



Bothaina Al Ansari

ON A MISSION TO GET MORE QATARI WOMEN INTO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN BUSINESS.

Words by C.M. Paschyn

According to Al Ansari, women's professional advancement is necessary for every society that wants to achieve great things. And she has made it her personal duty to help Qatari women so that Qatar can rise to the top.

Al Ansari, a savvy HR executive and businesswoman, has devoted much of her professional career to Qatari women's progress.

"I need to increase the number of Qatari women at the senior level because we don't have that many in Qatar, or women [in leadership positions] elsewhere in the world," she explains. "Women everywhere are a little bit detached from decision making and strategic planning because [people] underestimate their mindsets and thinking. So I want to close this chapter and start a new one"

She certainly has the skills to do so. Al Ansari has managed HR teams at Islamic bank Masraf Al Rayan and now Ooredoo, where she is the telecommunications giant's senior director of human resources.

At Ooredoo she started a programme called Al Jiwana, which offered female employees at various levels in the company a chance to further develop their skills via training programmes focused on finance, management, and self-development, among other topics.

One piece of advice she shares with aspiring female entrepreneurs is that you can have many projects and interests, but if you want to succeed, focus only on one during the developmental phase. Another is finding a supportive mentor and workplace environment. Last March she organised 'Women in Focus', a whole month for Ooredoo to celebrate its female employees' achievements.

Now Al Ansari is taking her mission to the next level: educating the international community about Qatari women and their success. She has written a book called *Qatari Women Before/After Oil & Gas*, which chronicles Qatar's development and the powerful role women have played throughout the country's history. For instance, some Western readers may be surprised to learn that before the discovery of oil, Qatari women were basically the economic and social leaders of their communities for many months at a time since their men were frequently off at sea pearl-diving. She also highlights the achievements of modern-day Qataris, such as the country's former first lady Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

Al Ansari is a board member of the Qatari Businesswomen Association and was named one of the 100 most powerful Arab women by *ArabianBusiness.com* in 2012 and 2013. She hopes that by being public about her goals and accomplishments, she will inspire her countrywomen to follow suit while raising Qatar's global status as well.

"If you want a project to succeed, you have to empower it. You set the example from above," she says.

"It is not about promoting Bothaina," Al Ansari adds. "It helps me to promote my country, my country's vision, and to let other people come and really invest in my country." 🌍



QATARI WOMEN BEFORE/AFTER OIL & GAS

Published in May, *Qatari Women Before/After Oil & Gas* details not only Qatari women's progress, but also the country's economic and developmental achievements. Al Ansari says she wrote it to educate the world about what the Gulf is really like: "Hollywood portrays us as wasteful, spoiled, tents, camels... those things. I knew I had to develop something to change their perceptions." Easy to read with colourful images, it is the perfect addition to the coffee tables of the socially and historically conscious.