

Venture funding in the UAE: Evaluating the gender gap and the role of women-specific programs

Monday, July 17, 2023

11:00am – 12:00 pm ET / 7:00 – 8:00 pm UAE

Hybrid: ADGM and Virtual

Opening remarks



Amjad Ahmad

Chairman, empowerME, Atlantic Council

Amjad Ahmad is chairman of empowerME at the Atlantic Council. EmpowerME focuses on shaping innovative investments to empower entrepreneurs, women, and the private sector in the Middle East. EmpowerME also develops strategies and policies to drive sustainable prosperity through the creation of dynamic entrepreneurial economies, the economic participation of women, the integration of regional economies, and educational transformation. Amjad is also managing partner of the venture capital firm Precinct Partners and serves on the boards of Homzmart, Tapal Tea, RSA Global, Mr. Usta, and The Luxury Closet. He was recently appointed to the board of Amideast, a leading US nonprofit organization engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as building cross-cultural understanding between the United States and the region. Based in the United Arab Emirates for fifteen years prior to moving to Washington, DC, Amjad has collaborated with business leaders and entrepreneurs to build leading companies in the Middle East. Through his work as a venture capital and growth investor, Amjad established two investment firms in the region that provided over \$1 billion in funding to over fifty companies in sectors ranging from technology and education to healthcare and finance. During the past five years, Amjad has focused his investments on entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology. Amjad holds a master's degree in international affairs with a concentration in international finance and economics from Columbia University and is a graduate of the general management program at Harvard Business School.

Keynote remarks



H.E. Yousef Al Otaiba

Ambassador, The United Arab Emirates to the United States of America

Representing the UAE, His Excellency Yousef Al Otaiba serves as both the Ambassador to the US and Minister of State. He originally worked under Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He also previously served as Non-Resident Ambassador to Mexico. Sworn into the UAE Embassy in 2008, Ambassador Yousef Al Otaiba has since turned his full attention to the UAE-US alliance. Upon his arrival, bilateral trade increased over 70 percent and fortified the UAE's position as the US' largest trade partner in the MENA region. Emirati investments in America have grown, and world-class US institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic and New York University opened new branches in the UAE. In the name of peace and security, he's consistently used his platform to speak out on regional stability and US foreign policy in the Middle East. These long-time efforts eventually led to the US-brokered Abraham Accords, the highlight of his career thus far. The normalization agreement has already transformed the Gulf and rapidly increased UAE-Israel ties in the last year. The Ambassador has also worked hard to advance philanthropic and community programs in the US. Through the UAE Embassy's Community Soccer Program, over 10 soccer fields have been restored in underserved areas

throughout the country. On the Board of Directors for the Special Olympics, he also helped to bring the first Special Olympics World Games to the Mideast. In addition, he is a board member of the Center for Public Leadership program at the Harvard Kennedy School and the American University in Cairo, Egypt. These partnerships are deeply rooted in the UAE's principles of culture, diversity, equality and unity. He was awarded Ambassador of the Year in 2010 and listed among TIME's 100 Most Influential People in 2020. These are just a few of the many diplomatic awards and honors he's earned throughout his valuable time in America. He received his education from Cairo American College, followed by Georgetown University and the National Defense University.

**Daleya Uddin**

Head of Public Affairs and Outreach, The United States Embassy to the UAE

Daleya Uddin joined the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai as the Public Affairs Officer in July 2022. Previously she served as Acting Deputy Economic Chief at the U.S. Mission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and as the Budget and Oversight Officer at the U.S. Mission to the Rome Based UN and International Organizations, overseeing U.S. contribution flows of over \$2 billion/year. She has also worked in the Economic Section in Embassy Pretoria and the Front Office in New Delhi. In the Office of European Union and Regional Affairs in

Washington, Daleya served as the regional Energy and ESTH Officer. In addition, she has completed the Department's economic and commercial studies course which included a detail to the Treasury Department's Office of Multilateral Development Banks. A native of New Jersey, Daleya received her BA and Masters in Public Policy from Rutgers University and a Masters in Development Economics from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Sciences Po Paris) as a Rotary Foundation World Peace Fellow. She also studied at the London School of Economics and worked at the UK Parliament as a Hansard Scholar. After graduation, Daleya worked as an international audit analyst at the U.S. Government Accountability Office reviewing U.S. assistance to International Organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization. Daleya just completed introductory Arabic training at FSI and is fluent in Hindi and Urdu thanks to a healthy exposure to Bollywood.

