

PDGP

**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY &
GLOBAL POLICYMAKING
IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

الدبلوماسية العامة وصنع السياسة العالمية

The 2015 Doha Conference:

Findings from the
Student-led Public Diplomacy Program

Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy

in partnership with the
Qatar Foundation and Hamad bin Khalifa University

*The 2015 Doha Conference:
Findings from the Student-led Public Diplomacy
Program*

A Special Report by the Public Diplomacy and Global Policymaking in the
21st Century Program

Edited by Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Ph.D., and Ariana Marnicio

Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy
in partnership with the
Qatar Foundation and Hamad bin Khalifa University

© 2015 by the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy of Rice University

This material may be quoted or reproduced without prior permission, provided appropriate credit is given to the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy.

This paper was written by a student (or students) who participated in a Baker Institute research project. The research and views expressed in this paper are those of the individual student(s), and do not necessarily represent the views of the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy.

Contents

Introduction, 5

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Education

K-12 Education in Qatar, 9

Dante Zakhidov

Youth Entrepreneurship in Qatar, 15

Jennifer Ding

Rethinking Qatar's Global Education Initiatives, 23

Madeleine Tibaldi

Energy

Investing Abroad for Geopolitical and Economic Gain in Qatar Post-shale Gas, 27

Caitlin Laird

Addressing Challenges Facing Qatar's Solar Energy Policies, 31

Bo Kim

Accessibility in the Urban Landscape: Accounting for Disability in the Urban Expansion of Doha, Qatar, 37

Sevita Rama

Gender and Equality

Women in Qatar's Political Sphere: Challenges and Possibilities, 43

Rebecca Satterfield

Unleashing Potential: Promoting Female Labor Force Participation of Qatari Women in the Private Sector, 51

Maithili Bagaria

Women in the workforce: Moving beyond higher education in Qatar, 57

Sandra Lopez

Health

Breast Cancer Screening Policies in Qatar, 61

Jesal Shah

Lifestyle and Dietary Habits: Health Policy in Qatar for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus, 69

Chris Chu

Challenges Facing Mental Health care Access and Delivery in Qatar, 75

Shilpa Nataraj

Introduction

By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Fellow for the Middle East

Twelve students from Rice University traveled to Doha, Qatar, between February 27 and March 7, 2015 to take part in the Public Diplomacy and Global Policymaking (PDGP) 2015 Doha Conference. The PDGP is a joint initiative between Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and Hamad bin Khalifa University (HBKU) in Qatar, which generously provided funding for the PDGP. The Rice students were selected competitively out of a pool of almost 50 applicants and all took the spring semester PDGP course at the Baker Institute. Over the duration of the course, each student identified a research project based around the four key themes of education, energy, gender and equality, and health. The Doha conference provided an opportunity for the Rice students to present and discuss their work-in-progress to an audience of Qatar-based students and practitioners. The issue briefs in this volume represent the outcome both of the Doha conference and of the spring semester research projects.

The 2015 Doha conference was the product of the Baker Institute's continued collaboration with the Qatar Foundation and HBKU. The PDGP program was designed to introduce students at Rice and at HBKU to major public policy trends in U.S.-Qatar relations. The study week and student conference in Doha during Rice spring break constituted the capstone of the PDGP, designed to bring together the Rice and HBKU students in an intellectually rich and congenial formal and informal setting. Faculty talks at HBKU and study visits to key entities both within Education City and Qatar University added a significant practitioner-led element to the PDGP that offered course participants the opportunity to explore and deepen the policy impact of their academic research. Spending the week at the Qatar Foundation's flagship Education City campus also permitted the course participants to view at first-hand the sheer scale of infrastructural and sector-specific investment that has positioned Qatar at the forefront of higher education initiatives in the Gulf.

This volume presents the 12 issue briefs drawn up by the PDGP students during their research in Houston and in Doha. The issue briefs contain a combination of theoretical and empirical insight into critical public policy themes together with pragmatic and scalable recommendations for policymakers both in the United States and in Qatar. The PDGP Doha conference was invaluable as a tool that enabled the course participants to road-test initial ideas and generate substantive new leads for further research over the second half of the semester. An additional advantage of the PDGP group was their multidisciplinary background, which facilitated the exchange of ideas and perspectives

across traditional academic boundaries—as reflected in the depth and breadth of the issue briefs contained herein.

As noted above, the 2015 Doha conference was structured around four themes identified as having public policy relevance both for Qatar and in Houston. The study week began with a visit to Qatar University—the oldest institute of higher education in Qatar rooted in the establishment of a College of Education in 1973. A meeting with the president of Qatar University, Dr. Sheikha Abdullah al-Missnad, set the tone for the rest of the week as the PDGP students engaged Dr. al-Missnad in a wide-ranging and frank discussion of public policy challenges and trends in Qatar. Both the meeting with Dr. al-Missnad and the subsequent walking tour of Qatar University provided the PDGP participants with an invaluable overview of the state of public education in Qatar.

The four subsequent working days were spent at Education City in the architecturally impressive and brand new campus of the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies (QFIS), which acted as the host venue for the conference. Each day of the conference featured three student presentations and a faculty discussant followed by a keynote address from invited speakers from the Qatar Business and Finance Academy, Ooredoo Qatar, the Doha International Family Institute, and the Supreme Council of Health. Site visits to the U.S. Embassy in Qatar, the Aspire Zone academy and park, a farm, and the Qatar Foundation radio station provided further opportunities for the students from Rice and HBKU to bond and network in a more relaxed setting, as did a visit to the world-renowned Museum of Islamic Art and a dhow cruise around Doha's bay on the final day of the trip.

The volume begins with three issue briefs on education. Dante Zakhidov examines K-12 education in Qatar and questions why the ambitious educational reforms introduced in the early-2000s fell short of initial expectations and failed to generate sufficient buy-in from key stakeholders. Zakhidov emphasizes that educational reform should be seen as a long-term, intergenerational process of change, and makes a series of short- and long-term recommendations that absorb the lessons of the past and strengthen design-process leadership moving forward. Jennifer Ding focuses on youth entrepreneurship in Qatar and the importance of reducing legal barriers, connecting institutional resources, and shifting societal views toward risk for creating a sustainable start-up ecosystem and laying the foundation for future entrepreneurial growth. Ding observes that a local ecosystem that draws together Qatari citizens, institutions, and government will be pivotal if private sector development is to underpin the long-term policy objectives of Qatar's Vision 2030. In her issue brief on rethinking Qatar's global education initiatives, Madeleine Tibaldi explores how Doha's establishment as a regional education hub has functioned as a major component of a larger state-branding strategy that has well and truly placed Qatar on the global map. Tibaldi recommends that Education City, and the Western institutions within it, develop into an organic part of Qatar's educational landscape and integrate more closely into Qatari society.

Part II features three briefs on energy issues in Qatar. Caitlin Laird begins with an analysis of the geopolitical and economic gains of Qatar's international investment in foreign project holdings and their contribution to economic diversification and thickening linkages with global partners. Laird suggests that Qatari policymakers utilize the current state of flux in world natural gas markets to expand the country's role from that of producer to investor and capitalize on strengths within the Qatari energy sector to boost its intellectual and managerial reputation internationally. Bo Kim addresses the challenges that face Qatar's solar energy policies and questions whether and how Qatar might position itself as a regional leader in solar power. Kim calls on officials to increase the role of the private sector in developing solar projects in order to incentivize innovation and international cooperation and thereby resolve two technological challenges currently facing Qatar's solar industry. Sevita Rama shifts the focus to the issue of accessibility in the urban landscape of Doha and to the challenges facing people with disabilities as Doha's cityscape continues in its phase of rapid expansion ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Drawing on comparative case studies from the United States and Beirut, Lebanon, Rama highlights the public policy imperative of integrating accessibility into urban planning and development for Doha's further expansion.

The issue briefs on gender and equality start with a study by Rebecca Satterfield of the challenges and possibilities that women in public life in Qatar face. Satterfield examines how educational achievement and female role models such as Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser, the wife of former Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, have helped to empower female participation in public life in Qatar. Noting the crucial importance of mentorship and networking to further success, Satterfield recommends that the U.S. Embassy work with Qatari officials to develop programs that connect aspiring women leaders with those already in leadership roles. Maithili Bagaria explores mechanisms for promoting the participation of Qatari women in the private sector and unlocking their full potential. Bagaria calls on the Qatari government and employers to create attractive policies to encourage women to seek jobs in the private sector and, in turn, underpin Qatar's transition into a knowledge-based economy. Part III ends with an issue brief by Sandra Lopes on the transition of women from higher education to the workforce. Lopes makes a number of suggestions both for government and civil society organizations and recommends that a dedicated government body be established with the resources and the authority to facilitate this transition.

Part IV rounds out the volume and focuses on health. Jesal Shah analyzes whether current breast cancer screening practices are meeting the needs of women in Qatar and focuses on how challenges such as low breast cancer screening participation, late detection, and poor prognosis can be overcome. Shah recommends tackling sociocultural barriers and institutional shortcomings as well as building on collectivist ties and increasing awareness among vulnerable communities through top-level policy and physician-oriented behavior change campaigns. Chris Chu examines the role of lifestyle and dietary habits in the soaring rise in the incidence of Type II diabetes in recent years, which is a public policy problem across the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Among Chu's

recommendations are the creation of incentivized health policies, the design of effective nutrition and exercise programs, and campaigns to catalyze preventative changes in behavior. Shilpa Nataraj ends with an issue brief on the attitudinal and structural barriers in mental health access and delivery in Qatar that create a significant gap between those who need and receive treatment. Nataraj recommends a series of public policy initiatives that are necessary to reshape the mental health model in Qatar and design a clearer implementation mechanism for mental health strategies in the country.

K-12 Education in Qatar

by Dante Zakhidov

Executive Summary

In line with its national vision to create a knowledge-based economy, Qatar instituted a process of ambitious K-12 educational reforms in 2001 to improve its weak public school system. International education consulting groups were contracted to develop a new school model to match global standards through western curriculum adaptation, evaluation-based analysis, and organizational restructuring. Nearly fourteen years later, all Qatari schools have adopted the new Independent School (IS) model but the reforms have shown little improvement and have been met with decreasing public approval. A large majority of Qatari students are still not prepared for postsecondary education or the workforce and teachers are poorly trained to deal with the volume of demands stemming from new curricula, teaching style, and frequent policy flip-flopping. This issue brief looks to make short and long-term policy recommendations that learn from past mistakes and set Qatar on a sustainable and self-critical path towards an improved educational system.

Introduction

Before the 1950's, Qatar was a dwindling nation of 40,000 people with an economy bankrupt through the loss of its pearl diving industry. Following the discovery of oil and natural gas, Qatar has become one of the wealthiest nations in the world, ranking third with a GDP per capita of \$93,965 in 2014.¹ In order to diversify its economy, Qatar has invested heavily in improving the quality of its educational institutions, consistently spending more than 4% of its GDP on education.² While Qatar has the economic tools to finance educational reform, its ambitious goals have outpaced the intellectual capabilities of its people. Qatar has remained in the bottom five of countries taking the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2009 and 2012, consistently placing lower than poorer countries such as Kazakhstan and Tunisia.³ Qatar's first public school only opened in 1948 and its first university, Qatar University, in 1977.⁴ While Qatar is an extremely young country, the financial resources allocated for education are well above the world average and faster development should be expected.

The Qatari government hired the RAND Corporation in 2001 to create a new educational system and help lead its implementation over a ten-year timeline. RAND developed the Independent School (IS) model, which came to replace the bureaucratically-

controlled Ministry of Education schools. On inception, the Independent Schools were based on the four foundational principles of autonomy, accountability, variety, and choice. The management of these schools would be decentralized and run by qualified operators selected by the government on the strength of their educational plan. These operators could be Qatari or non-Qatari and come from educational or non-educational backgrounds. The operators would have the decision-making authority closest to the work itself and be adaptive to better meet the needs of their students. Furthermore, the operator and school would have the freedom to develop their own educational plans, creating diversity in the variety of schools. The independent schools and operators would then be held accountable via publically available performance measures. Ultimately, the school variety and accountability assessment data would allow parents to choose the best school for their children.

Overall, the reforms implemented by RAND were well devised and did bring about the start of meaningful change. Organizationally, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) was created to replace the over-staffed and inefficient Ministry of Education. The SEC is comprised of the Evaluation and Education Institute, which is further broken into specialized offices with clear focuses and means of collaboration for a well-integrated reform process. The Evaluation Institute has created the Qatar Comprehensive Educational Assessment (QCEA) and has been testing students since 2004. It also creates and distributes a nation-wide annual report that covers over 200 various factors affecting education, including the QCEA results, demographics, teacher qualifications, satisfaction levels, etc. Furthermore, the Evaluation Institute compiles reports for each school, which supports the parent's choice aspect of the IS model. The reforms also implemented a new Western curriculum that moved away from the rote memorization of the Ministry schools and, instead, supported group-based discussion, problem-solving sessions, and more student-teacher interaction. The length of instructional time considerably increased from the shorter Ministry calendar to the 180-day school year. The reforms have also allowed for much more professional development for teachers in the Independent Schools. However, the success of these reforms has been stunted by a few key factors that are analyzed below.

Critique of Current Policies

The largest setback to the reform process was the speed of implementation. The first Independent Schools opened in 2004, a cohort of 12 schools called Generation I. Even for Generation I, the timeline was strained. Buildings deemed suitable to be schools were not available for renovation until June 2004, which only left two to three months to complete any facility improvements before the school year began. Furthermore, the quick timeline forced the SEC to use current Ministry teachers to staff the Independent Schools. While professional development was available, teachers only had two to three months to train since they needed to finish their current teaching jobs. This time was deemed insufficient for the large work needed to learn new teaching styles and adapt to a new curriculum with new teaching materials. Nevertheless, RAND and SEC projected

that could and would need to open a total of 133 Independent Schools from 2004-2009 based on an analysis of projected enrollment growth, class-size estimates, and teacher availability. This plan was already ambitious, but is even more so when considering the need to not only identify and train new operators and teachers for each school but also to continue professional development for the previously opened schools. Furthermore, since Qatar does not have a qualified domestic supply of teachers and operators, many of these individuals would have to be vetted, hired, and even culturally trained by the SEC. In reality, after Generation I schools opened, the SEC followed the plan well, opening 14-18 schools each year. By the end of the 2009 school year, there were 85 Independent Schools, which was well below the planned 133 – showing considerable reflection and constraint. This was the end of the proposed RAND timeline. Then in the 2009-10 school year, without any publically searchable explanation, the SEC changed 93 Ministry of Education schools to ‘Semi-Independent’ while increasing the Independent school count to 108. The next year, they shifted the Semi-Independent to Independent to a total of 170 Independent Schools. The SEC and Qatari government were impatient in transferring Ministry schools to Independent Schools and as a result, teacher preparation and student performance suffered. The shift to nearly double the amount of Independent Schools without adequate preparation highlights another large setback to the reform process – poor leadership.

The surprising decision-making processes and sudden switches in policies have occurred throughout the entire reform process. The operators in Generation 1 schools were allowed to decide the language of instruction for their schools, but in 2006, the SEC decided that all science and math courses were to be taught in English. Many teachers were not proficient enough to teach in English and science and math scores plummeted. This caused a large influx of expatriate teachers that had the proper language qualifications. Disapproval of English as a language of instruction quickly grew as the public viewed it as an attack on their Arabic culture. Then in 2012, almost overnight, the SEC and Qatari government switched back the language of instruction for science and math back to Arabic. The new expatriate teachers lost their jobs and students had to re-learn many scientific concepts.

The lack of sufficient and proper leadership was clear from the beginning of the reforms. In the construction of the SEC, an Implementation Team was created to provide assistance to the SEC. Led by members of RAND and the Qatari Coordination Committee, which had led the design process of the reforms, the Implementation Team would be crucial in coordinating the institutes and advising the reform process for 5 years. However, not six months after its formation, the Implementation Team was dissolved in 2003 because “members of the implementation team and SEC were serving in part-time capacities, as a second or third job after their primary employment and the process became too cumbersome.”⁵ There were no efforts to create a new Implementation Team and a critical leadership dynamic of the reforms were forgotten.

The loss of key design-process leaders was further evident when in 2006, a new policy required Independent Schools to be run by a single Qatari operator under pressures for Qatarization – the mandated increase of Qataris in the domestic workforce.⁶ During the design process, RAND clearly announced that the “long-term success of the reform was dependent on the strength of the operators.”⁶ This caused highly qualified, non-Qataris to leave their positions and be replaced from a domestically small pool of undertrained Qatari citizens. This policy decision was a major blow to the reform process.

While not an educational policy, Qatarization has had far reaching social impact into education. The Qatari Labor Law of 1962 and then 2004 requires that public-sector employers must hire a certain percentage of Qataris into their workforce. This means that Qatari students are guaranteed a job regardless of their grades. This undermines the student’s motivation to do well and decreases the quality of the domestic labor pool. Over 96% of all employed Qataris work in the public sector and shows the extent of the problem that has Qatarization has created.

Overall, a combination of impatient policy decisions and rapid reform implementation headed by over-committed leadership has caused the reforms to falter. The SEC needs to re-evaluate its current situation and adjust leadership and policies to prevent future mistakes.

Policy Recommendations

1. The SEC leadership needs to be re-structured to introduce safe guards against overnight and poor policy decision-making. In a talk during the PDGP 2015 Colloquium, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Horr, a member of the SEC during the reform process, said that the inclusion of high profile politicians in the SEC has suppressed constructive and self-critical discussions. When formed, the SEC was headed by the Crown Prince, His Highness Jassim Bin Hamad Al Thani, and the vice chair was Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned. The inclusion of the royal family did not allow for intermediate management in the SEC to question policy decisions. For example, Dr. Abdulaziza Al-Horr remarked that much of the SEC was against the language policy switches. By having a balanced leadership team that stresses discussion, including previous teachers and operators, better-informed policy decisions can be made.
2. Despite the setbacks during the reform process, it has to be made clear that educational reform is a long-term process. The SEC leadership and public have been too quick to judge the success and failure of the reform process. Media campaigns should be created to emphasize what the Qatari people should expect in educational reform and how long it will take. It will be necessary to publically display the progress being made as well as the setbacks and lessons learned. In doing so, leadership of the SEC should also lengthen the timeline of any expected future reforms to account for proper teaching and operator training times.

