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Empowering Women in Remote Communities and Safeguarding Heritage:

The Case of Sougha, a Khalifa Fund Initiative

ABSTRACT

UAE has over ninety per cent of its population living in urban areas. Settlements in rural areas are sparse and spread over vast areas. While female gender equality is a priority area outlined under the UAE Constitution, Federal Decree No. 30 of 1996 and Ministerial Resolution 225 of 2015, there is an urgency to look at empowerment from a societal transformation point of view. The rapid economic development of UAE has endangered cultural heritage like 'Al Sadu' weaving, often thought as a woman's skill. Sougha, an initiative from The Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development, supports rural women to preserve local handicrafts through sales. Preserving heritage for future generations raises questions on how to capture this knowledge, preserve it, authenticate it and keep it relevant for modern times. Research findings on the concept of empowerment, the perceived identity of participant, the role of financial independence, need for business skills and preserving heritage have policy implications for the fields of education, health (happiness), economy and culture. The findings can be used for organizations working in this space as catalysts and is are applicable at a global level.

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Empowerment as a concept has implications for policy areas in governance, political legislation and representation, economic empowerment, employment, education, health and safety from violence (physical and mental). Women who make up almost 50% of the world population are performing 66% of global work, are 60% of the working poor, are producing 50% of the food, are earning 10% of global income and unfortunately owning 1% of property (Actionaid, 2013: 3). The United Arab Emirates (UAE), according to the World Economic Forum's 2016 Global Gender Gap is ranked 124 out of 144 countries, leading in the MENA region, and globally leads in some areas, like education (rank 32) and political empowerment (rank 83). Further areas for development according to this report are economic participation and opportunity (rank 130), and healthcare and survival (rank 132). In the UAE, the ratio of unemployed women to men is 10:1; more men have bank accounts than women (90% versus 60%); there are fewer women in STEM and we still need more skills diversity (McArthur, 2015).

Under the UAE Constitution, Federal Decree No. 30 of 1996 and Ministerial Resolution 225 of 2015, provisions have been made for female gender equality (see Table 1). In terms of business and entrepreneurship, Emirati women are starting up new businesses at a rate of 30% of that of Emirati men (Emirates Foundation, nd). Emirati women account for about 50% of the SME sector (Embassy of UAE, Washington DC 2017; UAE Ministry of State for Federal National Council Affairs, 2008). However, the challenge remains business scaling, as close to 60% of the women with businesses prefer to work from home with one quarter having their husbands as business partners (IFC, 2007).

Table 1: Constitutional Rights of Women[1]

"Equality, social justice, ensuring safety and security and equality of opportunity for all citizens shall be the pillars of the Society." Article 14, UAE Constitution
"Society shall be responsible for protecting childhood and motherhood and shall protect minors and others unable to look after themselves for any reason, such as illness or incapacity or old age or forced unemployment. It shall be responsible for assisting them and enabling them to help themselves for their own benefit and that of the community." Article 16, UAE Constitution
"All individuals are equal in Law. There shall be no distinction among the citizens of the UAE on the basis of origin, nationality, faith or social status." Article 25, UAE Constitution.
"A woman shall be paid the same wage as a man if she performs the same work." Article 32, UAE Federal Labour Law No. 8 of 1980
"Every citizen shall be free to choose his occupation, trade or profession within the limits of law." Article 34, UAE Constitution
"Women who are divorced, widowed or supporting orphaned children are eligible for social welfare." UAE Federal Law No. 6 of 2001

Compiled by Authors

While the UAE has made significant strides in empowering women, there are still areas to be addressed, especially when you look at women living in remote areas. The rural population in the UAE is estimated at 1.34 million, which is 10% of the population (World Bank, 2017). Of the seven emirates, Abu Dhabi has the majority of rural population with 1,085,529 residents living in rural areas (Abu Dhabi e-government, 2017). With rapid economic development and increasing urbanization, rural poverty will continue to exist for a long time (Ravallion, Chen and Sangraula, 2007).

This policy paper looks briefly at the multiple facets of the concept of empowerment, which is often used synonymously with gender equality. As set out in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, although the focus is on women, gender equality concerns both genders, as the process should result in short-term and long-term changes in behaviours and attitudes of the individual and collectively in society, in relooking the roles and responsibilities of women and girls, within the home, extended family, workplace, community and society as a whole. Another key point, is that when expanding freedoms and improving overall quality of life, equality should be achieved without sacrificing gains for males or females. These facts highlight the need to have an ecosystem approach that requires some societal transformation. Boulding (1967) looks at social policy as building the identity of a person around the community (e.g. family, place of religious worship, educational centres) with which, he/she is associated with.

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[1] Source: Embassy of UAE, Washington DC (2017), http://www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/women-uae. While article Article 7 of the Constitution Islamic Sharia is to be the main source of legislation in the Union, and the Quran explicit refers to the equality of men and woman before God ('I waste not the labour of any that labours among you, be you male of female – the one of you is as the other' (3:195)) .