Panelsits**Huda Al-Lawati**

Founder & CEO, Aliph Capital

Huda has 20 years of experience in private equity, operations and investments across emerging markets. Huda is the Founder and CEO of Aliph Capital, a GCC focused investment manager enabling traditional businesses bridge the technology gap through active ownership and digital transformation. Prior to founding Aliph, Huda was a Partner at Gateway Partners Group where she was a member of the Investment Committee. Prior to Gateway, Miss Al Lawati was Chief Investment Officer for Savola Group, one of the largest publicly-listed strategic investment holding groups for food & retail businesses in the Middle East and North Africa region. Prior to

Savola, Huda was a Partner and Chief Investment Officer for MENA at the Abraaj Group. She started her career with Schlumberger in 2002 after graduating from Brown University. Through her career she has led over \$2 billion of equity and over \$1 billion of debt deals and has experience in growth capital, MBOs, LBOs, venture capital, equity markets and structured equity transactions across a broad range of sectors. She has played leading roles in strategic initiatives, corporate turnarounds, change management, organizational building and investor relations. She is currently a board member at ADC Acquisition Corporation (the first ADX listed SPAC), Magrabi, Saudi Fransi Capital and Hala (ADGM and CMA regulated fintech company). She also serves as a member on the nomination and remuneration

committee of Saudi Fransi Capital and chairs the risk committee at Hala. She has previously served on multiple boards and committees across the region including Tim Hortons, Panda Retail Company, Herfy (Tadawul), AlKabeer, Savola Foods Company, SMG, The Entertainer, Kudu, Al Ula Development Company (a subsidiary of PIF) and the Young Arab Leaders. As a keen contributor to the community, she has been a member of the board of directors of the Middle East Investor Relations Association, a member of the Young Presidents Organization and a member of the advisory board of Global Ventures. Miss Al Lawati holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Neuroscience and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Economics (Honors) from Brown University.

**Alifia Doriwala**

Co-Chief Investment Officer, RockCreek

Alifia Doriwala is a Managing Director at RockCreek, responsible for OCIO and Multi-Asset Class portfolios. She focuses on sourcing, directing, and managing relationships with public and private investments, as well as portfolio management, asset allocation, and investment decisions. Prior to joining RockCreek, Alifia was an Equity Arbitrage Trader at Wolverine Trading, L.P., where she was responsible for sourcing, analyzing, and modeling equity linked trades together with equity options. She started her career as an Investment Banking Analyst at Merrill Lynch and member of the Financial Sponsor Group assessing the suitability of potential targets for private equity portfolio companies. Alifia graduated from Georgetown

University, magna cum laude, with a B.A. in Economics and English and holds an MBA in Finance and Marketing from New York University's Stern School of Business. She is a board member of the Georgetown University Global Business Initiative Advisory Board and a former Trustee and Chair of the Investment Committee at The Langley School. She is board member for the Teach for America-DC Region and Chair of the Teach for America Stewardship Committee. Alifia is a frequent panelist and speaker at investment conferences focused on sustainable investing, diversity and alternative investments, and she supports various non-profit organizations focused on education and women's initiatives.

**Zahra Rabih El Zayat**

Chief Commercial Officer, evision and e&Life – e& group

Zayat is a passionate thought leader focused on growth and expansion. With a strong flair for innovation, Zayat brings more than 18 years of experience in the areas of corporate and business development, digital transformation, and OTT. In Feb 2022, Zahra was appointed as Chief Commercial Officer for evision - e&life the vertical within e& group that focuses on building consumer digital adjacencies including entertainment, Fintech, ecommerce, super app and much more. Zahra was named "Woman Media Executive" of the year by BroadcastPro for her incredible work in launching and growing OTT and Digital businesses across MENAP. She was also recognized as one of the topmost influential women leaders in the ICT industry by Telecom

Review. Before joining e&, Zahra led senior leadership positions at OSN where she was SVP for OTT and led the digital transformation and OTT launch. She was also the GM of YuppTV MENA and under her leadership the platform grew and expanded to be awarded the OTT Service of the Year. Zahra has also worked for Deloitte where she spearheaded major projects in the financial services industry. In addition to various International Professional Qualifications, Zahra also holds an Executive MBA from London Business School in UK.

Moderated by**Lynn Monzer**

Associate Director, WIn Fellowship, Atlantic Council

Lynn Monzer is the associate director of empowerME at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, where she focuses on the WIn Fellowship Program. Monzer is a gender-equality professional, consultant, instructor, and social entrepreneur who has worked with think tanks, nonprofits, and startups. Monzer focuses on improving the lives of women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by increasing their labor-force participation and fostering female-led entrepreneurship. She holds a PhD focused on female entrepreneurship in the MENA region. She was previously a lead research analyst at the Wilson Center's Middle East Program and worked to identify policy gaps that contribute to low women's economic participation and entrepreneurship in MENA. She is also a global fellow at the Wilson Center. Previously, Monzer founded GenDev Consulting to help organizations foster opportunities for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship in the MENA region; she also led workshops for organizations including Google Developer Groups, the Rowad Foundation, the University of Maryland, the Creo Incubator, and Al-Sahm Women. Monzer was also a strategist at Localized, a mentorship social enterprise based in Washington DC, and a manager at Pinpay, a fintech based in Lebanon. Monzer is also the founder of Hokouki, a nonprofit organization that empowers women and girls in the MENA region by providing easier access to laws and regulations that affect them.