3. By guaranteeing jobs for Qatari citizens, Qatarization has destroyed economic mobility incentives for students to excel in school. While Qatarization shouldn't be discontinued overnight, intermediate employer policies can be enacted. By having employers require a high school diploma with passing grades, or a GED-equivalent test, Qatari students will be forced to work harder in school if they want the guaranteed government job.
4. In the short term, Qatari students are also missing a lot of class. Through the national annual education report, students self-report that they miss 18% of school each year while parents report that their students miss 10%. Independent Schools need to enact stricter attendance policies. However, it is clear that the lack of attendance is also a large social issue since parents seem to be complacent with their students' absences at school.
5. Emphasis on pre-school and elementary education (based on education scholarship from Handbook of Education Policy Research).
6. The 2006 policy decision to only allow Qatari operators needs to be overturned. The operators are the most integral part of the Independent School system and strong and qualified leaders are required.
7. Improve SEC Evaluation Institute evaluations.
8. In order to train Qatari teachers for Independent Schools, there needs to be a new committee in the SEC that crosses over with higher education to tailor postsecondary programs to improve teacher training programs.

Endnotes

1. Wikipedia, s.v. "List of countries by GDP (nominal) per capita." Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_\(nominal\)_per_capita](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(nominal)_per_capita).
2. Neeta Baporikar, ed. 2014. *Handbook of Research on Higher Education in the MENA Region: Policy and Practice*. (Hershey, PA: IGI Global) 59. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-6198-1.
3. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2010. "PISA 2009 Key Findings." Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa2009keyfindings.htm>.
3. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2013. "PISA 2012 Key Findings." Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>.
4. Brewer, Dominic, Catherine Augustine, Gail Zellman, Gery Ryan, Charles Goldman, Cathleen Stasz, and Louay Constant. 2007. "Education for a New Era: Design and Implementation of K-12 Education Reform in Qatar." (Santa Monica, California: RAND-Qatar Policy Institute). Accessed 28 January 28, 2015.
5. Paschyn, Christina Maria. 2013. "Zig-Zagging Education Policies Leave Qatari Students Behind." *Al-Fanar Media* October 25, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.al-fanarmedia.org/2013/10/zig-zagging-education-policies-leave-qatari-students-behind/>.
6. Supreme Education Council. 2006. "New Policies Correct System's Weaknesses and Support Reform." Last modified January 9, 2009. Accessed June 7, 2015.

Youth Entrepreneurship in Qatar

by Jennifer Ding

Executive Summary

In the wake of Arab Spring, many of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have raised entrepreneurship as a solution to address rising youth unemployment and to facilitate the transition to knowledge-based economies. While Qatar's high GDP and population growth offer a promising atmosphere for entrepreneurial exploration, traditional legal, institutional and cultural policies prevent this exploration from taking place. As the country progresses toward the 2030 National Vision, reducing legal barriers, connecting institutional resources and shifting cultural views toward risk and motivation are essential components to creating a sustainable startup ecosystem. Due to the current social contract between the government and citizens, sweeping national change may be difficult; however, by opening opportunities to youth as an initial target group, Qatar can begin developing a foundation for future entrepreneurial growth.

Introduction

In the past decade, entrepreneurship has emerged as a solution for global economic recession. With youth unemployment on the rise and an uncertain future for natural resource-based economies, many of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries are beginning to incorporate entrepreneurship into plans for economic diversification. The 2030 Qatar National Vision seeks "balance between an oil-based and knowledge-based economy" and raises entrepreneurship as a solution help reach this goal.¹ While the country's rapid population growth, high GDP, and favorable tax policies provide a supportive atmosphere for exploring new ventures, traditional policies and social structure seem to limit this exploration. In fact, though a 2011 Silatech poll found that 33 percent of Qataris aged 15-29 planned to start a business in the next year, in reality only 5 percent of Qataris choose a job in the private sector and only 2 percent run their own businesses.^{2,3} Recently, there has been a surge of resource development for Qatari youth from Education City to Qatar Business Incubation Center, but other vital aspects of Qatar's entrepreneurial ecosystem have not been developed as thoroughly. Addressing existing legal, institutional, and cultural factors that may be inhibiting the transition of entrepreneurial interest to sustainable practice will be an integral component to reaching the 2030 vision.

Entrepreneurship in Qatar Today

Legal

Laws and business policy serve as primary motivators and inhibitors to creating a new business. If startup costs are too low, it may be difficult to regulate for quality, committed business owners. However, if startup costs are too high, many promising companies may never make it through the legal hurdles to create a company. To form a Limited Liability Company (LLC) in Qatar, entrepreneurs must have minimum capital of 200,000 Qatari Riyal (about \$55,000) in the bank, a 12 month office space lease, and 51 percent company ownership by a Qatari national or company.⁴ Additionally, there are multiple registrations required with various government ministries, which costs a minimum of 15,000 QR (about \$4000) and takes at least 6–7 days.⁵ In contrast, starting a company in the United States is a generally an hour-long process that simply requires choosing an available name and paying a one-time fee. These hurdles prevent many potential young entrepreneurs from even considering starting a company in the country. In particular, these are obstacles for expatriates, who may have a hard time meeting a Qatari national and giving up majority ownership of the company. Also, entrepreneurship is an activity with a high percentage of failure, even when founders are passionate and committed. Thus, in a country with about 280,000 citizens, requiring a Qatari participant in every startup will result in a low number of startups created and an even lower number of successful startups.⁶

Due to traditional stigmas against bankruptcy, the current policies supporting people in such situations are harsh and ambiguous. There are currently two bankruptcy laws from 2005 and 2006 and they focus on “disbanding a company and liquidating its assets... rather than restructuring debt” for business survival. Issuing a check that bounces may lead to months of jail time.⁷ Additionally, liquidation procedures are long and result in a low recovery rate. In an activity where a large failure rate is expected, the lack of a safety net for startups as well as the potential of criminal punishments for personal debts are major disincentives to pursuing entrepreneurship.

Institutional

Creating resources for entrepreneurs through new and existing institutions is an essential component to raise awareness and provide a network of support. Qatar has made major efforts to create this ecosystem, especially through educational institutions. Both Qatar University and Education City have been instrumental in leading the change, with formal entrepreneurship programs and centers on campus. These offer opportunities such as mentorship, internships, hackathons, and business plan competitions. However, it seems that while these opportunities offer valuable learning experiences for students, very few encourage active pursuit of these ideas after the event or program. Prizes often include laptops or cash rather than incubation services, connection to investors, or other resources to support a venture post-competition—common student competition prizes in the United States. While creating a safe space for learning is good start, when these events

are framed as simulations and offer prizes not related to future entrepreneurial work, it is difficult for students to find the motivation, incentive, and support to move forward with their startups.

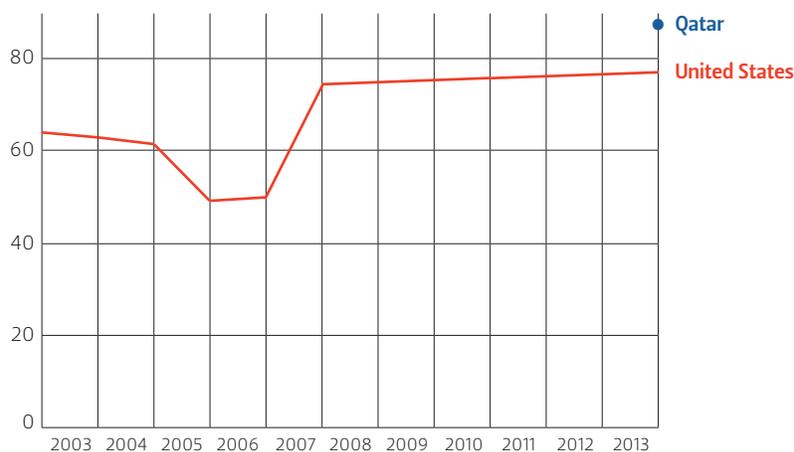
Financing is a crucial aspect of launching a new venture, especially for young entrepreneurs with no personal capital. The Qatar Development Bank, a government-owned institution supporting local industries and small to medium ventures, has funded 250 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) to date through about 3.5 billion QR (about \$1 billion) in financing.⁸ The Al-Dhameen indirect lending program is available for small, young startups based in Qatar. 75-85% of the loan request is provided in exchange for 13% equity at a maximum 7% interest rate.¹⁶ In comparison, the United States can provide startups Small Business Administration-backed loans, depending on the amount required at about a 6-8 percent interest rate and no trade of equity. However, most high growth startups in the U.S. traditionally acquire funding from venture capital and private investor groups rather than banks. In 2012, Silatech launched the SILA Angel Investment network to support young entrepreneurs but, unfortunately, it is no longer operating. Today, Silatech offers a few microloan options. In order to attract investors and build strong investor networks, it may take years for a healthy entrepreneurial ecosystem to prove that investments are worth the risk.

Many online and offline incubation programs are available to startups. The Qatar Business Incubation Center, which opened in 2014, provides training and mentorship, office space, and financing, with a budget of 100 million QR.⁹ QATAR's Digital Incubation Center also offers programs focused on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) focused startups, offering a 6-month program for new startup ideas and a 2-year program for existing startups. Any resident of Qatar is eligible to apply.¹⁰ Both of these incubation programs are run by government organizations and play multiple roles within the startup ecosystem as investors, mentors, teachers, and communities. In comparison, U.S. incubation programs like Y Combinator, invest a set amount in companies in exchange for equity, mentorship, and a final pitch day to investors, usually within a time period of 3-6 months. QBIC and DIC's work will be integral to laying the foundation for a Qatari startup ecosystem, but it is important that they do not play too many roles and allow other organizations to develop and fill key parts of the entrepreneurial community.

Cultural

Cultural traditions and standards play a major role in the development of a country's startup atmosphere. In countries like India, where youth unemployment is at the forefront of the national agenda, social entrepreneurship at the university level has sparked massive growth. In the United States, where "startup" is almost synonymous with Silicon Valley, high-tech companies have largely shaped entrepreneurial culture. With the guarantee of secure, high-paying public sector work, there seems to be less incentive in Qatar for citizens to assume the risk and difficulty of starting a business. However, entrepreneurship is seemingly viewed favorably as shown in Figure 1, and perhaps national pride and individual ambition could develop as counter-incentives.

Figure 1. GEM Data Visualization of Percent of Population 18-64 Who Agree that Entrepreneurs Receive High Status in the Country (2014 is the first year Qatar participated in the survey)¹¹



Qatar’s 2011-2016 Development Strategy discusses creating programs to attract youth to entrepreneurship as a major focus, and it also specifically targets another group: women.³ While women compose the majority of the university-educated population in the country, it remains a challenge for them to enter certain industries like business. Reasons for this may be the difficulty of mobility in public, access to certain environments, and even difficulty accessing credit due to “lack of required collateral against which to secure loans.”¹² The National Vision recognizes this problem and the government has begun forming resources like the Rouhda Center, which provides entrepreneurial services to women.

Building towards the 2030 Vision

With the goal of the 2030 National Vision set to grow the private sector by increasing entrepreneurial activity, a sustainable, local ecosystem must be developed between citizens, governments, and institutions. Though it may be difficult to create sweeping legal, institutional, and cultural change, by focusing developments to the target groups of youth and women first, Qatar can build a foundation for the future of the country’s entrepreneurial environment. It’s important that there is an atmosphere of collaboration and feedback among individuals and public institutions. For a thriving startup ecosystem to be developed, there must be both top-down policy and bottom-up cultural change.

One overall recommendation is for the development of a main governmental body that serves as a central resource to evaluate and suggest policy changes, connect institution networks, and promote cultural change. This will prevent confusion for interested entrepreneurs on where to start and also provide organization for different entrepreneurial initiatives into a consolidated, collaborative atmosphere. Because of its

centralized government structure, with openness to feedback and careful evaluation of the effects of policy changes, Qatar has the potential to make rapid progress.

Another major change governments must consider is loosening regulations on business creation and bankruptcy. Instead of requiring a Qatari partner in every venture, incentivizing such ventures with lower taxes and more favorable borrowing rates would promote Qatari involvement without discouraging non-Qatari participation. This way, those without Qatari connections are not prevented from sharing their ideas but those who do have an advantage. The 2005-2006 bankruptcy laws should be updated to modern standards and offer more support for salvaging, rather than liquidating, a business. This could help prompt a cultural shift toward destigmatizing bankruptcy and taking risks in spite of its possibility. While funding and office space support from incubation programs help alleviate those regulations, lowering the startup capital requirements and allowing businesses to first launch from home or other locations for a trial period could help lower the hurdles significantly.

Now that Qatar University and Education City have provided a foundation for educational resources, the institutions must create the programs and experiences necessary for students to be personally motivated to develop problem solving and leadership skills. Competitions and incubation programs should measure their success by the number of startups they create, and provide prizes that promote continued entrepreneurial activity. Human capital is one of the most important aspects of developing a startup ecosystem. While promoting citizen entrepreneurial activity is important to the future growth of the country, Qatar should draw from the diverse talent pools within and near the country. The country's large expatriate population may be a source of innovative ideas and willing to assume risk and hardship to launch a startup.

Lastly, the invisible influence of the boundaries of state bureaucracy and top-down hierarchy on culture and human behavior within Qatar are difficult to quantify, but also impossible to ignore. As a rentier state, the government assumes responsibility of distributing wealth to its citizens. Such an atmosphere is paradoxical to the individual responsibility of wealth generation in an entrepreneurial system. It seems that the 2030 National Vision aims for incremental change in the direction of loosening the rentier state social contract and empowering individuals to develop initiatives and generate personal wealth. Thus, while it may be impossible to tackle the whole of entrepreneurial policy and cultural shift at once, Qatar could start by addressing select target groups for favorable policy changes such as female SME owners and QSTP students leading science and high-tech developments. These groups may be able to lead a cultural and attitudinal change in the country through their successes and build startup and SME communities that could develop into a larger, general community in the future. The early risk-takers are essential components to kick-starting an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Once the foundation is there, interest can grow organically. However, to provide interested entrepreneurs even a chance to establish that foundation today, the government must share some of the risk with them and loosen the social and legal boundaries that are limiting startup development in Qatar.

Conclusion

Qatar presents an environment with a high potential for entrepreneurial growth if it can leverage its opportunities and lower current obstacles. With the development of a centralized entrepreneurial entity that can lead change in lowering business and bankruptcy regulations, connect the network of institutions supporting entrepreneurial activity, and create policies that promote a cultural shift to innovation and willingness to take risk, many of the current challenges faced by entrepreneurs today could be mitigated. While the country should consider drawing outside talent to mobilize a group interested in creating startups, it is important that the leadership of major incubation programs, universities, and investor groups is local to ensure the growth of an authentically Qatari startup culture that fits the local needs. Only in this way can a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem be developed.

Endnotes

1. General Secretariat for Development Planning. 2008. "Qatar National Vision 2030." (Doha, Qatar: General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). Retrieved from http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/qnv_2030_document/QNV2030_English_v2.pdf.
2. Loschky, Jay and Jennifer Dewan. 2012. "Qatar Leads Arab World in Youth Entrepreneurship." *Gallup (Abu Dhabi)* February 29, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/153020/qatar-leads-arab-world-youth-entrepreneurship.aspx>.
3. General Secretariat for Development Planning. 2011. "Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016." (Doha, Qatar: General Secretariat for Development Planning), 148. Retrieved from http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/gsdp_vision/docs/NDS_EN.pdf.
4. Pro Partner Group. "Starting a Business in Qatar." *AngloINFO*. Retrieved from <http://qatar.angloinfo.com/working/starting-a-business/>.
5. Doing Business. n.d. "Starting a Business in Qatar." Last modified June 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/qatar/starting-a-business/>.
6. Paschyn, Christina Paschyn. 2013. "The Challenges of Launching a Startup in Doha." *Wamda* May 27, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.wamda.com/2013/05/startup-challenges-chat-with-cna-qentrepreneurship-centre-in-doha>.
7. Rohan, Soman. 2014. "Outdated Bankruptcy Laws in Qatar Need Upgrade." *Business Quarter Magazine* September 14, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.bqdoha.com/2014/09/outdated-bankruptcy-lawsqatar-need-upgrade>.
8. The Worldfolio. 2015. "QDB Supporting Change in Qatar Through the Founding of an SME Sector." *The Worldfolio* March 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.theworldfolio.com/interviews/qdb-supportingchange-in-qatar-through-the-founding-of-an-sme-sector/3455/>.
9. Kataya, Abdulghani. 2014. "Opportunity (and Big Bucks) Knocks at Qatar's Newest Incubator." *Wamda* December 14, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.wamda.com/2014/12/opportunityknocks-qatars-newest-incubator>.

10. ictQATAR. n.d. "Our Programs." Accessed February 26, 2015 <http://www.ictqatar.qa/en/dic/programs>.

11. GEM Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. Retrieved from <http://gemdev.dev.marmaladeontoast.co.uk/visualizations>.

12. Hoteit, Leila and Mounira Jamjoom. 2014. "Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in the Middle East." Booz & Company Ideation Center. Retrieved from <http://cfi.co/africa/2014/05/booz-companys-ideation-center-empowering-women-entrepreneurs-in-the-middle-east/>.

Rethinking Qatar's Global Education Initiatives

by Madeleine Tibaldi

Introduction

While much of its economic wealth is due to natural resources, Qatar has made substantial efforts to define itself as more than just an oil distributor. In order to do this, Qatar has aimed to create a national brand to distinguish itself from other oil-rich nations and create its own unique place in the rapidly globalizing world.¹ Through global branding, Qatar has begun to legitimize itself as a purveyor of cultural capital, rather than purely monetary wealth. Doha's establishment as a regional education hub, coupled with other educational reforms, has served as the primary means of achieving this strategy. Still, efforts must be made to ensure that Qatar's knowledge-based developments continue to enrich national education quality and align with the overarching goals of the 2030 Vision.

Background

Currently, Qatar holds the coveted position of being the world's richest nation, and its GDP has more than quadrupled in the past 25 years. Much of Qatar's success can be attributed to the former Emir, Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who came to power in 1995. His reign introduced drastic changes, including the launch of Al Jazeera in 1996, the establishment of women's suffrage rights, and, most critically, the foundation of Doha's Education City in 1995. While Qatar's economy is still heavily dependent on hydrocarbon revenues, these changes have legitimated Qatar as a hub for cultural capital, rather than simply an exporter of oil.

Economic Reform

"The Dubai Model" is a model for economic development characterized by a pro-business mentality through the extensive use of foreign labor, an efficient public sector, and a reliance on foreign investments.² The Dubai Model has been implemented in several Gulf states, with the ultimate goal of replacing the Rentier model of development by decreasing economic dependence on oil and gas. In comparison to the United Arab Emirates, a larger percentage of Qatar's export earnings come from oil and gas, which account for 70 percent of the state income. In contrast to the rest of the Middle East, the Gulf states rank highly in terms of pro-business attitudes, including incentives for growth and diversification.²

Qatar now boasts a Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) ranking of 11, a dramatic increase from its 2007 rank of 38. This drastic change is a more significant rank increase of the Gulf nations, and Qatar is currently the highest ranked Gulf country in the GCI.³ Within the Gulf region, including in Qatar, restrictive labor regulations are the most significant factor impeding business growth. Qatar ranked highest in the macroeconomics market and efficient good markets institutions, and lowest in areas such as technology usage and openness to foreign competition.

