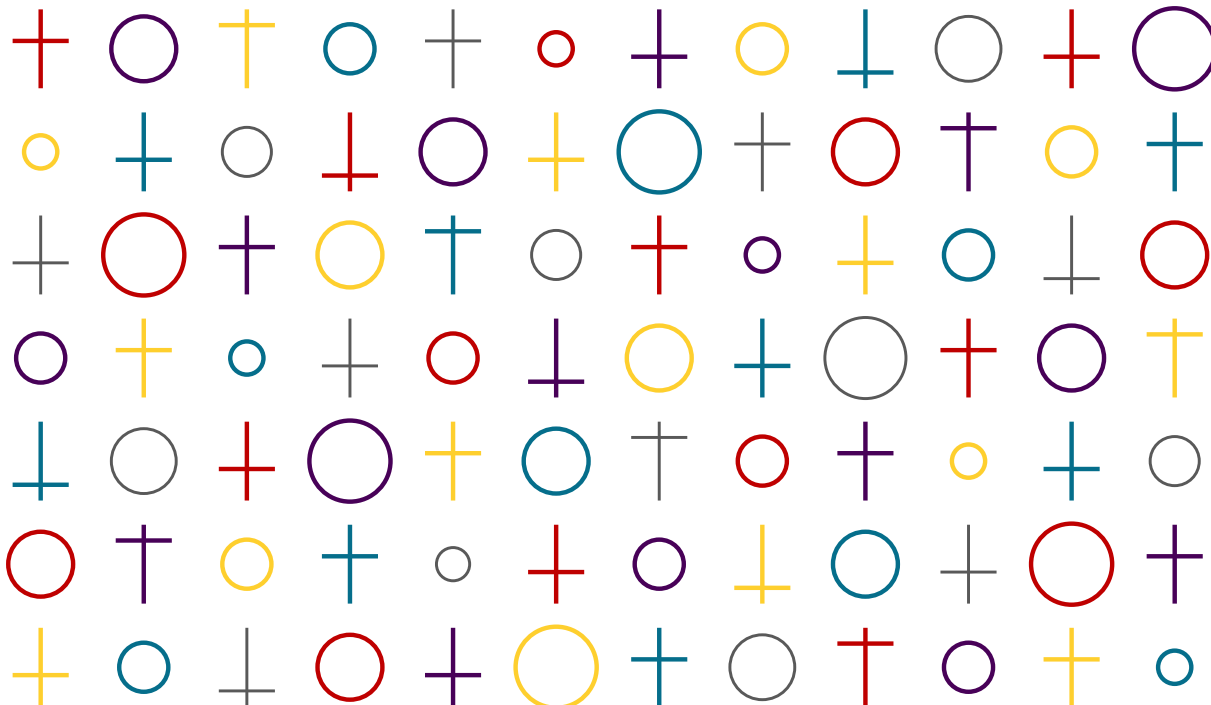


WOMEN TAKE THE LEAD 2021

Addressing challenges of young
women leaders: 20 perspectives



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Table of contents

Foreword by Pernille Bramming	04
Meet Youmna Emad	08
Meet Henriette Kabell Christensen	10
Meet Nihal El Chami	12
Meet Julie Lorentzen	14
Interview: A new motivation to drive change	16
Meet Rania Ayman	22
Meet Nina Scheel	24
Meet Menas Saleh	26
Meet Julie Arnfred Bojesen	28
Meet Mayar Darwish	30
Interview: Smashing the glass ceiling	32
Meet Thea Hammerskov	38

Meet Shaimaa Tantawi	40
Meet Lisette Skov	42
Meet Shahd Rashed	44
Meet Katrine Ebdrup Damgaard	46
Interview: Be the change	48
Meet Katrine Wind	54
Meet Samira Negm	56
Meet Marianne Dige Svenningsen	58
Meet Mai Fahmy	60
Meet Ateebah Chaudhry	62
Meet Sara Aziz	64
Interview: The journey is the destination	66
About DEDI	70

Foreword



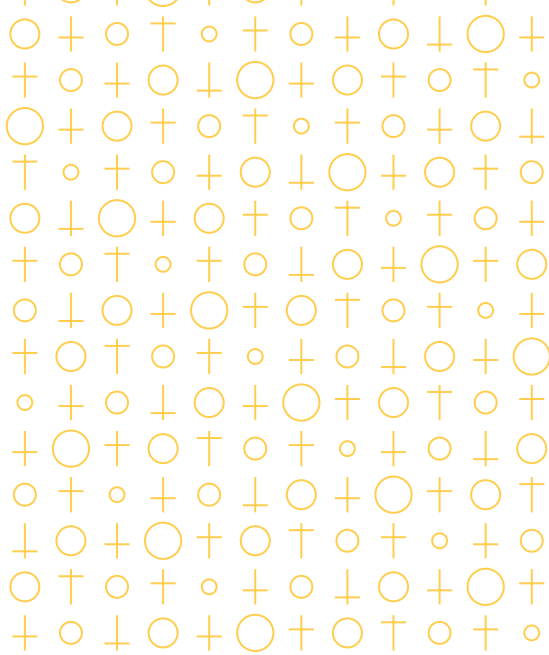
Equality in leadership is high on the agenda, not the least in Denmark and Egypt. And we Danes and Egyptians have very good reason to join hands: When it comes to the ratio of women to men employed in senior roles as “legislators, senior officials and managers”, Denmark is ranking number 101 while Egypt is ranking number 129 out of 156 countries according to The Global Gender Report 2021.

One way of addressing the lack of equality, especially when it comes to leadership, is to enhance networking. Traditionally, women have been offered less opportunities in professional networking than men, and this is recognized as a factor hindering women to advance in their careers.

With all that in mind, in 2021 DEDI initiated the Women Take the Lead Network to offer professional women a space for networking and cultural dialogue. The Danish Management Society (VL), specifically the VL-107 Group that have only women members, was a key inspiration for the network.

The Danish Management Society (VL) is committed to fostering and encouraging knowledge and understanding of modern leadership. Accordingly, the aim is to contribute to the financial success, social progress and general improvement of the conditions of society.

Given the experience of the Women Take the Lead Network in 2021, we can proudly state that the twenty Danish and Egyptian members are not only sharing this aim but have also made substantial contributions to achieving it – and that is all the more impressive since they are all younger than 35 years.



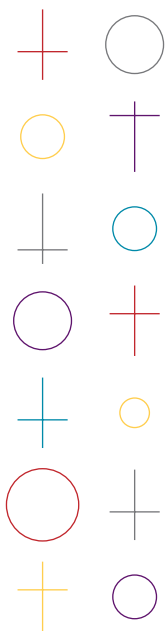
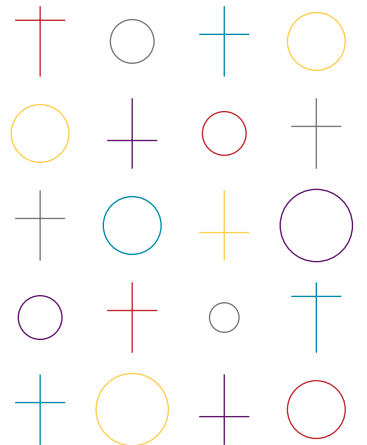
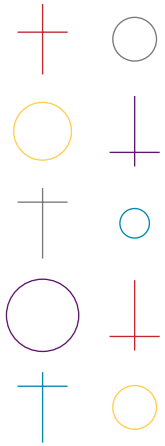
As women in “senior roles”, our twenty young Egyptian and Danish women are among “those who plan, direct, coordinate and evaluate the overall activities of enterprises, governments and other organizations, or of organizational units within them, and formulate and review their policies, laws, rules and regulations”, as according to the definition.

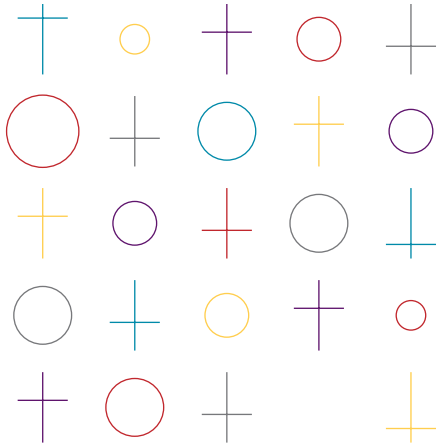
It goes without saying, that they meet a lot of challenges. Meanwhile, sharing these challenges; sharing thoughts, experiences, knowledge, doubts and hopes showed to be even more redeeming than anyone had expected.

By publishing this booklet, we want to share these wonderful experiences with many more women. It’s our hope, that it will spur women to reach out and join networks. Also, we hope to see this dialogue between Danish and Egyptian women leaders continue and inspire them to venture up the ladders.