The UAE's rapid economic development has almost erased an older way of life. The UNESCO'S Urgent Safeguarding List of Cultural Intangible Heritage of Humanity (2017) includes items such as ancient skills from the region like the 'Al Sadu' (weaving) (2011), 'Al Taghrooda' (poetry) (2012), 'Al Ayyala' (dance) (2014), 'Al Rafza' (performance art) (2015), 'Al Majlis', a social space (2015), 'Gahwa' (Arabic coffee) (2015) and falconry (2016). UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as the *"practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development." (UNESCO 2003).* Irin Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, stated *"Preservation does not mean freezing heritage, but rather means the transfer of knowledge, skills, meanings and values from a generation to another, which is the focus of the UNESCO Convention for 2003"* (UAE Interact, 2011). With data collected through Sougha, a Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development (KFED) initiative to empower rural women and preserve and revitalise Emirati handicrafts, we present policy-level recommendations for projects of these kinds.

There is a need to address empowerment and heritage preservation from a holistic developmental agenda perspective. There are policy implications for funding agencies and for the central organisation. A key issue in projects of these types is to prevent dependency by the women on the catalyst (in this case Sougha the organisation) and the employees involved in the project. This needs to be included in future impact studies. This study has implications for those organizations and entities working to preserve culture and heritage focusing on empowerment of women.

Empowerment and its Many Facets

Empowerment is defined as *"a meaningful shift in the experience of power attained through interaction in the social world, and describes the process of building empowerment as an iterative one, in which a person takes action toward personally meaningful goals; draws on community supports, skill, knowledge, and self-efficacy to move toward those goals; and observes the extent to which those actions result in progress* (Cattaneo and Goodman, 2015)". OECD-DAC adds to this definition by stating empowerment is *"Women's capacity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth* (OECD 2011)." There are three levels at which empowerment is achieved and facilitated: (1) individual level (2) community and (3) catalyst.

At the individual level, empowerment is a process that helps a person have control over their lives in multiple spheres and can simply be defined as the "ability to make choices" (Chant, 2016). It is a quality that comes from within, based on individual needs and their personal accountability (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). Empowerment is not easy to measure. One can use objective terms of impact like income, political participation, health and educational achievement, and legal reform; but, it also includes more subjective measures of an individual's private and public life, falling within psychological, familial, social, cultural, employment, civil and political spheres, looking at active voice, for example (Sharma, 2015). In the specific area of empowerment of women, the key activities have been condensed to (a) an understanding of their own self-worth; (b) the right to own and/or have access to resources and opportunities; (c) to have options and determine choices in life; and (d) to enjoy the freedom to make decisions about issues in all aspects of life that pertain/affect them (Alsop and Heinsohn 2005).

At the broader community level, empowerment needs to take into account the "opportunity structure" – i.e. cultures, societies, and institutions, which set the contexts and can facilitate or inhibit empowerment, leading to the ability to influence the course of social change at large and contribute towards the development of society (Alsop and Heinsohn, 2005). Within the community, the focus is on membership (everyone has equal belonging within the community), influence (the ability to make a difference in the group, such as having a voice), integration and fulfilment of needs (access to resources), and emotional connection (through similar experiences, members will have a relationship) (McMillan and Chavis, 1986). This would allow women and girls to participate in, contribute to, and share in the benefits of growth. Since empowerment is a cyclical process, it is important that those that have benefitted from the empowerment purpose should be able to continue on their self-journey of empowerment, and help others, by becoming a positive role model, and being open and appreciative of others (Sippi 2007). *"The process(es) and product(s) of empowerment of women vary across time and space and is contingent upon the prevailing social, cultural, political and economic environment of any given society.*

Individual instances and experiences can best explain and be consolidated to develop a context-specific meaning of empowerment. Thus, a meaningful notion of empowerment emerged inductively. In other words, the sum total of individual experiences can be used to formulate the notion of empowerment embedded in the given social and cultural contexts….Programs and policies for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women cannot be designed or planned independent of the socio-cultural setting. Women are part of society. They do not live in vacuum" (Sharma, 2015 p. 22, 30).

The catalyst introduced to facilitate change must not only be mindful of the socio-cultural context, but become eventually self-sustaining till the point it can safely withdraw from the process so that the community can take ownership and continue with the momentum that it started or seamlessly integrate into the opportunity structure. Catalysts can be independent and/or facilitated by governments, other intergovernmental organisations, non-government organisations or even individuals who can act as activists. Catalysts should play an "agency" role to create the necessary and safe conditions that would facilitate and influence the possibilities for empowerment. Because of the role of influence, the fine divide between mental or emotional coercion, and the delicate role of empowering the "purposive choice of the individual", it is necessary that catalysts must be sensitive to context and not aggressively superimpose their view points. In addition to all of this, a catalyst must be able to prevent dependency and transference and must also move beyond the "fire-fighting" approach, taking an ecosystem approach where the community is the main driver of change and the process is sustainable and self-sufficient.

As an all-encompassing definition, empowerment has a direct impact on the individual, the community or broader society, and government policy through the organisation which acts as a catalyst for change (see Figure 1). Empowerment as a concept is multi-faceted, is iterative in nature, needs the individual, the catalyst and the contextual environment to embrace the process and must be adapted to the evolving conditions. From a policy point of view – women in rural areas should be protected by law, must have a voice in the community and have the opportunity to make choices. Often the latter is a function of financial security.