Education City

One of the ways in which Qatar has sought to differentiate itself from the Dubai Model is by creating a unique brand for itself by focusing on educational development rather than tourism. Qatar has emerged as a “regional education hub”, which can loosely be defined as a highly concentrated area promoting cross-border education. When the new Emir came to power in 1995, Qatar launched a series of projects to benefit its growth and development, namely the inception of Education City. The educational complex houses six American branch campuses, as well as a British university, a French university, and recently a Qatari university.⁴ Education City has a substantially larger portion of Qatari national students than similar Western institutions in Abu Dhabi. The reason for this is two-fold: first, the government mandates that a certain percentage of students must be Qatari and admission standards are lax.

While the universities claim to uphold the same admissions standards as the original campuses, disputes have been raised regarding whether or not these standards are upheld when admitting Qatari students, especially males, who are significantly outnumbered by females at the university level.⁵ Many Qatari nationals are unprepared for the academic rigor of these institutions due to a lack of academic preparation and English language skills. Qatar uses the Academic Bridge Program as a one-year stepping-stone between high school and university to equip promising students for the high level of academic work they will be expected to complete. While many students find this program to be extremely helpful, the very necessity of the Academic Bridge Program may be indicative of a more significant problem in the national primary and secondary education system that requires a more profound infrastructural solution.

Primary and Secondary Education Reform

Qatar began working extensively with the RAND-Qatar Policy Institute to create reforms for its K-12 education system; however, these policy reforms were largely unsuccessful, and RAND is no longer operating in Qatar as a result. These education reforms were drastic and sudden, and poor economic budgeting led to many schools using funding inefficiently. The reforms allowed too much autonomy to educational institutions in designing their own curricula and also implemented strict quotas regarding the percentage of staff that was required to be Qatari. The reforms also changed the language of education from English back to Arabic. The inconsistency of the reforms

led to a decrease in educational quality and can be used to explain Qatari students' unpreparedness to succeed in a university setting.

Policy Suggestions

While programs such as the Academic Bridge have had some degree of success in closing the education gaps for Qatari students, they should not be a permanent solution, as they indicate clear educational deficits in university preparedness among Qatari students. To lessen this gap in preparedness, Qatar should implement changes in the K-12 education system that can alleviate the failures caused by the initial reforms. In order to improve the quality of academic institutions the Qatari government should develop policies which focus on hiring the best educators possible, managing the academic budget efficiently, and fostering critical learning rather than simply rote memorization. Concretely, schools should be given more freedom in hiring their staff, educators should be given increased salaries, a streamlined economic policy should be enforced, and the language of instruction should gradually transition to English. Schools should analyze previous failures and successes to determine the best course of action.

In order to incentivize citizens to pursue higher education, Qatar should develop new ways to promote business ventures and decrease the barriers to entrepreneurial endeavors. One of the best ways Qatar can achieve this goal is by establishing research collaborations between educational institutions and private sector stakeholders. This strategy will promote technological advancement and entrepreneurship, which were Qatar's areas of improvement according to the GCI, while simultaneously promoting the importance of obtaining a higher education.

Within Education City, policy changes should be made to further integrate Western universities into Qatari society while upholding the high educational standards and promoting academic growth among all students. Rather than simply transplanting Western values, these institutions should increase cultural sensitivity to their geographical environments in order to prevent the isolation of Qatari students. This can be encouraged through hiring more Qatari-educated professors and increasing partnerships between Western universities and Qatar's national university, Qatar University. By engaging in co-curricular initiatives and joint teaching programs, Education City can establish itself as a viable and organic part of Doha's educational landscape, rather than a disconnected outlier. By making these policy adjustments, the western universities can take steps toward integrating themselves into the greater educational landscape of Qatar, rather than simply importing educational practices that may be incompatible with the national educational infrastructure.

Endnotes

1. Peterson, J.E. 2006. "Qatar and the World: Branding for a Micro-State." *The Middle East Journal* 60.4: 732-748.

2. Hvidt, Martin. 2011. "Economic and Institutional Reforms in the Arab Gulf Countries." *The Middle East Journal* 65.1: 85-102.

3. Hanouz, Margareta Dzerniek and Miroslav Dusek. 2013. "The Employment Competitiveness Nexus in the Arab World: Findings from the Global Competitiveness Index 2012-2013." (Geneva: World Economic Forum).

4. Knight, Jane and Sirat Morshidi. 2011. "The Complexities and Challenges of Regional Education Hubs: Focus on Malaysia." *Higher Education* 62.5: 593-606.

5. Walker, Lesly. 2014. "Female University Students Outnumber Men 2:1." *Doha News* June 12, 2014. Retrieved from <http://dohanews.co/female-university-students-outnumber-males-nearly/>.

Investing Abroad for Geopolitical and Economic Gain in Qatar Post-shale Gas

by Caitlin Laird

Introduction

Qatar boasts the highest GDP per capita of any nation and, as in other Gulf States, Qatar's economic prosperity is closely linked to its energy resources ("The Richest Countries in the World"). Oil and natural gas sectors account for 57.8 percent of Qatar's substantial GDP, and hydrocarbon earnings totaled 60 percent of government revenues for the past five years ("Qatar"). However, the role of hydraulic fracturing in raising global supply and the high investments by some countries in expanding domestic production of natural gas are increasingly cited as threats to Qatar's energy economy. While these developments certainly affect global gas markets, they also provide an opportunity and perhaps even an incentive for Qatar. By shifting its focus away from domestic production and increasing foreign project holdings, Qatar can diversify its economy and further strengthen its political capital through economic ties.

Background

Qatar has the third largest natural gas reserves behind Russia and Iran, but it is the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG), producing 77 million tons of LNG per year. More importantly, nearly all of Qatar's natural gas production comes from the non-associated North Field in the Persian Gulf ("Qatar Oil & Gas Report", 80). Non-associated gas reserves are isolated in natural gas fields, rather than developed in conjugation with oil reserves. Because of this, OPEC cannot regulate Qatar's natural gas production and the country can set export prices independent of OPEC decisions (Krane and Wright, 10). This autonomy has enabled Qatar to quickly build up its profits by selling LNG to the energy-hungry Asian markets at higher prices.

Qatar made diversifying its revenues and creating a knowledge-based economy a key goal in its 2030 Vision, but the country still relies heavily on LNG revenues and will continue to rely on them for the foreseeable future. LNG competitors have largely been non-factors for the past decade and a half; however, shale gas is changing the demand dynamics of natural gas, as well as further incentivizing already-popular domestic gas production projects. The United States has gone from being a net importer of LNG to an expected net exporter by 2016 ("Market Trends: Natural Gas"). Additionally, Malaysia, Australia and even South American countries are all in various stages of project development, which threaten the demand market for Qatar's LNG.

Despite the impact of shale gas, Qatar's fate is not as grim as is sometimes portrayed in the media. According to Stéphane Michel, Total's Senior Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa, economic growth in Asia will be enough to handle U.S. shale gas volumes "without changing Qatar as a player" (Cornwell). Additionally, the market impact of the U.S.'s high rate of production is mitigated by the country's strict export regulations. And such strong production is not likely to become the norm in domestic production outside of the U.S. because of the high cost of shale gas projects and large public concern for environmental damage. Still, although Qatar can reasonably continue as a rentier state for some time, the "threat" of shale gas and domestic production projects provides a convenient occasion for the state to capitalize on economic and geopolitical opportunities.

Foreign Project Opportunities

Qatar has a number of potential investment projects abroad with so many countries focusing on expanding domestic production. However, four countries stand out as opportunities for gaining economic and political capital: Poland, the U.S., China, and Argentina. Poland currently relies heavily on Russian gas through pipelines; however, the volatility of prices and the Ukrainian conflict have spurred Poland into developing its own resources quickly. Poland's gas projects focus on shale gas, which is extremely capital-heavy on the front-end. Because of current tight profit margins due to low oil prices, Qatar does not have much competition for project investments in Poland because they are simply too expensive for companies in the short-term. If Qatar were to help reduce Poland's dependence on Russia by investing in shale projects, the Western reception would be favorable.

The United States already has extensive shale gas projects, but there is a market for gas-to-liquids (GTL) production in the U.S. that is currently untapped. GTL plants convert methane-rich natural gas into other hydrocarbons like gasoline, diesel fuel, or even naphtha for plastics manufacture ("Overview of Gas to Liquids"). These projects are expensive, and the low oil rates make it unfeasible to recoup costs early (Gallucci). Liquid diesel is profitable because of the spread between cheap natural gas and expensive oil, but falling oil prices have dis-incentivized GTL projects. Both Shell and the South African giant Sasol had previously announced plans to establish a large-scale GTL plant in Louisiana, but Shell announced the cancellation of its project in 2013 and Sasol decided to put its project on hold in early 2015 (Gallucci). Should it invest in a GTL facility, Qatar can wait out the initial losses to recoup its investments and economic stakes in the U.S. have the promise of boosting political influence.

China represents the project with the most growth potential. The Chinese population is enormous and the industry-heavy economy requires massive energy supplies (Biorol). The larger Asian market is also the most lucrative region to sell LNG because high demand has boosted prices significantly. China, in an effort to supplement expensive foreign

energy supplies, made increasing domestic production of natural gas a key concern, even embedding it in the country's 12th 5-Year Plan (Fensom). However, despite lofty ambitions, China has produced gas at significantly lower levels than hoped. This has discouraged IOCs from investing in these projects; Shell and Hess are the only two foreign companies to actually secure production-sharing contracts in these projects thus far. Despite the obstacles in investment requirements and production target scale-backs, China remains a favorable prospect. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) estimates that China's shale resources have 31.6 trillion cubic meters of recoverable gas, which is nearly double the combined shale resources of the U.S. and Canada ("Technically Recoverable Shale Oil & Gas"). And, given the skyrocketing energy consumption of China and the rest of the Asian region, this supply would not have difficulty finding a market.

Argentina has rising energy demands, but it is also worth noting that exploration in the country has been economically discouraged since the 2002 economic crisis because the government has kept energy prices artificially low (Stark, 12). In 2008, however, the Argentinian government introduced its "Gas Plus" program, which allows newly-discovered unconventional (shale) gas to be sold at prices up to \$5/thousand cubic feet. With greater domestic investment projects, the Argentinian economy has the potential to recover further, opening up long-term possibilities for successful shale gas partnerships with Qatar. Although Argentina is politically weaker than the other three countries, it has an established energy industry, which makes the initial investment cheaper than Poland due to already-existing infrastructure. For example, the Vaca Muerta shale play development has progressed more quickly than projects in both Poland and China (Kemp). Additionally, establishing partnerships in Argentina is an enticing long-term political maneuver because the country does not have the political authority of China or the U.S. to dominate diplomatic relations. Rather, the growth of Argentina promises stronger future support in the international arena without requiring that Qatar submit as the politically weaker actor.

Policy Recommendations

Qatar would be wise to use this period of flux in the natural gas markets to expand its role from a producer to an investor. This would not only help to diversify Qatar's energy revenues, but would also necessarily build Qatar's intellectual and managerial reputation. In looking for potential projects, Qatar should focus on maximizing political influence and long-term economic returns as a method of boosting the country's political strength. Four countries, Poland, the U.S., China, and Argentina are suggested in this brief; however, it is critical that no matter where it invests, Qatar capitalizes on its strengths. For this reason, the U.S. and Poland are the most attractive options. Qatar's solid GTL project experience can be leveraged in the U.S., and its vast monetary reserves make Qatar uniquely positioned to invest in Poland's costly shale gas aspirations. Both countries offer large political gain for Qatar, and can help Qatar on its path to reducing dependence on energy exports.

References

- Southeast Asia Energy Outlook. 2013. "World Energy Outlook Special Report." (Paris: International Energy Agency). Retrieved from https://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/SoutheastAsiaEnergyOutlook_WEO2013SpecialReport.pdf.
- Cornwell, Alexander. 2014. "Qatar Will Still Be a Major Gas Exports Despite US Shale: Total." *Gulf News* November 4, 2014. Accessed March 30, 2015 <http://gulfnews.com/business/sectors/energy/qatar-will-still-be-a-major-gas-exports-despite-uss shale-total-1.1408073>.
- Fensom, Anthony. 2014. "China: The Next Shale-Gas Superpower?" *The National Interest* October 9, 2014. Accessed March 30, 2015 <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-the-next-shale-gas-superpower-11432>.
- Gallucci, Maria. 2015. "Oil Price Decline Is Hurting Sasol, Shell Efforts to Turn Natural Gas into Liquid Diesel." *International Business Times* January 31, 2015. Accessed March 30, 2015 <http://www.ibtimes.com/oil-price-decline-hurting-sasol-shell-efforts-turn-natural-gas-liquid-diesel-1801068>.
- Kemp, John. 2014. "Why Argentina Is Most Attractive Shale Play outside US." *Reuters* November 3, 2014. Accessed March 30, 2015 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/04/argentina-oil-shale-kemp-idUSL6N0ST44Z20141104>.
- Krane, Jim and Steven Wright. 2014. "Qatar 'Rises Above' Its Region: Geopolitics and the Rejection of the GCC Gas Market." Report No. 35. (Kuwait Programme on Development, London School of Economics). Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55336/1/_lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_Kuwait%20Programme_Krane_2014.pdf.
- U.S. Energy Information Administration. n.d. "Market Trends: Natural Gas." Last modified May 7, 2014. Accessed March 31, 2015.
- Linc Energy. n.d. "Overview of Gas to Liquids." Accessed March 30, 2015 http://www.lincenergy.com/data/info_sheets/GTL1_overview_TPR.pdf.
- U.S. Energy Information Administration. n.d. "Qatar." Last modified January 30, 2014. Accessed March 30, 2015 <http://www.eia.gov/beta/international/country.cfm?iso=QAT>.
- "Qatar Oil & Gas Report No. 1." 2015. *Qatar Oil & Gas Report* January: 1-121. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost Accessed March 31, 2015.
- Stark, Melissa. 2012. "Water and Shale Gas Development: Leveraging the US Experience in New Shale Developments." (Dublin: Accenture). Accessed March 31, 2015.
- U.S. Energy Information Administration. 2013. "Technically Recoverable Shale Oil and Shale Gas Resources: An Assessment of 137 Shale Formations in 41 Countries Outside the United States." Accessed March 30, 2015. <http://www.eia.gov/analysis/studies/worldshalegas/>.
- Global Finance Magazine. n.d. "The Richest Countries in the World." *Global Finance Magazine*. Accessed March 31, 2015 <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economicdata/richest-countries-in-theworld>.

Addressing Challenges Facing Qatar's Solar Energy Policies

by Bo Kim

Introduction

In 2014, Qatar announced an ambitious goal of generating 1.8 gigawatts (GW) of electricity from solar energy by 2020.¹ A few initiatives and deals with international companies followed this announcement, but only a very small fraction of the proposed generation has yet to come to fruition. It is nevertheless important that Qatar, one of the most energy-rich nations in the world, is investing in solar energy in a region where renewable energy is almost nonexistent. With these efforts, Qatar might be attempting to position itself as a regional leader in developing solar energy.

Recent demographic and economic developments in Qatar

Despite the high solar potential in the sunny climate, Qatar's interest in solar energy seems incongruous in light of its plentiful natural gas reserves. However, an examination of recent developments in Qatar reveals otherwise. Firstly, Qatar's population has tripled over the past decade, with growth driven primarily by temporary migrant laborers from South and Southeast Asia.^{2,3} With numerous construction and infrastructure projects underway before the 2022 FIFA World Cup, this high demand for labor will likely remain stable, although the population growth rate is projected to decrease from its 2010 high.⁴ This population boom has created steep increases in electricity and energy demand.⁵ These effects are further compounded by the unique characteristics of Qatar's development: numerous construction projects, a focus on petrochemicals, and the high levels of energy use associated with both.

Given the large government subsidies on energy in Qatar, this increase in energy demand might become a financial burden to the Qatari government, as has been the case in other Gulf States. In Qatar, any financial impacts might be mitigated by Qatar's use of natural gas for all of its electricity generation and its surplus of gas reserves. Nevertheless, such impacts are possible, particularly given the state's path-dependence on a recently-developed infrastructure constructed without much regard to energy prices, which contribute minimally to operating costs under current government subsidies.⁶

While a movement towards renewable electricity generation would have the potential to mitigate these issues, it is unclear how much concern these problems are raising in such a rapidly growing economy. Publicly, the Qatari government has instead promoted

solar energy as a part of a movement toward a diversified, sustainable, knowledge-based economy. It is likely, with at least one eye toward this future, that the Qatari government has begun to publicize its solar energy goals.⁷

Overview of current Qatari solar ventures

The realized development of solar energy in Qatar has been minimal and problematic. Qatar built a photovoltaic module production factory and signed deals with international actors, but other projects have been plagued by delays of an undetermined length. For example, a solar tender was set to be opened in Q1 2013, but as of April 2015, has not materialized.⁸

These delays are likely attributable in part to Qatar's rapid economic and population growth. Ironically, while this growth has necessitated the development of Qatar's forward-thinking mentality, it has also created bottlenecks in development. With the strain on Doha's infrastructure, created by rapid population growth and the World Cup, policymakers have had to first deal with these more immediate policy concerns before devoting time and resources to long-term projects such as solar energy.

It is also possible that the delays stem from changes in the Qatari government. The 2013 transition of power from Sheikh Hamad to his son, Sheikh Tamim, has been accompanied by changes in leadership across state-owned entities.⁹ Under the banner of economic "consolidation," this new leadership is re-evaluating programs initiated during the previous emir's rule and re-scheduling or cutting non-essential programs.¹⁰

Falling oil prices might also be a factor in these delays. Saudi Arabia's renewable energy initiatives have seen setbacks stemming from a re-evaluation of large, costly renewable energy projects after unexpectedly low revenues from falling oil prices.¹¹ As oil is much less critical to Qatar's economy, falling prices might not have as pronounced of an effect. The possibility of some impact, however, cannot be ignored. Indeed, low oil prices might be partly responsible for the aforementioned Qatari economic consolidation.

Regardless of the cause, these delays jeopardize the likelihood that Qatar will meet its stated goals for renewable energy generation. This would be concerning for the long-term visions of Qatar, as many of the infrastructure and economic issues that solar energy could alleviate are not likely to be solved on their own without a strong commitment towards sustainable growth and development. Delays could also negatively affect Qatar's credibility and commitment to its goals, warding off potential investors.

Qatar-specific challenges to developing solar power

In addition to the above macro-level issues, Qatar's solar industry faces a number of environmental and technological challenges specific to the region. The technological expertise needed to overcome these issues is likely underdeveloped due to the lack of renewable energy development in the MENA region.

