

**United Arab Emirates**

**The National Report  
of the UAE on Beijing +20**

**2014**

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## **Introduction**

This National Report was prepared by the General Women's Union (GWU), in cooperation with the governmental institutions and local mechanisms on women issues. The GWU has benefited from the information provided by the ministries and other relevant federal and local governmental bodies, in addition to a number of non-governmental organizations.

The UAE, since its endorsement of the recommendations of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, has worked on developing national strategies, plans and programs of actions in order to implement the Beijing Platform for Action.

The UAE, within the framework of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, submitted its national reports on the achievements it made and the major obstacles it faced during the implementation process since 1995. Also during that period, the UAE, which ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, submitted its reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Nineteen years after the Beijing conference, the UAE is currently conducting a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including the current challenges affecting the implementation of the Platform for Action, gender equality and empowerment of women; as well as opportunities to enhance gender equality and empower women within the framework of the sustainable development goals and the Development agenda beyond 2015, by including gender perspective. The review will take place during the fifty ninth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in 2015.

## **Part I: General Analysis of the Achievements and Challenges since 1995**

### **1. Participation in the Parliament.**

The UAE has broadened women's participation in the political process, based on the principles enshrined in the State's Constitution on the equality of all citizens in rights and duties, opportunities and resources, as a very important element in supporting sustainable development. The national strategy for the advancement of women in the UAE, which was launched in 2002, has contributed in shaping the institutional work to advance UAE women in order to effectively contribute in developing legislation, policy making and planning and setting up development programs. According to UAE's Constitution, Article (35) states that "The door for holding a public office is open to all citizens, on the basis of equal conditions, and in accordance with the provisions of the law. Performing the duties of a public office is a national service entrusted to the person holding that office. A public servant, while performing his/her duties, shall seek to achieve only the public interest". The Constitution emphasizes the right of every citizen to stand as a candidate and to vote. It regulates the legislative power in the country through a singular one council system - the Federal National Council (FNC), which, based on Article (68) of the Constitution, consists of 40 Members. Article (69) entrusted each Emirate with the decision to determine the method of selecting its own representatives in the FNC, based on the following criteria:

1. The Member must be a citizen of the Emirate he or she represents in the FNC and must reside permanently in that Emirate.
2. The Member, when selected, must be no less than 25 years of age according to Gregorian calendar.
3. The Member must be competent, with good character and unblemished reputation, and must not have previously been convicted of any criminal offence, unless he has been rehabilitated in accordance with the law.
4. The Member must be able to read and write adequately.

The above requirements do not distinguish between men and women. This led to a wide participation of women in the effective implementation of women's involvement in politics in 2006, in the first electoral process, and in the second electoral process in 2011. This is a milestone in the history of

the country, made possible by implementation of the Empowerment Program led by the President of the UAE. Women's participation during the two processes was very clear in organizing and monitoring, and, especially, in the nomination and voting processes. UAE women proved their tremendous ability to succeed in the political arena, and to have a serious and active participation in the sessions and legislative debates of the National Council.

In the efforts to build capacity and empower women politically, many courses and workshops were organized by women's organizations in the UAE in the area of political empowerment of women. The most notable among these initiatives was the launch by the GUW of the Political Preparedness Program (enhancing and revitalizing the role of women parliamentarians) for the years 2005-2007, in the area of empowering women, in cooperation with United Nations Development Fund for Women (formerly UNIFEM, currently, UN Women), and with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Some of the programs' objectives are to enhance women's participation in decision-making and empower women to be able to make changes and create a political environment favourable for achieving gender equality in all areas of national development. A series of programs and training workshops were held in different regions of the country to shape the skills of women leaders in the UAE to prepare them for the political work and help them share best practices and lessons learned. A large number of women attended the program and over 200 graduated with notable participation.

First elections for the Federal National Council were held in December 2006, in accordance with the decision (3) of 2006, by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, in response to the Supreme Council decision (4) of 2006 on determining the method of selecting UAE representatives in the Federal National Council. The decision stipulated that half of the members should be elected and the other half should be appointed by the Governors of respective Emirates. It also called for the establishment of the National Elections Committee, chaired by the Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs, and it established the terms of reference of the Committee.

Based on the wise leadership's strong belief in the importance of women's participation in public life and national action, UAE women are given great support and appreciation in various fields. Women's involvement in political

life through the Cabinet and through their membership in the Federal National Council reflects the extent of the awareness of the leadership and the people of the UAE, as well as their political maturity and strong faith in women's capabilities, and their total trust in women's ability as an effective partner in shaping the future of the country. Women's experience in the FNC is a qualitative leap in the parliamentary work. Giving women the opportunity to stand as a candidate and to vote is a clear message on the importance of women's presence in the political arena in the UAE, unlike women in other countries, where they had to fight for many years to realize their right to vote. The victory of Dr. Amal Al Qubaisi's as the first UAE woman to win a seat in the FNC is a proof of the trust people put in her. Afterwards, eight other women were appointed in the council, bringing the total number of seats held by women in the Council up to 9 seats, with a percentage of 22.5%, which is high compared to parliaments in other countries. During that time, the average of women representation in parliaments reached 9.3% in Arab countries and 17% in other countries. In the campaign for the 2006 elections, women played a prominent role. Two women chaired two of the 7 polling stations, where voting was held by the electoral authority. There were 65 registered women candidates in the electoral authority out of 456 candidates, which is about 14.4%. This was a positive indication of the confidence of the UAE women in the first election experiment in the country's history, and an awareness of their important role in the political arena, alongside their role in other areas, such as economic, social, health and educational, where women showed leadership in participation and performance.

In 2011, an election campaign was organized by the UAE, where women had a prominent role in expanding the preparations of the electoral authorities based on the vision of progression in political participation that guides the country's approach. According to the statistics, there was a noticeable increase in the number of women voters in the two election experiences. In the first, in 2006, the number was 1,162 women voters, a percentage of 17.6% of the total voters. In 2011, the number jumped to 60,000 women voters, a percentage of 46% of the total electorate. Out of 450 candidates, 83 women competed for the membership of the Federal National Council, a percentage of 18.4%. While only one woman won a seat in the council, six others were appointed, bringing the total to 7 seats, at a rate of 17.5%. By doing so, the UAE elevated its position globally in the area of women's representation in the parliament, and their engagement in the process of reviewing and amending legislation, and monitoring the

government's performance on the same basis as men. This is also a reflection of the commitment of UAE Government and society to the empowerment of UAE women, who proved their merit in the political arena since 2006, compared to the great results of the second electoral experience of 2011, characterized by large increase in the numbers of electorate, in accordance with vision of political progression that guides the State.

On the other hand, reports of the General Secretariat of the Federal National Council confirmed that performance of women members in the National Council was outstanding during the first experience, and their participation in the general sessions and the work of the council's committees surpassed the performance of other members, especially in negotiating and amending draft laws submitted by the Government, within the legislative powers of the Council, and in posing questions to government officials, within the monitoring role of the Council, especially, in the matters of health and legal rights. Moreover, women chaired many standing and interim committees of the council, participated in several international and regional conferences, and represented the UAE in international and regional parliaments, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, an international organization with 140 states, Arab Parliamentary Union and the Arab Transitional Parliament of the League of Arab State.

As for the role of media in promoting women's participation and raising the society's awareness of their important role, media has reflected the political visibility achieved by UAE women during the electoral process through promoting their electoral platform and programs, focusing on women's interaction with the voters through participation in fora and workshops organized by the media and cultural institutions in the UAE during the two electoral processes. Media also focused on analyzing the leadership role of women parliamentarians in discussing issues raised by the Federal National Council, which boosted awareness of the importance of effective participation of women in decision-making.

Furthermore, UAE women, locally, had a strong representation in the decision-making process in the local councils, such as in Sharjah, where in 2006, seven women were appointed to the membership of the Council, compared with five in 2001.

## **Challenges:**

The United Arab Emirates was established in 2 December 1971. Since then, the State continued to promote the participation of all its citizens, males and females, in the decision-making process. The UAE has developed a stable path to enable its citizens to build capacities through education, training and acquiring expertise. The UAE has succeeded in becoming one of the best countries in most areas. Since the seventies of the last century and prior to Beijing Conference in 1995, it continued to attach great importance to the advancement of women and establishing national mechanisms. Hence, it was not a coincidence for UAE's women to become a key partner in sustainable development; it was a strategic option by the State, until the right time had come for women to occupy their position in the decision-making process. The year 2006 was a milestone in the history of the legislative authority, where women realized the right to stand as a candidate and to vote in the elections for the Federal National Council.

## **2. Position of Power and Decision-Making.**

The importance of women's participation in the decision-making and occupying power positions at all levels, including federal and local governments and the private sectors, is increasingly being acknowledged in the UAE, which developed a set of legislative and executive measures that enable women to reach high-level positions in those areas. In 2006, two ministerial portfolios were handed to women. The number doubled to 4 ministerial portfolios in the cabinet shuffle in 2008 and 2013. Twelve women were also appointed to high leadership positions - Under-Secretary and Assistant Secretary- in 2013 compared to eight women in 2008. It should be noted here that UAE women occupied the post of Assistant Secretary as far back as two decades ago. Moreover, 2006 saw the appointment of the first woman Secretary General of the UAE cabinet. She played an important role in developing and follow-up of the implementation of the strategy of the UAE Government that prioritizes the government's action in all sectors, and further develops initiatives from all federal entities. She also actively participated in planning and implementing the restructure of the governmental system in order to elevate the efficiency and the effectiveness levels in a way that ensures achievement of the objectives of the government's overall strategy.

Women occupy 66% of posts in the governmental sector, 30% of which are in high leadership positions related to decision-making, and 15% are posts in technical and academic areas that include medicine, pharmaceutical and nursing, in addition to occupying various posts in the armed forces, police and customs.

