

Outline of remarks by Roxanne Decyk at the Arab International Women's Forum, London, 8 March 2007

Panel discussion on "Role of the public and private sectors in stimulating entrepreneurship – creating the climate, providing support initiatives and policies"

Opening remarks

- Statement of position: I believe the encouragement and development that international companies provide, to prepare women for leadership in business, make an important contribution to increasing women's ability to take on leadership roles in their communities and their countries

Importance of diversity

- Part of Shell core values
 - Actively seeking to increase diversity, including gender diversity, at every level in the company
- Business case for diversity
 - Internal drivers: attract and retain top talent; increase productivity; productive work climate; license to operate and grow
 - External drivers: customers and markets; globalisation; mergers and acquisitions; changing demographics
 - [from NAM study] Diversity needs to be combined with inclusiveness to deliver its full benefits: teams that score high on inclusiveness are more likely to score high on process indicators; inclusiveness can be influenced by many factors, including task interdependence, common goals, self management, flexibility, leadership, social norms, conflicts - intervention on these factors can increase inclusiveness and hence performance
- Increasingly recognised across Arab world
 - Quote from HH Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saaed Al Maktoum, patron of Dubai Quality Group and of Emirates Business Women Awards (which Shell sponsors with Dubai Quality Group):
 - "There is a substantial role that women play in society in developing and contributing to the economy. It is the responsibility of the people of the country to ensure higher levels of participation and involvement from business women in various sectors of the economy"
 - More than 400 women have enrolled in the Emirates Business Women Awards programme since its inception

- These awards recognise the achievements of business women in the Emirates; going from strength to strength; interest in rolling out to other countries in the region, such as Kuwait and Qatar

Developments in the Middle East are promising

- Education opportunities for women in technology and professions are widening
 - E.g. in Abu Dhabi, Shell supports the ADNOC Petroleum Institute which enrolled 100 young UAE national women in September 2006
- New wave of technical professional women coming into the workforce
- More events to try and attract women into business
 - E.g. SPE is holding Women in Engineering, Science and Technology Workshop, Bahrain, 10 March; Shell a co-sponsor
- Company activities
 - Shell – own staff
 - Developing workshops and training for women leaders to be held in Qatar in November
 - Female staff in Dubai have set up Shell Professional Women's Network - Dubai, to share challenges, news and views of business matters
 - Intilaaqah
 - Operates in Egypt, Oman, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Syria, Kuwait
 - Helps young people set up and run their own business; makes young people aware of the opportunities available to them as entrepreneurs
 - Oman, 2006: the Intilaaqah programme started a Business Management course for fashion trainees; the course is conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Manpower, sands to benefit nearly 800 young women, delivered free of charge
 - November 2006: Intilaaqah Abu Dhabi programme expanded to Al Ain; 8-week “Become a Successful Owner Manager” course now runs in Al Ain Women's College, open to both women and men
- Other companies in Middle East energy sector
 - Shell’s partners in joint ventures (BP, Total, etc) are also active in attraction, recruitment and development of women

- Saudi Aramco major policy changes recently (e.g. has banned wearing of veil)
- Companies in other sectors
 - E.g. Vinson & Elkins (law firm) – actively increasing recruitment of women to increase the number of women in the pipeline to partnership; set up a Women’s Career Development Council and an Advisory Board of leaders from outside V&E; firm-wide (US, China, Japan, Russia, Dubai, UK) Women’s Initiative addresses short and long term challenges to empower women to contribute to fullest potential on the job, at home and in the community
- Some good support mechanisms in place
 - E.g. the Women's Professional Forum in Dubai, meets monthly for lunchtime discussion and talks by visiting women (e.g. ambassadors, business people), includes professionals and entrepreneurs
- A new generation of women CEOs of multibillion dollar companies is emerging, as fathers for the first time are leaving the family business to their daughters

Need for more role models

- Identified as the top need in Shell Survey of requirements for attraction and retention of women
- Middle East has some great role models (in addition to those at this event)
 - E.g. Raja Al Gurg – head of the Eissa Al-Gurg Group, responsible for 29 companies with over 3000 employees, President of the Federation of the UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry Business Women’s Committee, and of Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry Business Women’s Committee; formerly an award-winning secondary school principal, and a member of Dubai Education Council and of National Advisory Council for the college of Business Sciences at Zayed University
 - E.g. Shaikha Lubna Al Qasimi – Executive Chairperson of Tejari.com, made history by becoming the first woman minister of the UAE when she was appointed the Minister of Economy and Planning; although niece of the ruler of Sharjah, she worked her way up from an IT programmer’s position at Datamation in Dubai
 - E.g. Nabila M Al-Tunisi, project support and controls department manager at Saudi Aramco, selected one of 25 influential women in project management worldwide
 - E.g. Ceri Powell, head of Exploration and Production for Shell in the Middle East

Conclusion

- This is a journey
- Good progress being made
- More work to be done
- Cultural sensitivities need attention; to have more women leaders, women need to be able to compete on a like-for-like basis
- Companies playing an important role, and will continue to do so