Qatar's desert climate poses a number of issues. Firstly, dust collecting on solar panels reduces panel efficiency.¹² Water is generally used to clean the panels, but Qatar's water security is tenuous, particularly given that recent population increases have created skyrocketing water demand. Large-scale solar energy deployment and subsequent cleaning of the panels would exacerbate these water security issues. Additionally, despite high amounts of sunlight in the summer, temperatures in excess of 100°F (38°C) can also reduce panel efficiency.¹³

It is also very difficult to meaningfully forecast the future of Qatar's solar industry. This is due to its early stage of development and the lack of regional case studies. The unique politics and economies of many of the states in the MENA region make it difficult to make meaningful comparisons of Qatar's solar energy industry to industries in other states outside of the region. Volatile politics and demographic changes to Qatar and the MENA region further complicate matters.

Policy recommendations

Firstly, Qatar should encourage public-private partnerships. Increasing the role of the private sector in developing solar energy projects would incentivize innovation and international cooperation, both of which are critical in solving the technological challenges facing Qatar's solar industry. The Qatari government could benefit from funding comparative research that examines relationships between companies, investors, and state entities around the world. Although no system would be perfectly implementable in the Qatari system without modifications, this research could identify best practices for how Qatar's institutions could better facilitate government-business dialogue.

Secondly, Qatar should invest in technological research and development that specifically attends to regional challenges. This would address the lack of focus on the aforementioned technological problems that could preclude a large-scale deployment of solar power throughout the Gulf region. Possible solutions to these problems could include panels that function efficiently at higher temperatures, cleaning mechanisms that require less water, or the use of solar energy for desalination of water from the Gulf. To help foster this research, Qatar should continue to invest in foreign companies, as their technical expertise would be invaluable given the nascence of Qatar's solar industry.

In regards to the current climate of economic consolidation, renewable energy must be considered a top policy priority so as to not get lumped together with other initiatives set to be cut or delayed.¹⁴ Despite their short-term costs, the long-term importance of such projects should convince policymakers to allocate resources toward these initiatives. Unfortunately, renewable energy will likely become a harder sell as World Cup construction increasingly strains the national budget over the next seven years.

Finally, Qatar should clarify its exact renewable energy targets and goals. This could take the form of a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), which would mandate a certain

percentage of electricity generation from renewable sources. In addition to mandating and creating a baseline amount of renewable generation, an RPS policy, unprecedented in the MENA region, could be a significant boon for Qatar's international reputation. Successful enforcement of such a policy would send a clear signal of Qatar's firm commitment to its renewable energy targets even as other MENA states renege on theirs.¹⁵ Even if Qatar settles on a less strict policy, a clear commitment to stated goals would have a similar impact.

This signaling effect would likely drive increased international cooperation and position Qatar to become a regional leader and model for other states looking to develop similar renewable energy technologies. More broadly, this would hasten Qatar's development into a more sustainable, knowledge-based economy. The Qatari government and public relations apparatus would likely be amenable to fostering this image of Qatar as a regional leader in sustainability.

Conclusions

The development of solar energy in Qatar faces challenges unique to the region that can be addressed through concentrated policy initiatives. Many of these challenges are due to the dearth of regional models for solar energy development. This lack of examples is problematic but it also presents an opportunity for Qatar to take the initiative and to be seen as a regional leader in solar policy through well-enforced, innovative, and forward-thinking policies. Qatar's wealth means that financing these policy changes is more feasible than in other nations, although whether investment in the solar industry is currently aligned with the government's priorities is an open question.

However, this does not diminish the importance of addressing and contextualizing solar policy within the overarching structural, economic and political challenges associated with Qatar's rapid development. While solar energy can certainly alleviate some of these problems, to expect renewable energy to be a panacea for these issues is unrealistic. Necessary steps must be taken to address these larger issues in order for solar energy development to have the desired effects. Thus, the fate of Qatar's solar industry, like so many other Qatari issues, is inextricably tied to the ways in which Qatar manages its rapid expansion, growth and future.

Endnotes

1. The Foundation. n.d. "Qatar's New Energy Horizons." Qatar Foundation. Last modified August 25, 2014. Accessed March 31, 2015 <http://www.qf.org.qa/content/the-foundation/issue-68/qatars-new-energy-horizons>.
2. Congressional Research Service, Qatar. 2014. "Background and U.S. Relations, Rep. No.RL31718." Accessed April 1, 2015 <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL31718.pdf>.

3. Siebel, Michael Siebel. 2014. "Exploitation of Migrant Workers in Asia." *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute* 7. Accessed April 1, 2015 <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/top-10-2014-issue-7-exploitation-migrant-workers-asia>.
4. Walker, Lesly. 2014. "Qatar's Population Reaches All-Time High, But Rate of Growth Slowing." *Doha News* October 2, 2014. Accessed April 1, 2015, <http://dohanews.co/qatars-population-reaches-time-high-rate-growth-slowing/>.
5. Walker, Lesly. 2014. "Qatar's Energy Conservation Aims Struggle Amid Rising Need." *Doha News* September 26, 2014. Accessed April 1, 2015 <http://dohanews.co/rise-demand-power-questions-success-energy-conservation-campaign/>.
6. Krane, Jim. 2010. "The Basis of Abu Dhabi's Quest for Renewable Energy and Policies Required to Meet its Goals." (working paper, Dubai School of Government, Dubai, 2010). Retrieved from <http://www.jimkrane.com/misc/KRANE-DSGWorkingPaper10-07.pdf>.
7. Note that different sources offer various goals, of which 1.8 GW by 2020 is the most conservative. Other goals include 2 percent of power output by 2020.
8. Ayre, James. 2015. "Qatar Close To Opening 200 MW Solar Tender." *CleanTechnica* January 29, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2015 <http://cleantechnica.com/2015/01/29/qatar-close-opening-200-mw-solar-tender-reportedly/>.
9. Stephens, Michael. 2013. "Change Brings Challenges for Qatar Emir Tamim." *BBC News* June 25, 2013. Accessed April 1, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22875409>.
10. Kovessy, Peter. 2014. "Qatar's Finances to Take Hit from Falling Oil Prices." *Doha News* October 26, 2014. Accessed April 8 2015 <http://dohanews.co/qatars-finances-take-hit-falling-oil-prices/>.
11. Dipaola, Anthony. 2015. "Saudi Arabia Delays \$109 Billion Solar Plant by 8 Years." *Bloomberg* January 19, 2015. Accessed March 31, 2015 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-20/saudi-arabia-delays-109-billion-solar-plant-by-8-years>.
12. AlRashid, Abdulsatta. n.d. "Water Resource Management Challenges and Water Security" (slide presentation).
13. Meltzer, Joshua, Nathan Hultman, and Claire Langley. 2014. "Low-carbon Energy Transitions in Qatar and the Gulf Cooperation Council Region." (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution), 52. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2014/03/lowcarbon-energy-transitions-qatar-hultman-meltzer>.
14. It is possible that this is already happening. The Qatar Foundation, which operates Qatar Solar Energy, is facing budget cuts of 45 percent, which paints a rather gloomy picture of the future of Qatar Solar Energy and its associated renewable energy projects.
15. Saudi Arabia, for example, has had to revise its solar energy generation targets and delay its \$109 billion solar power project, likely to due falling oil prices causing unexpected financial strains.

Accessibility in the Urban Landscape: Accounting for Disability in the Urban Expansion of Doha, Qatar

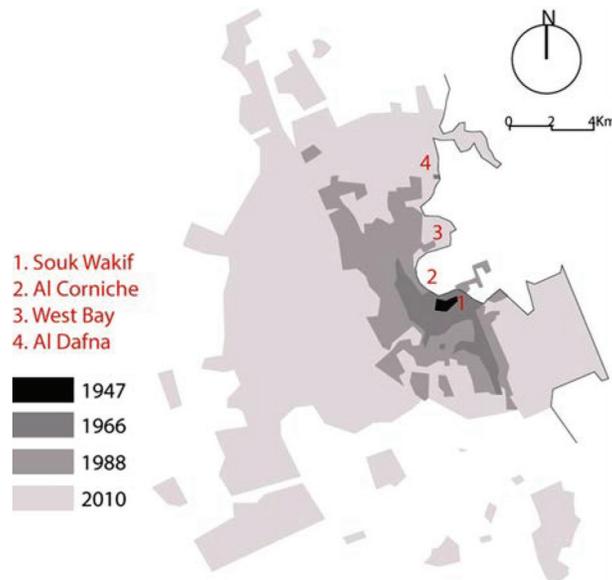
by Sevita Rama

Introduction

As the city of Doha, Qatar, continues to grow in a testament to what can be accomplished in architecture in the modern era, it is important to consider the inclusion of the city and country's entire population. People with disabilities are often considered the largest minority group in the world.¹

Figure 1. Urban Growth Phases in Doha

1947 – Urban Development Prior to Oil Exploitation; 1966 – Modernization Phase; 1988 – Petro-Urbanism Phase; 2010 – Megaproject Phase.



Source: Rizzo, Agatino. "Rapid Urban Development and National Master Planning in Arab Gulf Countries. Qatar as a Case Study." *Cities* 39 (2014): 50–57.

The needs of people with disabilities are not often taken into account in designing features in an urban landscape. To best address accessibility for people with disabilities in Doha, it is important to address both the architectural and infrastructure-related design issues.

Despite the lack of forethought in urban planning of Doha due to the rapidity of its expansion, the 2022 World Cup has the potential to shed light on issues of mobility and accessibility. We can see the four major phases of urban expansion in Figure 1. The next seven years are a critical time to rethink and supplement design ideas with knowledge and recognition of the population with disabilities living in Qatar. This can be both cost-effective and preempt the institutionalization of stigmas against people with disabilities.

The number of people with disabilities or mobility issues in Qatar can also be expected to increase with Qatar's rapid population growth, an aging population with longer life expectancies, and the recent increase in motor vehicle accidents.²

Background

According to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which adopts a social model of disability, people with disabilities are defined as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”³

The number of people with disabilities in Qatar has recently grown as a direct result of an increasing population. However, in comparison with international disability spread rates, Qatar's numbers are still quite low. In 2010, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs in Qatar conducted a census and found that 0.35 percent of people in Qatar are living with disabilities. Even in the past five years, this number is sure to have increased. Qatar's population growth rate as of 2013 was 5.6 percent. With the further urgency of construction for the World Cup, this number will also increase in the next seven years.

In the study conducted by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, 36.5 percent of people with disabilities have a mental or neurological condition. The second most prevalent type of disability is motor impairment, which accounts for 21.7 percent of the disabled population. While Qatar has already instituted some government-sponsored programs for people with mental and neurological disabilities, the resources and programs for people with physical disabilities are limited.

Current government and policy priorities have focused heavily on addressing learning disabilities. Organizations that assist all people with disabilities, but focus on children include the Qatar Center for Autism and Special Needs, The Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs, and Shafallah, which is for Qataris and non-Qataris.^{4,5,6} Other organizations focused on the educational needs of children include the Step by Step Centre for Special Needs, the Child Development Center, and HOPE Qatar.^{7,8,9,10} Not all organizations are easily available to both Qataris and non-Qataris, especially given that some only seem to have information online in Arabic.

Current Policy Priorities

The Second Secretary at the Qatari Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, Nour Al-Sada, pointed to the Building National Capacities program, which is being implemented by Elderly People Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Qatar Assistive Technology Center (MADA). The program is designed to promote and support the rights of people with disabilities through information and communication technology.¹¹ It was noted that 90 percent of the national database for people with disabilities has been completed through coordination with public and private bodies working the field in addition to a working group of policy stakeholders to develop a friendly work environment for people with disabilities.

The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps is now the current standard for classifying disabilities. The ICIDH was published by the World Health Organization and focuses on the consequences of a disability or disease. The last time Qatar reported statistics on the population living with disabilities was in 1986.¹² Discrepancy in available information about the disability population in Qatar can contribute to a lack of public awareness and a lack of understanding of the need for disability services.

His Eminence the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud also spoke in 2008 to Qatar's dedication to the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of an international cooperation effort.¹³ At this time, Qatar was also working with the Deaf Muslim Organization in the United States to organize the First International Forum for the Deaf in Doha, where 500 deaf Muslims from around the world attended alongside the chairman of the World Federation of the Deaf and World Association of Sign Language Interpreters.¹⁴

Both of these government statements on people with disabilities in Qatar involve multilateral cooperation, indicating that Qatar should be more motivated now than ever to address issues facing their disabilities population. In particular, the international attention from the 2022 World Cup should be used as a mobilizing effort for addressing issues of accessibility in the urban landscape in Doha.

Design and Accessibility: International Models

In the United States, these needs are standardized in the Americans with Disabilities Act's Standards for Accessible Design. However, in Qatar, such a model does not exist. Some organizations, like Education City, use ADA standards in their accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Accessibility and Disability: A Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment is a publication made in an attempt to provide Lebanon, particularly the Beirut Canal District, a design manual on accessibility for the disabled.¹⁵ The manual provides specific design

ideas and implementation techniques and can serve as a model for an organization like the Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning in Qatar to use as a supplement to a city master plan. The manual also provides regional specifications for devices used by people with disabilities (such as wheelchairs). The diagrams and specs are modeled after the guidelines regularly updated through the ADA as well as other international models of accessibility and integration.

Another model for disability-friendly cities is through the Accessibility Award, which is given by the European Commission on Justice.¹⁶ The award covers four key areas of accessibility: the built environment and public spaces, transport and related infrastructure, information and communication technologies, and public facilities and services.¹⁷ Understanding what makes these cities accessible could provide an idea of the best practices for accessibility for people with physical disabilities in Qatar.

Conclusion

The Qatar National Vision (QNV) has been a driving force of policy in Qatar and provides a clear directive for the priorities for the Qatari government. The Human and Social Development pillars of the QNV 2030 indicate an interest in integrating people with disabilities into society and when possible, into the workforce. Urban accessibility should be thought of as another disability service provided by the government to accomplish its human and social development goals.

Despite the massive construction occurring for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, Qatar has still not devised a master plan for Doha. Locations like Education City have a semblance of a plan, possibly because of their desire to follow an American university model. A master plan, zoning regulations, and standardized disability-friendly guidelines would allow for a smooth transition into making accessible urban planning and development the norm.

Adding accessibility as an essential factor into the urban development of Doha poses a much smaller challenge than in some other regions. For example, Beirut has much older infrastructure that might have to be compromised to implement accessible changes. Additionally, greater social awareness might feed into the design of accessible structure in earlier planning and building stages which would allow for decreased costs in making the entire urban landscape accessible.

Design changes cannot occur independently from education efforts about disabilities and the needs of people with disabilities. There has been a strong governmental push to address the needs of children with learning and mental disabilities as well as the stigmas against them, yet motor and physical disabilities are often left out of this dialogue despite being the second most prevalent type of disability in Qatar. The incoming boom of an elderly population, the more immediate needs of the World Cup, and increases in traffic and resulting accidents require that Qatar examines its policy regarding the rights of people with disabilities and ensure that programs and initiatives to assist this population are re-institutionalized.

Endnotes

1. UN General Assembly. 2006. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." A/RES/61/106, Annex I. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/facts.shtml>.
2. Bener, Abdulbari. 2005. "The Neglected Epidemic: Road Traffic Accidents in a Developing Country, State of Qatar." *International Journal of Injury Control and Safety Promotion* 12(1): 45–47, doi: 10.1080/1745730051233142225.
3. UN General Assembly. 2006. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1 – Purpose." A/RES/61/106, Annex I. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/facts.shtml>.
4. Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Special Needs. n.d. Accessed April 23, 2015 <http://www.qsrn.org/English/>.
5. Qatar Autism Center and Special Needs." 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.qacsn.com/qacsn.aspx>.
6. Shafallah. "About Shafallah." Last modified 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.shafallah.org.qa/about-shafallah-3/>.
7. Step By Step Qatar. "About Us." Last modified 2012.
8. Child Development Center Qatar. 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.cdcenterqatar.com/>.
9. Victoria Scott. 2014. "New Special Needs Center Opens in Doha as Demand for Support Rises." *Doha News*. Last modified May 8, 2014. Retrieved from <http://dohanews.co/new-special-needs-center-opens-demand-support-services-rises/>.
10. Hope Qatar. 2009. Retrieved from <http://www.hope-qatar.org/>.
11. Arabia 2000. 2014. "Qatar Affirms Keeness to Enhance Capacities of Persons with Disabilities." *Arabia 2000* June 25, 2014. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.rice.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nfh&AN=6FI2481853837&site=edslive&scope=site>.
12. UN Stats. n.d. "Human Functioning and Disability." (New York, NY: United Nations, Demographic and Social Statistics). Accessed April 23, 2015 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/disability/disform.asp?studyid=208>.
13. Arabia 2000. 2013. "HE Deputy Premier: Qatar Pays Special Care to People With Disabilities." *Arabia 2000* October 8, 2013. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.rice.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nfh&AN=6FI441198362&site=edslive&scope=site>.
14. Ibid.
15. SOLDIERE and ESCWA. 2004. "Accessibility for the Disabled: A Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment." (New York City: United Nations).
16. Ibid.
17. European Commission. "Access City Award 2015." Last modified May 6, 2014. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/disabilities/award/index_en.htm.

Women in Qatar's Political Sphere: Challenges and Possibilities

by Rebecca Satterfield

Executive Summary

Globalization and gains from oil wealth have drastically altered the realities for women in Qatar's traditional Wahhabi society. More women than ever in Qatar have been able to develop employable and politically relevant skills by attending universities and benefiting from government investments such as Education City in Doha. Under Qatar's recently implemented constitution, men and women are legally declared inherently equal. Nevertheless, Qatar frequently performs near the bottom in world rankings of women's political participation alongside men; in the 2014 World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, Qatar was ranked 114 out of 147 countries (World Economic Forum 2014). Three major focus areas have significantly influenced women's political participation: educational achievement, greater workplace involvement, and increased female role models such as Sheikha Mozah. Potential solutions that the US and Qatar could jointly implement to encourage women's greater political engagement include initiatives to provide stipends and fellowships for women to study governance issues and hosting exchanges between female American and Qatari community leaders to support strong role models.

Historical Background to Women in Qatari Politics

Given Qatar's relatively recent status as an independent country, it is worth examining the dramatic gains women have recently obtained, such as being elected to municipal office and appointed to governmental positions. Since men and women were both given the right to vote and run for office in 1999 (Al-Mannai et al 2006), women have gained political power in Qatar. The small Gulf state made international headlines by appointing the first woman to a ministerial level position in 2003 (Al-Mannai et al 2006). Women's legal equality to men has also been written into the Qatari constitution, which outlines men and women as equals and legally prevents discrimination against women with regards to employment (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar 2013). Qatar has taken clear steps to raise its gender equality profile internationally, including participating in international conferences on women's equality. One of the major goals of Qatar's National Development Strategy 2011-2016 is to empower women to enter the workforce and participate more fully in the public sphere (National Development Strategy 2015). Under the 2030 Qatar National Vision, Qatari leaders have advocated for women to "participate fully in the political and economic spheres, especially in decision-making roles" (Qatar National Vision 2030, 2015).