In terms of women's participation in the diplomatic corps, the UAE recruited UAE women as diplomats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It also developed measures to enable women to balance their responsibilities towards work and family. UAE has 4 women ambassadors in Sweden, Spain, Montenegro and the permanent representative of the UAE to the UN, as well as a consul in China. There is one woman Minister Plenipotentiary of the highest category, 11 women at first secretary level, 16 women at second secretary level, 71 women at third secretary level, 47 attachés and 3 women counselors.

In 2008 amendments were made to the regulations of working in the judicial system, which enabled the appointment of women as judges and prosecutors. There are currently 2 women judges in the court of first instance, 2 women judges in the military court, two prosecutors, as well as 17 assistant prosecutors and a woman marriage official. Many women are being trained to work in the judicial system. Also, several others were appointed as advisers in fatwa and legislation department within the Ministry of Justice, as well as notaries-public in various State courts.

Notable achievements include the appointment for the first time of a woman to occupy the post of the first Deputy President of the Federal National Council. Also, for the first time, a woman was appointed in the Executive Council of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, who acted as the Director General of Abu Dhabi Educational Council. A UAE woman was appointed as the Director General of the Arab Women Organization, a regional organization of the League of Arab States. The President of Zayed University is a woman, and women are also members of the board of directors of UAE and Zayed Universities.

On 9 December 2012, UAE Cabinet issued a decree calling for women's representation to be mandatory in all boards of governmental corporations and bodies in the country. His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, tweeted on his twitter account that "Women have shown a great efficiency in all work

places. Today, we want their strong presence in decision-making positions in our institutions". In doing so, the UAE's international ranking in diminishing the gender gap was raised, and UAE became the number one Arab country in this area. Information indicates that women represent 22% of the governing bodies of the governmental agencies both federal and local, while this percentage drops to 1.5% in the boards of directors of the institutions listed in the State financial markets. Women hold between 3%-5% of the senior positions in boards of directors of companies and businesses in UAE, however, they lag behind in occupying the post of chairperson of the board of companies, where the percentage is less than 1%.

There are 21,000 businesswomen in the UAE, representing 10% of the total UAE private sector, where they run projects valued at 40 billion UAE Dirhams. Businesswomen also account for 15% of the membership of the board of directors of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the country.

### **Challenges:**

Transformation from traditional economy to knowledge based economy required major investments in human capital. The UAE recognized since its inception the importance of the advancement and empowerment of women. Tremendous progress has been achieved in the area of legislation, policies, measures and mechanisms on women issues. The UAE invested an enormous amount of funds in education, training and health, and also established national recruitment mechanisms aimed at recruiting nationals in all posts regardless of gender. All the initiatives were favourable to women, who also enjoyed political support from the able leadership of UAE. Those initiatives enabled women to hold senior posts in both public and private sectors.

### **3. Literacy for women.**

The UAE, since its inception, worked hard to eradicate illiteracy for all its citizens. It made strenuous efforts over the past decades that culminated in great results. The General Women's Union played a pivotal and leading role in women's literacy and in raising their cultural level, in cooperation with the UAE Ministry of Education and women's associations in the various Emirates. These extended efforts included urban and rural areas. Illiteracy among women in UAE declined from 90% to less than 24% between 1972/1973 and 1989/1990; then declined further to 7.6% in 2005 and to less

than 1% in 2013. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commended this decline and appreciated UAE's efforts in achieving the six goals of Education for All, adopted by the nations of the world in Dakar conference in 2000, to be achieved by all countries by 2015. The most important of which are expanding and improving the care and education in a comprehensive manner in early childhood; enabling all children to have access to quality primary education; ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adolescents are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and acquiring the skills necessary for life; reducing illiteracy rates for adults; in addition to realizing equal opportunities of basic and continuing education for adults.

The Ministry of Education provided planning, budgeting, curricula and teachers, as well as all the needed supplies. The campaign started with 43 study centers with 6,083 students. There were 13 women centers, with 1,387 students in 1972/1973. The number has grown to 128 centers for male and female students with more than 24,000 male and female students. The number of women centers reached 78 with 12,108 female students in 1989/1990.

The Council of Ministers adopted the decision 83/7 of 1989 on 20 February 1989, on the approval of a total literacy campaign. The campaign to eradicate illiteracy among women received a special attention from Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, President of the General Women's Union, who declared the year of 1988 as the year of launching literacy for UAE women. Based on that declaration all capabilities were used to achieve this goal. Moreover, practical steps were developed to implement this declaration in the best and most effective ways, notably:

1. Opening more literacy centers according to the geographical distribution, to ensure easy access of all women to this service.
2. Developing new ambitious plan to accommodate women whose various situations prevented their access to education.
3. Studying the obstacles to the total elimination of literacy.

The declaration focused on paying attention to the reading and writing skills and on encouraging women to finish their education up to the university level, through establishing education centers for adults, which were created to act as an inclusive school in the modern educational orientation, in terms

of the integrated curriculum to include literacy classes and classes for other education levels from primary to secondary.

That experiment was officially characterized in terms of preparation and implementation as follows:

1. Full-time services of members of educational faculties and administrative bodies.
2. Opening morning schools and extending appropriate scholastic hours to finish the required curricula.
3. Vocational programs to augment the literacy program and the education of the elderly.
4. Extending women education to include the secondary school level, so that they could pursue higher education at the Educational Qualifying Center in order to get a diploma or university degree.

Mainstreaming literacy is essential to progress at the social and economic levels. For that reason, the UAE Cabinet adopted decision 2843/2 of 1996 on the enrolment and admission in literacy and adult education centers, where all matters related to enrolling in literacy and adult education centers were identified in 8 chapters. Those chapters regulated: categories of persons accepted in the literacy and adult education centers, age of admission, registration dates, registration procedures and places, registration records and documents, transfer of students from literacy schools to adult education centers, transfer from day schools to literacy and adult education centers, admitting students from private schools into literacy and adult education centers, student absences, student expulsion and other general provisions.

The Ministry continued to develop adult education and literacy system to offer students suitable paths to fulfill functional and professional requirements and meet the demands of labour market and sustainable development, capitalizing on the positive energy of male and female students in the evening centers and specialized associations, and on their keen desire to contribute directly to the great advances of the UAE.

The UAE reported a significant increase in the literacy rate for adults aged 15 and above. The rate jumped from 71.2% in 1985 to 92.8% in 2005 according to UNESCO records, which indicates gender disparity against men in year 2005 compared to the year 1985, where the rate for males was 72.3% compared to 68.7% for females, with 0.95 gender parity index in

1985. In 2005 male rate was 89.5% compared to 91.5% female rate, with 1.02 gender parity index in 2005.

Rates of youth literacy aged 15-24, were higher than rates of adult literacy in 2005, which indicates the increase in opportunities to access primary and secondary education among UAE youths. Rates of youth literacy reached 95% compared to adult literacy, which was 90% in 2005. According to the forecasts of UNESCO, there will be a significant improvement in literacy rate for adults between 2005-2015 in the UAE. UNESCO estimates the rate to increase from 95% in 2005 to 99.5% in 2015.

UNESCO records also show that there was a gender disparity against young males from 1985 to 2005, where male rate was 81% compared to 84.5% female rate, with 1.04 gender parity index in 1985, while male rate was 93.6% compared to 97% female rate, with 1.04 gender parity index in 2005. UNESCO expects that the UAE will achieve gender parity by 2015, with a gender parity index of 0.99% in 2015.

### **Challenges:**

The UAE Constitution provided for compulsory education in the primary stage, and was extended to include the second stage (to 9<sup>th</sup> grade). There has been a trend to extend the compulsory education to the end of high school. Eradicating illiteracy has not been an easy task for the UAE. However, efforts made on both the official and grassroots levels, and the people's desire to compensate the deprivation of education prior to the UAE federation, made everyone recognize the benefits of education, especially women. Families and the community also had a big role in enhancing the desire to receive education. Continuity in the official and non-official literacy program enabled women to achieve their literacy; this is evidenced by the international indicators and by the gains the UAE has achieved through its efforts in the field of education, in general, and women literacy, in particular.

## **Part II: Progress made in Implementing Critical Areas of Concern of the Platform for Action since 2009.**

### **A. Persistent and Growing Burden of Poverty on Women**

#### **Accomplishments:**

There is no poverty in the UAE (Millennium Goals 2011). The prosperous economic level of the UAE community and per capita gross domestic product, 132.3 Dirhams, make for the well being of UAE people, which was confirmed in the World Happiness Report, where the UAE ranked number one among Arab countries. The UAE advanced in the overall ranking to number 14 internationally in the report of 2013. UAE also occupied the second place among Arab countries and the 14<sup>th</sup> place internationally, among 187 countries, in the Global Human Development Report of 2014.

The global financial crisis did not affect UAE, where the economic growth and the government expenditure continued. It ranked number 3 internationally in the government expenditure index and number 3 internationally in the people's trust in politicians, according to the Global Competitiveness Report.

The UAE protects all segments of society who are vulnerable to poverty. The Ministry of Social Affairs launched the social security program, which receives requests for financial aid from all strata of society with special needs, such as, but not limited to, women, children, elderly, youth and orphans. There are approximately 20 centers around the country that receive these requests, in addition to the possibility of submitting the requests electronically. The Ministry provided monthly financial assistance to 48,582 women in 2009, the number increased to 54,205 women in 2010 and decreased to 38,497 women in 2013. The amounts were 1,540,000,000 UAE Dirhams in 2009, 1,507,000,000 UAE Dirhams in 2010 and 1,148,000,000 in 2013.

In 2012, President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, established a 10 billion AED Settlement Fund to pay Debts of Low-Income Citizens. The goals of the Fund include eliminating personal loans that burden low-income

citizens, with a view to promoting the concept of saving through rational consumption and tying expenditures to income. The fund helps persons detained because of inability to pay back their loans, persons with judicial rulings against them, persons whose cases are being dealt by the courts, persons who were reported to police or persons who have difficulty to pay back their loans and who apply for help in reaching a settlement of their debts.