March, 2022

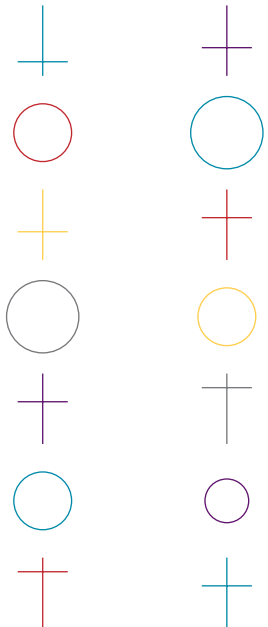
*Pernille Bramming
Coordinator*



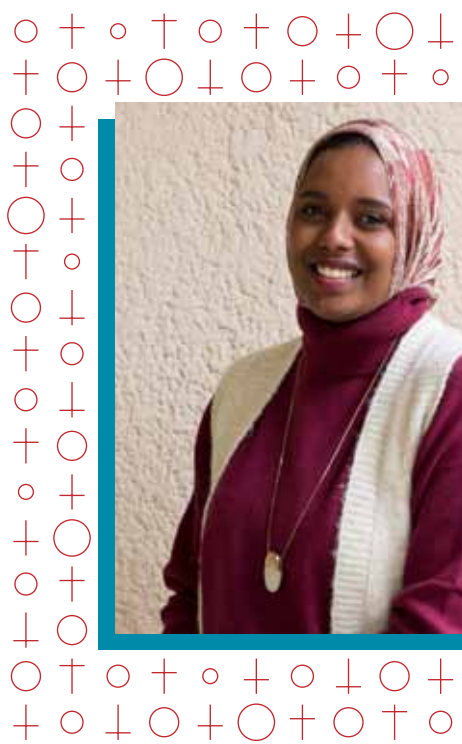


“We are faced with many of the same dilemmas as women. For instance, we are met with certain expectations from the society around us. We are asked about starting a family or how you prioritize work in relation to your private life, which are questions men will rarely be asked.”

**Julie Lorentzen, Head of Division,
Municipality of Copenhagen**

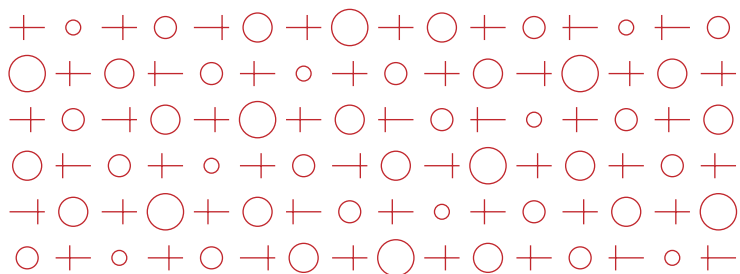


Yomna Emad



Title	Head of Experimentation
Business and name of organization	UNDP Egypt Accelerator Lab
Years of management experience	7 years
Educational background	Bachelor of Sciences in Pharmaceutical Sciences, Master of Science in Nanotechnology Master of Public policy
Age	32 years

Who is your role model?	I can't say I have just one. There are a lot of people around me and I am constantly meeting new ones who I get to learn from and get inspired by. I think I am lucky to have that.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Being a visionary, empathetic, and having the ability to gather the team around a common goal.
What is your driving force?	Change and impact
Do you have a motto?	"If you are the smartest person in the room, you are in the wrong room."
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Lack of equality
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>The Tipping Point</i> by Malcolm Gladwell
What talent would you wish you had?	Visual expression
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Building something that involves innovation and public policy for system transformation.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	Realizing that I am a generalist and that I thrive at the intersection of various things.
What is your favorite word?	Hope
What has failure taught you?	That it is only failure depending on the angle you are looking from.
What has success taught you?	That we should celebrate small successes. It is about the journey, not the destination.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Accepting the constraints of time.

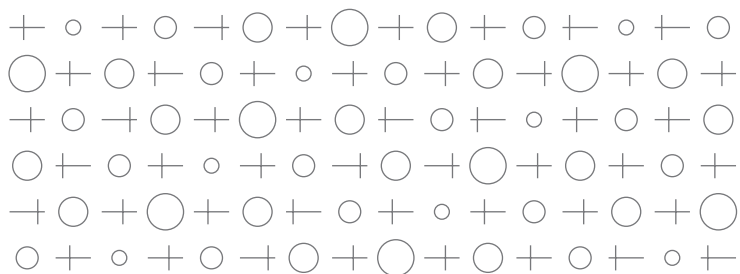


Henriette Kabell Christensen



Title	Business Analyst
Business and name of organization	Young Professional at the African Development Bank Group, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (since February 1, 2022. Was working at SKARP Software development and digitalization during the program.)
Years of management experience	6 years
Educational background	Master of Science (MSc.) in Techno-Anthropology
Age	31 years

Who is your role model?	My mother and my aunt have been important role models for me.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Empathy, care and being results-oriented.
What is your driving force?	I want to make a difference that matters.
Do you have a motto?	"I have not tried this before so I can probably do it" - this is the motto of Pippi Longstocking, the fictional main character in an eponymous series of children's books by Swedish author Astrid Lindgren.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Continued global abuse of power
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Sapiens: The Birth of Human kind</i> by Yuval Noah Harari
What talent would you wish you had?	I would like to be able to play an instrument.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	I have lost some important people in my life, which has reminded me of how fragile and short life can be.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	In the African Development Bank living somewhere in Africa.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I successfully obtained my Master's degree and moved to Scotland for my first job.
What is your favorite word?	"Pyt", it means "let it go"
What has failure taught you?	To be more resilient.
What has success taught you?	That I can achieve anything I desire, if I work hard for it.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Maintaining a healthy work-life balance.



Nihal El Chami



Title	Head of Program & Marketing
Business and name of organization	Falak Startups - an early-stage Venture Capital investing in growth stage tech startups
Years of management experience	3 years
Educational background	Master's Degree in Management, The German University in Cairo
Age	28 years

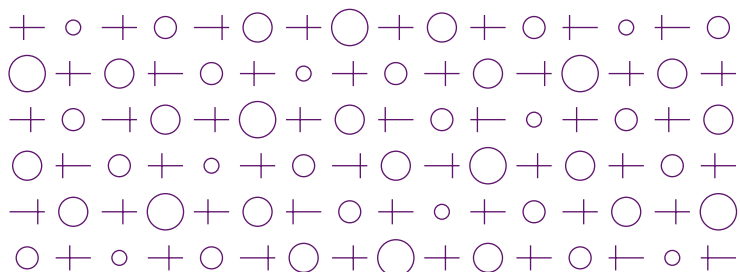
Who is your role model?	My mom
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Someone who inspires their subordinates and helps them to be better versions of themselves. Someone who listens to them, has their back and is always there to support them.
What is your driving force?	Making people happy. I love to do everything I can to see the people I care about happy, yet this is a very challenging thing to always give yet never complain.
Do you have a motto?	Trying to be positive as much as I can تفعلوا بالخير تجدوه
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	The world is full of problems, from poverty, pollution, war, to endless diseases. Hence, it's becoming harder for people to have a happy life while being successful at the same time. This puts a lot of pressure on us, especially youth, to achieve our dreams, be successful and save for a better life in the future.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>The Alchemist</i> by Paulo Coelho is the first book I read and finished. It has a special place in my heart as I was inspired by the guy who found his treasure in the end. It encouraged me to keep reading, never give up and be persistent.
What talent would you wish you had?	To have a photographic memory.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	No specific story, but I learned throughout my short professional experience, to never say no to any opportunity because I never know what the future holds for me, and this opportunity might take me to my dream job.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Having my own family, trying to balance my personal and professional life, in addition to running my own business and trying as much as I can to be an inspirational leader to my team and one of the most influential females in the region.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	Acting in a way that doesn't suit my personality. Sometimes you need to be assertive, firm, and aggressive to handle certain situations, yet you don't want it to affect you personally and change the kind person in you.
What is your favorite word?	I never thought about it before. But I can tell you my most used word "Insh'Allah" - "if Allah wills it" it makes me feel the connection and how close God is to us, I feel like I ask him every single time about his opinion and I can feel how close I am to him.
What has failure taught you?	Failure taught me to be more patient and grateful.
What has success taught you?	To never underestimate myself, to be persistent and to believe I can achieve anything I want.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Avoiding micromanagement and learning to say 'no' before I get overwhelmed and can't handle things anymore.

Julie Lorentzen



Title	Head of Division
Business and name of organization	The Health and Care Administration, City of Copenhagen
Years of management experience	4 years
Educational background	MSc in Business Administration and Philosophy Diploma of Leadership (in progress)
Age	34 years

Who is your role model?	My grandmother - encouragement and true inspiration across generations.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	To be honest, responsible, and balanced.
What is your driving force?	Making small changes to the world around me and taking small steps as a person and professional.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	This is a very big question. If I were to focus on Denmark, I would emphasize the inequalities that still exist (which many people don't even acknowledge let alone wish to change). And in general, the lack of will and effort to develop and improve our society and country.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Just Kids</i> by Patti Smith and <i>Nothing but fear (Den som blinker er bange for døden)</i> by Knud Romer
What talent would you wish you had?	To be able to compose a piece of music or write a book.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	I'm blessed to say that I have a lot of those kinds of stories. All of them involving people who support and care for me - and who insist on my well-being and happiness.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	I hope to still work in the public sector and in management particularly.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I was recommended to apply for a position at my current workplace - and making the choice to take a leap of faith by applying without having any knowledge about the sector or organization
What has failure taught you?	To make an effort when it matters - and that not all failures are significant or serious.
What has success taught you?	That I am not too old to call my mother up and show off my accomplishments.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	I still struggle to truly separate what other people expect of me from what I wish for myself.