Changes to women's political status in Qatar have overwhelmingly taken place as a result of top-down policies. As Qatar offers few opportunities except at the municipal level for either men or women to run for elected office, women have historically benefited from appointed political positions more than elected roles. Appointments of women, most prominently Sheikha Mozah, by progressive government officials have led to more women in positions such as Health or Education ministers.

Women's Education and Political Representation

One of the biggest puzzles in Qatar and the Gulf region as a whole has been why dramatic gains in women's higher education have not transferred to their greater political representation. In many oil and gas rich states, such as Qatar, women have achieved parity or beyond with men in their levels of higher education. In Qatar, women make up 70% of the students at higher education campuses and often possess multiple degrees (World Bank 2013). However, few gains have been made for women politicians in recent years beyond the nominal representation of a few women in the country's Municipal Council and those appointed as ministers or judges. Women's limited status in the public sphere results from a combination of societal and workplace obstacles.

The World Bank's 2013 report on women in the MENA region proposes several explanations for why women fail to attain elected office despite their outperforming men in higher education. One reason could be that women are encouraged by their families to study women-friendly fields, such as health, education, or cosmetics, that do not transfer as well to political office (World Bank 2013). Employed Qatari women are also highly concentrated in the areas of education and health. These areas have long considered to be "nonthreatening" and more open to women than other fields (Al Muftah 2010)

Stigma against women in the public sphere still exists in many aspects of Qatar's traditionally conservative society. In some Qatari families, it may be unacceptable for women to aspire to political positions that could allegedly distract them from their familial roles as wife and mother. Societal views on women's presence in the public sphere also impact whether women are likely to pursue jobs in political areas. Some estimate that around 80% of Qatari families preferred their daughters to work in a gender-segregated workplace (Paschyn 2014). Vocational training and further education abroad that could give women better political qualifications can often be restricted. Qatar enacted a law in 2007 that gave women "the right to obtain a passport and travel abroad without the permission of their male guardian" (UNICEF 2007). Given how recently this law was implemented, it seems likely that societal perceptions of women as capable leaders have not yet changed enough to allow their political engagement on a level that is on par with men.

Workplace Obstacles that Hinder Political Engagement

Examining workplace realities for Qatari women could better explain which factors prevent them from pursuing a political career. In recent years, Qatar has implemented a variety of laws that directly benefit working women, such as paid maternity leave. Under current legislation, working women are entitled to a 50 day period of paid maternity leave, with some politicians even recently calling for the leave to be extended up to a year (Gulf News 2015). In addition, new mothers are granted time to breastfeed during work for up to an hour (Gulf News 2015). Women-friendly policies such as maternity leave carry significant benefits for women who choose to both work and have children. Such policies, however, have led others to wonder whether they will lead to greater discrimination against hiring women. In her discussion with Rice University students, President of Qatar University Sheikha al-Misnad expressed worry that yearlong maternity leave would incentivize employers not to hire women because they would miss a year of work.

Private sector work may, in fact, be more attractive to women than the public sector because it provides more freedom to work from home, flexible hours, and often greater compatibility with having a family. The rising number of Qatari women entrepreneurs, highlighted in arenas such as the annual Qatar International Businesswomen Forum, speaks to the attractiveness of personal businesses for women (QIBF 2015). Unlike a public service career, women can decide their own hours and degree of commitment to a business. Family and cultural concerns, such as the taboo of working in a mixed-gender workplace, can also be more easily mitigated than in the public sector.

Qatari women's leadership in NGOs and other civil society organizations should be an area of further research. As many governmental positions are still closed off to women outside of the royal family, nongovernmental work can be an important avenue for civic-minded Qatari women. One organization in particular that has further involved Qatari women in the public sphere has been Teach for Qatar. A Qatari version of the US-based Teach for America, Teach for Qatar recruits promising young Qataris to give back and participate in improving educational outcomes in the Qatari school system (Teach for Qatar 2015). Teach for Qatar's founder and chairwoman Sheikha Hind bint Hamad herself represents a prominent female role model for other Qatari women hoping to serve their country in the public sphere.

The Power of Female Political Role Models

Female role models can have a crucial impact on discrediting societal perceptions of women as unable to lead and encouraging other women to participate in politics. Qatari women have benefited from the strong example and advocacy of role models such as Sheikha Mozah. In both Qatar and the U. S., female leaders in the public sphere can help shatter what researchers have deemed the "glass ceiling," or factors preventing them from holding higher office. Qatari role models, like their American counterparts such as Hillary Clinton and Condoleeza Rice, have helped pave the way for more women to enter previously male-

dominated areas of politics. One challenge in Qatar will remain the restriction of top-tier political positions to women in the royal family and the most elite classes.

Female Qatari leaders, such as Sheikha Mozah, have blazed trails in the public sphere, challenging conservative preconceptions of women as purely homemakers. Sheikha Mozah's influence extends across the entire country, from the Qatar Foundation and Education City institutions to the country's 2030 development goals. In 2010, Sheikha Mozah was ranked 74 on Forbes' list of The World's 100 Most Powerful Women (Forbes 2010). Other female members of the royal family, such as Sheikha Aisha, sister of then-Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, have taken on prominent leadership roles within the government. Sheikha Aisha was named head of the Women's Information Committee before the 1999 elections, a position that allowed her to enact educational outreach policies to better inform Qatari women about democracy (Lambert 2011). Sheikha al-Mayassa, another prominent member of the royal family, has also begun to make a name for herself internationally through her leadership of the Qatar Museums Authority. Her activism on behalf of Qatar's rich cultural heritage directly contradicts traditionally conservative perceptions that women do not belong to the public sphere; she even gave a popular TEDTalk in 2010 on the importance of the arts in Qatar (TED 2010). By taking active roles in the country's educational and cultural development, female Qatari leaders set a powerful example to encourage more women to enter the public sphere.

The emergence of strong female leaders in Qatar has not gone unnoticed by the international media. "Inspiring Women: Qatar Success Stories," published in fall 2014 by the GCC-focused public relations firm Medeis Al Khaleej, highlights 25 of the most powerful and inspiring women in Qatar's civil society. Not only does the book identify successful female leaders in a range of professions from law to politics, it also gives them a chance to speak to their fellow Qataris about women in leadership roles. In an interview with Dr. Amal Al-Malki, professor at Carnegie Mellon University Qatar, Dr. Al-Malki explains, "I hope to see women assuming leadership positions and playing a major role in the country's political life" (Qatar Success Stories 2015). "Qatar Success Stories" effectively identifies key women making a difference in Qatar's public sphere, which helps encourage other women to serve their country by working in the governmental sector.

As more Qatari women take on leadership roles in society, there exists a greater potential for future women to follow in their footsteps. In particular, female role models can create successful networks and establish women in previously male-dominated areas of civil society. Qatari women in leadership positions helped create such mentorship organizations as the Qatar Professional Women's Network, "Qatar's leading and largest women's group" that connects over 1500 Qatari and expat women leaders (Quinn 2014).

Policy Recommendations

As historically strong partners in the Gulf region, the U.S. and Qatar should continue working closely to better empower Qatari women politically. Policies that could

help incentivize future Qatari women to enter public sphere employment should be implemented through public diplomacy, utilizing the strong traditions of cultural exchanges and mentorship.

To increase women's representation in politics, the U.S. should strongly support affirmative action policies by the Qatari government to appoint more women to political positions. There exists a significant regional precedent for introducing quotas for women's political engagement, most notably in Saudi Arabia in 2013 after King Abdullah appointed 30 female members to the Consultative Council (BBC 2013). Other neighbors, such as Oman and the United Arab Emirates, have had much more success in establishing guaranteed places for women politicians through appointed councils (Kirdar 2010). In Qatar, women have already enjoyed more representation through appointed positions, and such a policy would continue the country's trend towards top-down support for women's empowerment. As many Qatari officials expressed disappointment that few women have been elected in past elections, appointments and quotas can be a way to guarantee women's voices are heard while setting a precedent for greater public support of women as political leaders.

Highlighting the importance of female role models, the U.S. Embassy in Doha could implement a program that identifies promising Qatari female students at higher education institutions such as Qatar University and provide them with a chance to study leadership in the U.S. Given the opposition by some Qatari families to having their daughters travel abroad, the program could be female-only and could be a short term exchange rather than an entire semester. To reach out to the most conservative families who may be reluctant to allow their daughters to participate, the program could also look into allowing a male relative of the participant to accompany her to the U.S. A secondary program could then be created for the male relatives in the program, directed at engaging and better informing Qatari men on issues of gender equality in politics. In addition, women leaders and politicians from the U.S. could personally visit Qatar and conduct training and mentorship sessions with Qatari women from more conservative families.

As mentorship and networking are crucial to women's success in political leadership, both the U.S. and Qatar should do more to connect aspiring women leaders with those currently in leadership roles. The US Embassy could work with Qatar to set up a mentorship program with existing Qatari women in positions of influence in both the Municipal Council and in NGOs. In surveys of Qatari women's views on political engagement, Quinn (2014) found that women identified a greater need for political training programs that would equip women with skills to run in a campaign and lead a civil society organization, and other politically savvy (2014, 25). Given the success of Doha's Education City, a scholarship and mentorship program could be organized to identify promising women interested in politics. Mentorship and training programs could look to the success of such programs as the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies' Public Policy in Islam Masters program.

Conclusion

In the coming years, there is great potential for more Qatari women than ever to enter the political sphere, whether in democratically elected positions or in NGOs. Since gaining the right to vote and run for office alongside men, Qatari women have come a long way, now chairing major organizations and deciding on educational policies for the entire country. To truly reach parity with their male counterparts, more should be done in Qatar for women outside of the traditionally female spheres of health, education, and support services. Much will depend on a commitment by the government and international actors, such as the U.S., to encourage women's representation.

References

- Qatar International Businesswomen Forum. n.d. "About Us: Arab Businesswomen as Change Makers." Last modified 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.qibwf.org/>.
- Aguilar, Joey. 2013. "Qatar yet to 'Totally Comply' with CEDAW." *Gulf Times* October 4, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.gulf-times.com/Qatar/178/details/367630/Qatar-yet-to-%E2%80%99totally-comply%E2%80%99-with-CEDAW>.
- Al-Attiyah, Asma and Ramzi Nasser. 2014. "Qatari Women's Perceived Rights in Light of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." *The Social Sciences* 9(2): 91-97. Retrieved from <http://docsdrive.com/pdfs/medwelljournals/sscience/2014/91-97.pdf>.
- Al-Mannai, Salah. 2006. "Women in Contemporary Qatar: Their Rights and Welfare." (doctoral thesis, University of Leicester, 2006). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/2381/28890>.
- Al Suwaidi, Nofe. 2014. "CEDAW Review: Qatar's Gender Discriminatory Laws and Practices Comes Under Fire." *Just Here Qatar* February 15, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.justhere.qa/2014/02/cedaw-review-qatars-gender-discriminatory-lawspractices-comes-fire/>.
- Bahry, Louay and Phebe Marr. 2005. "Qatari Women: A New Generation of Leaders?" *Middle East Policy* 12(2): 104-119. Accessed January 28, 2015, doi:10.1111/j.1061-1924.2005.00205.x.
- Basac, Cali and Nazila Ghanea. 2013. "From Ratification to Implementation: UN Human Rights Treaties and the GCC." Presentation for the conference, "The Domestic Effects of International Human Rights Treaty Ratification in the GCC," Doha, Qatar, May 2013). Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/7140048/The_Domestic_Effects_of_International_Human_Rights_Treaty_Ratification_in_the_Gulf_Cooperation_Council.
- World Economic Forum. 2014. "Global Gender Gap Report 2014: Qatar." Last modified 2014. Retrieved from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>.
- Kirdar, Serra. 2010. "United Arab Emirates." In *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Progress amid Resistance*, edited by Sanja Kelly and Julia Breslin (New York, NY: Freedom House). Retrieved from https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/United%20Arab%20Emirates.pdf.

- Lambert, Jennifer. 2011. "Political Reform in Qatar: Participation, Legitimacy, and Security." *Middle East Policy Council* 18(1). Retrieved from <http://mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/political-reform-qatar-participation-legitimacy-and-security?print>.
- Muftah, Hend Abdalrahman Al-. 2010. "How do Qatari Females Make It to the Top? An Examination of the Organizational Constraints to Their Advancement." *Hawwa: Journal Of Women Of The Middle East And The Islamic World* 8(2): 97-119. Accessed January 28, 2015, doi:10.1163/156920810X529958.
- Paschyn, Christina. 2014. "Educated and Ambitious, Qatari Women Nudge Their Way into Office." *The Christian Science Monitor* (Doha, Qatar) May 1, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2014/0501/Educated-and-ambitious-Qatari-women-nudge-their-way-into-the-office>.
- Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies. 2015. "M.A. in Public Policy in Islam." Retrieved from <http://www.qfis.edu.qa/programmes/ma-in-public-policy-in-islam>.
- United Nations Children's Fund. 2011. "Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa, Regional Overview for the Middle East and North Africa." (New York, NY: United Nations Children's Fund). Retrieved from <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Qatar-Gender-Eqaulity-Profile-2011.pdf>.
- General Secretariat for Development Planning. 2008. "Qatar National Vision 2030." (Doha, Qatar: General Secretariat for Development Planning). Retrieved from http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/Social_development.
- Qatar Success Stories. n.d. "Dr. Amal Al-Malki." Retrieved from <http://www.qatarsuccessstories.com/#!dramal-m-al-malki/cr2p>.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar. n.d. "Qatari Women." Retrieved from <http://www.mofa.gov.qa/en/Qatar/Pages/QatariWomen.aspx>.
- Qatar Professional Women's Network. n.d. "About QPWN." Last modified 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.qpwn.org/#about-qpwn/>.
- Quinn Patricia. 2013. "How and to What Extent Have Female Role Models Influenced Female Leaders in Qatar?" (master's thesis, New York, NY: St. John's University). Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/6452986/How_and_to_what_extent_have_female_role_models_influenced_female_leaders_in_Qatar.
- BBC News. 2013. "Saudi Arabia's King Appoints Women to Shura Council." *BBC News* January 11, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20986428>.
- Mayassa, Sheikha Al. 2010. "Globalizing the Local, Localizing the Global." TED video file, 10:53. December 2010. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/sheikha_al_mayassa_globalizing_the_local_localizing_the_global?language=en.
- Teach for Qatar. n.d. "The Fellowship Experience." Last modified 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.teachforqatar.org/en/fellowship/fellowship-experience>.
- Forbes. 2010. "The World's 100 Most Powerful Women: Sheikh Mozah, #47." *Forbes*. Last updated 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/profile/sheikha-mozah-bint-nasser-al-missned/>.
- Toumi, Habib. 2013. "Call to Extend Maternity Leave in Qatar." *Gulf Times* May 20, 2013. Retrieved from <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/call-to-extend-maternity-leave-inqatar-1.1185866>.

Unleashing Potential: Promoting Female Labor Force Participation of Qatari Women in the Private Sector

by Maithili Bagaria

In the last 30 years, a significant trend in the world economy has been the flooding of women into the full-time workforce. Employment of women increases the talent pool at companies, which in turn boosts innovation and productivity.¹ In advanced economies, female workers can offer specialized skills that foster a knowledge-based economy. As a rapidly growing country, the state of Qatar has recognized the importance of female labor force participation in realizing its future goals, which can be seen in Qatar's National Vision for 2030.² Thus far, the Qatari government has formulated policies to attract Qatari women to jobs in the public sector. However, its efforts in the private sector have fallen short, with few women willing and able to work in private industries and few employers demanding their services. This problem largely stems from two main obstacles: prevailing socio-cultural norms and structural factors, which include economic and institutional barriers. In order to combat these challenges, the Qatari government and employers must create attractive policies that encourage women to seek out private sector jobs, which in turn can allow Qatar to complete its transition to a knowledge-based economy.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region paints a very bleak picture of the overall level of female labor force participation. In 2010, the region had an unemployment rate of 25.4 percent within its female population, the highest female unemployment rate amongst all world regions.³ In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the low female labor force participation rates are even more concerning because many women are highly qualified. The average labor force participation rates of Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait are only 51 percent, 47 percent and 43 percent, respectively.¹ Some of the significant challenges women face in the workforce are the "double-burden syndrome" (women balancing work and domestic responsibilities), lack of appropriate infrastructure (transportation, women-only facilities in a gender-mixed environment), lack of pro-family public policies or support services (e.g. childcare) and family or social norms against women's employment.⁴

Another cause of high unemployment in the MENA region is the poor state of the private sector, which encompasses all individuals and companies involved in for-profit businesses that are not owned or operated by the government.⁵ The private sector has failed to generate enough jobs, which has led to the creation of jobs in low-productivity activities, often in the informal economy. In addition, many nations in the region have implemented policies that restrict competition and limit the entry of new firms, preventing efficient firms from growing. Instead, a few politically connected firms often capture attractive business policies, resulting in a privilege-based environment for entrepreneurs.⁶

State of Affairs in Qatar

According to the World Bank, the average world labor force participation rate of women was 50.2 percent in 2013.⁷ In comparison, in the same year, 33 percent of Qatari women above the age of 15 were economically active. In the final quarter of 2014, 36 percent of Qatari women were economically active, demonstrating that there is movement towards more female employment.^{8,9} However, minor progress shouldn't shift attention from the fact that Qatar's female labor force participation rates are significantly below the world average and that more than half of the Qatari women are not active in the workforce. Often, a lack of women in the workforce stems from a lack of educated women. In Qatar, this is not the case—in 2012, 99.8 percent of women in Qatar aged 15 to 24 could read and write, which means highly educated Qatari women are being held back or holding themselves back from entering the labor force.¹⁰

Qatari women have little desire to work in the private sector in particular. This is mainly due to the marginal role that the private sector plays in the overall economy of the Gulf state. State-owned and operated companies dominate almost all major industries and drive much of the diversification into new sectors. Conversely, the private sector contributes little to the employment of locals mostly because Qataris don't find jobs in this sector appealing.¹¹ In a labor force survey of unemployed Qatari men and women, more were unwilling to work in the private sector than willing. Qatari women were especially unwilling—738 out of 966 unemployed Qatari women said they were not willing to work in the private sector.¹²

However, promoting Qatari women's participation in the private sector is one of Qatar's future goals. As part of Qatar's National Vision 2030, the Gulf state aims to increase opportunities and vocational support for Qatari women and enhance the role of the private sector. The underlying objective behind these targets is Qatar's desire to move from a resource-based economy to a knowledge-based economy, which requires more human capital.¹³ The first rational step is to mobilize an existing group with work potential—Qatari women.

Obstacles in the Private Sector

Despite Qatar's National Vision, two broad sets of obstacles—socio-cultural and structural—deter Qatari women from joining the private sector. Socio-cultural factors can be attributed to the prevailing societal norms, which are dominated by a relatively conservative idea of gender roles for men and women. Structural factors include a combination of institutional and economic restrictions on women entering the private sector.