Emirates Red Crescent has provided many services to most needy segments of the society, especially to the non-national families. It launched "Save Grace project" (Hifidh Al Ni'ma), which provides various permanent aid to needy families, women who take care of orphans, widows and divorced women. It also provides some 800 dry food boxes monthly, and 175,000 cooked food meals annually to families in need. In addition, it provided clothes for 300 families in 2013.

The Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation has helped many segments of the society, mainly families who are the most in need, orphans, widows, divorced women, indigent students and persons with disabilities, and has supported families of citizens who run medium projects. Within the foundation, there is a program that provides subsidized basic foods for persons throughout the year, and it provides 13,000 UAE Dirhams per family year round, including subsidized food stuffs, such as rice, flour, dates, cooking oils, juices, water, tomato paste and fruit juice.

The Foundation supports productive families through purchasing and marketing their products and presenting them in trade fairs, and through utilizing their services in preparing meals during the month of Ramadan, which is financed by the Foundation, a project from which the productive families profit.

Zakat Fund (Alms-giving fund) launched in 2012 Da'em Project (Supporter Project) to assist national and non-national families who struggle to meet basic necessities of life. In 2013 the fund provided 36,000,000 UAE Dirhams to about 20,000 nationals and non-national, compared to 13,000,000 UAE Dirhams in 2012. One of the projects launched by the fund is "You may think them to be wealthy" for the most needy families, where 219 persons benefited from the fund in 2009, and the number increased to 838 persons in 2013.

The Community Development Committee in Dubai provides social benefits and financial support and aid to citizens in order to empower national families socially.

Retired women in the UAE enjoy privileges that enable them to keep up with their life necessities. UAE retirees, either in the government or private sectors, receive retirement emoluments as legal rights, which are equally as important as the benefits they receive during their actual service. UAE Government does not regard pensions as donations or financial aid; rather, it provides them with the same legal protection granted to salaries and wages, in order to provide the retirees with economic security and social stability. For that reason, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, has enacted a decision to raise the minimum retirees' pensions to 10,000 UAE Dirhams as of January 2012.

Education in the UAE is free. The Government is responsible for all education costs of all stages for national students, from kindergarten to secondary school, as well as at the university and graduate levels. The State pays monthly salaries to students at the university level and above inside and outside the country. As for non-national students seeking university and higher education, who face financial difficulties, their tuitions are fully paid by charities, such as Emirates Red Crescent, the Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan Charity and Humanitarian Foundation, Zakat Fund, the Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Foundation and other charities. According to statistics, those charities have undertaken considerable efforts in assisting thousands of students who are orphans, from low-income families, children of prisoners, children of divorced women and abandoned wives, by providing financial and in-kind assistance in order to improve the students' financial conditions and to create a good environment to double their efforts and their educational gains.

Health Care is free in the UAE as well to all nationals and non-nationals. It is provided through an inclusive health insurance for all citizens and for non-national government workers. The government requires the private sector to provide health insurance for its workers. While there are some expatriate groups that may face financial difficulties and cannot afford comprehensive health care, the aforementioned charities, on the other hand, bear all the costs of medical treatment.

The Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs has launched “Absher” Initiative to promote the participation of national personnel, with a view to implementing guidelines of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, to provide all means of stability and welfare for UAE citizens, by enhancing their participation in the labor market, and to provide job opportunities for UAE citizens based on a clear strategy that is integrated under the principles of the UAE Vision 2021. By creating more job opportunities for UAE citizens, it will boost the competitive advantage of the national economy, while simultaneously enhancing the socio-economic and professional standards of Emiratis and diversifying their career options. The initiative is built on four strategic pillars in order to achieve its objectives: Creation of job opportunities for UAE citizens; Training and Development; Counseling and Vocational Guidance; and Encouraging the UAE citizens to work in the private sector.

### **Challenges:**

The progress achieved in the policies of recruiting women nationals in the private sector notwithstanding; no improvements were noticed in salaries, promotions and work conditions. Many women continue to be employed in low paying, jobs with fewer advantages compared to the public sector. Federal Act (13) of 1974 on pensions and retirement benefits for clerks and civil servants establishes that the period of service in an office in order for the clerks to be granted pension is no less than 15 years. And a retiree is entitled to receive his pension when he is 55 years old. While there are many women who retire before reaching 55, they receive no pension until they reach that age, which subjects them to financial problems that worsen their living conditions.

## **B. Educating and Training of Women**

### **Accomplishments:**

Education in the UAE is a right for everyone. The Constitution guarantees in Article 17 that “Education shall be a fundamental factor for the progress of society. It shall be compulsory in its primary stage and free at all stages, within the Federation. Under the law necessary plans shall be developed for the promotion and the universalization of education at various levels and for the eradication of illiteracy.” The Cabinet of UAE has approved the

reorganization of the State's primary education, and the extension of the compulsory education to 9 years, which is the key stage of the educational ladder that includes in its first phase 5 year and in its second phase 4 years. The government of UAE is looking towards issuing a new law that extends compulsory education to the end of secondary (high) school.

The political leadership showed a strong commitment toward implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, to achieve universal education through developing necessary policies aimed at reforming educational system to bring it in line with the latest developments in science and technology, and to promote national culture and identity. Accordingly, efficient resources were allocated to advance the educational process in its key pillars, the student, the teacher, the curriculum and the educational environment. Appropriations for education programs at the elementary, secondary, university and higher level amounted to approximately 9.8 billion UAE Dirham, which was 21% of the Federal Government budget for the 2014 fiscal year.

The education sector is seeking to develop an all inclusive educational system that includes everyone and excludes no one in the UAE, to prepare the students to become good citizens and participate in the sustainable development of the country, where they could address problems and meet challenges ahead. Education indicators increased in all stages of learning because of this trend. The Ministry of Educational has implemented since 2005 an efficient and ambitious strategy. The number of private and public schools increased in the 2011-2012 school year. These schools have about 859,229 students in all stages, with 270,918 students in public schools, where girls account for 52.2% of them. The UAE provides opportunities to all communities to establish their own schools. It also provides free university education to all citizens, males and females, either in local universities or abroad, where the government bears all expenses. As for non-national students, the government provides university education opportunities through public and local universities.

The government's efforts in building public schools and increasing the number of the private schools, institutes, colleges and universities have helped in increasing opportunities for women to go to schools, which left a positive effect on women's educational indicators, as shown below:

1. Women percentage compared to men's in the first stage (1-5):

Women percentage to men has increased in the first stage to 95.4% in the 2009/2010 school year, compared to the year 1990, which was 93%, with an annual growth of 0.13 during that period.

2. Women percentage compared to men's in the second stage (6-9):

The percentage in this stage has decreased from 106% in 1990 to 94.5% in the 2009/2010 school year. The percentage, nonetheless, remained within the desired level.

3. Women percentage to men's in the secondary school:

While the percentage has decreased in secondary school from 115% in 1990 to 104.9% in the 2009/2010 school year, it remained higher than the targeted rate in 2015, where women and men percentages would be equal.

4. Women percentage to men's in the university:

Women percentage in universities reached 144.1% between 1990-2010, which is one of the highest in the world, due to the encouragement of girls to learn by the government and the families, and also due to men's early joining of the labor market.

5. Percentage of educated women to educated men:

The UAE is one of the few countries where the percentage of literate women exceeds the percentage of literate men in the age group 15-24. It reached 103.6% in 2010, compared to 100.5% in 1990.

### **Challenges:**

It may be said that gender equality in education index values have been achieved, or almost achieved, during the planned period. From now on, focus must be placed on the quality of education, especially on improving curricula that consider gender mainstreaming from kindergarten to university, and on capacity building for teachers and workers.

## **C. Women and Health**

### **Accomplishments:**

The UAE made significant progress and witnessed an accelerated growth in health service sector during the last four decades, which impacted the individual's health. The government provides free health services for all, nationals and non-nationals. The State established a wide network of hospitals and health care centers to ensure health care in all stages and specialties throughout the country. Thanks to its intensive efforts, the government was able to improve many indicators related to the status of women in health. There was a significant reduction in the number of deaths of women, as well as in the mortality rates of women of childbearing age and infant and children mortality, while there was an increase of life expectancy for both men and women.

Public and private UAE health institutions - the Ministry of Health, Health Authority in Abu Dhabi, Dubai Health and Medical Services Authority, medical services in the armed forces and medical services in petroleum companies, have worked to extend their services base to reach all parts of the country, based on the concept of providing inclusive health care as a key to an exceptional therapeutic, preventative, promotional and rehabilitative services.

The Government has adopted operational programs and policies with a view to improving indicators for family health, in general, and for women and children, in particular. The government has the following goals:

1. To provide primary and specialized universal health care to all UAE citizens.
2. To sustain better primary and secondary health care services.
3. To reduce mortality rate and increase life expectancy for all, and reduce diseases and accidents.
4. To reduce communicable and infectious diseases for children, especially for school children.
5. To early detect and treat chronic diseases.
6. To provide necessary care to persons with special needs.
7. To establish specialized centers and diagnostic and therapeutic units.

8. To develop a professional body for information and data to plan, track and evaluate health performance of the government.
9. To pursue health strategies and to regulate precise specifications for therapeutic centers, and provide them with up-to-date equipment and instruments to keep abreast with the latest scientific developments and achievements.
10. According to the changes in universal concepts toward health, the UAE has included reproductive health concept in its systems in a way that does not limit maternal and child health services to women during pregnancy or childbearing, but to include all mothers and girls in all ages and adolescent girls and boys.
11. Maternal and child services and programs are the cornerstone of enhancing maternal and child health and well-being. These services are given special attention in the development and growth strategies in the UAE, and are provided through a network of maternal and child centers and units manned with well qualified doctors and nurses and equipped with the latest technologies. The UAE implements early detection programs to monitor mother and child health and provide immediate and efficient treatment and periodic follow-up, in order to protect this important group of the society from deaths and mental or physical disabilities.
12. Centers and units are available in all regions in the country. They conduct a continuous training to health care providers by developing training plans in all areas of maternal and child services to build capacity. Educational and health programs are implemented by these centers in all health areas related to woman and child in schools, universities and women's groups in order to raise awareness among all members of the society, in particular, workers in the area of motherhood. This has contributed to decreasing maternal mortality due to pregnancy and childbirth to zero. Reports indicate that there has been no maternal mortality since 2004. Moreover, childbirths in hospitals reached 99.9% and under specialized medical supervision. This rate is considered one of the highest in the world.