Julie Lorentzen: **A new motivation to drive change**

by Rasmus Boegeskov Larsen

Meeting Egyptian women in leadership positions not only gave Julie Lorentzen a better understanding of life in Egypt. It also made her learn something about herself and her own country.

When Julie Lorentzen decided to join Women Take the Lead, she was hoping it would be different from what she had experienced in other networks.

“I was really missing a network that was not limited to the field I work in and was not about furthering your career. In such networks it easily becomes a competition, where people boast about themselves and try to surpass one another. I wanted to find a network that was more focused on learning about each other and about oneself,” says Julie, who works as Head of Division at the Department of Management and Communication at the Health and Care administration in the City of Copenhagen.

A lot in common

In the Women Take the Lead network, organized by the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative, 20 female leaders from Egypt and Denmark hosted each other in Cairo and Copenhagen. They spent days together visiting workplaces, holding workshops, and discussing wide-ranging issues.

“What I found in the network was just what I had been looking for. I don’t think I have ever been in a room where people were so open-minded and not judgmental or patronizing. When you expressed an opinion, reflection, or experience, it was not questioned or countered by another opinion. Rather, people listened and asked questions to understand you better. We very quickly built-up trust and began sharing things that were difficult and sensitive. It was a very liberating experience,” says Julie.

As the women got to know each other, they realized that they had a lot in common.

“We are faced with many of the same dilemmas as women. For instance, we are met with certain expectations from the society around us. We are asked about starting a family or how you prioritize work in relation to your private life, which are questions men will rarely be asked. As women, we often have to legitimize what we choose to do and are automatically expected to act and live in a specific way,” she says.

“What is different is that in Egypt it is more rooted in religion and traditions, whereas in Denmark it is more unspoken. It is a social pressure that we face in family gatherings and job interviews for instance,” Julie elaborates.

A deeper insight

Meeting the Egyptian women not only gave Julie a better understanding of life in Egypt, but also made her more aware of how things are in Denmark.

“I always strive to put myself in situations where I am confronted with what is different to me. Not only do you learn from them and get exposed to something new, but you also learn a lot about yourself. You start to reflect about all the things in your own life that you take for granted or rarely

“What I found in the Women Take the Lead network was just what I had been looking for. I don’t think I have ever been in a room where people were so openminded and not judgmental or patronizing.”

think about. They get highlighted in the meeting with what is foreign. I was reminded that even though we boast in Denmark that we have a very equal society, we still have a lot to work on. Too often we forget that. We believe that all is good in our country, and that can make us passive.”

For Julie, it was important to show the Egyptian women that in Denmark not everything is as it appears on the surface.

“Denmark’s image can be very rosy. It is said that we are the happiest people on earth. I felt I need to take that image apart. We are privileged to live in a country with high living standards, limited differences between social classes, and a well-functioning public sector and welfare system. But we still have a



During the workshop the women visited Julie Lorentzen at her workplace, the municipality of Copenhagen.

long way to go before everyone is treated equally and feels free to do and choose that they want,” she explains.

According to Julie, having these discussions among Danes can be challenging, because some cannot see the problem. She enjoyed talking about it with the Egyptian women, who might have been surprised by some of what they heard but could easily relate to it.

A shared experience

“It was really nice to be in a setting where you do not need to prove how young women are treated differently in the job market. You do not need to start the conversation debating whether inequality exists at all. We were in a space where you could talk about what you experience, and people would just listen and share their own experiences. I really enjoyed that,” she recalls.

This shared understanding allowed the women to quickly move the discussions into a more constructive direction.

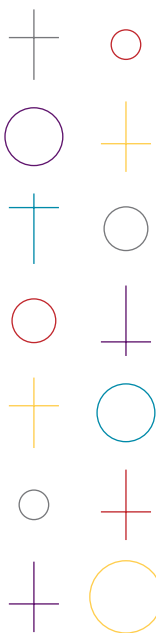
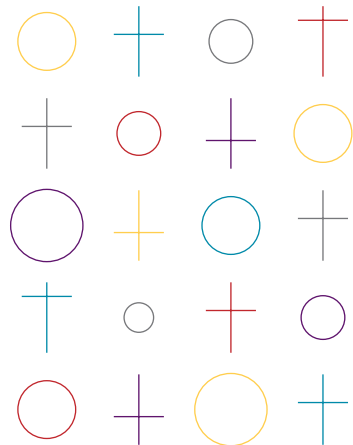
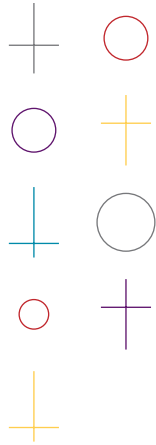
“When you bring together twenty young women together, you might assume that everything would revolve around criticizing the patriarchy. Of course, we talked about the differences there is between how men and women are treated, but much of the time we just talked about how it is to be in this situation, how you can take some steps away from it, and how you can have an impact on it. It was not about complaining and blaming others. Our talks were really constructive,” she says.

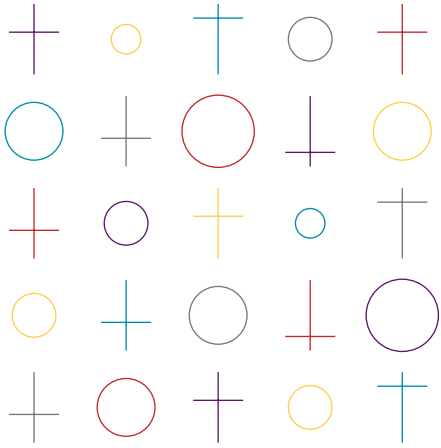
When the program had finished and the Egyptians travelled back to Cairo, Julie was left with a new motivation.

“It was really inspiring to be with so many talented and brave women who have each made an effort to promote equality and to break the norms for what a woman can do. It has motivated me to find new ways that I can contribute. Honestly, spending time with the Egyptian women and hearing about their struggles made me a bit ashamed that in Denmark the fight for equality has stalled. We tend to be content with what we have. It was eye-opening to realize how much we still have to work on and how much responsibility we have ourselves to drive that change,” she concludes.

“As women, we often have to legitimize what we choose to do and are automatically expected to act and live in a specific way.”







“We had a woman with us who told us about the female leaders in ancient Egypt. Much of what she said was new to me, and it made me immensely proud that they are part of our history.”

**Sara Aziz,
Founder of Safe Egypt**

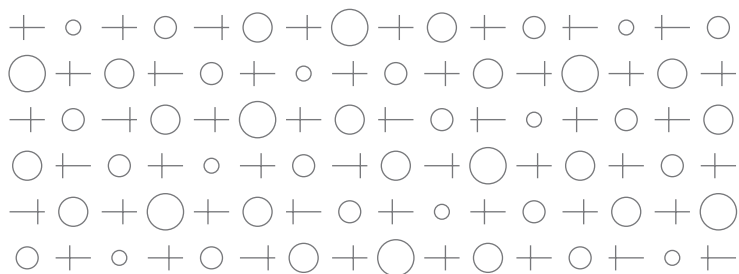


Rania Ayman



Title	Founder and CEO
Business and name of organization	Entreprenelle
Years of management experience	8 years
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Age	29 years

What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Being a good listener and an empathetic firm friend.
What is your driving force?	The calling to support female entrepreneurs. My team and I work night and day to make sure that no woman is left behind.
Do you have a motto?	"Never see with your ears."
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	The peer pressure people feel from social media, especially younger generations.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Picasso in Starbucks</i> by Yasser Hareb
What talent would you wish you had?	Reading minds
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	Yes, I had a huge car accident where I thought I would die but luckily, I didn't. After my survival, I realized that all the fights, clutter, and money don't matter. The only thing that matters is the peace and impact you leave on others' lives.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Doing what I am currently doing but on a wider national level.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I see my team flourish and make the impact I wish for, without me stepping in.
What is your favorite word?	Peace
What has failure taught you?	To never judge a book by its cover and to never rush results.
What has success taught you?	To keep moving and to always give myself time to celebrate the results since I did my best.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Sustaining and growing Entreprenelle's impact.



Nina Scheel



Title	Owner & Qualitative Research Consultant
Business and name of organization	NinaScheel.com
Years of management experience	7 years
Educational background	Master's Degree in Anthropology (with specialization in Innovation, Organization and Work) Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration
Age	35 years

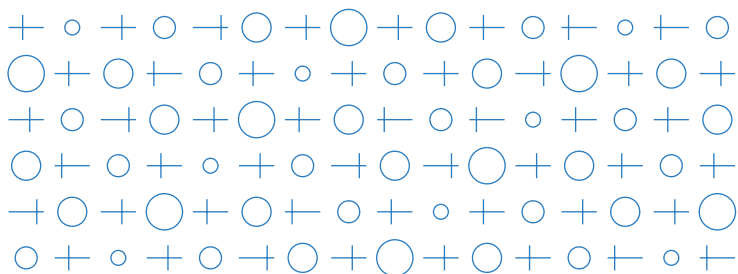
Who is your role model?	I don't have a role model... All lives are different, and I wouldn't want to try to be anybody other than myself, so the concept of role models doesn't make sense to me. However, many people inspire me. Especially women who have the courage to stand up for themselves and say no to injustice and try to change things while risking their lives (such as the Afghan women protesting Taliban) or on a smaller scale, knowing they will be humiliated and put to shame (such as the frontrunners of the #MeToo movement).
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	To practice what you preach, integrity, empathy, courage to show vulnerability, being a visionary and inspiring others.
What is your driving force?	Curiosity and a need for constant development.
Do you have a motto?	No, but I am currently often using an expression that I have borrowed from my dad; "jord på og videre" (translated: "bury it and move on").
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	That humans have forgotten to respect and live with nature (and ignored the fact that we are a part of nature, not above it). Instead, we have been, and are still thinking short term, and driven by greed and stupidity, exploiting natural resources in a destructive way.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Dina's Book</i> by Herbjørg Wassmo
What talent would you wish you had?	To be able to fly.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Somewhere newer than where I am today, in an organization again – either as an employee or with employees of my own, where I am trying to make a difference and still doing what I love, working with customer insights, innovation and (project) management.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I lost my job due to layoff and realized that it was not the end of the world which opened new doors that got me somewhere much better.
What has failure taught you?	That you can learn from everything and come back stronger (yes, totally cliché but still absolutely true).
What has success taught you?	That I can do most things if I set my mind to it and work hard enough.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Balancing the pros and cons of being a company owner while also loving to be part of a team.

