

For Immediate Release



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AUB launches the first mini-certification on inclusive employers' policies in the Arab MENA.

The Center for Inclusive Business and leadership (CIBL) for Women at the Suliman Olayan School of Business (OSB) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) launched, in collaboration with OSB's Executive Education Programs, the first of its kind and free of charge mini-certification program, made possible through generous funding of the US State Department and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), on 'Inclusive Strategies for Recruitment, Retention and Promotion (RRP) strategies for Women' in the Arab Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The RRP mini-certification program outreach was received by professionals and decision-makers with great interest. Although aimed at decision-makers and managers in the Arab MENA, there was momentum from professionals in Europe and North America who sought certification and emphasized the importance of this program. A total of 1215 individuals from four sectors (STEM, Healthcare, Higher Education, and Banking) and eight countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) applied to the program and 489 applicants were accepted.

The program kicked off on February 23rd, 2021 and was delivered over the period of four weeks, in both Arabic and English languages, with instant French translation, extending forward-thinking human resource solutions to employers towards building and supporting more inclusive workplaces in the region. Comprised of four hands-on modules, the first three provided participants with concrete competitive arguments for implementing inclusive strategies, followed by practical exercises and Q&A closing sessions to enable local strategizing. The fourth module brought together a panel of trailblazing champions of inclusion who shared successful inclusion initiatives that have worked in their organizations

CIBL for Women's Founding Director Dr. Charlotte Karam, and Faculty Research Affiliate at CIBL for Women Dr. Lina Daouk-Öyry started off the first module on 'Inclusive Recruitment' explaining that responding to local problems requires indigenous strategies based on local needs.

'The workplaces across the world are rapidly changing and greater efforts are needed in the MENA region to establish more diversified economies and support strategic growth and regional development', said Dr. Karam. 'The rise and role of women as a conduit to building stronger organizations is the key focus of this mini-certification program, where we speak from the region to the region', she added.

The second module on 'Inclusive Retention', delivered by CIBL Founding Members Dr. Fida Afiouni and Dr. Carmen Geha explored with employers the inclusive retention policies and practices that are most needed to support women's wellbeing and work-life balance across the region. Employers agreed that retention policies will eventually translate into higher retention rate and women's upward mobility.

The third module on 'Inclusive Promotion' was delivered by CIBL Founding members Dr. Lama Moussawi and Dr. Wassim Dbouk who explained the importance of women in leadership positions to the sustainability and growth of organizations. After a tumultuous 2020, women are increasingly needed to be in decision-making positions to be able to influence economic recovery and inspire other women to re-enter the workforce.

All three modules included engaging discussions and vibrant debates on how best to ensure that the gender-gap does not further widen in these difficult times. According to Dr. Karam, "this pioneer program by CIBL for Women is aimed at creating the platform to partner with employers. We want to work with decision-makers and aid in the design and implementation of gender-inclusive policies."

Some comments received from employers in the region:

'I totally agree that greater efforts are needed to support strategic growth specifically for women and that these efforts will help create more diverse and sustainable economic systems', employer from Bahrain.

'Organizations need to know that they are stronger when their leadership has diverse perspectives and experiences to draw upon,' employer from Algeria.

'Flexible working hours should be an article of the labor code and implemented to both men and women,' employer from Jordan.

'I would like to see more strategies addressing paternal leaves policies that can actually encourage men to share the child care responsibilities,' employer from Lebanon.

'I have a better understanding about how work-place policies can address the struggles that women face in my country and I feel empowered to be part of changing these policies and structures,' employer from Morocco.

“This course showed me the importance of lifelong learning and education as a tool to changing perceptions and fighting stereotypes. I am convinced we can together change policies and that we can learn better from each other,” employer from Tunisia.

‘I am really excited to share my experience with this program with all my colleagues. Learning about the challenges that women face in other countries was an eye opener that we are not alone and that there is a lot to learn from each other,’ participant from Iraq.

‘Emphasis must be placed in education from a young age on the active participation of women and its impact on sustainable development,’ employer from Libya.

The final module of trailblazers, moderated by Norma Taki, Diversity and Inclusion Leader at PWC Middle East (UAE), gathered pioneering champions of inclusion who have shared with us their experience in successfully implementing inclusion strategies in their organizations.

‘Recruiting with a bias free process was the main key to naturally implement an inclusive mindset in our organization,’ said Dr. Nahla Khaddage Bou Diab, Deputy General Manager COO at AM bank s.a.l and Head of Women Empowerment for the World Union of Arab Bankers.

‘We rolled out a series of sessions -Dare to Dream Big- where successful women shared their journey with us. This had a positive impact on our team, both men and women, who started becoming more receptive on having more women in the team,’ Ms. Majda Labadi, VP Human Resources at Hikma Pharmaceuticals (UAE).

‘Change starts with communication. Open and honest communication can positively affect the work culture,’ Ms. Mariam Saif, Diversity and Inclusion Vice Chairman and Group CEO’s Office at Zain Group (UAE).

By the end of the program, decision-makers were able to connect, learn and acquire tools to adopt and implement gender-inclusive strategies and amplify the potential of the women across the ranks of their organizations. A total of 93 participants completed the requirements of the RRP mini-certification program and earned a certificate of completion, becoming as such, the first professionals to be certified in RRP in the MENA region.

The RRP is part of a milestone project at CIBL for women ‘the SAWI Project’, which stands for “Support and Accelerate Women's Inclusion”, a three-year project made possible through generous funding of the US State Department and the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). SAWI partners with a transnational network of employers to develop, improve, and implement inclusive policies and practices for better recruitment, retention, and promotion of women.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 365-bed hospital.

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