invest in women.



women-information.net

New Media Empowerment for Middle Eastern Women

Now, more than ever, knowledge is power. Access to and handling of information is an important factor for shaping world economies, politics and lifestyles in the knowledge society.

As an emerging force in the region, women need to overcome the digital gender divide so that their talents and energies can contribute more directly to the development of their countries.

Women must share in the creation, distribution and management of this information. Information which is true to their own perspectives, which is free

from manipulation, discussed in an open and critical way and is freely available.

Around the world many women have limited public possibilities, struggle with cultural expectations and lack the access to information resources: the internet is a powerful tool to overcome this obstacle.



An open, interactive, participatory web-platform on women's issues

- to provide a daily news service,
with local and global perspectives,
- to enable women to engage in the
information society
- to overcome the digital gender divide
- to raise awareness for the "hidden
culture of women"
- to provide on-line web classes for
future female leadership training
- to promote the creation and use of
national and international networks
- to offer creative and participatory
training in on-line formats

Through women building the women-information net, women can get the information, inspiration and encouragement to realise their ambitions and dreams.

women-information.net



How Does it Work?

Who and where will the women-information.net be?

The women-information.net will be set up in a core group of Middle Eastern countries in close cooperation with local universities.

Female students will form the management task force on the local level. Women without Borders will help to identify and train them in Vienna in cooperation with the Institute for New Culture Technologies, with monitored follow-up workshops in their countries.

The training will prepare the task force to create their own news sources, to contribute op-eds, to gather, select and present news and resource items.

They will manage the form of the public submissions and overall site content. In particular this group will streamline the material to highlight the interconnection between women and local as well as global issues.

Additionally, the women-information.net will feature other on-line media options relevant to women, such as on-line female empowerment programs and the possibility to participate in social research projects.



On-line classes for Female Leadership Training Projects and initiatives for the young female talent pool on the net



Fit for Leadership!

We see the targeting of girls and boys as crucial to the success of any effort to empower societies. Youth in particular tend to be more open minded, less restricted and ready to embrace alternative solutions. Under the umbrella programme of Girls Fit for Leadership! the women-information.net will run innovative model programs that offer youth attractive forums to develop the *competence* and *confidence* for a positive healthy life based on human rights and democratic values. With the chance to simply log in and learn, young girls can join the on-line training everywhere!



Bee what you want to be!

This program encourages self-awareness and develops personal capacity for a new generation of strong girls. Under the logo of a smart bee the on-line course introduces themes of individual exercises and tuition such as self-identity,

gender awareness, communication and synergy. The course enables girls to discover their own personal force and zones of impact so they can achieve their aspirations in the future. Why the Bee? – because they have highly developed societies and advanced communication skills – just what we strive for!

Girls e-Parliament Initiative

'How to be a leader' targets the youth, awakening their political and go-getter spirit in preparation for management and leadership roles later. As part of the on-line curriculum, young women learn about politics, democracy, human rights, advocacy and agency through a series of self-teaching and interactive exercises. Self-confidence, effective communication, presentation and basic project management are included as vital abilities in the modern world. In virtual meetings participants hold 'shadow' parliament sessions with 'elected' ministers. They practice their skills, debating real issues and concerns for youth. The results of these sessions are posted through the women-information network, thereby giving the girls a direct voice to speak out in public. This virtual network enables girls to interact and gain advice and support from peers, role-models and friends locally and around the world.



On-line Action and Research Projects



“Women today need to make wise choices. At the end of the day, it is better to choose than to sacrifice. What counts is your education and training, whatever you make of it.”

Sheika Lubna is the first female minister for finance and planning in the United Arab Emirates. She is a role model and an inspiration to the future young leaders in the region.

Bridging the Gap

A new project for women and youth in the Middle East

There is an exciting transition taking place in the Middle East states (ME): an educated, effective and well-connected cadre of empowered women are currently emerging as the face of Arab modernisation.

And there are clear signs that governments are supporting them in these efforts. Predominantly male governments are fostering change in many initiatives: from conferences to legal amendments, they are preparing the ground. This is a welcomed new partnership between men and women in these traditional societies.

This major new research project poses the question, who are the women of Arab modernisation? How can they maintain the momentum and help empower the next generation of young women to bridge the gap between their education and becoming future political and economic leaders for their societies. From graduate to post graduate and beyond, this project promotes real access to women’s empowerment.

Bridging the Gap and the women-information.net

- Students and graduates, male and female, from universities in the Arab region can complete confidential **on-line questionnaires** examining their ambitions, the support and hurdles in their professional and public lives. The thousands of completed questionnaires will contribute to one of the biggest youth surveys in the region and provide new data and analysis for concerned policy makers and shapers.
- The women-information.net will **showcase testimonies** and real life narratives of pioneering Arab women and role-models in the region. These inspiring stories and other e-mentoring programs will equip Arab women with the self-assurance and the framework to move forward.



“International Agencies have recognised that women are the great untapped resource in the Arab Middle East.”

Irshad Manji

“Now it is very politically correct to address women's issues. It is like a competition between Arab governments to encourage women to enter business and the political process.”

Haifa Fahoum Al Kaylani

Middle East Career Fairs

Professional networking



The Bridging the Gap project will not only provide original data and analysis, but will pilot and test a practical means by which the women of today can reach out to the women of tomorrow. This framework will take the form of innovative professional fairs, enabling the national and multinational commercial companies, media outlets and governmental organisations to connect with the young female talent pool.

This will be an opportunity to run a series of connected seminars addressing new and still unfamiliar issues in the field of human resources, such as self-confidence, and gender-awareness in general and in specific in the work place. These fairs will be fully evaluated, with before and after assessments with the graduates, the outside presenters, as well as a review of the media response. Although an experimental framework, the blue print for subsequent events would be in place.

These Career Fairs will held in three countries: Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Dubai, linking the existing potential with the economic and political opportunities, in each of the three countries. The starting point, will be the study that examines the short-fall between the numbers of highly educated women and the number in employment, for it is precisely from these young women that positive social change can be expected.



Information Technology as a Key Tool to Bridge the Gap

HP, a leading provider of information technology and committed to advancing women in business, supports efforts like the one from “Women without Borders” to ensure that women have equal access to technology, equal opportunities to absorb and utilize technology and benefit to an equitable extent from the applications of technology. Currently “there are substantial differences in participation in, access to and use of media and information and communications technologies (ICT), their content and production”, as the United Nations Commission for Women concluded in a 2003 session. The gender divide has implications for every level of the digital society, including access, training, scientific and technical employment and women’s participation in the knowledge economy.

What contribution can ICT make to women’s lives? It will improve the pool of human capacity of a country, leverage women's central role in sustainable development eradicating poverty and will ensure that women's knowledge is not lost. When women do have access to ICT, they can substantially improve



their lives and increase their income. ICT can provide women with skills, training, and market information for their small-scale enterprises. ICT can be tools for strengthening women's political participation.*

Technology can be a powerful tool to overcome boundaries and bridge distances providing access to information and opening up new career opportunities.

* Nancy Hafkin and Sophia Huyer: Lessons on ICT and Gender in Developing Countries: A Review of Current Literature and the infoDev Portfolio, March 2002

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