Follow up and routine checks are done periodically during pregnancy, according to the care for pregnant women protocol, which includes the following:

1. Special instructions on caring for pregnant women and identifying the factors that may be dangerous during pregnancy. This step helps to early detect such cases, which require the immediate referring of the women to hospitals to be supervised in order to avoid any complications that may affect the health of mother and child.
2. Early detection measures for risk factors during pregnancy.
3. Health education and nutritional advice.
4. Caring for mothers after delivery.

According to the reports of the Ministry of Health, AIDS is not a health problem in the UAE. Since early 1980's, the Government continued to take drastic actions to prevent the entry and spread of this disease through implementation of programs to fight AIDS. The Ministry of Health is taking a series of preventive measures, including precautionary measures to ensure that this disease does not enter the country from abroad, relying on local blood donors and using the latest technologies for blood and human tissues and organs. Attention is being focused on developing specialized tests for the most vulnerable groups to this disease, which include testing couples about to get married for AIDS.

The Government is endeavoring to reduce child mortality rate, which has decreased in children under 5 from 14.4 per 1000 live births in 1990 to 9.1 per 1000 live births in 2009. Infant mortality rates also fell from 11.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to approximately 6.9 deaths in 2009. In 1998, proportion of 1-year-old children or younger immunized against measles was 88% and it increased to 98% in 2009.

The Ministry of Health has launched a number of advanced national programs, such as counseling prior to wedding, early detection of breast cancer, early detection of cervical cancer and a program to promote and protect breastfeeding.

### **Challenges:**

In order to sustain UAE's accomplishments in the area of women's health, focus must be placed on the quality of services provided to women in all age groups, and on expansion and promotion of those services regularly, through financial resources and specialties of the services and the capacity development of the caregivers. Emphasis should be given as well to enhancing and expanding health educational programs and encouraging

healthy patterns among children and adolescents, and to developing a health database for women at the national level.

#### **D. Violence against Women.**

##### **Accomplishments:**

The UAE attaches the utmost importance to human rights issues, particularly human trafficking phenomenon and violence against women. The Government has declared preventive and punitive measures on anyone who attempts to hurt women, including legislations, policies and initiatives, which are improved when necessary. The Government issued Federal Act of 1987 to combat special forms of violence against women, which was amended by Federal Acts (34) of 2005 and (52) of 2006. The Federal Act (51) of 2006 was issued on combating human trafficking.

The State has established shelters for women and children victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in different Emirates, which work under the umbrella of the Emirates Red Crescent. Moreover, the UAE National Committee to combat Human Trafficking was established in order to extend the scope of implementing combating human trafficking laws, in cooperation with relevant bodies in the seven Emirates of the Federation, such as Immigration department, Residency Directorate, police and judiciary and the Department of Public Prosecution. The UAE utilizes a special system to control immigration and passport issues to monitor crimes of human trafficking, including strengthening entry procedures for children and monitoring procedures for women from countries with highest rates of women trafficking in sexual abuse networks. The State is not only making efforts in issuing legislation, enhancing laws and coordinating with relevant bodies, but is also providing support for the victims of human trafficking crimes, as they play no role in such crimes and they have to bear their consequences. In this context, the Government provides shelters and care to the victims until the time they depart the country.

The UAE Government has adopted, in 2012, a national strategy based on five key pillars: precaution and prevention, prosecution, punishment, protection of victims and promotion of international cooperation to reduce

human trafficking crimes. The campaign expanded its activities to include combating human trafficking in the airports of UAE cities, hosting raising-awareness workshops to educate private sector institutions on what is considered to be human trafficking and how to avoid its risks during the employment process, in addition to enhancing collaboration with the international society and international organizations in the area of human trafficking. This official campaign had positive results and accomplishments: 19 cases were recorded at public prosecutor's office according to Law (51) of 2006, 24 victims were reported and 50 traffickers were punished. The number of reports filed at the Ministry of Interior was approximately 27.

The UAE Government established a family court in Sharjah and an office for settlement of family disputes in 2014. Cases related to divorce, the right to see the children after the divorce, alimony and support and marital disputes and other family matters were referred to this court. "Qawareer", a center dedicated for the protection of women, was established within the Department of Social Services in 2011 in Sharjah. The center aims at providing a decent life for women, making them aware of their rights and enabling them to live independently and in dignity through providing a healthy living environment. It hosts the women temporarily, where their physiological and social needs are met, until their situation improves. Women victims of violence are rehabilitated socially, psychologically and vocationally in this center and reintegrated into the society.

### **Challenges:**

There is no clear and common national definition of the concept of violence against women. It is required, therefore, to develop an explicit definition that is consistent with the nature of the UAE society and its cultural specificity. There is a significant lack of data and information on violence against women for this reason, specialized researches and studies should be undertaken to better understand the root causes of all forms of violence against women and legislations should be developed to prevent violence against women.

## **E. Women and armed conflict**

### **Accomplishments:**

The UAE has implemented initiatives aimed at reducing the impacts of the armed conflicts on Syrian refugee women and girls in countries neighboring Syria, such as Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq due to the conflict in Syria.

Below is a brief outline of UAE's efforts through Emirates Red Crescent in this matter:

- An Emirates - Jordanian camp was established in Mrajeeb Al Fahood in Jordan for the Syrian refugees, which could receive 25,000 refugees in 5 phases, in cooperation with Jordan. The camp consists of about 2,770 caravans, numerous pre constructed buildings for sheltering the refugees, 4 school for girls and boys, main and sub storages and administrative offices. There is also the infrastructure, like roads, yards, water and electricity networks and wastewater purification plants; in addition, there is a field hospital with distinct specifications, which provides high quality health care and treatment. Grants are being distributed by the camp to the refugees to meet their needs. Camp officials check the refugees' needs from clothes to food, where 3 meals are being served daily. A training center was opened in the camp by the Norwegian council and UNICEF, which offers technical and vocational training sessions to the Syrian youth refugees. The camp also provides psychological support for women and children who suffered through the war in Syria, in collaboration with a number of international organizations, such as "Ardh Ilbashar" organization (Terre des Hommes), which aims at reintegrating and psychologically rehabilitating children who suffer from trauma. Moreover, a women training facility was established for sewing, embroidery and handcrafts.
  
- The UAE has opened, through Emirates Red Crescent and in cooperation with the Government of Kurdistan region in Iraq and UNHCR, a camp housing 150 Syrian family who have drifted to Kurdistan.

- Emirates Red Crescent has organized a relief campaign to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which included foods, blankets and winter clothing.

## **F. Women and the Economy**

### **Accomplishments:**

The Government of the United Arab Emirates is working through federal government and local institutions, and through encouraging the private sector and civil society institutions to support women's economic participation in the areas of labour market entrepreneurship. This is being implemented by developing motivating economic policies, building women's capacity, providing them with training and advancement, as well as granting them necessary soft loans to launch their small, medium and micro projects financed through available funds set for this purpose. During the first half of 2013, the number of women entrepreneurs in UAE went up to 20,000 women, with a growth of 100% compared with 2011, and 58% compared to 2012. Women entrepreneur's sector constitutes 10% of the total Emirati private sector. Meanwhile, women entrepreneurs constitute 15% of the total board members of Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the country with a growth of 13% in 2012. The total value of the investment projects owned and managed by women entrepreneurs is 40 billion UAE Dirhams, and it is expected to go up to 50 billion UAE Dirhams within the next two years.

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued a Federal Act No. 2 of (2014) on small and medium project. The Act sets forth provisions and regulates relations between official state institutions and owners of small and medium projects. It aims at developing small and medium project and enterprises in order to become essential support for the economic development for the country, promoting and encouraging research, creativity and innovation cultures, as well as business leadership, which fulfills the economic aspirations of the country, coordinating the efforts of the concerned parties to develop small and medium projects and enterprises and enhancing the competition among them in order to provide job opportunities for the national economy. The Act also helps to develop programs and initiatives aiming at flourishing small and medium project and enterprises, to stimulate and support citizens to have an access to labour market in the areas of small and medium projects and enterprises to contribute to the gross

domestic product for the country, and to strengthen the status of the UAE as a center for business leadership and the establishment of projects and enterprises.

Federal Act No. 9 of (2011) approved part-time work system with a total lump sum payment based on the vacancy. This will provide bigger opportunities for women to reconcile family and work life. In 2010, the Cabinet adopted a decree to provide childcare and housing allowance for women whose husbands are unemployed. The decree also states that women workers who support their children shall receive 60% bonus for housing; in addition to offering recent widows 4 months and 10 days off in view of their situation. The Government applies a flexible working-hour-system for women, particularly in the ministries with a specialized nature of work “shift-system”, where equality of rights and duties prevails for all the children of the citizen workers.

The Federal Authority for Government Human Resources conducted a study on the needs of working women in the governmental sector included 7000 employees in the federal government on 28 April 2011. The study concluded that the most prominent challenges facing workingwomen are balancing between family and work, the male domination on senior-level managerial positions and lack of training and guidance. General Women’s Union has organized a forum, devoted to the theme “Working Women: Opportunities and Challenges”, during which many subjects related to workingwomen were reviewed. Indicators that emerged from the forum concluded that the participation of the citizen workingwomen in the federal government was 65% of labour force. Women also occupied high-level leadership and supervisory positions in civil service ministries and technical fields. In the Ministry of Education, women accounted for approximately 75% of labour force, and the percentage was almost the same in the Ministry of Health.