A large socio-cultural obstacle is Qataris' emphasis on family, which makes it extremely hard for Qataris to balance domestic responsibilities with work commitments. Several Qatari scholars and business leaders have indicated that marriage and family are the basis of Qatari society.^{14,15,16} One scholar even argues that many laws, such as government

housing laws, are based on the concept of family.¹⁷ The emphasis placed on family makes work-life balance a priority for the majority of Qatari women. The private sector, however, can demand long working hours and incompatible schedules (early morning starts and late nights), which makes it extremely difficult for Qatari women to put their family before work. In many cases, the work-life balance is so hard to attain that Qatari women give up employment in favor of being full-time homemakers.¹⁸

Another socio-cultural factor is Qatari women's reluctance to work in a gender-mixed environment.¹⁹ However, the need for gender-separate facilities is often not recognized in the private sector. If organizations do realize the need, they are deterred by the additional cost of financing infrastructure for separate working areas and sometimes overestimate the cost of additional infrastructure. Employers are not entirely at fault, though, because there is ambiguity in the law as to the extent to which gender-separate facilities are required. Because companies can often incur indirect financial costs due to ambiguous law, they are hesitant to establish the infrastructure necessary to employ Qatari women.²⁰

The promise of public sector jobs deters women from entering the private sector. The widespread availability of well-paid government jobs encourage Qatari women to first pursue educational degrees that orient them towards those jobs.²¹ Consequently, despite being highly educated, Qatari women are not equipped with the skills needed in the private sector. This dynamic, however, is forecasted to change in the future with the decreasing availability of public sector jobs, making private sector jobs a more attractive alternative.²² In addition, public sector jobs pay as well or better than private sector jobs and offer retirement with full pension benefits. In a government survey on reasons unemployed Qataris are unwilling to join the private sector, 26 percent cited the lack of retirement benefits and 23 percent cited low wages in private sector jobs.²³ Public sector jobs also provide college loan schemes that feed Qatari students into government jobs by offering students loans on the condition that they will work for the government for a given number of years after college.²⁴ Overall, the combined advantages of high wages, high availability, guaranteed retirement benefits, and college loan schemes of public sector jobs increase their overall attractiveness as compared to private sector jobs, driving Qatari women toward the public sector.

Another structural factor is restrictions on entrepreneurial activity for women, which limits their ability to participate in the private sector. In general, three components work together to create an entrepreneurial culture: institutions (e.g. universities, training programs), culture of risk-taking, and laws (business regulations, bankruptcy laws). Qatar falls short on all three components. One major problem is that Qatari women do not enjoy easy access to credit since they often lack the required collateral against which they can secure loans. Thus, barely 10 percent of the funding for women entrepreneurs is provided by commercial banks and other formal sources.²⁵ Furthermore, Qatar's reliance on traditional loan-based vehicles is not conducive to the risky nature of entrepreneurship, which would be better financed by venture capital.²⁶ Qatar also suffers from a risk-averse culture due to unfriendly bankruptcy laws, which make

failure a difficult process and deter the growth of startups.²⁷ In addition, there are very few training programs that market themselves towards women—62 percent of interest in entrepreneurship comes from male students as compared to 38 percent from female students.²⁸ Fortunately, in recent years, the number of entrepreneurship workshops and training centers in Qatar has grown dramatically, although it is still too soon to tell how successful they will be.

Looking Ahead

As Qatar transitions to a knowledge-based economy, its government has realized that women possess economic potential that hasn't been fully unleashed, especially in the private sector. In order to draw Qatari women into the work force, the government and private sector employers must implement policies that target the structural and socio-cultural obstacles women face in entering the private sector.

In order to combat socio-cultural challenges, employers can introduce measures that help women strike a healthier work-life balance, such as “home-work” options through which women can perform their jobs remotely, or provide a part-time track that allows women to work fewer hours for a certain time period (e.g. after childbirth) before returning to the full-time track. Employers can also—with the government's help—institute gender-separate facilities to allow Qatari women to work without defying socio-cultural norms. The government should establish uniform standards for these facilities and subsidize (partially or fully) the infrastructural costs, so employers are not deterred by the indirect cost of hiring Qatari women. As for some inevitable gender-mixed environments in the private sector, employers can still ensure they are complying with socio-cultural norms by instituting induction programs on appropriate interaction with the opposite gender and implementing safety measures to protect women from harassment in the work place.

To overcome structural obstacles, the government can expand programs in the public sector to the private sector. This would mean allowing Qataris full retirement benefits regardless of whether they have worked in the private or public sector and, with the cooperation of employers, establishing loan schemes that are conditional upon students working in private sector companies after graduation. The government must also create a more entrepreneurship-friendly environment by revising bankruptcy laws so entrepreneurs are not discouraged from trying again should their first attempts fail, expanding women's access to credit by fostering the growth of venture capital, and establishing more entrepreneurship workshops oriented towards women.

A powerful example of a company that has successfully propelled Qatari women into the private sector is Mowgli Mentoring. The company has already supported five women entrepreneurs since launching in 2012 and helped them achieve a healthy work-life balance and tap into a vast network of business connections.²⁹ The company also promotes a positive feedback loop in that these female leaders can be future mentors to

other women and will be more likely to hire women, increasing the overall proportion of Qatari women in the private sector. Most importantly, Mowgli Mentoring's success illustrates that if one company can have reverberating effects on the mobilization of Qatari women in the workforce, then the government and employers combined can truly unleash the economic potential of Qatari women in the private sector.

Endnotes

1. Lowrey, Annie. 2014. "How Working Women Help the Economy." *The New York Times* April 15, 2014. Accessed April 01, 2015 http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/04/15/how-working-women-help-the-economy/?_r=1.
2. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. n.d. "Human Development." Pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030. Accessed April 01, 2015 http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/Human_development.
3. Fakih, Ali and Pascal L. Ghazalian. 2013. "Female Labour Force Participation in MENA's Manufacturing Sector: The Implications of Firm-Related and National Factors." Report No. 7197 (Bonn, Germany: Iza). Accessed March 21, 2015. <http://ftp.iza.org/dp7197.pdf>.
4. Sperling, Julia, Chiara Marcati, and Michael Rennie. 2014. "GCC Women In Leadership—from the First to the Norm." McKinsey & Company. Accessed March 21, 2015 http://www.mckinsey.com/global_locations/europe_and_middleeast/middle_east/en/gcc_women_in_leadership.
5. Investopedia s.v. "Private Sector Definition." Accessed April 01, 2015 <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/private-sector.asp>.
6. World Bank. n.d. "Jobs or Privileges: Unleashing the Employment Potential of the Middle East and North Africa." Issue brief. Accessed March 20, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/MNA/unleashing-the-employment-potential-of-the-middle-east-and-north-africa.pdf>.
7. World Bank. n.d. "Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+)." Accessed February 10, 2015 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS/countries/1WQA?display=graph>.
8. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. 2013. "Labor Force Survey—The Second Quarter (April – June) 2013." Accessed March 22, 2015 http://www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/Last_Archive/2013/Archive.htm.
9. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. 2014. "Labor Force Survey—The Fourth Quarter (October – December) 2014." Accessed March 22, 2015 http://www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/Last_Archive/2014/Archive.htm.
10. World Bank. n.d. "Literacy Rate, Youth Female (% of Females Ages 15–24)." Accessed February 10, 2015 <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.FE.ZS/countries/1W-QA?display=graph>.
11. Hertog, Steffen. 2013. "The Private Sector and Reform in the Gulf Cooperation Council, Report No. 30." Accessed March 23, 2015 <http://www.lse.ac.uk/middleEastCentre/kuwait/documents/the-private-sector-and-reform-in-the-gcc.pdf>.

12. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. 2013. "Labor Force Survey—The Second Quarter (April – June) 2013." Accessed March 22, 2015 http://www.qsa.gov.qa/eng/Last_Archive/2013/Archive.htm.
13. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. n.d. "Human Development." Pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030. Accessed April 01, 2015 http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/Human_development.
14. Horr, Abdulaziz Al-. 2015. Lecture, Public Diplomacy Global Policymaking Conference, Doha, Qatar, March 2, 2015.
15. Malki, Noor Al-. 2015. "Family, Gender and Identity in Qatar." Lecture at the Public Diplomacy Global Policymaking Conference, Doha, Qatar, March 4, 2015).
16. Misnad, Sheikha Abdulla Al-. 2015. Meeting, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar, March 1, 2015).
17. Malki, Noor Al-. 2015. "Family, Gender and Identity in Qatar." March 4, 2015.
18. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, Labor Force Survey The Fourth Quarter (October – December) 2014.
19. RAND-Qatar Policy Institute. 2008. "Qatari Women in the Workforce." (Qatar, 2008).
20. Sperling, Julia, Chiara Marcati, and Michael Rennie. 2014. "GCC Women In Leadership—from the First to the Norm."
21. RAND-Qatar Policy Institute. 2008. "Qatari Women in the Workforce."
22. Misnad, Sheikha Abdulla Al-. 2015. Meeting, March 1, 2015.
23. Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. 2013. "Labor Force Survey The Fourth Quarter (October – December) 2014.
24. Staff Member. 2015. Group tour, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar, March 2, 2015.
25. Hoteit, Leila and Mounira Jamjoom. 2013. "Empowering Women Entrepreneurs." *Qatar Today* April 7, 2013. Accessed April 01, 2015 <http://www.qatartodayonline.com/empowering-women-entrepreneurs/>.
26. Hakim, Maher. 2015. "Three Necessary Factors To Establish A Qatari Silicon Valley." *Entrepreneur* January 21, 2015. Accessed March 23, 2015 <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/242237>.
27. "Entrepreneurship and Economic Development." 2015. Conference, Doha, Qatar, March 2-3, 2015).
28. Hoteit, Leila and Mounira Jamjoom. 2013. "Empowering Women Entrepreneurs," April 7, 2013.
29. Mowgli Mentoring. 2012. "2012 Impact Report." Accessed March 24, 2015, http://mowgli.org.uk/sites/default/files/2012%20Mowgli%20Impact%20Report_High%20Res.pdf.

Women in the workforce: Moving beyond higher education in Qatar

by Sandra Lopez

Introduction

Worldwide, the movement to improve women's rights and gender equality has taken priority on the agenda of many. As this movement continues, progress should be assessed in all regions of the world. In the Middle East in particular, Qatar can be a role model for surrounding states as well as an area where progress can still be made. More specifically, this improvement can come in the transition of women from higher education to employment. To be able to make these improvements, however, it is equally important to understand some of the obstacles women face in Qatar as they attempt to make this transition.

Qatar's global influence is relatively new. Following the discovery of oil in the 1930s, the economy began an impressive level of growth. Qatar now boasts the highest GDP per capita in the world¹, leading to a rapid change in infrastructure and standard of living. Regardless of recent changes, many of Qatar's social values remain the same. Life for many still emphasizes the extended family and the support that individuals derive from this network. The family plays a major role in the decisions of most Qataris, including women's career decisions.

At the policy level, women face obstacles with respect to rules regarding guardianship laws, Qatar's stance on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and a lack of democratic values.

According to Qatari law, women under the age of 25 must obtain permission from a male (father or spouse) to travel abroad, obtain a driver's license, or work at night.² This severely limits options for women who wish to study abroad to obtain an education outside of Qatar. Women who cannot obtain a driver's license are also hindered from being independent enough to pursue a career of their choice. This leaves the fate of many women in the hands of their male counterparts.

Qatar has made important steps toward gender equality. Though elections are only held at the municipal level and offer very little influence to citizens, women earned the right to vote at the same time that men did and can even run for office. However, only one woman has ever been elected to a municipal council position, which still demonstrates a lack of equality. Qatar has also ratified CEDAW, unlike the United States, but it did so with

reservations to key elements of the convention.³ These reservations undermine the push for gender equality in Qatar and all of the progress that has already been made.

The transition from higher education to employment

More Qatari women are in the higher education system than men; women outnumber men at a ratio of about three to one.⁴ However, the unemployment rate for women ages 15 to 24 is about 8.9 percent, as opposed to 0.4 percent for men.⁵ There is not only an imbalance of employed men and women, but there is also an imbalance in the sectors in which women are employed. There are still fields in which the proportion of women to men is staggeringly low, such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). It is important to examine what hinders women's transition from higher education to employment. Besides the policy-level impediments already discussed, women in Qatar face further economic, social, and institutional obstacles in this transition.

Due to the rapidly changing economy in Qatar, women find themselves in a position where they must compete with both Qatari and expatriate males. Qatar's successful bid for the 2022 World Cup has led to a need for migrant labor to build the necessary infrastructure, and this has caused an imbalance of migrants to Qataris. As a result, the government undertook initiatives for Qatarization, or the hiring of Qataris to public sector jobs. Many Qatari males have been hired straight out of high school, leaving women to seek higher levels of education to compete for jobs. Women are also often without access to sufficient paid maternity leave or segregated working areas, because these offerings are not economically appealing to employers.

The social obstacles that Qatari women face in pursuing employment are difficult to overcome because they are deeply ingrained within Qatari society. When analyzing social factors of Qatari life, many are quick to point to Islam as the main influence, especially in regard to gender inequalities. However, this is not necessarily the case. Though it is true that many social aspects of Qatari life are influenced by Islam, the religion by no means condones gender inequality, and even explicitly states that men and women are equal. The only difference Islam perceives between men and women is that men should be the financial provider for the family. However, it is still important to recognize that, like Islam, the social factors that affect a woman's transition into the workforce are deeply ingrained and therefore will be difficult to overcome.

For many women, the choice not to pursue a career may strictly be a personal one. There are women who prefer to be family-oriented and dedicate their time to their home and children. There are also women, however, who are expected by both society and their families to remain domestic, as caretakers of the home and children. Women who choose to pursue work must rely on the support of their families to do so. According to a study of high school seniors, 9.8 percent of girls cited that "other members" of their families would prevent them from pursuing the career of their choice.⁶ This demonstrates again the influence of the extended family in Qatari life, especially for women. Many women

who do work will confine themselves to jobs like teaching or clerical work because they have flexible hours.⁷ Finally, when women enter other positions, including male-dominated sectors, they often lack the social capacity to assert themselves alongside males. The difficulties faced by women in obtaining or continuing a career make the prospect unappealing and troublesome, disincentivizing the transition from higher education for some.

Women find little help for this transition as Qatar still lacks institutional support. There is a lack of government support or endorsement of the transition of women into employment, especially into leadership roles, in either the public or private sector. There are still very few initiatives to include women in STEM industries or to include women in leadership roles within the government.

Facilitating this transition

However, there have been efforts to help include women. One of the best examples is the Qatari Business Women Association, an organization that helps facilitate networks between successful and up-and-coming businesswomen. It holds conferences to help promote women in leadership positions and offers training to women working in the business sector.⁸ Qatari women have also been exposed to role models like Sheikha Mozah and Sheikha Al Misnad, who have contributed much to both the education field and women's rights.

Qatar has proven to be a true role model for surrounding Middle Eastern states and the world in terms of the movement for gender equality; however, there are still areas for improvement. The first step would be an increase in the number of groups similar to the Qatari Businesswomen Association, perhaps for other sectors as well such as STEM. An active support of this by the government will be essential to its success and legitimacy. Investment in segregated working areas, at least in government offices, would also help more women feel more comfortable with the thought of entering the workforce and would comply with social norms. A policy-mandated increase in the minimum amount of paid maternity leave offered would significantly aid women seeking to pursue the careers of their choice. As it stands, Qatar's 50 required days⁹ is simply not enough.

An institution similar to the US Department of Labor's "Women's Bureau" would be helpful to Qatar. A government entity with the resources and authority to be able to provide aid to women pursuing any career could prove indispensable and display a real commitment to women's rights. Finally, a ratification of CEDAW, without reservations, would allow the government to completely legitimize the move for gender equality in Qatar and demonstrate its support for the cause.

Conclusion

A consolidation of efforts to improve the transition of women from higher education into the workforce would prove invaluable to Qatar. Women bring ideas and new perspectives to the workplace and would greatly contribute to Qatar's goal of a "knowledge-based economy". Improvements to the standing of women via policy and government support do not contradict or sacrifice Islamic values. Finally, a sincere support of this movement could greatly legitimize Qatar's standing as a world power, as it wishes to display its progress and solidify its place as an authority. It is without a doubt in Qatar's best interest to help push for gender equality in the workforce, as it is for the rest of the world.

Endnotes

1. Central Intelligence Agency. n.d. "Qatar." (Langley, Virginia: The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency). Accessed January 3, 2015 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/qa.html>.

2. Seikaly, May, Rahil Roodsaz, and Corine van Egten. 2014. "The Situation of Women in the Gulf States." (Brussels, Belgium: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Citizen's rights and Constitutional Affairs, European Parliament). Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/509985/IPOL_STU%282014%29509985_EN.pdf.

3. United Nations Children's Fund. 2011. "Status of Girls and Women in the Middle East and North Africa, Regional Overview for the Middle East and North Africa." Retrieved from <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/REGIONAL-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>.

4. Williams, Justin, Ramudu Bhanugopan, and Alan Fish. 2011. "Localization of Human Resources in the State of Qatar: Emerging issues and research agenda." *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues* 4(3): 193-206.

5. Central Intelligence Agency. "Qatar."

6. Constant, Louay, Vazha Nadareishvili, and Hanine Salem. 2008. "A Survey of Qatar Secondary School Seniors: Methods and Results." (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation). Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR577.

7. Thani, Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh Al-. 2012. "Women in Qatar: Quotas, Qualifications, and Qatarization | Sheikha Aisha bint Faleh Al-Thani." Youtube video file, 41:48. Posted by the Center for International and Regional Studies on December 17, 2012. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYDJxsDiDwQ>.

8. Qatari Business Women Association. n.d. Last modified 2012. Accessed January 28, 2015 <http://www.qataribusinesswomen.org/>.

9. Doha News. 2013. "Doctor: Qatar Should Extend Maternity Leave for Up to One Year." *Doha News*. Last modified May 21, 2013. Retrieved from <http://dohanews.co/doctor-qatar-should-extend-maternity-leave-for-women/>.

Breast Cancer Screening Policies in Qatar

by Jesal Shah

Executive Summary

Qatar faces low breast cancer screening (BCS) participation, late detection, and correspondingly, poor prognostic outcomes. Sociocultural barriers such as fear, embarrassment, and fatalism inhibit BCS participation, as do institutional weaknesses such as poor infrastructure capacity, an unclear referral system, and physician unwillingness. Qatar has initiated several projects to raise awareness and tackle the underlying lack of knowledge present in the above sociocultural barriers. Moreover, recognizing the physician's importance in BCS participation, Qatar has devised policy goals and invested considerable funds to create the infrastructure necessary to facilitate such interactions. Nonetheless, there are certain areas, both in terms of sociocultural barriers and institutional shortcomings, in which Qatar could improve. Qatar can more effectively target the elderly, uneducated population, which has a larger share of nonparticipants, as well as better leverage its collectivist ties. Additionally, Qatar can instill greater physician financial incentives for BCS testing, improve the implementation process of top-level policy, and initiate physician-oriented behavior change campaigns.