Figure 1: Multi-level Notion of Empowerment

| Community	• Support Individual • Interacts with individual • Allows experiences of power	5. The ability to influence the course of social change at large and contribute towards the development of society
Organization (Catalyst)	• Iterative Actions/Strategies for • Empowerment • Experience of power • Observes extent to which actions lead to progress	4. Be sensitive to context and not aggressively superimpose their view points
Individual Beneficiary	• Experiences power through interaction • Sets personal meaningful goals • Develops skills, knowledge and self-efficacy	3. Enjoy freedom to make decisions about issues in all aspects of life. 2. To have options and determine choices in life; and 1. An understanding of their own self-worth, right to own and/or have access to resources and opportunities;

Source: Authors

Empowerment of Women in Rural Societies

Empowerment in rural societies often focuses on three key areas – disenfranchisement, oppression and vulnerability. Disenfranchisement is when a person is deprived of the capability to participate in and to influence agenda-setting and decision-making in the global arena for sustainable development (Fisher, Dana and Green, 2004). By addressing disenfranchisement, it is possible to reduce exclusion and focus on the collective level on civic empowerment (Levinson, 2010).

Oppression has political, social and psychological dimensions and it can be defined as the unjust exercise of power, and the control of ideas and coveted resources in such a way that it produces and sustains social inequality (Watts, Adbul-Adil, Griffith, and Wilson, 1996). The irony of oppression is the oppressed can become the oppressor and empowerment is a way of breaking this vicious circle. Oppression leads to exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 2009). In traditional societies, rigid cultural and societal norms may hinder or prevent empowerment of women. It is important to focus on core issues. ActionAid (2013) illustrates this example with the following statement in their report, *"For instance, women in war-torn Afghanistan do not understand women's empowerment or equality in terms of doing a job, getting educated or not wearing a veil. Their quest is for basic minimum, which means right to live with dignity and to be considered as a human being; even if it comes by wearing a veil, it does not matter. In fact, in places like Afghanistan, the chances are, that women may get respected with veil, but without (the) veil their condition can be worse than one can imagine."*

Vulnerability is the degree to which a population or an individual or a society is unable to withstand the adverse effects of multiple stressors, particularly in times of disasters making them liable to serious hardships (WHO, 2002; Hoogeveen, Tesliuc, Vakis and Dercon, nd, Ballesteros, 2008). Sippi (2007) highlights that vulnerabilities are often a combination of social interactions, institutions, and systems of cultural values. Vulnerable groups are those that (1) are subjected to high levels of stigma and discrimination (2) experience high-levels of physical and sexual abuse (3) often encounter restrictions in the exercise of their political and civil rights (4) are not able to participate fully in their societies (5) live in places where they are not able to access essential health and social care (6) live in places where emergency relief services remain inaccessible (7) face significant barriers in attending school and finding employment and are (8) more likely to experience disability and die prematurely, compared with the general population (adapted from WHO, 2010). While women are physically vulnerable compared to men of similar age and development, the implications are also psychological. Vulnerability in disadvantaged communities is often an outcome of economic recession as women who work in sectors such as garment manufacture, agriculture and electronics are more affected by declines in consumption (Buvinic, 2009); women are often pushed into informal and unsafe jobs at a faster rate than men (Mayanja, 2010); and women have fewer assets such as financial resources, education and social networks to fall back on (Bridge, 2010). Empowerment needs an ecosystem approach as is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Empowerment – An Ecosystem Approach
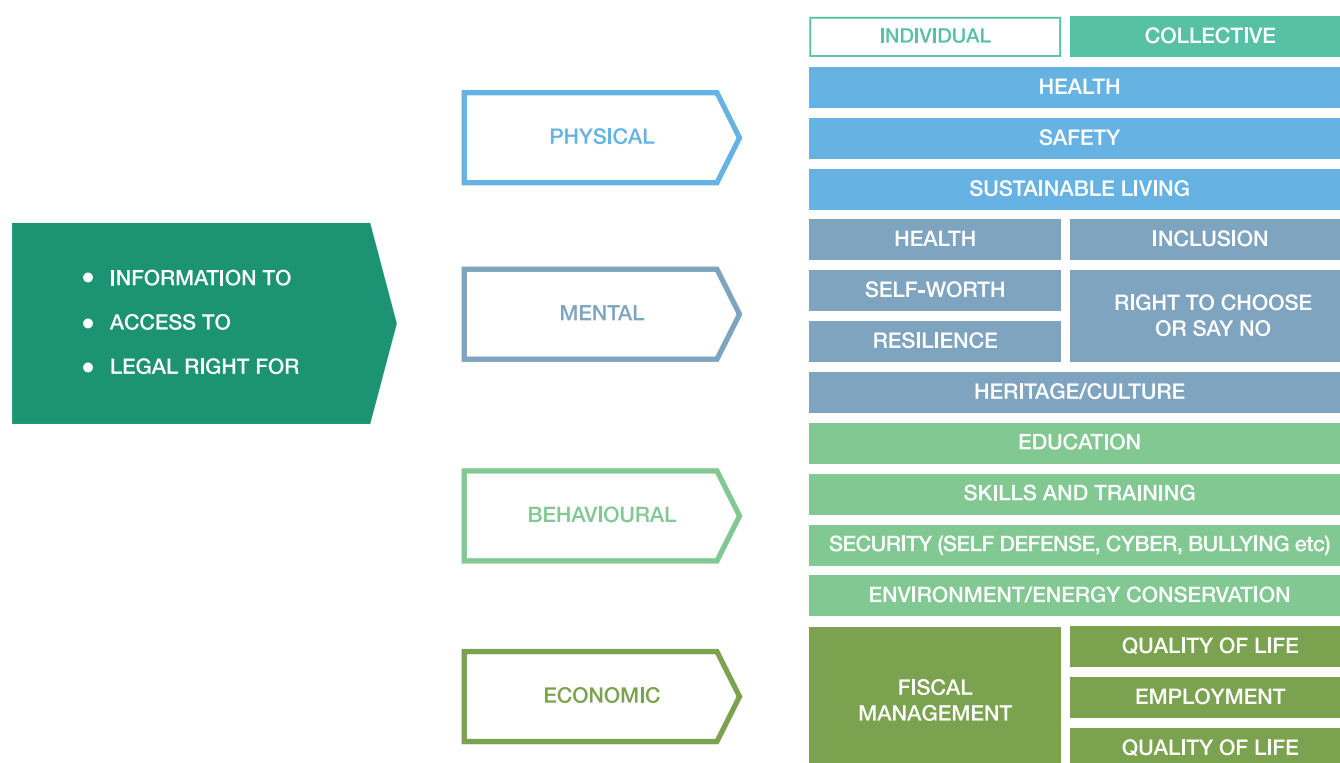