Menas Saleh



Title	Finance Director & Enterprise Agile Coach
Business and name of organization	Unilever
Years of management experience	12 years
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting
Age	36 years

What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Creating the space for the team to thrive collectively using their own unique individual strengths.
What is your driving force?	Wanting to make a positive impact on people who cross my way.
Do you have a motto?	It changes based on what I want to develop in myself! At this very moment it's: "Good enough for now, safe enough to try!"
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Loss of purpose & too many distractions or noise
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>How to Be Everything: A Guide for Those Who (Still) Don't Know What They Want to Be When They Grow Up</i> by Emilie Wapnick
What talent would you wish you had?	If we are not talking about superhuman talents, then I believe there is no talent I cannot cultivate in myself if needed. Praise to all generalists!
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	September 2016 in Barafu base camp on Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, when I decided to stop and not continue up the mighty mountain to its peak. Nothing is the same after such an intense experience.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	You can start with linkedin! I will hopefully be making an even bigger impact on the people of the corporate world!
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	I experienced burn out in 2015. My recovery process taught me to make different choices, which now shape who I am personally and professionally.
What is your favorite word?	Insha'Allah
What has failure taught you?	That it is not a real word! It is not "failure" it's "experimentation"
What has success taught you?	That the high of reaching the destination doesn't last too long and I should enjoy the ride.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Prioritization - so much I want to do, so little time!



Julie Arnfred Bojesen



Title	Director
Business and name of organization	Ukrainian-Danish Youth House
Years of management experience	3 years with some management and 1 will full responsibility
Educational background	Master's Degree in Communication for Development Bachelor's degree in Political Science
Age	30 years

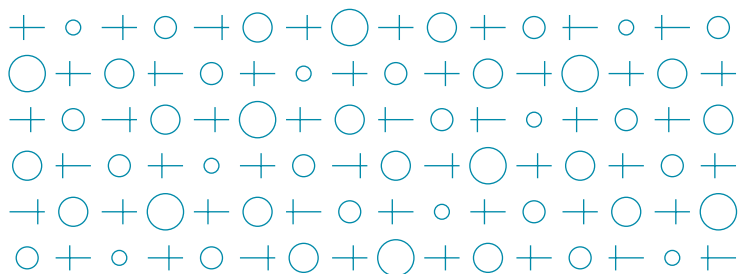
Who is your role model?	Two of my former bosses: Mathilde and Charlotte were extremely inspiring, reflective and intelligent leaders along with being fantastic company.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	To be able to inspire, lead by example and make people feel they have fair processes.
What is your driving force?	People, being part of something bigger, making a change for the better (no matter how small it is) and optimizing processes and seeing results.
Do you have a motto?	Treat others like you would want to be treated in return. Make sure to “walk the talk” and live up to your own principles and standards. Be a good example.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	That truth and manners are losing their impact.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	In addition to Harry Potter shaping my childhood with an awareness of fighting evil with love, I must mention <i>The colour purple</i> by Alice Walker and <i>Half a Yellow Sun</i> by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	When I impulsively chose to apply for an internship at the Danish Embassy in Kiev the night before the deadline - if I had not done so, I would not be in Ukraine today and my life would have looked vastly different.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Somewhere in the field of civil society or democratization around Europe.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I unexpectedly got the call offering me my present position and an opportunity of a lifetime for personal and professional growth as well as being a part of a bigger change - but on the other hand, being headhunted is not built on one moment, but on all the work done ahead of this moment.
What has failure taught you?	To be more tolerant, resilient, and less emotional.
What has success taught you?	To stay humble and keep doing your best - it pays off.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Time - to have enough to be a good, present team leader, to do my own tasks as thoroughly as I would want, and at the same time develop, think bigger, and make ambitious strategies.

Mayar Darwish



Title	Marketing Manager
Business and name of organization	Pepsico
Years of management experience	8 years
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration, Minor in Economics
Age	32 years

Who is your role model?	I don't believe in the "role model" figure. Let's stop romanticizing the idea! There's something to learn from everyone I encounter regardless of their title or background.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	The starting point is having a vision. From there it's resilience to keep going and knowing how to bring people together.
What is your driving force?	Results. There is nothing more rewarding than results and growth.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Politics
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>A new earth</i> by Eckhart Tolle <i>Tuesdays with Morrie</i> by Mitch Albom
What talent would you wish you had?	I wish I was more into sports.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	The sudden loss of my father two years ago turned my life around and made me realize how strong & resilient I can be; I would have never imagined.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Corporate top management and startup consultancies on weekdays; with family on weekends.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	There were many and the story is quite the same; the crucial moments are those where the business is not doing so well after track records & the team is extremely stressed. These moments are critical for success, they are tipping points so with the right understanding, vision, and a better spirit we drive impressive results and turn the business around.
What is your favorite word?	Resilience
What has failure taught you?	Resilience again!
What has success taught you?	You must always be working for it! It is endless so it is important to take time to celebrate along the way.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Work-life balance and time management. I know I can do more!





Mayar Darwish: **Smashing the glass ceiling**

by Rasmus Boegeskov Larsen

For Mayar Darwish, the Women Take the Lead Network has been both eye-opening and empowering. She is planning to share her experience with her team of women at PepsiCo.

It was the prospect of exchanging professional experiences, knowledge, and opinions with Danish and Egyptian young women leaders that prompted Mayar Darwish, marketing manager at PepsiCo, to join the Women Take the Lead Network. She was expecting that her Danish counterparts would be telling very different stories about their careers since Scandinavia is known for having made headway when it comes to gender equality and women's rights.

"But it really stunned me how many similarities there were between us. Of course, we are all humans and at the core we are the same. But I had expected that the differences in our background and lifestyles would show clearly. I would not have thought we would have such similar experiences in our lives," Mayar Darwish says.

Mayar was surprised by the remaining gender gap in Denmark. "Within Danish families there are some who still hold on to fixed ideas about gender roles and have certain expectations about how women should live their lives. And I almost couldn't believe that there is still a significant wage gap in Denmark between men and women. I had thought that wasn't an issue there anymore. Of course, the Danish government is more proactive in trying to solve these issues. We are starting to make progress on that front in Egypt, but we still

have a long way to go. So, our challenges might be quite similar, but the magnitude of the challenge in Egypt is bigger,” she says.

The first part of the Women Take the Lead program took place in September when the Danish delegation of ten young women in leadership positions came to Egypt and joined their pairs. Together, the twenty women had an intense program of field visits to work places and lectures from selected speakers. Also, the women held talks, met in dialogue circles, and spent time in pairs getting closer to each other.

It didn't take long for the participants to warm up to one another.

Getting closer

“Anyone can be put in a room with strangers, but few will open up and speak honestly from the start. But with this group that is what happened. From the very beginning everyone was very outspoken, and our discussions were very deep. We quickly became comfortable speaking about very personal and difficult issues and allowed ourselves and the others to be vulnerable. At the end of the first day, I felt like we had been together for weeks,” says Mayar.

“It is up to ourselves if we let the glass ceiling confine us or if we smash it.”

In November, the exchange was reversed, as the Egyptian women travelled to Copenhagen. During the two parts of the program, each participant had to hold a talk on a subject that is important to them in their lives. For Mayar, it was stepping up to the challenges in life.

“My job is very demanding. I'm always on the go and juggling a lot of things at the same time. It can be very overwhelming. My talk was about how despite it all you need to step up to these challenges, and just do your best. Do not shy away from them out of fear of what will happen. You will eventually land further ahead than you expected. The more you try and the more you give of yourself, doors will open for you. I tend to forget this myself, and do not look back at how far I have come. It was very useful for me to speak about it, and I felt it resonated with a lot of the other women,” says Mayar Darwish.

Imposter syndrome

A topic that came up frequently in their discussions was ‘imposter syndrome’. Sometimes people in leadership positions have doubts about their own abilities and feel they do not deserve what they have achieved. This was something that many of the participants had experienced.

“It doesn't only happen to women leaders, but it is more obvious among females. Women often feel they are not good enough. We need a lot of



Mayar Darwish and her counterparts visited the municipality of Copenhagen to hear about Julie Lorentzen's work during the network.

awareness to overcome it, and deal with the fact that the journey is endless. Our discussions offered a lot of support on this issue and ideas on how to get around it.”

