



2020
يوم المرأة العمانية
OMANI WOMEN'S DAY
المرأة شريكة في التنمية

يوم المرأة العمانية

Omani Women's Day
17th Oct 2020



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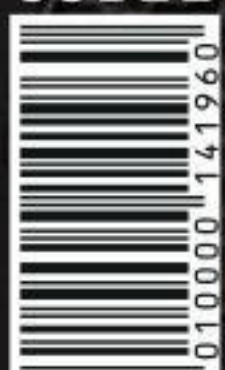
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A world of opportunities

Ibtisam Al Riyami

**Chief - People, Technology &
Culture highlights OQ's
empowerment
avenues for women**

Oman.....RO 1.500
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AVENUES TO THRIVE GLOBALLY

Ibtisam Al Riyami, Chief – People, Technology and Culture, OQ shares the values, growth opportunities and policies that differentiates the organisation from its global compatriots in an exclusive interview

After a long and very successful career at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and having risen to the organisation's highest leadership levels as the People and Change Director, what was the motivation to move to OQ?

I remain ever indebted to PDO for the phenomenal professional career opportunities it afforded me, in and outside of Oman.

Moving out of PDO was not in my career plans and not an easy decision but OQ presented a compelling proposition in terms of both challenges and opportunities. It also offered a chance to work towards the larger goal of contributing to building an energy sector in Oman that is future ready.

OQ today is an integrated global energy company that is redefining the sector. We unveiled our new brand identity in late 2019 by unifying nine prominent companies. The result is a globally

integrated energy company with roots in Oman – operating in 16 countries around the world and covering the entire value chain from exploration and production to marketing and distribution of end-user products. Our fuels and chemicals are sold in over 60 countries worldwide, making us a prominent player in the energy sector. The breadth and footprint of our business is quite unique.

Joining the company in its early stages of integration was and continues to be challenging but very exciting. We aim to leverage the integration to build further resilience in our business and fuel our growth into new business lines such as alternative energy and retail. OQ's future roadmap is full of promise and I wanted to be a part of this exciting journey.

How do females feature in OQ today?
OQ employs close to 1,000 women; representing around 14 per cent of the

total population. While this number may seem small, it is comparable to prevailing global averages for our type of industry.

There is also fair representation of females across all organisational levels and they are spread across all lines of business. Moreover, their contribution is not limited to specific scope; they are proving their multifarious capabilities by contributing across the board. We are especially proud of our 277 females currently working in operational locations.

How does OQ differentiate itself in support of more women participation and empowerment?

The integration opens a larger world for all our staff and a unique value proposition.

OQ offers diverse development and career opportunities across the entire energy value chain; from upstream,

“ At the heart of the culture we are building are the values of Care, Share and Dare. We openly invite our staff to Dare current norms in order to drive innovation ”



As a global company, we are firm believers in diversity and the power of inclusiveness

midstream, downstream all the way to trading, retail and marketing. Our borders are also not confined to Oman.

At the heart of the culture we are building are the values of Care, Share and Dare. We openly invite our staff to Dare current norms in order to drive innovation. We ask them to apply a pragmatic approach that balances speed and agility with quality delivery. We believe in aiming for an 80/20 solution that gets us moving quickly, learning fast and enhancing and modifying over time. This unique spirit and character are very energising.

As a global company, we are firm believers in diversity and the power of inclusiveness. We ensure that OQ policies and procedures do not discriminate and give equal rights to all our employees. As a result, men and women at OQ have equal hiring, mobility and career advancement opportunities.

In addition, we pay close attention to the overall wellbeing and the special needs of females. Many projects have been implemented specifically to create the appropriate environment suitable for working women and in keeping with the local cultures in which we operate. For example, in Oman we have ensured that everything from uniforms, living quarters, entertainment and health facilities are all in keeping with the Omani culture.

A specific challenge cited by females is balancing their dual roles of being nurturing mothers with being responsible professionals. To alleviate some of this burden we support them by providing secure and hygienic mother's rooms in all our facilities and the infrastructure and policies that allow them to work more flexibly.