Source: Authors

Policy Concerns in Safeguarding Heritage and Empowering Rural Woman: Case of Sougha

Sougha is a concept incubated and launched by The Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development[2] (KFED), Abu Dhabi, UAE in 2009. Its purpose is to support women in rural areas and thereby preserve local handicrafts. Due to the rapid economic development and modernisation of the UAE, many cultural artforms were now endangered, especially as the nomadic way of life was replaced with urbanisation. The initial focus area for Sougha was the Western Region, Al Gharbia, which is located 150-300 kilometres away from the city of Abu Dhabi, accounting for 71% of the Emirate's land mass but only 9% of its population of which 11% are Emirati (Oxford Business Group, 2015; DED 2012, Statistics Center - Abu Dhabi, 2012). A survey was carried out in the region between December 2015 to May 2016. It was administered orally by a representative of Sougha as the majority of the women were illiterate, the places were difficult to reach and strangers are not easily welcomed. In total, 70 responses were collected. Sougha had 172 artisans at that time across the emirates, with 67 artisans skilled enough to receive orders. This is a response rate of 40.6% of the total beneficiary population.

2   Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development was developed by Presidential decree in 2005 (Law 14, 2005). It is an Abu Dhabi government initiative to create an independent non-profit Socio-Economic Development agency to support the SME ecosystem and instilling the UAE nationals with a pro-investing culture to support the economy

The respondents came from Gayathi (40%), Al Mirfa (4.3%); Liwa (10%); Falaj Al Mualla (8.6%), Ajman (1.4%), Al Wathba (4.3%), Al Sila (28.5%) and others (2.9%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sougha Artisans' Home Base
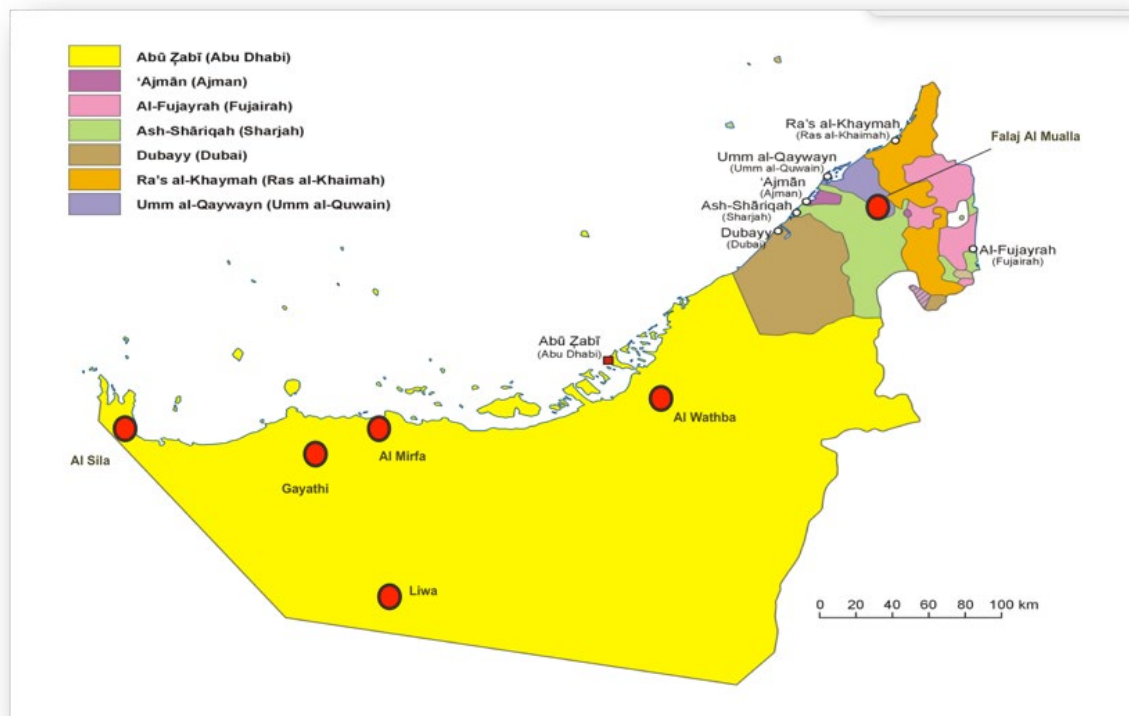
Source: Wikimedia Commons