Background on Breast Cancer Burden and Screening in Qatar

With an incidence rate of 38.1 per 100,000 residents (2008), the third highest incidence amongst all Arab countries, breast cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Qatar irrespective of gender (Bener et al. 2007; Donnelly et al. 2011; Al-Madouj 2011). Most importantly, however, the mortality rate of breast cancer cases in Qatar and the region as a whole compared to western countries is disproportionately high. With a mortality rate of 12.9 per 100,000 patients (2008), nearly a third of females diagnosed with breast cancer in Qatar do not survive, compared to about one-fifth in western countries (Donnelly et al. 2011).

Breast cancer screening (BCS), in the form of breast self-examination (BSE), clinical breast examination (CBE), and mammography, is critical to detecting the disease in early stages, when there are greater treatment options and better cure rates (American Cancer Society 2013; American Cancer Society 2014b; Al-Madouj 2011). Despite the impact of early diagnosis on long-term prognosis, Qatar has extremely low rates of BCS participation. Data from Arab women interviewed in Qatar, nationals and non-

nationals alike, found that only 26.9 percent had received a mammogram annually or biennially, compared to 67 percent in the U.S.A. (Donnelly et al. 2012; American Cancer Society 2014a).

It is evident that Qatar's current BCS practices are not meeting the health needs of its female population. In order to reduce the high rates of mortality from breast cancer, Qatar must understand the sociocultural and institutional barriers to BCS participation as well as initiate interventions and policies to promote such practices.

Barriers to BCS Participation: Sociocultural

Twenty to 25 percent of the female population did not plan a CBE or mammogram due to embarrassment related to the procedure, lack of knowledge regarding screening location, or fear, whether related to perceived procedural pain or potential ramifications of cancer discovery (Donnelly et al. 2013a). BCS practices, such as CBE or mammogram, can serve as a source of embarrassment. This was evident in the fact that a vast majority of Arab women in Qatar demonstrated a gender preference for female health care providers (90.8 percent). Despite Qatar's gender preferential health care provider option, patients with gender preferences were 50 percent less likely to practice BCS (Donnelly et al. 2013a). Fear was another major sociocultural barrier in engaging with BCS. Patients, due to a lack of awareness of screening protocols, were often worried about the possibility for discomfort or pain. BCS participation was also negatively influenced by views of fatalism, where cancer was seen as a punishment from God or an unequivocal death statement, making screening futile (Donnelly et al. 2013a; Donnelly et al. 2013b). Moreover, as a majority of women in the target age group for BCS recommendations are homemakers, the women's responsibility to the family also acted as a deterrent in BCS participation (Donnelly et al. 2013a).

Barriers to BCS Participation: Institutional

Poor institutional practices and resources also play a significant role in the low screening rate in Qatari women. Of the Arab women in Qatar surveyed, 98.3 percent highly trusted their physicians and 93.8 percent would make a mammogram appointment if recommended by a health care provider, but less than a quarter of physicians actually discussed BCS with their patients. Correspondingly, the single most prominent response for not planning a mammography was that a "doctor did not recommend it" (Donnelly et al. 2013a).

Challenging logistics, including lack of time, limited health personnel, and inadequate training to properly recommend or initiate BCS protocols, can prevent physicians from providing BCS. Furthermore, the infrastructure capacity has lagged behind the population explosion. Qatar in 2011 had 22 primary health centers (PHCs), the same number it had in 2008, even though its population grew from 380,000 to 1.8 million in that period. Additionally, Qatar has limited radiotherapy treatment options, a scarcity

of cancer specialist clinicians, and inadequate access to community and home-based care for individuals with advanced stage cancer (World Health Organization 2014).

A physician's lack of awareness regarding follow-up procedures after a positive examination also undermines BCS promotion (Supreme Council of Health 2011). There are unclear referral systems and unreliable treatment resources. Additionally, patients typically only visit doctors in the case of immediate illness; there is not a culture of preventive medicine where BCS can be easily instilled as a priority (Supreme Council of Health 2014).

Current Policy Initiatives: Overcoming Sociocultural Barriers

In 2011, the Supreme Council of Health (SCH) introduced a five-year National Cancer Strategy to improve all facets of cancer care. If successful, this agenda seeks to dramatically increase screening coverage from participation rates below one-third in 2011 to 70 percent by 2016 (Supreme Council of Health 2011).

Acknowledging the relationship between BCS participation and knowledge, SCH has implemented various education programs to enhance the awareness of BCS practices and their benefits (Donnelly et al. 2013b). Through the Myth Busting Campaign, the government-led National Cancer Programme (NCP) is attempting to refute common cancer misconceptions with short videos available online, in the cinema, and at the clinic (D' Mello 2014).

Campaign material specifically targeting the lack of awareness of BCS also has been produced. The NCP has compiled written instructions to teach breast self-examination and screening guidelines/benefits. Striving to provide multiple platforms for information dissemination, they have also created a NCP website and free mobile application called Monthlies, both of which stress the value of early detection ("NCP launches... 2014). With these digital tools, the NCP can more effectively target the younger female population (National Cancer Programme 2014).

Furthermore, NCP has adopted the October breast cancer awareness framework and has hosted education sessions in conjunction with civil society groups, such as Qatar's National Cancer Society, to raise population-level knowledge (National Cancer Programme 2014; Time Out Doha 2012). Overall, the current Qatari campaign approach seeks a broad audience, employs multiple channels, and upholds a strong message.

Current Policy Initiatives: Addressing Institutional Barriers

The National Cancer Strategy, a QAR 2,204 million (US\$605 million) agenda, also details specific goals to improve the screening guidelines, follow-up procedures, infrastructure capacity, and workforce that impede physician BCS engagement (Supreme Council of Health 2011). This strategy resulted in the formation of a national

screening committee, which has been tasked with monitoring the implementation of the current BCS guidelines and compiling data regarding false positives, survival rates, incidence/prevalence, and BCS participation, to offer Qatar-specific recommendations (Supreme Council of Health 2011).

Previously, there was no clear referral pathway, leaving doctors confused on when and where to send patients. As of 2011, this process was streamlined via a detailed call and recall system that consists of proactive communication across various media, from e-mails and text messages to phone calls, and ensures explicit time standards for medical appointments (Supreme Council of Health 2011).

The National Cancer Strategy also dedicates significant resources for treatment and care. Personnel development is emphasized through goals such as the formation of multidisciplinary teams and increased nurse and physician specialization in cancer. To this end, Qatar opened a new training opportunity for nurses in Qatar University (“HMC welcomes...” 2015). Beyond endorsing specialty skills, the National Cancer Strategy dedicated more than QAR 2.2 million to refurbish Al Amal Hospital as the National Center for Cancer Care and Research (Time Out Doha 2012). It is also working to expand the availability of screening technology to all PHCs.

Additional Policy Considerations: Sociocultural Barriers

Recognizing that a major underlying component to sociocultural barriers is a lack of awareness and knowledge, Qatar has rightly pursued a comprehensive patient-targeted education campaign. However, this approach can be refined in multiple ways. Firstly, the traditional format of the October awareness month should be reassessed, given the unique cultural context of Qatar. Most notably, a study done in the United Arab Emirates suggests that a year-long awareness approach is more effective than a concentrated month of education (Al Khaja and Creedon 2010). Secondly, given the high level of trust Qatari women have in their doctors, the inclusion of physician support in media campaigns could improve patient responsiveness (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Moreover, Qatar’s current strategy focuses on the younger female population, but pays less attention to older, uneducated Qatari and Arab women, who form the largest proportion of BCS nonparticipants (Donnelly et al. 2013a; Benner et al. 2009). There is a need for greater analysis of this audience’s characteristics and media receptivity to more efficaciously design campaign products. Finally, the current awareness strategy could better leverage the collectivist ties of Qatari society. About two-thirds of those planning BCS cited a recommendation from a social connection, nurse or viewing of breast cancer screening information in the media or a clinic (Donnelly et al. 2013a). A diffusion of innovations model, as demonstrated by the University of California–Los Angeles’ mammography program, can recruit early adopters in the community and humanize the need for BCS screening (U.S. Department of Health and Humanism). Informal recommendations already serve as an impetus to seek BCS, and Qatar could potentially scale up this standard.

Additional Policy Considerations: Institutional Barriers

While Qatar has devised strong policy goals and invested substantially to create the necessary environment to facilitate BCS, the real challenges to progress exist in the ground-level implementation of these policies and infrastructure (Moorhead 2015; Khatri 2014). For these purposes, the National Cancer Strategy stresses the value of measurable data to evaluate success and failure. Despite such emphases, there are no publicly available reports assessing the progress even with less than a year remaining in the plan. There needs to be greater attention dedicated to strengthening the teams tasked with execution and monitoring.

Finally, a physician-targeted awareness campaign could further support BCS screening. Given that the largest barrier to following BCS guidelines is a doctor's recommendation, there are not enough resources allocated to fostering such awareness in physicians as compared to the general public. Qatar can design a multifaceted, interactive physician-targeted campaign to highlight the doctor's instrumental role in BCS (Grimshaw et al. 2002; Smith 2000). Furthermore, additional payment and reimbursement schemes, such as pay for performance, can further incentivize a physician's ability and willingness to provide preventive care. By either rewarding physicians and/or clinics for meeting a set (e.g. 70 percent BCS coverage) or incrementally progressing outcome goal, or penalizing those that fail to reach a certain benchmark, the Qatari government can financially entrench the need to deliver BCS (James 2012).

References

- American Cancer Society. n.d. "Breast Cancer: Mammography Statistics." Last modified 2014. Accessed February 24, 2015 <http://www.cancer.org/research/infographicgallery/mammography-statistics>.
- American Cancer Society. n.d. "Breast Cancer Survival Rates by Stage." Last modified September 25, 2014. Accessed February 24, 2015 <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/breastcancer/detailedguide/breast-cancer-survival-by-stage>.
- American Cancer Society. 2015. "Global Cancer Facts & Figures, 3rd Edition." Accessed February 21, 2015 <http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/content/@research/documents/document/acspc-044738.pdf>.
- Khaja, Mai Abdul Wahed Al and Pam Creedon. 2010. "Evaluating the Effectiveness of the First Breast Cancer Awareness Campaign in the United Arab Emirates: Lessons Learned and Next Steps." *Public Relations Review* 36(4): 386-388, doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.06.005.
- Madouj, Amal Nasser Al-, Abdelmoneim Edali, and Ali Saeed Al-Zahrani. 2011. "Ten-Year Cancer Incidence Among Nationals of the GCC States 1998-2007." (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Gulf Center for Cancer Control and Prevention). Accessed February 24, 2015 <http://www.moh.gov.bh/pdf/publications/GCC%20Cancer%20Incidence%202011.pdf>.

- Bener, Abdulbari et al. 2009. "Do We Need to Maximize the Breast Cancer Screening Awareness?: Experience with an Endogamous Society with High Fertility." *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention* 10(4): 599-604. Accessed January 29, 2015 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19827877>.
- D'Mello, Chantelle. 2014. "VIDEOS: Qatar residents urged to 'challenge' cancer taboos." *Doha News*. Last modified August 26, 2014. Retrieved from <http://dohanews.co/medical-authorities-urge-qatar-residents-fight-cancer-taboos/>.
- Donnelly, Tam Truong, et al. 2012. "Breast Cancer Screening among Arabic Women Living in the State of Qatar: Awareness, Knowledge, and Participation in Screening Activities." *Avicenna* 2. Accessed February 20, 2015, doi: 10.5339/avi.2012.2.
- Donnelly, Tam Truong, et al. 2013. "Beliefs and Attitudes about Breast Cancer and Screening Practices among Arab Women Living in Qatar: A Cross-Sectional Study." *BMC Women's Health* 13:49. Accessed January 28, 2015, doi:10.1186/1472-6874-13-49.
- Donnelly, Tam Truong, et al. 2013. "Arab Women's Breast Cancer Screening Practices: A Literature Review." *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention* 14:4519-4528. Accessed February 20, 2015, doi:10.7314/APJCP.2013.14.8.4519.
- Donnelly, Tam Truong, et al. 2011. "Study Exploring Breast Cancer Screening Practices amongst Arabic Women Living in the State of Qatar." *Avicenna* 1. Accessed January 28, 2015, doi: 10.5339/avi.2011.1.
- Grimshaw, Jeremy M., et al. 2015. "Changing Physicians' Behavior: What Works and Thoughts on Getting More Things to Work." *Journal of Continued Education of Health Professionals* 22(4): 237-243, doi: 10.1002/chp.1340220408.
- Qatar is Booming. 2015. "HMC Welcomes First Set of Qatar-trained Clinical Nurse Specialists." Last modified February 17, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.qatarisbooming.com/article/hmc-welcomes-first-set-qatar-trained-clinical-nurse-specialists>.
- James, Julia. 2012. "Health Policy Brief: Pay-for-Performance." *Health Affairs* October 11, 2012:1-6. Accessed March 24, 2015, http://www.healthaffairs.org/healthpolicybriefs/brief.php?brief_id=78.
- Khatri, Shabina S. 2014. "Qatar's Delayed Sidra Hospital Sacks Construction Contractor." *Doha News*. Last modified July 22, 2014. Accessed March 24, 2015, <http://dohanews.co/sources-qatars-delayed-sidra-hospital-sacks-construction-contractor/>.
- Moorhead, Robert. 2015. "Qatar National Health Strategy." Presentation at the Public Diplomacy and Global Policymaking Colloquium, Doha, Qatar, March 2-5, 2015.
- National Cancer Program. n.d. "Breast Cancer: Breast Cancer Services in Qatar." Accessed March 24, 2015 <http://www.ncp.qa/Pages/CategoryDetail.aspx?pid=18>.
- Cloud Computing Magazine. 2014. "NCP Launches App to Promote Breast Cancer Awareness." *Cloud Computing Magazine* October 19, 2014. Retrieved from <http://cloud-computing.tmcnet.com/news/2014/10/19/8074737.htm>.
- Smith, Wally R. 2000. "Evidence for the Effectiveness of Techniques to Change Physician Behavior." *Chest* 118(2): 8-17, doi:10.1378/chest.118.2_suppl.8S.

- State of Qatar Supreme Council of Health. n.d. "Qatar National Cancer Strategy." (Doha, Qatar: Supreme Council of Health). Accessed February 20, 2015 <http://www.nhsq.info/app/media/880>.
- Time Out Doha. 2012. "Think Pink in Qatar." *Time Out Doha*. Last modified September 26, 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.timeoutdoha.com/community/features/35392-think-pinkin-qatar>.
- National Cancer Institute. 2004. "Making Health Communication Programs Work." (Bethesda, MD: National Cancer Institute). Accessed Feb 24, 2015, <http://www.cancer.gov/publications/health-communication/pink-book.pdf>.
- World Health Organization. n.d. "Qatar, Cancer country profiles 2014." (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization). Accessed February 24, 2015 http://www.who.int/cancer/country-profiles/qat_en.pdf?ua=1.

Lifestyle and Dietary Habits: Health Policy in Qatar for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

by Chris Chu

Executive Summary

In recent years, there has been a staggering rise in the incidence of type 2 diabetes in Qatar due to the growing westernized culture shift—characterized by a sedentary lifestyle and consumption of hyper-caloric foods. In order to counter this rise, concerted policy change across several sectors must be initiated to create large-scale, population-based lifestyle behavior changes in regards to exercise and nutrition. To decrease the escalating diabetes epidemic, Qatar must create incentivized health policies, ensure access to appropriate and up-to-date knowledge, design effective nutrition and exercise programs, maintain accountability for those at-risk, and show powerful advertisements that can catalyze preventative change in a nation.

Introduction – An Overview of Diabetes Prevalence

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic disease that has become a growing global epidemic. While diabetes is prevalent worldwide—affecting approximately 8.5 percent of the adult population¹—the disease is more widespread in developed countries, such as the United States and Qatar. Based on the percent of the adult population with diabetes by country, Qatar has the sixth highest prevalence estimates (15.7 percent) in the world.² Similarly, diabetes in the United States is particularly prevalent and is quickly escalating.³ These staggering rises are largely caused by the rapid urbanization and growing culture of westernized diet and lifestyle—characterized by the consumption of hyper-caloric foods while maintaining a sedentary lifestyle.

Because type 2 diabetes has become a chronic condition in Qatar, as well as in all of the Gulf States, and because Qatar has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world, it has now become an urgent public policy issue. Thus, my research question is what public policy changes—specifically in regard to exercise and nutrition educational initiatives—can be implemented to mitigate the risk and counter the precipitous rise in diabetes mellitus in Qatar.

Policy Focus – Exercise and Nutrition on Diabetes

We will focus on type 2 diabetes, as opposed to type 1 and gestational diabetes, because type 2 is preventable through lifestyle changes such as adequate weight management, a

healthy and nutritious diet, sufficient physical activity, and no smoking. For my policy, I will focus on methods to maximize physical activity and nutrition for the prevention of diabetes.

Evaluation of the Current Problem – A “Westernized” Culture Shift

The current problem in Qatar is that 70 percent of the population is overweight and 41 percent is obese, compared to the 68.5 percent overweight and 34.9 percent obese of the United States, this places Qatar as the sixth highest prevalence of obesity.⁴ The primary cause of this growing epidemic in Qatar is the burgeoning westernized diet and lifestyle. The hyper-caloric food intake is supplemented by the ease and overabundance of fast food. The Qatari culture also promotes a culture of large and highly caloric meals and frequent snacks. A challenge in the fight against diabetes is that the business’ interests of the largest and most powerful business owners do not match health concerns. Because owning Western fast food chains is highly profitable, it is advantageous for business owners to sell and market their foods to maximize sales and revenue, rather than take into account the health of the nation. Currently, there are no specific laws regarding franchises, leading to key business people in Qatar holding most of the power of these franchises.⁵

This problem is only further agitated by the widespread sedentary lifestyle, which is caused by various factors: as a result of extreme heat that reaches over 100 degrees Fahrenheit for the majority of the year, which encourages an indoor and inactive lifestyle, the traditional garb of both men and women that are not appropriate exercise attire, and the gender differences that can discourage women from engaging in substantial physical activity. This is in contrast to the United States, where regular exercise has become a cultural pressure and norm. This shift has been catalyzed by the stylistic and idealistic advertisements of major sports clothing lines like Nike and Adidas, commercials featuring attractive and fit models, and other forms of digital and social media.