We have done well so far but we need to do much more. An important

milestone is the launching of OQ Women's Network on October 17, 2020, a platform dedicated for OQ women and led by them. The aim of the network is to connect OQ females across lines of business and across geographies to learn from one another, to better understand their unique challenges and to support them.

Oman is a young country in terms of its demographics. Given this fact, how does OQ contribute towards the larger national goal of skilling, training and developing Omanis, especially its women workforce?

The demographics in OQ are reflective of this fact! This is true not only of OQ's employees but also its top leadership. OQ's 2030 stated Aspirations for Talent are - "Our People thrive globally" and that "Oman is proud of the talent we grow."

Over the last ten years, the annual graduate and diploma holder intake is around 100. As soon as they join, they are placed in operational roles and receive on the job training through mentorship and coaching. They also follow specifically designed development programme that cover not only technical competencies but also business literacy, soft skills and work ethics. This structured method of development has proven very effective in accelerating learning and decreasing time to autonomy.

Special attention is paid to potential future leaders; their leadership abilities are honed by assigning them challenging tasks and regularly exposing them to the latest leadership practices. A good example is the ongoing MASAR Leadership programme conducted in partnership with one of the top ranked executive education schools. The programme endeavours to develop leaders who can bring in agility and competitiveness.

An exciting programme we are about to introduce is OQ's Ahmed Bin Majid programme - named after the famous Omani navigator and cartographer - this is an initiative that offers young professionals up to a two-year global working experience. The programme aims to provide them with first-hand experience at various OQ locations and with its partner organisations around the world. The programme's main aim is to empower our young people to excel and bring back new insights to the Group and the country. We presently have seven young women on international secondment.

In addition to the programme we offer to OQ staff, we also provide internship opportunities to more than 100 graduates annually. These graduates spend between 6 to 8 months working alongside our staff gaining real world work experience.

These are merely examples to illustrate our strong belief in training and development throughout our employees' professional lifecycle.

Oman has been a pioneer in bestowing women with equal rights and empowering them since the beginning of the Blessed Renaissance. Has this been a big contributor to the success of women across different walks of life in the Sultanate?

Our beloved, the Late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (may Allah have mercy on him) was always at the forefront of women empowerment and equality through various initiatives and programmes dedicated to women. This is also evident in the fact that he devoted a special day for Omani women - 17th October. This vision was reflected in the appointment of Omani women in several senior positions in Oman.

Women in Oman enjoy equal rights as men and are free citizens of the country. Indeed, this has been a strong contributing factor to the success of women in all sectors because we as Omani women have equal opportunities in almost all sectors in the country.

In 2008, the Sultan's Royal Decree gave

A CROSS SECTION OF WOMEN LEADERS AT OQ



women equal rights to own land as held by their male counterparts. The late His Majesty also signed the ‘Decent Work Country Programme’, a service dedicated to increase job opportunities for women as well as to stand for justice, equality, and freedom. His vision is being carried forward by our new Sultan – His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said.

This was reflected in the appointment of eight women in senior roles within the government including three women ministers recently. This is in addition to the considerable representation that women have in Oman’s two parliamentary houses.

On the occasion of Omani Women’s Day, what would be your advice for a young Omani woman who is embarking on a career?

First piece of advice I would give is to take strong ownership of your professional career path. This means you are clear in your own mind on the experiences that would excite and fulfil you; equally important is to be clear on what you are not willing to do. In making these choices, a good idea is to seek advice and to include your family in the decision making. No matter what career path you end up following, to succeed you will need their support.

Once you have made choices, commit to them but be open and watchful for any opportunities that may come your way. Women tend to take less career risks compared to men, but as the saying goes “growth and comfort never co-exist”! Trust that you will make mistakes; dust yourself off and figure out how to do it differently.

Lastly and most importantly, take care of yourself throughout the journey. Ask for help when you need it and never lose sight of who you are and what makes you happy and content. **OER**