The Cabinet adopted a decree No. 130/6/9 of (2012) through which the Ministry of Social Affairs was assigned to establish a Specialized Committee for the employment of people with disabilities. The Committee was mandated to set necessary policies and procedures to employ those with special needs, particularly in the private sector, and empower them to establish feasible projects with economic output. Her Excellency Mrs. Maryam Al Rumi, Minister for Social Affairs, adopted a decision to establish a specialized committee for the disabled chaired by Under-Secretary for the Ministry of Social Affairs, to set forth necessary policies and requirements for the employment of people with disabilities, in order to

achieve the greatest possible efficiency with ensuring the continuity of work for a longer period. The decision has entrusted the Committee with the task of encouraging and supporting people with disabilities qualified to establish feasible projects with economic output, providing information on available grants and soft loans and the ways to access them, providing information on labour market, available jobs and their future aspirations. The Committee undertakes also preparing studies on professions and jobs in line with the technical developments and the needs of the labour market, encouraging and providing guidance for the private sector to train and empower those with special needs with appropriate support, within capacity limits, as well as proposing the necessary procedures to protect people with disabilities from all forms of exploitation at work.

The Committee members include representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, the National Human Resources development and Employment Authority, the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources, the Emirates Nationals Development Programme, the Community Development Authority in Dubai, the Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services.

“Absher” an initiative by the Ministry of Presidential Affairs was launched to promote the participation of the nationals, upon instructions of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Head of State, to set an inclusive strategic framework for the national’s employment with an integrated and clear vision that supports the principles of Emirates Vision for 2021. This initiative raises the level of the nationals’ participation in the labour force market, creates job opportunities on the national level and achieves a competitive advantage for the national economy, which consequently, achieves family and social stability and diversifies work fields. The initiative is based on four strategic pillars; serve to achieve the desired goals of the initiative, which are: creating job opportunities for UAE nationals; training and development; counseling and vocational guidance; and encouraging the UAE citizens to work in the private sector.

### **Challenges:**

The challenges facing this aspect are: taking the necessary measures to consider the gender perspective in macroeconomic policy-making,

facilitating employment opportunities for women, inter alia, through promoting adequate social protection, simplifying the administrative procedures, removing the financial barriers, as appropriate, promoting and protecting women workers' rights and taking actions to remove structural and legal barriers that hinder gender equality at work.

### **G. Women in Positions of Power and Decision-making:**

#### **Achievements:**

Acknowledgment of the importance of women's full participation in decision-making and power positions in the UAE is growing significantly. Such participation engulfs all sectors of life and at all levels, including federal, local and private sectors. The state has also introduced a number of legislative and procedural measures that enable women to reach the top positions in these fields. It has also appointed two lady ministers in 2006 and the number has doubled in the consecutive governments of 2008 and 2013 respectively. On the other hand, the year 2013 witnessed the appointment of 12 ladies in senior leadership positions in several ministries and governmental bodies such as Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister, compared to 8 women in the year 2008.

It is worth mentioning that the UAE women have been appointed as undersecretaries since more than two decades, and the first lady appointed as the Secretary General of the UAE Cabinet was in year 2006, who plays an important role in developing and following up the UAE strategy for setting the priorities of the government work in all sectors and developing initiatives undertaken by all federal institutions, besides the effective participation in planning and executing the restructure of the government apparatus to increase its efficiency and effectiveness in order to achieve the overall strategy of the government.

Women constitute 66% of government workforce, 30% of which in leadership decision-making positions and 15% in professional academic roles including medicine, pharmacy, nursing as well as their involvement in other important roles in the armed forces, police and customs authorities.

The UAE has also paved the way for women's participation in the diplomatic corps through Ministry of Foreign Affairs and introduced measures to reconcile family and professional responsibilities, which enabled women to work in the political sphere. Four Emirati women were appointed as ambassadors to Sweden, Spain, Montenegro and as the permanent representative of the UAE to the United Nations, in addition to a lady consul in China and a lady senior plenipotentiary minister plus 11 women as first secretary, 16 women as second secretary, 71 women as third secretary and 47 attachées and 3 lady advisers.

The government embarked in 2008 on making serious adjustments to judiciary labor laws in order to allow women to enter the judicial field as women judges and prosecutor. As a result, there are now in the UAE two women judges in the First Instance Court, and two women judges in the military court and two prosecutors, 17 assistant attorneys and marriage registrars, plus a considerable number of women are being qualified to work in the judiciary field. There have been several appointments of women consultants in the Fatwa and Legislation Department at the Ministry of Justice and the writers of justice in the various state courts.

For the first time in the history of the Federal National Council, a lady has been appointed as the first deputy of the President of the Federal National. Also for the first time a lady has been appointed in the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi, who also heads the Abu Dhabi Education Council. Moreover, women have been appointed in senior positions such as Director-General of the Arab Women Organization, which is a regional organization affiliated to the League of Arab States, President of Zayed University, and as members of the boards of directors of the United Arab Emirates University and Zayed University.

The UAE cabinet issued on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2012 the decision of compulsory representation of women in all corporate boards and government bodies across the state. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Vice President of the UAE, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai tweeted on his personal account "Women proved themselves in many workplaces and today we want them to have a strong presence in decision-making positions in our institutions". With this decision, the UAE's rank moved up at the international level with regard to reducing gender gap after the UAE ranked as the first in this area among the Arab countries.

Statistics show that 22% of the boards of directors of government agencies, whether federal or local, are female; whereas in boards of directors of companies listed in the financial markets it does not exceed 1.5%. Women hold 3% to 5% of the top jobs of the boards of directors and business ownerships in the UAE; however this percentage decreases to less than 1% when it comes to occupying the post of corporate chairperson. There are 21,000 business ladies, and women account for 10% of the UAE private business sector, as they run their projects worth over AED 40bn. On the other hand, women business owners account for 15% of chambers of commerce and industry boards in the UAE.

### **Challenges:**

The government still needs to encourage the implementation of measures designed to achieve gender balance in appointing women and men in the decision-making bodies at all levels.

## **H – Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women**

### **Achievements:**

The UAE established several national mechanisms to handle women's issues in line with its commitment to gender equality and the goals and objectives contained in the Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995. Such mechanisms achieved a tremendous progress in the initiatives, programs and activities promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and also managed, through individual and collective efforts and with the great support received from the UAE Government, to integrate gender mainstreaming into legislations, policies, programs and projects.

The national mechanisms built many successful partnerships with various local, federal, regional and international government agencies in gender issues and took practical steps to achieve gender equality. National mechanisms on women's issues cooperated with the Ministry of State for National Council Affairs for empowering women politically, and organized workshops, seminars and lectures to prepare UAE Women for the process of nomination and election held for the legislative session of the year 2011.

A consultative committee on women working at the government sector was formed at the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources in year 2001 for the purpose of studying the needs of working women in the government sector and reviewing working women laws. Then the committee proposes the necessary amendments, and follows up on the implementation of initiatives and regulations related to supporting women's employment environment, motivating and increasing her productivity, and providing her with access to the best international practices in this regard. This will help in achieving women's goals and dreams for the future, and asserting their right to work in a gender-sensitive environment, which enables them to increase their contributions for the benefit of the society and the country.

Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) formed a Women's Committee from its female employees for the purpose of creating a positive environment that promotes women's performance and enables them to come up with incentive initiatives that increase their satisfaction and loyalty to their work.

The General Women's Union initiated in 2013 a process for updating the national strategy for the advancement of women in the UAE, which was launched in 2002. A specialized team on women's issues is in charge of assessing what has been accomplished at all levels in the past few years, and of setting up a national strategy for women for the period 2014 to 2021. The 2014 to 2021 strategy will focus on women's quality of life in a society that achieved rapid economic and social growth rates and advanced global competitiveness level, especially in the field of the advancement of women. In 2011, the Women Protection Center (Qawareer) was established at the Department of Social Services in Dubai with a view to providing women with decent life and raising her awareness of her rights in order to enable her to live independently with dignity in a suitable environment that fulfills her physiological, social and security needs on a temporary basis until her conditions are improved. The Center also facilitates for women and girls who are victims of violence to be rehabilitated socially, psychologically and professionally and be reintegrated into society.

National mechanisms on women's issues in the UAE, especially the General Women's Union (GWU), build partnerships with regional and international organizations. At the international level, the GWU entered into partnership with FAO in 2014 for organizing workshops and training programs for women who want to set up small and medium agricultural projects. In 2013, the GWU also built partnership with the UN Women to organize workshops

for building capacities and economic empowerment for rural women. Such workshops were very successful and attracted high attendance. The efforts of the UAE in the areas of advancement and integration of women in development put the woman in the center of attention on the national level international levels. The UAE became more interested in international bodies and mechanisms focusing on women's issue such as the UN Women, to which the UAE has donated \$ 5 million and was elected as member of its executive board in 2013.

As part of the modernization project of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, the Research and Development Department at the GWU organized a workshop on April 29, 2012, which focused on the importance of women's political empowerment and of assuming leadership positions, as an important means for women to contribute to the decision-making process and express their opinions and needs. Therefore the UAE National Strategy for the Advancement of Women for the period 2014-2021 include initiatives and programs which aim at eliminating the stereotypical attitudes and behaviors that limited the roles of women in certain fields.

The Research and Development Department also organized, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor, a special ceremony for national female workers in the private sector on the occasion of the International Workers' Day on May 1, 2012. The ceremony included a number of events presented by students, such as "Ahlan Emarati" concert. An exhibition for productive families was also organized on the sidelines of the ceremony. Under the modernization project of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women, the Research and Development Department also organized a workshop on May 15, 2012 to discuss the present services and social care provided to women in the UAE in order to identify the most important emerging needs and propose programs and projects aiming at empowering women in various fields, in order to be included in the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE for the next five years. The representatives of institutions providing social care and services to women attended the workshop.

### **Challenges:**

Taking measures to promote gender awareness in national mechanisms involved in women's issues and among the other civil society and private sector institutions to encourage them to assume their social responsibilities and disseminate gender-sensitive information.

## **I - Women's Human Rights**

### **Achievements:**

The UAE acceded to the international human rights covenants, treaties and protocols relating to gender equality. The government also works hand in hand with civil society organizations to promote a culture of human rights in general and women's rights in particular.