Furthermore, privilege has pushed Qataris to a sedentary lifestyle due to wealth. The nation’s oil boom recruited millions of migrant workers to replace the Qataris in physically demanding jobs of the desert, leaving the nationals in air-conditioned comfort.⁶ This culture perpetuates inactivity, along with long sit-down meals and the prevalent usage of shisha—smoking being another risk factor of diabetes.

A Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) study found that among the Qatari population as a whole, Qatari nationality was the strongest risk factor, followed by higher monthly income, obesity due to poor dietary habits, a lack of college education, and no daily vigorous or moderate exercise in order of strength. Among a sub-analysis of only Qatari nationals, obesity, lack of daily vigorous or moderate activity, and lack of a college education were found to be the strongest risk factors in order of strength.⁷ These results suggest that lifestyle is the main contributing factor to high levels of type 2 diabetes.

Evaluation of Current Goals and Initiatives

In order to craft effective, implementable, and sustainable policies, these policies and initiatives must fit within the goals of a nation. The primary goals of Qatar as a nation are underscored in the Qatar National Vision for 2030. Under the Pillar of Human Development, the National Vision outlines how Qatar must increase participation in a wide variety of cultural and sports activities, as well as create a healthier population. It states that Qatar must create innovative disease management programs that will establish reduction and prevention strategies for diabetes⁸. These goals are fortified by the National Health Strategy for 2011–2016, which identifies diabetes as one of the high-priority diseases for preventative healthcare⁹ and calls for the development of an action plan and long-term strategy to curtail the rise of diabetes.

One of the largest strides for Qatar in the fight against diseases like diabetes was the winning bid to host the FIFA World Cup in 2022. The World Cup—one of the largest and most publicized sporting events in the world—acts as a soft power to catalyze sustainable physical activity and participation in sport.¹⁰

The most prominent health movement has been the conception of a five-year initiative called Sahtak Awalan, or Your Health First, which was launched in 2012. Sahtak Awalan is a unique wellness promotion program designed to encourage the Qatari population to lead healthier lifestyles decisions by raising awareness of the issue of obesity and diabetes. Minister of Public Health, H.E. Abdullah bin Khalid Al-Qahtani asserted that, “... it is far more important to promote health awareness and healthier lifestyles among the population. These efforts directly contribute to the fulfillment of health objectives that are aligned with Qatar National Health Strategy 2011–2016 and Qatar National Vision 2030.”¹¹

Challenges to Current Structures

Diabetes requires concerted policy action across several sectors. According to the HMC, eliminating obesity and improving awareness of diabetes can reduce the incidence of diabetes by one-third for the total population and one-half for Qatari nationals. Furthermore, promoting physical activity has the potential to reduce diabetes in 10 percent of the total population and 15 percent of Qatari nationals.¹² This indicates the necessity that health prevention programs focus on modifiable risk factors, such as diet and physical activity, in order to reduce diabetes for an entire population. These lifestyle factors circle back to the westernized culture shift discussed earlier.

Policy Recommendations and Implications

In order to implement long-term change at a population-wide level, there must be a concerted effort across several sectors. I propose the following: 1) focus on creating implementable and sustainable educative health policies and initiatives that will combat

the staggering rise of diabetes, 2) ensure healthcare providers, clinicians, and patients all have ready access to appropriate tools and guidance to help manage diabetes, 3) design effective nutrition and exercise health programs that can both inform a nation and set a nation into action, 4) maintain accountability for diabetes management practices, and 5) create moving advertisements that can aid the change of behavior regarding lifestyle factors.

Sustainable policy and initiatives can come from a combination of incentivizing healthy habits and dis-incentivizing unhealthy habits. I propose a taxation system on the start-up costs and upkeep fees for fast food restaurants to maintain their businesses in Qatar. The fee should be substantial enough to dissuade business owners from wanting to invest in these franchises. There must be a way to create incentives for both citizens and business owners. This can be done through exercise and nutrition progress tracking, with prizes given out based on meeting certain goals. For example, Fitbits could be given out to help track the exercise of citizens and if certain goals are met of time walking and weight lost, a prize of some kind would be rewarded. For business owners, tax reductions could be granted for serving healthier foods and encouraging customers to consume healthier options, thus balancing their interests between revenue and health.

To ensure that patients and citizens have ready access to information about preventing diabetes, it is crucial to have well-informed clinicians and providers. This could be accomplished by creating an exchange program, where a clinician or provider will study in a country with high expertise and low incidences of diabetes in order to bring that knowledge back to Qatar and disseminate it to others.

Promoting exercise and healthy eating can start very early. K-12 education systems, as well as universities, should require a physical education or activity requirement. This will enable children to stay active from an early age while developing important character traits that sports and physical activities can build. Additionally, the creation of more private single-sex and mixed-sex gyms could be beneficial. This will bypass the gender differences, as well as provide more opportunities to be exercise indoors to escape the heat.

Maintaining accountability can be difficult, but regular doctor visits should be heavily encouraged. An online tracking system should be created so that doctors can follow up with patients if the next appointment is missed. Through clear and consistent communication, the bond between healthcare providers and the population could be strengthened, aiding in regular appointment attendance.

The use of digital media and social networks—such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube—will be a powerful resource to reach the largest number of Qatari nationals and expatriates as possible. Effective advertisements have the potential to create positive pressure on a country. I propose an overhaul on advertisements to market more sporting brands, healthier food options, and the benefits of exercising. These advertisements must be moving and powerful in order to create a cultural push toward more physical activity.

Conclusion – A Need for Sweeping Lifestyle Changes

The rapid increase of the incidence of type 2 diabetes in Qatar is a definite sign of the urgency to create policy change that would create a national movement to curb this rise. Research and studies have pointed to lifestyle factors as the principal cause of Qatar being seated as one of the world's most overweight, obese, and diabetic countries. However, lifestyle factors are modifiable; thus, the policies that implement sustainable change must focus on altering behavior in regard to exercise and dietary habits.

In order to spark this modification, it is not enough to simply educate and raise awareness, but it is necessary to actually create a change in lifestyle behaviors in regard to exercise and nutrition. Based on comparisons with the United States and analyzing the effectiveness of current health and wellness campaigns, my policy recommendations follow five underlying principles. To decrease the escalating diabetes epidemic, Qatar must create implementable and sustainable educative health policies, grant access to appropriate tools and guidance, implement effective nutrition and exercise programs, maintain accountability for patients and those at-risk, and show moving advertisements that have the power to spread knowledge regarding diabetes.

Endnotes

1. World Health Organization. n.d. "Diabetes." Last modified January 2015. Accessed March 1, 2015 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs312/en/>.
2. International Diabetes Federation. n.d. "Diabetes in United States – 2014." Last modified 2014. Accessed March 1, 2015 <http://www.idf.org/membership/nac/united-states>.
3. American Diabetes Association. "Statistics about Diabetes." Last modified June 10, 2014. Accessed March 1, 2015 <http://www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/statistics/>.
4. Bell, Connor. 2012. "Obesity: A Big Problem for Fast Growing Qatar." *Al Jazeera* July 25, 2012. Accessed March 1, 2015 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/07/2012722917422894.html>.
5. Keane, Lee. 2015. "Franchising in Qatar Requires a Robust Legal Framework." *The Edge* April 6, 2015. Accessed April 16, 2015 <http://www.theedge.me/franchising-in-qatarrequires-a-robust-legal-framework/>.
6. Slackman, Michael. 2010. "Privilege Pulls Qatar Toward Unhealthy Choices." *The New York Times* April 26, 2010. Accessed March 1, 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/27/world/middleeast/27qatar.html?_r=0.
7. Christos, Paul J., et al. 2014. "Prevention of Type II Diabetes Mellitus in Qatar: Who Is at Risk?" *Qatar Medical Journal* 2(13): 70-81, accessed March 1, 2015, doi.10.5339/qmj/2014.13.
8. Qatar Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics. n.d. "Pillars of Qatar National Vision 2030: Human Development." Accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.gsdp.gov.qa/portal/page/portal/gsdp_en/qatar_national_vision/Human_development.

9. General Secretariat, Supreme Council of Health. 2013. "Executive Summary Update 2013, National Health Strategy 2011-2016." Accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.nhsq.info/app/media/325>.

10. Brannagan, Paul Michael and Richard Giulianotti. 2014. "Soft Power and Soft Disempowerment: Qatar, Global Sport and Football's 2022 World Cup Finals." Abstract, *Leisure Studies* doi: 10.1080/02614367.2014.964291.

11. Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. 2015. "World Innovation Summit for Health to Showcase Qatari Healthcare Initiative 'YOUR HEALTH FIRST.'" (Doha, Qatar: Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar). Accessed March 1, 2015 <http://qatar-weill.cornell.edu/media/reports/2015/world-innovation-summit-for-health.html>.

12. Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. 2015. "Diabetes Prevention Should Focus on Lifestyle Factors." News release, January 12, 2015. Accessed March 1, 2015, <http://cdn.qf.com.qa/app/media/28056>.

Challenges Facing Mental Health care Access and Delivery in Qatar

by Shilpa Nataraj

Introduction

In Qatar, one in five individuals will develop a mental disorder in their lifetimes.¹ According to the Global Burden of Disease study findings, three of the six most burdensome diseases in Qatar are mental health disorders, as well as three of the top five causes of disability.² Major depressive disorder is the most burdensome disease in Qatar based on disability-adjusted life years.² Despite the prevalence of mental disorders in Qatar, there remains a significant gap between those who need treatment and those who receive it. Attitudinal and structural barriers to mental health care access and delivery continue to persist, and it remains uncertain whether the National Mental Health Strategy 2013 to 2018 can effectively surmount these barriers. Therefore, public policy initiatives are necessary to reshape Qatar's mental health care model.

Attitudinal Barriers

Attitudinal barriers that generate negative perceptions of mental illness and treatment are primarily influenced by stigma from sociocultural factors. Examples of these factors in Qatar include family structure, gender roles, and religion.

A vestige of Qatar's tribal origins, the extended family structure contributes to the prevailing attitudes toward mental health care. A family member with a mental disorder might cause society to negatively view the extended family, thereby affecting those relatives' marriage or job prospects.³ These societal consequences can lead to a lack of family support, which can be detrimental for individuals coping with mental health disorders.⁴ Bener et al. investigated a number of attitudinal barriers that psychiatric patients in Qatar experience and showed that about 50 percent of compliant patients reported having family support.⁵ This finding suggests that family acceptance of a mental disorder can prove beneficial to patients in complying with their treatment.

Undeniably, life in Qatar differs significantly for Qatari men and women. Although 70 percent of college students in Qatar are women, as reported by Qatar University President Dr. Sheikha Abdulla Al-Misnad, the number of women with jobs is significantly lower due to obligations and restrictions in the extended family structure. Furthermore, in the Middle East, it is traditionally females who must care for ill family members.³ As a result, women in Qatar are at greater risk for developing a mental health disorder because of the unhappiness caused by societal limitations.

Psychiatric patients in Qatar are often thought to be possessed by the Jinn from Islamic folklore and the Quran, causing them to be ostracized in society.⁵ In order to mitigate attitudinal barriers, psychiatrists sometimes treat patients by using the tenets of Islam and Sharia law in psychotherapy.⁶

Structural Barriers

Structural barriers encompass the cost of treatment and the availability of services and providers. The primary structural barriers in Qatar are differential access to healthcare, shortage of mental health workforce and training opportunities, and limited number of mental healthcare facilities.

The divide between the Qatari national population and the expatriate population places Qatar in a unique position, creating a structural barrier based on the differential access to health care as a result of socioeconomic status. With wealth distributed to the Qatari nationals, the expatriate population does not have the same benefits in terms of job security and health care. The Hamad Medical Corporation, for instance, provides free treatment to Qatari nationals but charges the expatriate population, which can be costly for specialty health care services.⁷

Additionally, there remains a significant disparity between Qatar and other high-income countries in the mental health workforce, training opportunities, and facilities. There are approximately eight times fewer psychiatrists, three times fewer psychologists, and three times fewer nurses in Qatar compared to other high-income countries (Figure 1). Even more shockingly, there are no training opportunities in Qatar for psychologists and social workers and a very limited number of opportunities for psychiatrists (Figure 1). Furthermore, there are no psychiatric beds in general hospitals in Qatar and almost 10 times fewer beds in psychiatric hospitals and community residential facilities compared to other high-income countries (Figure 2). The quality of mental health care services patients receive is greatly affected by these structural barriers.

Qatar National Mental Health Strategy 2013 to 2018

In order to address the gaps in Qatar's current mental health care system, the Qatar National Mental Health Strategy 2013 to 2018 has been created as a part of the Qatar National Vision 2030 with support from the Supreme Council of Health, Hamad Medical Corporation, and the Primary Health Care Corporation. The objectives of this strategy are numerous: (1) identify strategies for mental health promotion and prevention, (2) provide comprehensive and integrated mental health services, (3) encourage better leadership for mental health, and (4) improve information systems.¹

Progress has been made in advancing mental health care in Qatar and raising awareness. Qatar has established World Mental Health Day on October 10 to promote mental health education, and several workshops have been held with international collaborators. The first cohort of physicians from the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) completed

a mental health training program, which was designed to help primary care physicians identify and understand mental health problems, dispel myths, and reduce stigma.

Although the National Mental Health Strategy seeks to address key challenges and describes key program indicators of success, it unfortunately does not include the precise steps for implementation, which raises the question as to whether the strategy's desired outcomes will be materialized. For example, the strategy promises effective leadership and governance in addition to the enactment of a mental health law by the end of this year, but omits the specific and detailed steps that will be taken to meet these goals. There also seems to be a lack of transparency with the public in order to understand whether the timeline of key program indicators is being met.

Similar to education reform, which was not successful because of its quick implementation phase, it is somewhat concerning that Qatar has placed an ambitious target of 2018 to meet its goals, and it is uncertain whether it can achieve those goals. Furthermore, financial consolidation remains a pressing issue, with the scaling back of major projects in Qatar and the bankruptcy of Sidra, a medical center that was set to open earlier this year. As a result of greater financial restraints, it is even more unlikely that the goals of the National Mental Health Strategy will be met, especially given mental health's low priority in Qatar.

Public Policy Recommendations

Qatar must implement awareness campaigns to combat the stigma associated with mental health disorders and ensure that mental health remains a high priority in health care reform. A successful awareness campaign model was the Beyondblue Initiative in Australia, which began in 2000 and targeted groups without access to mental health services, primarily students and rural populations.⁸ Both print and electronic media were used to destigmatize mental health, and a website was constructed to answer questions about a wide array of mental health services and preventative measures.⁹ Because of its impact, unsolicited donors eventually began contributing to the campaign. The Beyondblue Initiative is credited with increasing much of Australia's public awareness about mental health issues.

The quality of mental health care services can be greatly improved by addressing structural barriers. With the shortage of specialty care providers, there is a need for increasing mental health training opportunities in Qatar. By channeling funds to increase the number of beds not only in psychiatric hospitals but also community-based facilities, the integration of services in community-based settings will greatly ameliorate the stigma associated with seeking treatment from a specialty provider.¹⁰

Research in mental health-related topics remains sparse in Qatar. As such, there needs to be a push for conducting research studies in these areas in order to inform evidence-based practice in the medical setting and direct future efforts to improve mental health care access and delivery in Qatar.

Although there is hope for a successful mental health care model in Qatar, the National Mental Health Strategy must develop a clearer implementation plan, accompanied by public policy initiatives, to overcome the attitudinal and structural barriers that persist.

Endnotes

1. National Health Strategy. n.d. "Mental Health Design." Last modified 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.nhsq.info/strategy-goals-and-projects/comprehensive-world-class-healthcare/mental-health-design/mental-health-design>.
2. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation. 2010. "GBD Profile: Qatar, Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors Study 2010." (Seattle, WA: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation). Retrieved from http://www.healthdata.org/sites/default/files/files/country_profiles/GBD/ihme_gbd_country_report_qatar.pdf.
3. Dalky, Heyam F. 2012. "Perception and Coping with Stigma of Mental Illness: Arab Families' Perspectives." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 33(7): 486-491, doi:10.3109/01612840.2012.676720.
4. Kadri, Nadia, et al. 2004. "Stigma Impact on Moroccan Families of Patients With Schizophrenia." *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 49(9): 625-629. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15503735>.
5. Bener, Abdulbari, Elnour E. Dafeeah, and Mohammad O. Salem. 2013. "A Study of Reasons of Non-Compliance of Psychiatric Treatment and Patients' Attitudes towards Illness and Treatment in Qatar." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 34(4): 273-280, doi:10.3109/0612840.2012.745039.
6. Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics. 2014. "Psychological and Mental Disorders between Shariah and Psychology." Video file, Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, November 11, 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.cilecenter.org/en/videos/cile-public-lecture-mental-and-psychological-disorders-between-shariah-and-psychology-24112014/>.
7. Hamad Medical Corporation. n.d. "After Your Appointment." Retrieved from http://www.hmc.org.qa/en/patients_and_visitors/patient_information/patient_guide/outpatient_information/after_your_appointment/after_your_appointment.aspx.
8. Mojtabai, Ramin, William W. Eaton, and Pallab K. Maulik. 2012. "Pathways to Care: Need, Attitudes, Barriers." In *Public Mental Health*, edited by William W. Eaton (New York: Oxford University Press), 396-415.
9. Beyondblue, n.d. Retrieved from <http://www.beyondblue.org.au>.
10. Everett, Anita and Su Yeon Lee. 2012. "Community and Public Mental Health Services in the United States: History and Programs." In *Public Mental Health*, edited by William W. Eaton (New York: Oxford University Press), 396-415.

Figures

Figure 1. Comparison of Health Professional Workforce and Training Opportunities for Health Professionals between Qatar and other high-income countries

	Health professionals working in the mental health sector Rate per 100,000		Training of health professionals in educational institutions Rate per 100,000	
	Qatar	High income Countries	Qatar	High Income Countries
Psychiatrists	1.66	8.59	0.13	0.30
Medical doctors, not specialized in psychiatry	0.20	1.49	Unknown	8.67
Nurses	10.94	29.15	1.59	19.35
Psychologists	1.26	3.79	0.00	2.15
Social Workers	0.46	2.16	0.00	4.10
Occupational Therapists	0.40	1.51	0.00	0.75

Source: Qatar National Mental Health Strategy, 2013

Figure 2. Comparison of Mental Health Care Facilities relative to population between Qatar and other high-income countries

	Total number of facilities / beds	Rate per 100,000 population	
	Qatar	Qatar	High Income Countries
Mental Health Outpatient Facilities	16	1.06	2.32
Day Treatment Facilities	2	0.13	0.517
Psychiatric Beds in General Hospitals	0	0.00	13.6
Community Residential Facilities	1	0.07	0.066
Beds in Community Residential Facilities	15	0.99	10.15
Psychiatric Hospitals	1	0.07	0.10
Beds in Psychiatric Hospitals	60	3.98	30.9

Source: Qatar National Mental Health Strategy, 2013