Settlements are scattered and far apart, in some cases, having only 200 households, typically with large families of 4-11 siblings (Western Region Municipality Interview, 2016). Of our respondents, the average number of children of those who had children was 6.99, with one 50-year-old respondent stating that she had 47 grandchildren. The average age of the respondents was 46.77 years, with the oldest being 74 years and the youngest being 22 years. Of the respondents, 72.8% had heard of Sougha from family, 15.7% from friends, and the rest, 11.5%, either through TV, another artisan or a Sougha representative. On an average, the artisans had been working for Sougha for 3.5 years and 25.7% had another female family member working for Sougha. As is often the case with endangered heritage skills, the women are older, and characteristically living in traditional rural areas, with word of mouth being the primary way of message transfer in their community.

1. Preservation of Traditional Handicrafts

In Al Gharbia, the participation of women in labour is low (42.5% versus men at 97%) and 81% of all businesses are micro or small businesses, mostly owned by men (78%), and operating in the retail and services sector (64%) (Statistics Center - Abu Dhabi, 2012; DED 2012). Traditional employment is handicraft production, animal husbandry, camel breeding and cattle herding (Oxford Business Group, 2015). This area is known for the handicrafts created by Bedouin women and here the tribal culture is strong. It is estimated there are around 80 tribes. The 'Al Sadu' weaving, which uses material made from camel, sheep and goat hair is mostly still continued by the Al Manaseer tribe that keeps this important tradition alive. Many of the inhabitants of Al Gharbia are second or third generation Bedouin. The women Sougha approached were older and often grandmothers who had knowledge of making traditional handicrafts. This knowledge was passed down through the generations. The average age of the craftsman is high, and the younger generation is not necessarily aware of the skills (see Table 2). The reasons why Sougha chose older women was to get legitimacy within the groups. This target not only had the basic knowledge but were influencers in their own rights. Grandmothers would get approval from their male counterparts faster (because of their age) and, since they practised this skill in the women's 'majlis', more women were exposed to the craft, especially the younger ones.

Table 2: Emirati Handicrafts Knowledge and Importance by average

I used to make these handicrafts when I was younger	6.4
I remember my mother and/or grandmother making these handicrafts	6.5
I do not remember making these handicrafts but Sougha taught me	2.6
It is important to teach the younger generation the skills to make these handicrafts	6.4
I teach the younger generation how to make these handicrafts	6.2

Likert scale 1-7, 1- lowest influence change & 7 maximum influence change

UNESCO (2003) has highlighted some challenges in safeguarding handicrafts at their meeting, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The challenges for policy makers is threefold. The first challenge is skills revival. Traditional handicrafts and modernisation are sometimes not seen as synonymous. From a policy point of view, these skills had to be valued in the market for traction from the younger generation if the focus was not just on the antiquities market. Debates were also held internally in Sougha, on what could be adapted to promote the skill. The traditional loom for example was very heavy, but by remodifying the loom, the question arose as to whether by interfering with design, was it affecting heritage preservation? How authentic must the process be? Older women were not averse to using the traditional equipment but many of the younger generation were not comfortable using this technique. Hence it may be enough to record, preserve and document use of traditional equipment, but evolve the process to a more modern way of execution. The other concern is that this skill is still seen as in a woman's domain, as in the past, and may need to be redressed for gender empowerment.

The second challenge is market development. To be saleable, the crafts needed to be adapted to market needs. Using 'Al Sadu' weaving on a laptop case may not be the traditional use of the skill, which was originally intended for tents, storage bags and animal trappings, but it would definitely widen the market. Perhaps the designs and the meaning behind them need to be documented, as is the type of wool being used – sheep or camel? From a policy point of view, who would be responsible for the documentation of this? How can this tacit skill be promoted? Should it be introduced at the school education level as part of the arts and crafts curriculum? How is it promoted at a national and international level? Is there pride associated with buying, supporting and facilitating the handicrafts at a national and an international level?

The third challenge is heritage authentication. To charge a premium in the market, it would be necessary to educate the market and customers and help them discern quality and authentic handicrafts. Without this, machine-made, or cheap imports could take away market share and reduce market price. Would it be necessary to have an authentication process, or a seal of quality? Sougha tackled some issues at a micro-level but there was a need to address this at a policy-level. Another question is how authentic does the wool and materials or even the design need to be to be considered authentic? The younger generation was more experimental and this creativity was needed to preserve the tradition but was the symbolism then being lost? Traditionally the designs were a reflection of a way of life, as the way of life changed, so, was it necessary to record this also?