“One of those ideas was that it can be especially useful to write down all the positive feedback you receive and your key achievements and make it a habit occasionally to go back and reflect on how far you have come. It gives you a perspective on things,” Mayar explains.

Passing on knowledge

She leads a mostly female team and wants to pass onto them what she learned through the Women Take the Lead network.

“Being in this group of accomplished and ambitious women really made me feel that there is no glass ceiling for what we can achieve. I feel empowered, and I want to pass on that empowerment to the women I work with. My awareness has been heightened and this will make me more mindful in all my interactions. I want to empower my team to speak up and step up to more challenges with confidence. And I want them to understand that it is up to ourselves if we let the glass ceiling confine us or if we smash it,” she says.

Mayar hopes that the Danish-Egyptian group will continue to meet and learn from each other.

“I really hope we keep it going. This should not just be a one off. We have created a community and we should keep it going.”

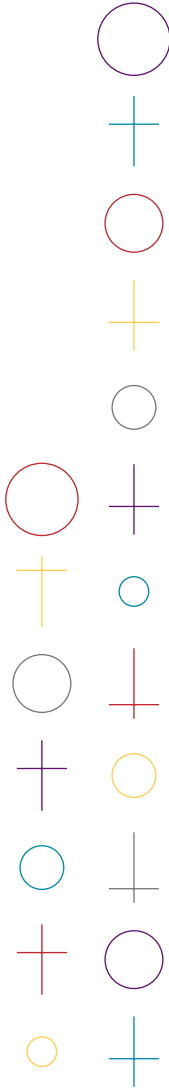


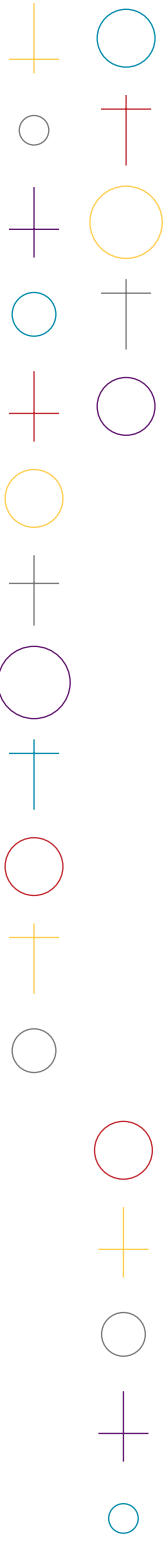
We quickly became comfortable speaking about very personal and difficult issues and allowed ourselves and the others to be vulnerable. At the end of the first day, I felt like we had been together for weeks.”



“We are twenty living proofs that women can be just as ambitious as men, and just as good leaders as men. It is so important that we, as women, dedicate ourselves to normalize the world we want to live in. We must live the change we want to see.”

Katerine Ebdrup Damgaard,
Business developer at Dansk
Kulturliv.



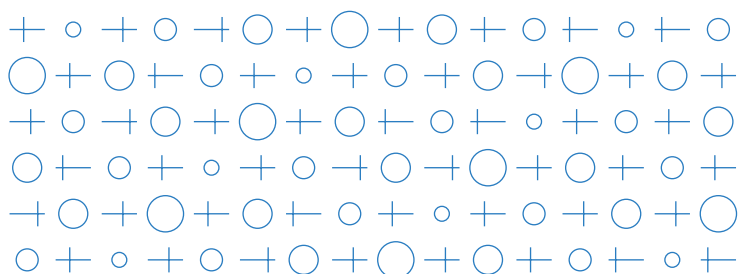


Thea Hammerskov



Title	Head of Corporate Relations, Nordics / Head of Employee Engagement, Northern Europe
Business and name of organization	DIAGEO - Alcohol beverage industry
Years of management experience	3 years
Educational background	Master of Sciences in International Marketing and Management
Age	38 years

What are the characteristics of good management/ leadership	Self-awareness, empathy, learning, agility and courage.
What is your driving force?	The drive for independence
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Inequality is at the heart of many of the biggest issues facing the global community, including development, climate and peace.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	I can't choose one book. Currently, I'm reading <i>Brief Answers to the Big Questions</i> by Stephen Hawking
What talent would you wish you had?	Public speaking
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	My first solo trip. Travelling is empowering - it gives you a sense of freedom, confidence and happiness.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Hopefully, in a bigger managerial role in the private sector.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I was given the opportunity to become the manager of a smaller group of young professionals.
What is your favorite word?	Brilliant
What has failure taught you?	That failure is inevitable. Embrace your situation. Pick yourself up. Move forward.
What has success taught you?	Success won't (necessarily) make you happy.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Overcoming imposter syndrome.

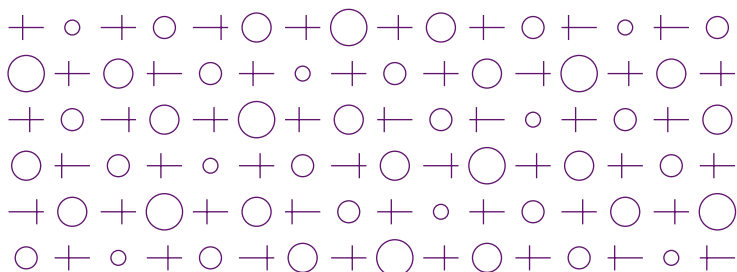


Shaimaa Tantawy



Title	CEO & Founder
Business and name of organization	Man AHYAHA NGO
Years of management experience	8 years
Educational background	Business- PMP
Age	39 years

What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Focus on action yet people oriented.
What is your driving force?	Hope
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Man's Search for Meaning</i> by Viktor Frankl
What talent would you wish you had?	To disappear whenever I want.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	When I decided to leave the corporate life and devote my time to MAN AHYAHA.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Within the business sector
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	The moment we invited new board members to the NGO.
What has failure taught you?	That it happens even if you think you have everything under control.
What has success taught you?	That it has a different meaning.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Stepping back from the leadership of my NGO in a sustainable way.

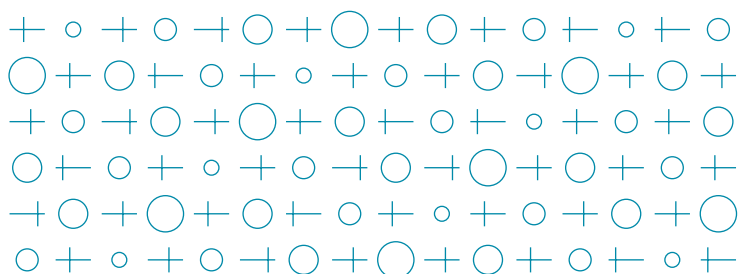


Lisette Skov



Title	Project manager/ Board member
Business and name of organization	Pass it Forward
Years of management experience	16 years
Educational background	High School
Age	38 years

What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	The ability to listen to the ideas of others and acknowledge that one is not always right.
What is your driving force?	That I can always do better.
Do you have a motto?	I don't do things halfway.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	That we still as humans don't see one another as equal.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	I read a lot, so I think it's a difficult question, I don't really feel I have one.
What talent would you wish you had?	That I could master all the languages of the world.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	The day I sold my company 10 years after I started it.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Doing a lot more work for the LGBT+ community.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I sold my part of my company.
What is your favorite word?	Granola
What has failure taught you?	The only time I have felt the word "failure" was when I filed for divorce. It is hard to say what I learned from it, other than that life goes on, but the feeling of "failure" is still there.
What has success taught you?	That patience pays off / and success is not always a guarantee to give you happiness.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	To remember not to say yes to too many new job opportunities.

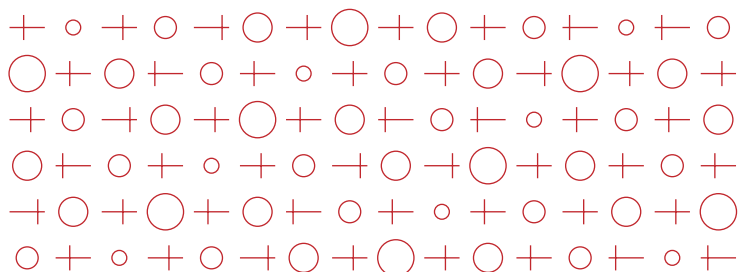


Shahd Rashed



Title	Europe, Middle East and Africa Digital Strategist
Business and name of organization	IBM
Years of management experience	5 years
Educational background	Bachelor's degree in Marketing & Economics, The German University in Cairo
Age	27 years

Who is your role model?	My mother, Dr. Raghda my professor, Samah my manager and Yasmine center leader.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	To walk the talk and lead by example.
What is your driving force?	Creating impact.
Do you have a motto?	Yes, "You only live once."
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Inequality
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Eat Pray Love</i> by Elizabeth Gilbert
What talent would you wish you had?	Acting
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	A friend of mine, who is younger than me, lost his life fighting Cancer for the second time.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Being a marketing consultant for big companies, and creating content on social media to influence others.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	Winning "Campaign Middle East Marketing faces to watch" in 2021.
What is your favorite word?	Passion
What has failure taught you?	Failure is feedback, so I keep learning from every failure I go through regardless of whether it was small or big.
What has success taught you?	Success is a mixture of hard work, persistence, resistance and agility.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Communication: to be precise and communicate clearly overcoming any confusion, misunderstanding & misinterpretation that might take place.