Since its establishment, the UAE is constantly issuing legislations and amendments thereto that give women special protection and eliminate any discrimination against them. In 2011, the government amended legislations to grant citizenship to the children of the UAE women who married foreigners, where the presidential decree stated:

- The equal treatment of the children of women citizens without discrimination in education, health or employment.
- The children of women citizens shall enjoy the right to acquire the UAE nationality when they become 18-year-old.

The statistics of the Ministry of Interior indicate that 2047 children of women citizens were granted the UAE nationality since the presidential decree has been issued. Children of women citizens of unknown fathers and abandoned children enjoy the same rights under this decree.

The UAE Cabinet issued Resolution No. 269/2 for year 2009 concerning the National Committee on International Humanitarian Law, chaired by the Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs, and its work plan for 2011-2012, which included the formation of the three committees. The Information, Guidance and Publishing Committee, is one of these committees which aims at disseminating, in coordination with national media organizations, information on the role of the National Committee among the citizens and residents of the UAE and its terms of reference and international law. The Committee also organizes field visits to high schools, the colleges of law, politics and media as well as military academies to raise their awareness of the activities of the National Committee and international law. The Information Committee also documents data and statistics relating to the contributions made by the National Committee at the national level. The Information Committee had also established a documentation and information center inside the Committee, which contains documents and reports on international humanitarian law in addition to the latest

publications and related research. The Training and Education Committee seeks to incorporate international humanitarian law as a separate topic in the military training programs and in university curricula for the students of law, politics and media. It also aims at establishing a postgraduate diploma in international humanitarian law, and identifying the contents and concepts of international humanitarian law to be included in the curricula of pre-university education, in coordination with the Ministry of Education.

The UAE Cabinet issued Resolution No. 29 of 2010 which prohibits concerned bodies from rejecting employment of persons living with HIV/AIDS due to their illness, as long as their health conditions allow them to perform their job duties and the nature of their work does not pose a threat to public health, according to the decision of the relevant committee, unless there are other reasons not to do so.

The Resolution also included a national program for combating HIV, "AIDS", which requires the establishment and operation of unanimous voluntary testing centers according to the standards specified in the program. The program allows any person to conduct voluntarily unanimous free tests at any specialized center or institution accredited by the program for the purpose of detection of HIV infection. In these cases individuals who take the tests are not compelled to identify themselves.

This 7-chapter resolution prohibited placing restrictions or special conditions on people living with the HIV virus that prevent their access to the rights granted to all members of the society according to the UAE applicable laws, unless it contradicts with the provisions of other laws. The resolution also emphasized that the employing organizations of the persons who live with HIV virus must ensure that the nature of their work does not change and that they are not dismissed or forced to retire, unless their condition conflicts with the requirements of their work or if their continued attendance at work poses a threat to the public health as determined by the relevant medical committee. The resolution also, which includes 25 articles, considers the infection with HIV/ AIDS which impedes carrying out work duties fall under the reasons of being unfit to work, provided that it is supported by a decision issued by the relevant medical committee.

The General Women's Union (GWU) is the national mechanism entrusted with women's issues. The GWU is an active member of the National Committee for the Preparation of the Universal Periodic Report on Human Rights, and is headed by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. "Know

Your Rights” is one of the important and continued initiatives which received full cooperation from the GWU, the Ministry of Justice and civil society organizations. The initiative, which is very popular, aims at spreading the culture of women's rights in all corners of the UAE. It includes lectures, workshops, seminars and brochures for educating on treaties related to women's rights. The UAE laws equated between men and women in employment grades and salaries. Article 20 of Federal Decree No. 9 for year 2011 pertaining to the provisions of the Federal Law No. 11 of 2008 on human resources of the federal government stipulates that “all ministries should have a unified chart for grades and salaries issued by the Cabinet upon the proposal of the Federal Authority for Government Human Resources and in accordance with the job description, requirements and qualifications regardless the gender of the employee.”

The government also provided nurseries for the children of working women at work places. This decision was further reinforced by other decisions which included granting working women two hours of breastfeeding per day for 4 months with full pay, and paying a travel ticket, at the expense of the employer, to one family member accompanying a national female worker who travels abroad on official work. The Cabinet also decided in 2011 to grant the unemployed spouses of national female employees an allowance for children and housing, where the legislators decided to grant the women workers who head their households a housing grant of 60% and in case of the death of the spouse a 4-month and 10 days leave taking into account their psychological condition.

### **Challenges:**

The UAE has an outstanding record in human rights in general, and women's human rights in particular. However, an independent body on human rights needs to be established. The UAE is in the process of establishing such mechanism and the sooner is the better.

## **J - Women and Media**

### **Achievements:**

The media scene in the UAE has witnessed many vital developments in terms of consecrating transparency and freedom of the press, updating legislation, regulating media activities and developing media infrastructure

to keep pace with global changes in the field of telecommunications and information technology. The UAE issues 8 Arabic-language newspapers and 8 English-language newspapers in addition to dozens of magazines and specialized journals. The number of companies operating in the Free Zone of Dubai Media City reached more than 1400 companies, including 60 television networks that run and broadcast nearly 150 TV stations, and more than 120 publishing houses issuing almost 400 publications. The Media City in Abu Dhabi on the other hand, is home to 135 national and international companies operating in distribution and production of information materials and audio-visual materials. There is also a free media zone in both Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah, and together they are home to dozens of radio and television networks. Dubai Press Club is another distinguished media hub with its regular schedule of distinctive events and activities, as well as the Journalists Association, which boasts 734 members, in addition to local departments of information and hundreds of reporters and journalists accredited by the state. Such abundance of media content has enabled the UAE to maintain its leading rank in the list of countries most permeable to internet (1<sup>st</sup> place in the Arab world and 12<sup>th</sup> place globally) with an internet penetration rate of up to 82.15%, according to a report by the United Nations Trade and Development in 2010.

The UAE witnessed huge increase in the numbers of users of social media positioning it as the 6<sup>th</sup> globally in the index of electronic participation according to the UN e-government questionnaire issued in 2013.

The UAE also achieved the full use of Internet and social media in communicating with the public for developing services and improve the decision-making process. More than 60% of federal government institutions in the UAE use social networking platforms for publishing their news or answering the questions of their clients. Using social networking platforms is not limited to federal institutions, each Emirate works individually on strengthening this aspect of media. The Abu Dhabi Government Contact Centre, part of the Abu Dhabi Systems and Information Centre (ADSIC), has received the top award under the category of 'Promoting Whole-of-Government Approaches in the Information Age'. Also Dubai Smart Government launched a pioneering initiative for providing government online services to the public, government bodies and corporates and also for community life in Dubai.

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai announced the development of

government services by transforming from the e-government to the smart government which makes government services available on mobile and portable devices to facilitate customers' access to such services anywhere anytime.

The UAE has the best infrastructure telecommunications in the world. The number of mobile phone lines in the UAE is nearly 14 million with average of two phone lines for each subscriber. Statistics show that in 2013 there were approximately 3.6 million active users of Facebook in the UAE and about 43% of the population use Facebook. Statistics also showed that 61% of Internet users are using Facebook and 69% of the users are male, and about 31% of the female users are between 22-30 years old. Nearly 44% of the UAE population is using Twitter and they tweet about 2.5 million tweets per day.

A study conducted by Dubai School of Government revealed that the importance of social networking in creating greater opportunities for development is well understood in the UAE more than the rest of the Arab Gulf region. The study pointed out that the UAE leads the Arab Gulf Countries in terms of the proportion of women using social media platforms. Dubai Media developed social communication policies in the Television and Radio Sector where the percentage and number of followers of radio and television channels accounts increased 100% in one year only.

Dubai Media focuses on enhancing interaction and communication with the public through listening to their opinions and observations, and emphasizing on building relationship with the followers based on trust and giving them priority. There is great interest in integrating women in media, where many senior functions in official media organizations are being occupied by women. For example, H.E Noura Al Kaabi is the Chief Executive Officer of the Media Zone Authority - Abu Dhabi (twofour54), a government initiative with a key objective of developing media and digital businesses in the UAE. She is also, with another UAE woman, members of the board of directors of Abu Dhabi Media Company, which was formed in 2014. In recognition of her outstanding efforts in the field of media, H.E Noura Al Kaabi was awarded the title of best CEO in media sector in 2012 and was named the "Queen of Media" in 2013 by one of France's most prominent weekly magazines *'Le Nouvel Observateur'*. According to the forecasts of the Chief Executive Abu Dhabi Media Company, the percentage of the UAE women working in media sector will reach 40% in 2030.

We can say that women in the UAE benefited greatly from the social media platforms, newspapers, radio and television in raising awareness of gender equality. Also modern tools of social communications enhanced the freedom of expression among women and enabled them to discuss and disseminate their ideas and issues and influence the community quickly.

### **Challenges:**

Taking effective measures to utilize information and communications technology in building and strengthening women's ability to create, access to and promote networking, and support the programs aiming at building the capacities of the non-governmental organizations of women.

## **K- Women and the Environment**

### **Achievements:**

The United Arab Emirates launched many initiatives to empower and involve women in monitoring and tracking the management plans for natural and environmental resource. Women in the UAE occupy leadership positions in recognized government environmental institutions, such as Mrs. Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak who is the Secretary-General of the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi, and the managing director of the Emirates Wildlife Society and a member of the Global Footprint Network, and a member of the board of directors of Wildlife. Furthermore, a lady holds the position of Assistant Undersecretary by proxy for the Environmental Affairs in the Ministry of Environment and Water. Another example is Dr. Nawal Al Hosni, director of Sustainability Department at Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, one of the most sustainable cities in the world, and a centre for renewable energy and clean technology that provides an innovative entrepreneurial milieu. Women head 50% of the departments of the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi including Biodiversity, Public Relations and Communication, Quality of Environment, Financial and Administrative Affairs, and Awareness Department and several others.