2. **Multiple Roles Managed by Women**

Typically, women from this region are dependent on their menfolk who are the main breadwinners. While the majority of the employment is in the public sector, for the women who joined Sougha, most said that the men in their families did not work for the government (95.7% - with only three women having their male family members working in government jobs), and a majority of the women said that their menfolk held many jobs. When asked how they saw themselves in the traditional societal roles: besides being a wife, the majority saw themselves as daughters (87.1%), mothers (87.1%), sisters (88.6%), aunts (80%) and grandmothers (68.6%). Sougha gave them an opportunity to earn additional income and change the roles they played in society (see Table 3). What is interesting, is that the perception of their new role did not come easily to them. This is known as the 'gender subconscious bias' - when unconsciously, one (whether male, female or/and society), assumes that gender is associated with categorisations in life, and often where women are not socialised to play traditional "male roles". This bias extends to professions, tasks, customs or activities (Valian, 1998, 2005). Briegel and Zivkovic (2008) in their study of UAE women found that 72% of those surveyed, feel that men are better at managing money, 57% feel men are better at saving than women and many depend on the men to show them the basics of opening and managing an account.

Table 3: Additional Roles of Women (responses (%))

	Financial provider	Business Owner	Bank account owner	Influencer
Unprompted	3 (4.3%)	-	8 (11.4%)	1 (1.4%)
Prompted	32 (45.7%)	36 (51.4%)	35 (50%)	4 (5.7%)

From a policy point of view, the most important issue is that of education and socialisation of roles of women and men. To empower women, you must also educate and socialise men and society in general – for example, are women represented in educational books as role models? Focusing on women alone is not enough when one is creating a strategy to empower women; one must also focus on men also. Begin with an analysis of the context. What is the exposure of the target population to successful women role models? While rural areas take more time to acculturate, it is a process that needs to start with the three-pronged approach (women, men and collectively as society). This has implications for education, media exposure and role models projected in these areas. Though women are approximately 50% of the population they do not see themselves as overt influencers, which is interesting.

3.   **Financial Empowerment**

Financial empowerment is closely entwined with financial literacy. It loosely alludes to the knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation necessary to effectively manage money (Remund, 2010). Most women in rural areas do not have access to, nor are bank account holders. A World Bank study of 98 developing countries found that countries where women face legal restrictions in working, heading a household, choosing where to live, and receiving inheritance, these are places where women are less likely to own a bank account, save and borrow, relative to men (Remund, 2010). Before Sougha, most artisans were dependent on the income from their husband's salary (64.2%), pension (8.6%), their father (8.6%), with only a few self-earning individuals (15.7%). After joining Sougha, they all began earning an income and 100% of the respondents, said that earning money made them happy (see Table 4 for more details of perceived financial empowerment). In 2014, artisans were paid in cash or by cheque, owing to the low number of artisans that were part of Sougha. The number of tradeswomen who had bank accounts before 2014 was close to 80 women. By 2017, out of the 250 registered female artisans 80% of them, numbering 200, have bank accounts. Payments are made either monthly or bimonthy to the artisans. After issuing invoices to the buyers of the Sougha products, the payment typically takes a month or up to two months and the payments are forwarded directly to the craftswomen accounts who participated in creating those orders.

Table 4: Financial Empowerment

I manage my money independently after joining Sougha	5.7
I am more financially well-off since joining Sougha	5.6
I am more financially literate	5.6
The younger generation respects that I am an income earner	6.0
Sougha provided me with enough training to be a micro-entrepreneur	6.0
I am ready to become independent of Sougha and begin my own business	5.8

From a policy point of view, the unbanked are an area of focus. On one hand, you have the practical issue of opening a bank account. Since bounced checks have severe criminal penalties, checking accounts are not encouraged. This can be changed through education and by actually encouraging the creation of bank accounts for girls, even when they are minors. In Briegel and Zivkovic's survey (2008), many of the participants used the informal 'jomaia' or 'jam'iyya' saving method where members contribute monthly to a common fund and on a turn basis, each member gets access to the whole month's fund. Hence the informal methods of saving seem to be more popular than formal methods. There is also an infrastructure issue of creating physical banks close enough to reach for rural settlements. More importantly, there is the educational issue of teaching illiterate women to manage online bank accounts and a societal issue where parents take pride in gifting a bank account to a child and teaching them the basics of financial literacy.

If Sougha wants women to become independent business owners, they must first help the women think of themselves as such and then, they must be able to manage the financials of a business, including if needed, getting a bank loan which means they must have assets in their name. Also, another important point is that happiness is perceived as linked to control over some financial aspects of life – including the ability to have or earn income (Sarumathi and Mohan, 2011). Briegel and Zivkovic (2008) in their study of UAE women found that they did make a distinction between their own money and family money, of which 70% felt they do not control. The same study found that 66% of the women surveyed felt that money brings them happiness. This has implications for gross national happiness looking at the debate of consumption versus degrowth (Schneider et al. 2010: 512; Verma 2017).