Katrine Ebdrup Damgaard



Title	Head of innovation
Business and name of organization	Business developer at Dansk Kulturliv Board member at Brobyggerne and GymDanmark
Years of management experience	8 years
Educational background	Master's Degree in Urban Planning and Social Science, Roskilde University
Age	31 years

Who is your role model?	My former colleague Olav Hesseldahl. He is a visionary and has no off-days. He has this ability to tell a story that is inviting people onboard and inspiring you to join efforts.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Authenticity, empathy, honesty, trust and an analytical mindset.
What is your driving force?	When there is something at stake and it's challenging, I drive towards creating common ground within my team, and seeing the changes we can make together.
Do you have a motto?	"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." Antoine de Saint-Exupery.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Polarization: the differences between rich and poor, between young and older people... etc.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Sapiens: The Birth of Human kind</i> by Yuval Noah Harari
What talent would you wish you had?	Patience - and to fly
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	In August 2019, I was headhunted for an exciting position in a ministry. Shortly before I was going to the interview, I was offered to be promoted to organizational director at my present job. Having two exciting job opportunities at hand, I had to make up my mind whether I would opt for a management-job or not.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	In a new organization that will need my competence to make it grow.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When the Director and the President of the Danish Red Cross Youth believed in my potential, it opened the door to understand my competence when it comes to strategy, organizational change and human understanding. It gave me a push to rest in my level of ambition, and inspired me to learn how it can be managed.
What is your favorite word?	The Danish word "uimponeret" meaning not being easy to intimidate but daring to jump into tasks and challenges you haven't tried before and also meeting every person on an equal footing no matter their title or seniority
What has failure taught you?	Failures are catalysts to change; where you find failure you'll often find change. That it gives strength to recognize the mistakes when they happen and ask for help to move on.
What has success taught you?	Success is rarely a rest pad when achieved, but rather a driving force to achieve more.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	At the moment, I'm really passionate about my job, which challenges my ability to balance work time and freetime.



Katrine Ebdrup Damgaard: **Be the change**

by Rasmus Boegeskov Larsen

Katerine Ebdrup Damgaard speaks of structural challenges facing women, the importance of connecting to other female leaders and how the Women Taking the Lead Network has empowered her to have difficult conversations in her workplace.

“Why is it necessary for women leaders to meet with each other? You are all doing so well.” Katrine Ebdrup Damgaard was met with this question from some male colleagues after participating in the Women Take the Lead network organized by the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative. She was happy they asked her.

“We really need to have these conversations. In Denmark, we think we have a very equal society, but women still face structural challenges, and it can be very helpful for us to meet and talk about it. I told my colleagues what I experienced in the network and about the discussions we had. It led to some really good conversations. When twenty women from different backgrounds have all experienced structural challenges, it is easier to convince others that it does exist. It is not just me,” she says.

Katrine is heading a newly established alliance that aims to strengthen the political influence of the cultural sector in Denmark. The alliance brings together associations representing, for instance, libraries, theaters, and museums, and allows them to speak with one voice with politicians and stakeholders.

The 31-year-old leader says she is privileged to have many good networks in her work life, but lacked one where she could talk about the specific challenges facing young, female leaders.

A special network

“It was really nice to be in a space where everyone has experienced the challenges you meet as a young, female leader with high ambitions. It can be hard to share this in other networks, since it is not always taken seriously. It was great to be able to share the frustrations you have when you, for instance, are treated as a student assistant in a meeting. I was asked to bring coffee, when I was the one facilitating the meeting. I gained a lot from hearing how other women had dealt with such an experience, and what tools they had used to counter it,” she tells.

“We need to facilitate conversations in our workplaces so that we can expose these dynamics and talk about what we can learn from each other.”

Just recently, Katrine says she felt the benefits of the network when she was holding job interviews.

“What happened was exactly what we had spoken so much about in the network. The women were all very well prepared for the job interview and knew all about the organization, whereas many of the men didn’t even bring a notebook and had hardly looked at our website. We had talked a lot in the network about how women feel a need instinctively to show that they are qualified. They want to feel in control. Men however trust that they will do well and believe that if it doesn’t work out, they will just find a job somewhere else,” she explains.

“We need to do what we did in the network. We need to facilitate conversations in our workplaces so that we can expose these dynamics and talk about what we can learn from each other. The ideal is not that everyone does what women do. Some men need to prepare themselves much more, but many women are too well prepared and lose their authenticity in the job interview. We need to tone down our need to be in control.”

Confronting disagreements

During the Women Take the Lead network, the participants were challenged to confront disagreements and develop their arguments.

“There was one exercise that I particularly enjoyed. We were presented with a statement, and then had to find our place on an ‘opinion line’ depending on how strongly we agreed or disagreed with the statement. Then those who agreed and those who disagreed together developed their strongest



Women Take the Lead 2021 group in Copenhagen.

arguments and we had a debate between the two groups. At the end, we would then find out if the arguments had made some of us change our minds,” she recalls.

“But despite these differences, I never felt we were in two camps. There was a range of different perspectives among the Danes, and among the Egyptians

The women had been surprised to find how much they had in common. They did not share the same perspectives on everything, but their differences were rooted more in personality than in country of origin.

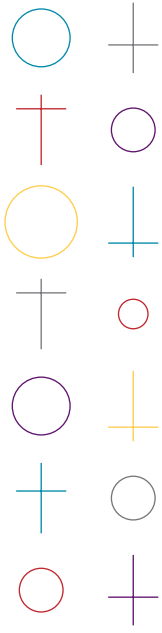
“Of course, there are some major differences between Denmark and Egypt. The influence of religion in our daily life is for instance not something that we talk that much about in Denmark. We actually find it hard to discuss that with our friends and family. In Egypt, the influence of religion is something that is talked about more openly, but the women in our group could also tell us that it can take up too much space.”

“But despite these differences, I never felt we were in two camps. There was a range of different perspectives among the Danes, and among the Egyptians. For instance, we talked a lot about the right balance between work and private life. Do you need to compromise on your ambitions if you want to have kids? Some want to spend a lot of time with their children, whereas others think it is good for the development of the children that other people also take care of them. It was a really interesting discussion with room for a lot of nuances,” says Katrine.

The network has strengthened her belief that women leaders can pave the way for others.

“We are 20 living proofs that women can be just as ambitious as men, and just as good leaders as men. It is so important that we, as women, contribute ourselves to normalize the world we want to live in. We must live the change we want to see,” she says.







“Being in this group of accomplished and ambitious women really made me feel that there is no glass ceiling for what we can achieve. I feel empowered, and I want to pass on that empowerment to the women I work with. And I want them to understand that it is up to ourselves if we let the glass ceiling confine us or if we smash it.”

**Mayar Darwish,
Marketing Manager at Pepsico.**

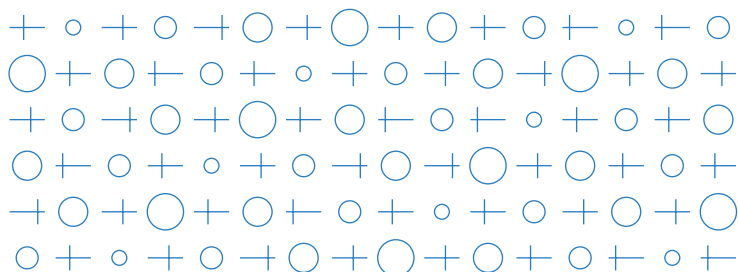


Katrine Wind

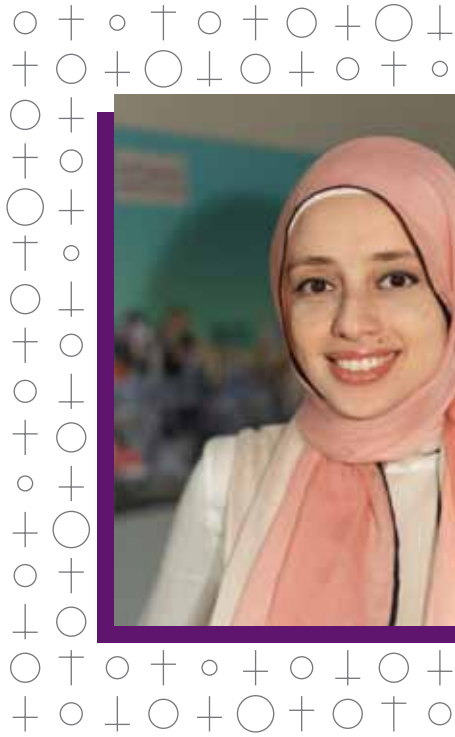


Title	Head of Digitalization and Analysis
Business and name of organization	“Julemærkefonden” - Danish NGO that helps children who are not thriving
Years of management experience	7 years
Educational background	Political Science
Age	33 years