Believing in the central role of women in developing and preparing future generations, the Environment Agency organized several awareness campaigns for increasing women's awareness on environmental issues and enhancing their role in preservation, protection and sustainability of the

environment. The campaigns help in building positive attitudes and approaches towards the environment among women and promote and disseminate environmental values across society.

The General Women's Union (GWU) organized environmental awareness campaigns for women to help them to make the right decisions in rationalizing the consumption of electricity and water, buying environment-friendly products, and recycling waste. The campaigns also provide women with accurate environmental information to enable them to effectively participate in the process of changing for the better. The GWU also marked the National Environment Day through a panel discussion in which a number of UAE prominent female figures in the field of environment participated, such as the Director of Sustainability Department at Masdar City and the Executive Director of the Biodiversity sector at the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi. The discussion focused on capacity building of women and raising their awareness to enable them to play an effective role in the preservation of environment, and drew the attention to renewable energy and available applications for the individuals to use solar energy at homes and saving electricity in general. On the occasion of the Earth Day celebrated globally on April 22, 2014, the GWU celebrated this occasion with the spouses of the representatives of diplomatic corps in the UAE and sought to generate public support among women regarding the importance of conservation of environment and to highlight the issue of environment as one of the core issues for the UAE.

The General Women's Union (GWU) formed a partnership with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), whereby the GWU finances the learning gardens project in schools for the academic year 2013-2014, in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Education Council, the United Arab Emirates University and Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority. The project creates gardens in schools to be supervised by students and teachers and encourages student to grow products from the UAE environment. The project also applies modern irrigation techniques to reduce water consumption with a view to building the capacities of educational institutions and raising awareness of the importance of healthy nutrition. It also aims at building teachers' capacities, training and enhancing their skills in areas of modern and organic agriculture.

Media Lab, which is a production and consultation company, has organized the *Abu Dhabi International Environmental Film Festival* during the period 20 to 25 April 2013. The Secretary General of the Environment Agency-Abu

Dhabi chaired the jury of the official film competition. The festival aims at promoting the importance of preserving the environment under the theme “Making the Earth a Better Place for Life”, and also to keep up with all modern and new developments in areas of awareness and preservation of environment.

The Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi (EAD) in cooperation with BP Co. launched an environmental educational program entitled “Sustainable Schools Initiative” for years “2009 –2013”. The initiative is mainly aimed at building the capacities of schools communities in addressing their impact on the environment, promoting friendly-environment behaviors, establishing a sustainable environment for education and implementing environmental awareness activities in schools.

A group of high school female students in Dubai implemented an environment protection project entitled "Echo Environment". The program is organized by the International Nama Association for Research and Development (Nama) and aims at raising public awareness on the importance of recycling waste paper and consumables and their reuse for various purposes. The team toured public parks, interviewed visitors, distributed leaflets on environmental awareness, and held workshops for children with a view to promoting the principle of recycling and enhancing children’s awareness and education on environment.

### **Challenges:**

Taking measures to develop gender-based programs and infrastructures in order to effectively respond to disaster and emergency situations that threaten the environment, livelihood security, as well as the management of the basic requirements of daily life.

## **L. The Girl Child**

### **Achievements:**

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates issued Federal Law No. 1 for year 2012, which is the first federal law regulating the care of children of unknown parents. The Law regulates the process of establishing care homes, finding substitute and

foster families, and the responsibilities of substitute/foster families in providing health, psychological, and social, recreational and educational care to those children.

The law also determines the legal method to be used in dealing with any abandoned child found in any place in accordance with Article 3, which requires reporting the abandoned child to the nearest police station. The child will be officially received by the nearest health center for necessary medical examination. The Public Prosecutor will be responsible for referring the child to the care home for children of unknown parents after coordinating with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior. The child will be given a four-part name and the care home will complete the necessary procedures for registering the child according to the applicable laws in the State in order to ensure his full rights like any other citizen. The child remains in the care home which will secure all his needs until a substitute/foster family fulfilling all the requirements laid down by the law is identified for taking care of him. The law also stipulates that if the biological parents come forward to take the child into their care, they must be able to prove that they are the biological parents before a court, which will then issue a ruling to this effect. The child will then be re-registered under a new name suggested by biological parents in accordance with the applicable laws in the State.

His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, issued Federal Law No 15 for year 2009, banning import of tobacco and its by-products into the State unless they meet the conditions and standards set by the State, which include posting clear words and images warnings on tobacco boxes. The Law bans all types of advertisements, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products, and fortified penalties against the violators reaching in some cases up to a fine of AED 1 million in addition to a jail term of not less than two years. The law also prohibits selling tobacco products to individuals less than 18 years old, bans cultivation of tobacco, and importation of tobacco-look-like sweets and toys and other similar products. The law also issued regulations aiming at punishing violators and ensuring adherence of individuals and companies to this law in order to create healthy environment in public and residential areas and spare the non-smokers the effects of passive smoking and other inconveniences caused by the use of different products of tobacco. The law also empowers the court, in case an individual or a firm found breaching the law, to confiscate seized items and advertising materials and even closing down the firm. Article 5 of the law prohibits selling of tobacco products to those less than 18 years old,

while Article 6 requires display and sale of tobacco products only in designated places. Article 7 banned smoking in public and closed places.

The UAE Cabinet issued Resolution 7 for year 2010 concerning the non-governmental institutions for the care and rehabilitation of the disabled. The resolution entrusted the Ministry of Social Affairs with the licensing of institutions requesting to provide such services, where no natural person or legal entity shall set up such institutions without obtaining a prior permit from the Ministry. Existing institutions at the time of promulgation of this resolution were obligated to complete all requirements and procedures in accordance with this resolution within six months from the date of its implementation, otherwise they are deemed violated the resolution. The resolution also identified the duties of these institutions, which include submitting detailed outline of their curricula, plans and programs of rehabilitation to the Ministry at the beginning of each year, and obtaining prior approval from the Ministry before carrying out any changes in the buildings of these institutions. These institutions are also required to comply with the regulations issued by the Ministry with regard to providing health, social and psychological rehabilitation services to the disabled persons, ensuring that the principles and values of the Islamic and Arab laws and other customs and traditions are observed in the curriculums applied in these institutions, and maintaining medical tests and diagnosis for each individual. The institutions are subject to the control and supervision of the competent authorities in the Ministry to ensure their compliance with the licensing requirements. The Resolution penalizes violators with written warning, ordering removal of violation within a period of 15 days from the date of warning together with an administrative fine according to the list of penalties and fines annexed to the resolution. The institution may be placed under the financial and administrative supervision of the Ministry and final closure or transferring it into another institution.

The UAE also issued Federal Law No. 29 for year 2006 on the rights of peoples with special needs, which some of its provisions were later amended under Federal Law No. 14 for year 2009, where the legislator decided to replace the phrase “people with special needs” by “disabled”. The State’s attention to the rights of the disabled was not only limited to issuing this law, but also included the ratification of the Comprehensive and Integrated International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities under Decree No. 116 for year 2009.

On January 22, 2014, the Federal National Council approved a draft federal law on the rights of the child and referred it to the government for approval. The law includes the following basic rights:

- Safety and Care

The law defined the basic rights of the child, which include the right to life and safety, the right to grow up and develop, have access to care and express his views freely. They also include the right to be registered immediately after birth in the registry of births and to carry a name that does not bring contempt or insult his dignity. The child also enjoys the right to have citizenship in accordance with the applicable laws in the State in addition to his right to receive alimony.

- Protection Mechanisms

Any act threatens the life and safety of the child and his physical, psychological, moral and mental health which cannot be avoided overtime is considered an imminent harm.

-Sexual Assault

Any person convicted of sexual assault or child pornography crime is prohibited from working in a place that allows him to have direct contact with children. The judge may rule on any person convicted of sexual assault against a child to be prevented from staying in the area where the child lives by up to 5 square kilometers radius from the place where the child lives.

- Abuse

The law includes an article stipulating that the Ministry of Social Affairs, in coordination with the competent authorities, will create a log to register child abuse cases and to keep such information confidential. This information cannot be accessed to without the permission of the public prosecutor or the competent court, as deemed appropriate.

-Identity Documents

The child's parents, or his legal guardians, are committed to obtain all official documents confirming his identity, including his birth certificate and nationality in accordance with the laws in force in the State. Directors of movie theaters, TV channels and programs, and other similar places, must announce in a visible place that children are banned from entering or watching these programs as provided in the regulations of this law.

#### -Penalties

Imprisonment for a period of not less than 6 months and/or a fine not less than 100,000 Dirhams and not exceeding one million Dirhams on violators of any of the provisions of Item 4 of Article 21, and Article 30 of this law, which requires the telecommunications companies and internet service providers to notify the competent authorities about any child pornography material published on Internet sites. The law also emphasizes the need to provide the necessary information about the persons or institutions or web sites that publish such material or intentionally lure children.

#### -Inciting Sexual Instincts

Dissemination, display, circulation, possession or production of any visual, audio or printed material or games which incite the sexual instincts of children or tempt them to behave contrary to public order or morals, or encourage for behavioral deviation are prohibited. Violators of the provisions of Article 27 or items 3 and 4 of Article 38 of this Law shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than one year and/or a fine of not less than 100,000 Dirhams and not exceeding 400,000 Dirhams.

The General Women's Union announced in 2012 the formation of high committees and technical committees of the multi indicators cluster survey program, which is an international family survey program supervised by the UNICEF. The survey is designed to collect precise statistical data and comparable estimates to international key indicators to be used in assessing the status of women and children in areas of health, education and social protection. Survey MICS 4 is a tool to monitor the progress made in achieving national goals and global commitments aiming at promoting the welfare of women and children, including the Millennium Development Goals.

On the World Children's Day, celebrated on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2012, the General Women's Union and the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood launched, in collaboration with the UNICEF, a database on mothers and children in the UAE to facilitate data collection, maintain and update the indicators of women, motherhood and childhood in the United Arab Emirates in relation to the Millennium Development Goals.