4. **Women Empowerment**

Women empowerment is related to their feeling of control of themselves, their choices, and the people they are able to influence. This means they get a "voice" to express themselves, and are able to influence decisions that can have a direct and indirect impact on themselves. As seen before in Table 2, only four percent of the women thought they were influencers. A closer look at this topic (see Table 5), reveals that influence has increased, more in the perception of control over the symbiotic nature of relationships, followed by neighbourhood and family.

While the difference in absolute values is small, they represent different areas over which the feeling of empowerment is manifested. If stress as a factor is removed, the control over self is perceived as highest. Creating attitudinal change in rural places does involve stress, as does the process of creating any business. Education does not necessarily teach coping strategies in a systematic way. The World Health Organisation (2001) states that mental diseases are an area of priority, with depression affecting more women than men and a strong need to take into account the environment. Often professional mental treatment is not available in rural areas and there is also a stigma associated with seeking help. In the interim, Sougha provides a support system that maybe important for the women in their multiple roles within society, their immediate and extended family, and as individuals, but there are policy implications for education and health.

While women prefer working from home to become successful entrepreneurs, they have to venture outside the comfort of their home and community to access markets. They require relevant knowledge and expertise (Figure 4), but knowledge alone, is not enough as complications can arise if the distribution system is not set up. The artisans needed a strong access to a supply of raw material. Sougha artisans in the initial days had to wait for their menfolk to deliver the products, as the women did not find it easy to come to the capital city for both cultural and logistical reasons. The younger generation have been helpful in accessing markets online. One other issue is that of timely delivery of big projects and pricing. Sougha clients in the past have included large organisations such as Etihad Airways, Masdar Environment Agency, Executive Affairs Authority, Tawazun and The Office of the Brand of Abu Dhabi. Sougha is responsible for checking the quality of the work received and pricing the finished product based on the cost of raw material, time, creativity and craftsmanship but these are things that eventually the local entrepreneur needs to be able to do. Standardisation of quality is important but creativity is encouraged, which also creates challenges in pricing.

These points must be addressed at the broader level at the economic and trade policy-levels, as to whether to have quality trademarks of authenticity, register certain types of produce as protected designation of origin, or even to create incentives and programmes to enhance training and access to knowledge, finance, export and legal advice, in order to encourage entrepreneurship.

Control over "Self"	
Influence on self, control	
Level of influence change about you and your welfare	5.8
I feel like I am more productive than I used to be	6.1
I enjoy what I do	6.0
I am more stressed than I used to be	4.3
I am more confident about myself after joining Sougha	6.1
I am ready to become independent of Sougha and begin my own business	5.8
More knowledge, more choices	
I have more knowledge about my future choices	6.0
I am more knowledgeable about conducting business than I used to be	6.1
Sougha provided me with enough training to be a micro-entrepreneur	6.7
Average Score	5.8
Influence in the Family	
Immediate family	
Level of influence change about your immediate family and their welfare	5.5
The younger generation is proud of the work I do	6.2
The younger generation respects that I am an income earner	6.0
The younger generation girls are interested in choosing a business career after seeing mine	5.8
The younger generation boys are interested in choosing a business career after seeing mine	5.2
Extended Family	
Level of influence change about the extended family and their welfare	5.2
I feel more comfortable expressing my viewpoints in meetings	5.8
My status in the family has grown after joining Sougha	5.8
Average Score	5.7

Influence in the neighbourhood and community	
Level of influence change about the surrounding neighbourhood and community	5.8
My status in the community has grown after joining Sougha	5.9
I have more people come to me to ask for advice about my line of business	6.2
Average Score	6.0
Symbiotic relationship	
Younger Generation	
I seek advice from the younger generation to see how I can improve my products	6.2
I am learning new technologies with the younger generation to improve and sell my products	5.9
I teach the younger generation how to make these handicrafts	6.2
Sougha	
I would recommend this organization to other women	6.2
I believe that Sougha has a huge impact on spreading awareness on Emirati products	6.4
I believe that Sougha is spreading the importance of handicrafts within the community	6.5
I have a greater sense of belonging after joining the Sougha community	6.0
Average Score	6.2