Who is your role model?	The French scientist Marie Curie
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Ability to motivate and understand people, being trustworthy and giving employees a clear direction.
What is your driving force?	Ambition and acknowledgement
Do you have a motto?	"I haven't tried this before so I can probably do it".
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Climate change
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Pippi Longstocking</i> by Astrid Lindgren
What talent would you wish you had?	Sowing
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	The NGO I work for now helped me as a child. I was lonely, being bullied and was not thriving. Now my work is all about giving the same opportunity to the children who need it.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	A director of a private company or organization.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I decided to quit my job of managing 11 people at an analysis company without a plan of what else to do. Shortly after, I got my two current jobs (I also teach methodology at Copenhagen University). I showed myself that I dared not hang my identity up on one thing and that it can get even better after a harsh decision like that.
What is your favorite word?	Expectation management
What has failure taught you?	That I can always get up again.
What has success taught you?	Humility. Success is so rarely only because of you when you are a manager. You can be a unique contribution to an organization, but in the end, you are only as good as the team.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Work-life balance

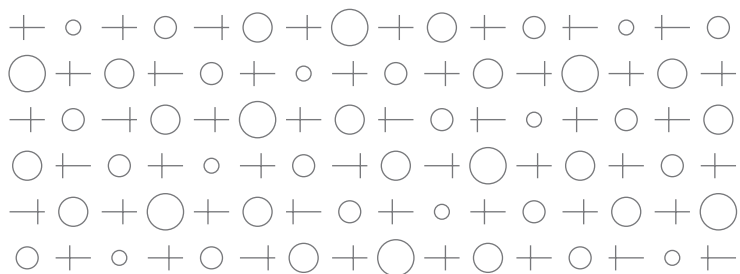


Samira Negm



Title	Tech Social Entrepreneur & CEO
Business and name of organization	“Raye7” Carpooling App “Anty” initiative to empower women with technology.
Years of management experience	8 years
Educational background	Bachelor’s Degree in Engineering
Age	34 years

What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Being both result driven & people centered.
What is your driving force?	Doing good
Do you have a motto?	There is always room for improvement.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	The fact that we still cannot systemize & ensure the good in humans and we still suffer from the evil & ignorant side of humans causing wars, murder, pornography, rape, harassment, inequality, overconsumption, climate change, ... etc.)
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>You can heal your life</i> by Louise L.Hay
What talent would you wish you had?	Living forever, having Aladdin's lamp, rewinding time, reading people's minds, and ability to change whatever I want.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	I was dumped by a friend, so I met someone who led me to join a student activity at University, that made all the difference in my life.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	In the hearts of Egyptian women whom I have helped with my platform, and in the newspapers, hopefully.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I joined the faculty of Engineering, and after that when I joined student activity, and when I quit my job to start a business.
What is your favorite word?	Willpower
What has failure taught you?	That I can stand up stronger.
What has success taught you?	That it is momentary, and you need to keep growing to stay successful.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Removing all the roadblocks to achieving my fullest potential.

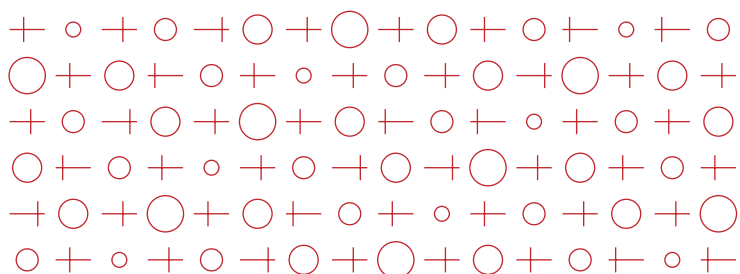


Marianne Dige Svenningsen



Title	Public Affairs Director
Business and name of organization	STRING
Years of management experience	1 year
Educational background	Cand.ling.merc in European Studies
Age	30 years

Who is your role model?	I have several. But the Danish politicians Connie Hedegaard and Margrethe Vestager are worth mentioning.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	The ability to clearly define the overall vision but still provide employees with enough freedom to define their own tasks.
What is your driving force?	To leave a mark by creating things.
Do you have a motto?	“The Kingdom belongs to the active”
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Besides climate change, it is that we are too busy being busy. We neglect what is important in life, which sometimes is taking a break.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men</i> by Caroline Criado Perez
What talent would you wish you had?	Patience
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	I don't have one single story that has shaped my life, but a life-changing event was my year in Greenland. That's always something that I will cherish, and it continues to have a great impact on me.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Hopefully (still) working closely with decision makers within the field of climate policies - but by then, we will (no jinxing) have seen a much needed effort across the globe.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When I was in my first job, I realized that you should never take a job just because it is offered to you. It is perfectly okay to insist on having a giving work environment.
What is your favorite word?	Humble - it is also the quality I value most in people.
What has failure taught you?	That you are stronger than you think you are and you should never apologize for standing up for yourself.
What has success taught you?	That mistakes are inevitable and that you should make mistakes - otherwise, you never improve.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	My lack of patience

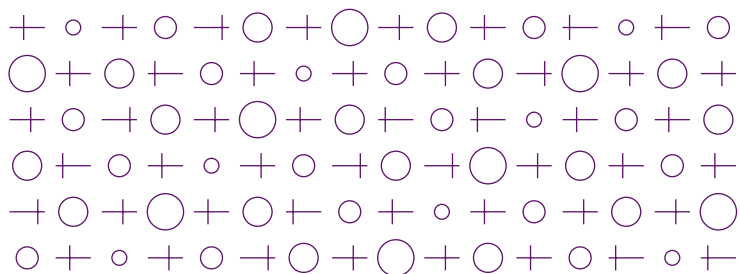


Mai Fahmy



Title	E-Commerce Manager
Business and name of organization	Philip Morris International
Years of management experience	6 years
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree in Business Informatics, German University in Cairo
Age	32 years

Who is your role model?	My role models change as my priorities in life change. There are different people who influence me in different ways and in different aspects.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Empathetic, influential, and assertive.
What is your driving force?	Independence
Do you have a motto?	"The show must go on"
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	COVID & Chip shortage
What talent would you wish you had?	Reading minds
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	In an E-Commerce leadership position perfectly balancing leading a team and motherhood.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	When they tell me I am setting a good example and showing professional maturity.
What is your favorite word?	Home
What has failure taught you?	As cliché as it may sound, what doesn't break you only makes you stronger & wiser.
What has success taught you?	Stay humble, be patient, and always have faith in what you do.



Ateebah Chaudhry



Title	Project Leader
Business and name of organization	International Business Development at the Confederation of Danish Industries
Years of management experience	2 years
Educational background	Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and International Relations
Age	25 years

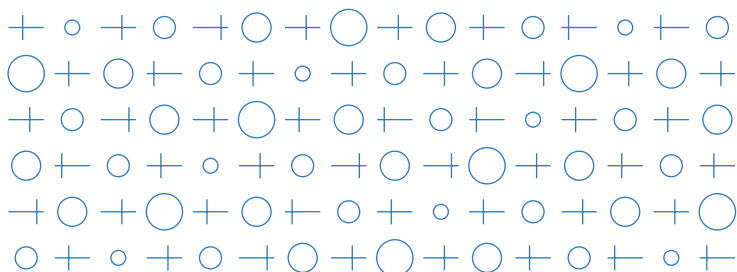
Who is your role model?	I find a lot of inspiration in my grandmother. She was the first woman to leave her village in Pakistan and to go to school. While it may seem as a “simple” thing to complete an education, the strength and independence that my grandmother showed back then (and continues to show till this day) has laid out a path of empowerment for the following generations of females in my family.
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Leading by example. It is important that a leader has credibility and practices the values and principles that they ask of their employees.
What is your driving force?	Making myself proud every day. It is important to strive to be the best version of yourself every day. This does not mean to be perfect every day, but to reflect on the small successes every day is to keep my level of motivation high.
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Ignorance and inhumanity
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>The Kite Runner</i> by Khaled Hosseini - A beautiful mix between a heartfelt story of two childhood friends and the historical roots of a prevalent political conflict, told in poetic prose.
What talent would you wish you had?	To speak every language in the world. I believe language can build bridges and connect people.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	My family has worked for the Danish Foreign Ministry since I was a child, which meant that I have lived abroad, changing homes every third year, for the most of my life. Therefore, I do not have a particular landmark that has shaped my present life, but many different landmarks that all represent important periods. Being able to travel and be part of diverse cultures is truly a gift.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	I hope to have followed my secret dream of becoming an entrepreneur. I wish to combine my professional skill set within business development, and my personal passion for social equality to create a business that benefits the segments in Danish society that are often underestimated and overlooked.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	Being recognised and acknowledged for my contributions by my previous leaders, which has allowed me to nurture my talents and evolve.
What is your favorite word?	Gratitude
What has failure taught you?	To be patient and be kind to yourself. I try to remind myself to speak to myself as I would speak to my beautiful younger sister (with endless love and compassion).
What has success taught you?	To be grateful and keep going.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	Currently, I am attempting to collect all my courage to take a leap into the unknown. As a person who has been blessed with a stable and comfortable life, I am trying to teach myself to take a chance to find my true happiness.

Sara Aziz



Title	Founder and CEO Safe Egypt Owner of Safe nursery Committee member at the National Council for Women
Business and name of organization	Safe Egypt
Years of management experience	10 years
Educational background	Master's Degree in Psychotherapy
Age	34 years

Who is your role model?	My dad
What are the characteristics of good management/leadership?	Servant leadership, inspiring the team and working together to achieve our dream.
What is your driving force?	Making impact
What is the biggest problem in the world right now?	Sexual abuse of children, teens and women.
Which book has made the biggest impression on you?	<i>The Dream Giver</i> by Bruce Wilkinson
What talent would you wish you had?	To know what I know now but earlier.
Do you have a landmark story that has shaped your present life?	The moment I decided to talk about how I really feel and stand up for myself.
Where should we look for you in 5 years?	Starting Safe school and/or in parliament.
Please describe the most crucial moment in your professional life?	Managing the situation during COVID and all the decisions I had to take that could affect more than 40 employees working with me.
What is your favorite word?	Impact
What has failure taught you?	To avoid what made me fail next time I'm met with a similar situation.
What is your biggest challenge at present?	To keep growing.