With the support of Sheikha Fatma bint Mubarak, Chairwoman of the General Women's Union, Supreme Chairwoman of the Family Development Foundation, President of the Supreme Council for Motherhood and

Childhood, and the Ambassador Extraordinary for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the General Women's Union signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Food and Agriculture Organization on December 25, 2011. The MOU aims at improving nutrition and raising awareness among school students through learning agricultural, nutrition and healthy diets skills, training families and members of the community to build simple gardens, and enhancing the capacities of participating teachers.

The Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, in collaboration with the General Women's Union and Emirates Center for Studies and Strategic Research, and their partners from government and non-governmental institutions as well as civil society institutions devoted to children's issues and with the support of the UNICEF office in the Arab Gulf area, is implementing a project for evaluating the child protection system in the United Arab Emirates using global tools approved by the main office of the UNICEF in New York. The project aims at evaluating the child protection system and identifying gaps in policies, legislation and services provided for child protection, in order to identify priorities and challenges and help the decision-makers to enhance national capacities and develop services provided in the field of child protection.

To protect users of information technology and computer networks from cybercrime, the UAE issued on August 13, 2011 Federal Law Decree No. 5 for the year 2012 on combating cybercrimes. The law protects the child from being a victim to any electronic porn contents.

### **Challenges**

Taking effective and urgent measures to mobilize the public opinion on the positive effects of the UAE Child Rights Law, and increasing programs and workshops on building the capacities of law enforcement and rehabilitation institutions, which are responsible for the protection and welfare of the children.

### Part III: Data and Statistics

A table outlining gender-based distribution of students at all educational stages (public/ private)

Stage	Gender	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Pre-school (kindergarten)	Male	64159	67210	69671
	Female	60816	62557	65332
	Total	124975	129767	135003
Primary Level	Male	168505	171412	186250
	Female	159156	164036	176424
	Total	327661	335448	362674
Preparatory Level	Male	108693	110345	113413
	Female	103574	105254	107611
	Total	212267	215599	221024
Secondary Level	Male	60435	63842	66371
	Female	63717	66125	68764
	Total	124152	129967	135135
Religious Education	Male	839	854	628
	Female	0	0	0
	Total	839	854	628
Technical Education	Male		4044	3746
	Female		515	1014
	Total		3559	4760

Source: National Statistics Center, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

A table outlining UAE women's political participation in the Federal National Council

Period	Appointed	Elected	Total Members of The Federal National Council	Percentage of Participating UAE Women to Total Membership of the FNC
1990-2006	0	0	40	0.0%
2007-2010	8	1	40	22.50%
2011	6	1	40	17.50%

Source: National Statistics Center, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

A table outlining the sub-indices of gender-gap at the United Arab Emirates 2013

	Evaluation	Outcome	Average Sample	Female	Male	Ratio of Female to Male
<b>1-Economic Participation and Opportunities</b>	122	0.467	0.601			
Participation in labor force	120	0.48	0.68	44	92	0.48
Equality in wages for both sexes for similar work (survey)	22	0.74	0.64	-	-	0.74
Estimated attained income (equivalent to	113	0.42	0.53	16,637	40,000	0.42

the purchase power of US dollar)						
legislators, senior officials and managers	103	0.11	0.26	10	90	0.11
<b>2-Educational attainment</b>	109	0.28	0.64	22	78	0.28
Literacy rate	1	1,000	0.934			
Enrolment in Primary Education	1	1,00	0.87	91	89	1.02
Enrolment in Preparatory Education	1	1.00	0.92	90	87	1.04
Enrolment in Secondary and Higher Education	-	-	0.87	-	-	-
<b>3-Health and Life Chances</b>	112	0.961	0.957			
Female to male Ratio at birth	1	0.94	0.92	-	-	0.95
Average life expectancy	119	1.00	1.04	68	68	1.00
<b>4-Political Empowerment</b>	81	0.121	0.211			
Women in Parliament	77	0.21	0.24	18	83	0.21
Women in Ministerial Positions	53	0.22	0.19	18	82	0.22
Length of term woman was president of the State	60	0.00	0.20	0	50	0.00

Source: Global Report on Gender Gap 2013

A table outlining distribution of university students based on gender and nationality for the school year 2010/2011

	Nationals			Foreigners			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Private	15370	13407	28786	17635	19197	36832	33014	32604	65618
Public	9758	24964	34722	1118	1973	3091	10876	26937	37813
Total	25137	38371	63508	18753	21170	39923	43890	59541	103431

Source: National Statistics Center, Annual Statistics Report of 2011, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

#### **Part IV: Emerging Priorities**

The UAE government designed the vision of the future in the year 2021 under the slogan "United in Ambition and Determination" to be among the best countries in the world by 2021. According to the UAE Vision 2021 summary "Under a strong and sound federation, the UAE, supported by knowledge and creativity, will step confidently and ambitiously towards building a resilient competitive economy in a cohesive society, bounded by its identity and enjoys the highest standards of living in a nurturing and sustainable environment."

The vision of the UAE government focuses on many issues; most of it if not all, has a direct relationship with and serve the purpose of the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recommendations of the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the General Assembly, and subsequent international conventions which all aim to achieve gender equality and empowerment of women at the national level, and the goals of sustainable development and the development plan beyond 2015.

Cohesive and prospering households make up the nucleus of the UAE society, they embrace inherent family values, maintain links to relatives and family members, empower women, which all help to prepare individuals for the performance of their duties towards society, and provides a safety net against social marginalization. Strong social ties are the backbone of any vibrant society and they represent the primary safety net against social

exclusion. Tightly bonded neighborhoods provide space for children to reach out beyond their families and take their first steps into society, and enable young people to develop their national identity, learn respect for others, and develop steadily into fully engaged citizens.

The UAE seeks to balance social and economic development in its seven emirates, and provides utilities and basic services across the country. There are no isolated or marginalized regions, and the advanced infrastructure and high quality transport services are contributing to boosting development and connecting all civil communities. The integrated planning and implementation of policies will ensure achieving balanced, sustainable, rationalized and efficient social and economic development across the United Arab Emirates.

The UAE Government will continue to play its role in creating a safe and secure environment, ensuring economic resilience and stability, upholding fairness and justice, and providing an advanced welfare system in order to enable all the UAE citizens to overcome life adversities and contribute positively to their society. The UAE will be diligent in its duty to defend and uphold the rights, interests and freedoms of all people, so that everyone can benefit from the non-discriminatory application of all laws, fairness and justice. Rational and capable institutional systems will steer the economy towards a stable and resilient course during economic fluctuations and will ensure decent livelihood to its citizens.

The UAE government enables all citizens to meet their basic needs through a sustainable welfare system, which aims at empowering them. This system helps the most vulnerable people through empowering them to overcome life adversities and to participate positively in developing the productivity of the society. Joining the labor market is the first step for the UAE citizens towards personal fulfillment and economic empowerment. Many UAE nationals show leadership spirit to stride much farther. Therefore, promising young UAE national must be supported to become leaders and entrepreneurs. The diversification of the UAE economy is the ideal solution for achieving sustainable development in a future less dependent on oil, which requires utilizing new strategic sectors in channeling national capacities towards industries and service sectors in which the UAE can build long-term competitive advantages. The UAE must also achieve balanced growth through using sustainable energy sources, which will enable the UAE to play an important role in promoting alternative and renewable energy sources, including nuclear power.

The UAE transformed its economy into a model where growth is driven by knowledge and innovation, which requires investments in science, technology and research in order to bring the productivity and competitiveness in the UAE to the best international standards. To shift into a knowledge economy, it was imperative for the UAE to create a conducive entrepreneurial environment that harnesses talent and creativity of the UAE citizens, and nurtures a new generation of entrepreneurs through supporting their small and medium-sized enterprises. Through national efforts, the UAE disseminates the spirit of entrepreneurship, hard work, boldness and innovation.

Access to a comprehensive range of high-quality basic medical services is available to all UAE nationals. The UAE continues to invest in first-class healthcare infrastructure, international expertise and high-quality services in order to fulfill the growing needs and expectations of its citizens.

The commitment of the government towards quality healthcare system enables every UAE national to have access to excellent health and personal care services. The UAE takes a proactive stance in developing new and more effective ways to combat local prevalent and genetic illnesses by supporting the advanced medical research in this field. While healing the sick is a top priority, it is also true that prevention is better than cure. Therefore, the UAE intensifies its efforts to fight lifestyle diseases, where early intervention to change habits can dramatically improve citizens' prospects for quality of life. The government also works strenuously on eliminating diseases resulting from the pollution of surrounding environment.

The UAE has set ambitious educational targets, and its progressive national curriculums applied in schools have exceeded learning and instructional methods to those of critical thinking and practical abilities, in order to provide the youth with the essential skills and knowledge required for the modern world. The UAE efforts resulted in enabling its students to achieve high scores in standard international examinations on equal basis with their peers in advanced nations. The UAE also encourages citizens to maximize their potentials by pursuing graduate and post-graduate education and higher studies. Most of high school students choose to pursue their university education, while those who choose to drop out receive other kinds of support such as vocational training. The UAE educational system provides equal opportunities to all students, which leads to balanced outcomes. Students with special needs are integrated in the educational system with support programs and suitable infrastructure.

In light of the common environment challenges facing all humanity, the UAE as part of its international responsibilities, supports vigorously international initiatives aiming at protecting the environment. The UAE is committed to contribute to developing and implementing innovative solutions to ensure protection and sustainability of the environment. Through applying new energy-efficient technologies, the UAE strengthens its pioneering role in the green revolution and reduces carbon footprint in its activities. For maintaining and preserving the environment and mitigating the effects of climate change, the UAE promotes environmental awareness and responsible behavior among the UAE citizens in order to save the environment for our generation and future generations. The UAE protects its local environment against human-induced threats – both global and local – through preventive measures that include reduction of carbon dioxide emissions, and implementing effective measures to protect the vulnerable environment systems from urban development. The UAE also safeguards its citizens from harm in the event of large-scale natural or man-made environmental disasters, and guarantees the right of present and future generations to have clean air and water, and be protected from environmental health hazards.