Likert scale 1-7, 1- lowest influence change & 7 maximum influence change

Figure 4: Knowledge Acquired by Sougha Artisans
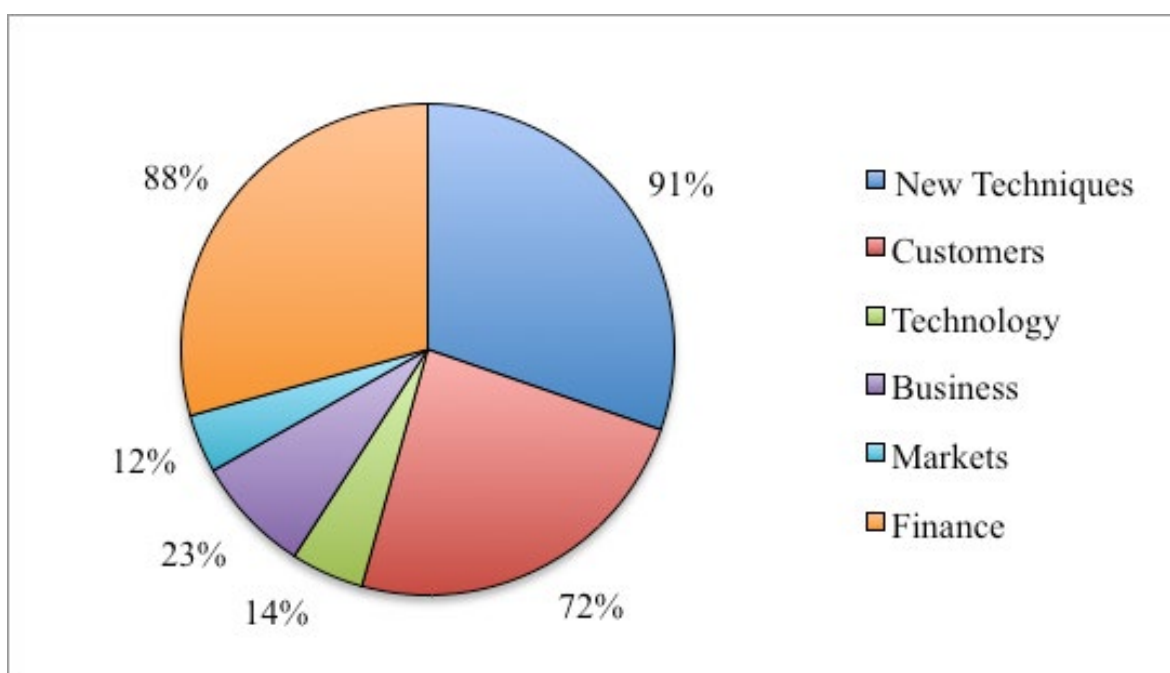
In terms of knowledge acquired (Figure 4), to build successful enterprises, the focus could be on creation of cooperatives or recognition of the trade as a cottage industry. Often this is an informal sector and hence the safeguards and challenges in its growth and development are significant for economy. There could be value added tax (VAT) exemption, for example, for such produce to encourage its trade. To prevent exploitation, there is a need to ensure the hand-crafted produce is able to be distinguished from that produced with technological enhancements and this is reflected in the pricing. This is a challenge seen in other countries, for example, the Indian handloom sector with the advent of powerlooms.

5. Role of the Catalyst

As a catalyst, Sougha must facilitate a change in the ecosystem in which it operates as is apparent in Table 6 below. There is a gap in the confidence the women have to begin a business and the training they receive. The reality is that everyone is not an entrepreneur, so the important way forward is to find ways to harness the talent and expertise available.

Table 6: Artisans and Sougha (relationship)

Sougha provided me with enough training to be a micro-entrepreneur	6.6
I am ready to become independent of Sougha and begin my own business	65.8
I am happy with this organization	6.2
I would recommend this organization to other women	6.2
I believe that Sougha has a huge impact on spreading awareness on Emirati products	6.4
I believe that Sougha is spreading the importance of handicrafts within the community	6.5

Likert scale 1-7, 1- lowest influence change & 7 maximum influence change

While Sougha is dependent on the KFED, as a grant-providing organisation, the long-term objective is to make Sougha self-sufficient and that means embedding a financial model for generation of funds from the project itself. Most of Sougha's employees are currently Emiratis, and this creates challenges if the project is to become a stand-alone project, as it loses the legitimacy of a government organisation and the employees will no longer earn government wages. There are two types of dependencies that need to be addressed: Sougha, as an entity on KFED and the Sougha artisans on Sougha.

As a catalyst, Sougha has a range of activities that focus on trust-building with the communities that it impacts. This began at the start of the project with creating personal trust with the individual representing the organisation, and has over time been able to build enough equity so that the name of the organisation – 'Sougha', has the trust at the collective level of the community. When the trust does not easily transfer to the organisation, it creates problems for succession planning within Sougha and a dependency that may not be healthy. The aim is to empower women through economic means and help give them a "voice" in the community.

Entrepreneurship seems the way to move forward and worldwide, according the GEMS report, women are starting new business at 66% of the rates witnessed of that of men (Allen, Elam, Langowitz, and Dean, 2008).

Sougha also acts an interface with policy makers through KFED. In 2012, KFED proposed an amendment to the then existing 2005 home-based business licence (Mubdia'h) for local women to further facilitate work from home for their artisans (Johnsen, 2015). Sougha began with 7 artisans from Al Gayathi in 2009. When it was registered in Abu Dhabi under the Department of Economic Development with a AED 1 million injected into the fund, it was able to generate AED 7.48 Million between 2010-2014, have 187 beneficiaries and train 208 people (in 2015) (KFAD Annual reports 2013, 2014, 2015, Ashoka Changemaker, 2017).

Conclusion

Empowerment of women and preservation of heritage is a process that requires active policy initiatives in the areas of education, health, economy and culture. It has spillovers into areas of tolerance and happiness. Although at a national level, preservation and propagation of heritage is a key focus as outlined in Vision 2021, this objective can be transmitted at a global level through cultural education and exchange using protected designation of origin status and trademarks. Empowerment is not confined to a gender as explained, but it also requires constant investment in time and resources as conditions and contexts change. Heritage is not an easy concept to preserve as there are grey areas that need to be addressed at a policy and global level. Both concepts require changes in education.

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