Sara Aziz: **The journey is the destination**

by Rasmus Boegeskov Larsen

Sara Aziz, founder of Safe Egypt, tells stories of inspiring female leaders, connections made during the time in Cairo and Copenhagen as well as how she has applied some of the learnings in her work.

For Sara Aziz the Women Take the Lead network proved how important it is, as a young leader, to have the right people around you. In a session, one of the Danish participants had told the other women how she experienced becoming a leader of a new branch.

“I will never forget her story. It was very inspiring to me how she tackled everything,” says Sara Aziz, founder and director of Safe Kids, an organization that provides psychosocial services to protect children, teens and women from violence.

“It was a big move for her. A scary move. She shared with us all the details of her daily struggles such as how to handle the team and set a strategy. It was very personal, and I could see myself in everything she spoke about. In the ten years that I have been leading Safe, I faced the same things. I didn’t expect that Danish women are also struggling to prove themselves and have the same self-doubts as we do. Hearing her story made me realize how common it is, even in a country like Denmark. It is not just me that is facing it,” she says.

“This was an important realisation because as a leader you need to learn to accept the everyday challenges and embrace them. You need to take your time to grow, and to understand that the journey itself is your destination. This is one of the key things I took with me from the network,” she says.

A different kind of gathering

Sara Aziz had previously taken part in networks organized by foreign embassies in Cairo. However, she found that Women Take the Lead was different.

“It was much more personal, and the discussions we had were very deep. There was an incredible will in the group to open up and share without any limits. It was unique how we bonded, how we connected, how we related. Everyone was willing to share what didn’t work for them, and listen to what worked for others”, she says.

“The organizers set the objective clear from the first meeting. They sent us a survey on email with very deep questions about, for instance, your biggest fears or the turning point in your life. That set the bar. In the first meeting in the Egyptian group the discussions were already very deep. We had established a strong connection even before we met the Danes,” she explains.

“I didn’t expect that Danish women are also struggling to prove themselves and have the same self-doubts as we do. Hearing her story made me realize how common it is, even in a country like Denmark. It is not just me that is facing it.”

For Sara Aziz the network underlined how much a young leader can benefit from having the right network.

“Some talked about how they hadn’t sought help and now regret it, while others explained how they had sought help, but with the wrong people. This is an important lesson. I gained so much from being in this network with women in the same position as me, and hearing all the lessons that they have learned,” she elaborates.

Bringing it home

During the program in Cairo and Copenhagen the women also took part in workshops on specific skills that is often required from leaders. Sara Aziz particularly benefited from the workshop on negotiation skills.

“Just yesterday I had a situation at work where I recalled the negotiation



session we had in Copenhagen. I had a problem with a print house that was supposed to print some products we had promised to send to our partners. They called me and said they couldn't deliver on time. In that situation I applied what I had learned in the workshop, and it worked perfectly. It was an amazing feeling."

Sara Aziz elaborates on how this session in the workshop inspired her to take a different direction than what she would normally have taken.

"In the workshop, the facilitator had made us arm wrestle and try to beat each other. He then said that in business, you should do the opposite. You should not want the other to lose but to have a win-win situation. In this case I really did not want to lose this print company. I know from experience that it is the best in town. So rather than being aggressive with the woman from the print company, I told her that I will not print outside their print shop, so let us try to see how we can work it out. The lady had not seen that coming. It impressed her, and we managed to find a solution," she explains.

I gained so much from being in this network with women in the same position as me, and hearing all the lessons that they have learned."

In Cairo, the women spent some of their time visiting the pyramids and the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities. It is almost obligatory to take foreign guests to see these world-famous treasures, but to the surprise of Sara Aziz she made some important discoveries there.

"We had a woman with us who told us about the female leaders in ancient Egypt. Much of what she said was new to me, and it made me immensely proud that they are part of our history. The stories of their lives opened many

discussions, and we had a great time talking about them. At that moment I really felt we connected to each other,” she says.

This year the Women Take the Lead network will take place again with new participants. Sara Aziz has recommended several of her friends to join the network.

“I told them this is a unique chance that you really don’t want to miss.”



About DEDI



Since 2004, The Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Initiative has been bringing Danes and Egyptians together, enhancing their knowledge of each other's culture and society and their mutual understanding of one another. We carry out partnerships within the fields of culture, media and civic participation. Our focus is on youth and especially young women.

In 2022, as part of the civic participation program, DEDI is organizing the second edition of Women Take the Lead, inviting twenty new women leaders to have experiences similar to those relayed in this booklet.

Sustainability is a dominant theme at DEDI this year; this is manifesting in the second edition of DEDI Green Gate, bringing together twenty four green entrepreneurs from Egypt and Denmark to explore the reshaping of the fashion industry and exchange knowledge and experiences of reducing the CO2 footprints. Likewise, DEDI is supporting exchange-field trips between Assiut University and Gladsaxe High School Focusing on the history of climate change.

The DEDI Club program also has a number of events related to this topic, among them are screenings of documentaries about climate change and game nights where SDG board games are on the table. While some DEDI Club events are open to the public, others only gather our alumni.

The theme of sustainability has also made its way into the media program, where DEDI is organizing a workshop for Egyptian and Danish young climate journalists around the topic of climate journalism. On the agenda are also a series of photojournalism workshops, given by teachers from the world famous department of photojournalism at the Danish Media School (DMJX). Ten Egyptian photographers have been selected to participate.

As for culture, 2022 is seeing the second part of the DEDI Art Symposium which will take place in Copenhagen and Hanstholm. The group of four Danish

and four Egyptian artists spent two weeks together in Cairo and Aswan in 2021. DEDI is also supporting 14 filmmakers and cinema professionals from Egypt to take part in the CPH:DOX 2022, one of the world's largest and most prestigious documentary festivals. A DEDI supported documentary, Light upon Light, has been selected to premiere at the festival.

Finally, in DEDI's flagship project, the annual furniture exhibition will take place at the end of the year bringing together Egyptian designers and students from the Royal Danish Academy. They will have prototypes of their designs manufactured by Egyptian craftsmen at Pinocchio's Furniture factory in Damietta. But first, in May, the designs produced in 2021 will be exhibited at Trapholt Museum in Denmark. They were exhibited at the National Egyptian Museum of Civilization last year.

DEDI also continues its partnership as an implementing partner of Ambassadors for Dialogue in Egypt since 2017, a project by the Danish Youth Council.

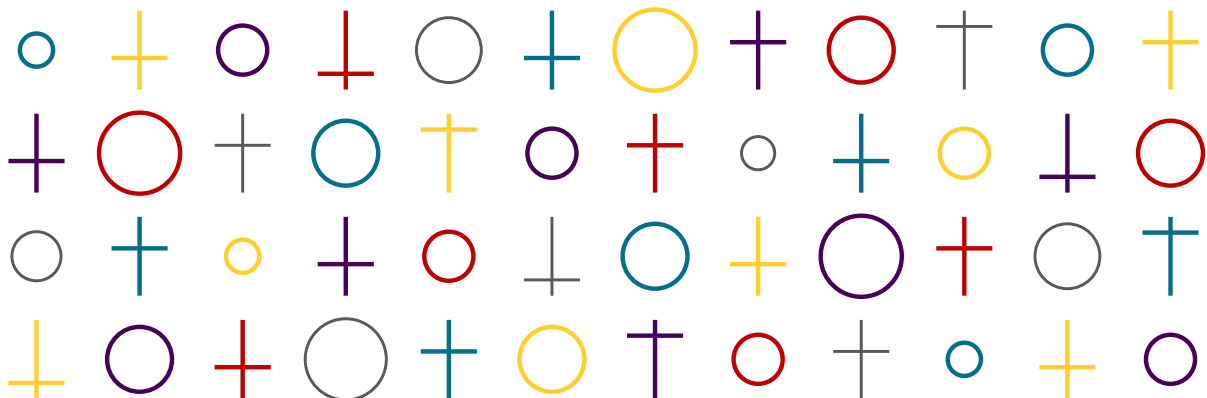
DEDI is a cooperation between Egypt and Denmark, financed by the Danish Arab Partnership Program under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Read more about our activities on DEDI's website: dedi.org.eg

Contact DEDI: info@dedi.org.eg

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“When twenty women from different backgrounds have all experienced structural challenges, it is easier to convince others that it does exist. It is not just me.”

Katerine Ebdrup Damgaard, Business developer at Dansk Kulturliv

“But it really stunned me how many similarities there were between us. Of course, we are all humans and at the core we are the same. But I had expected that the differences in our background and lifestyles would show clearly.”

Mayar Darwish, Marketing Manager at Pepsico

“What I found in the network was just what I had been looking for. I don’t think I have ever been in a room where people were so open-minded and not judgmental or patronizing.”

Julie Lorentzen, Head of Division, Municipality of Copenhagen



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