

# Bank of America and Vital Voices Promote Economic Empowerment for Women Leaders Across the Middle East and North Africa

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## *Global Ambassadors Program Will Focus on the Role of Mentoring*

Bank of America and Vital Voices today launched a weeklong joint mentoring forum in Doha, Qatar. The [Global Ambassadors Program](#) (GAP), which runs from November 11 through 15, brings together influential women leaders from the global public and private sectors with those from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) who are engaged in small businesses and social enterprises. Top women executives from around the world will be paired with emerging MENA women leaders for one-on-one mentoring sessions, a mentoring walk and participation in the Qatar International Businesswomen's Forum (QIBWF), an annual gathering to identify and create opportunities for Arab businesswomen.

Over recent years, the MENA region has made progress in reducing the gender gap, according to a study by the World Bank. This fact is particularly evident in the area of education, and today, almost all young girls attend primary and secondary school and more women than men are enrolled in universities. Despite this advancement, women are entering the MENA labor market at half the global rate, an issue which impacts their economic potential as well as the broader regional economy. Only 18.4 percent of the female adult population is economically active, the lowest rate in the world.

Working toward a common goal of advancing women's role in MENA's economic development, GAP mentors and mentees will partner with QIBWF participants during the week. Discussion will focus on ways to develop and harness the leadership potential of Arab businesswomen; values of identity and leadership style; opportunities to remove barriers that prevent women from becoming leaders in business and social activities; ideas for entrepreneurship and innovation among women; and profiles of women visionaries.

"We believe mentorship is critical to bridging the gap between women who complete university and those who join the job market – laying the foundation for women to be active participants in the dynamic growth story of the MENA region," said Candace Browning, head of global research at Bank of America Merrill Lynch and a Global Ambassador.

GAP brings together eight Global Ambassadors (mentors) with mentees from the MENA region.

The mentors are:

- Arije Al Amad, consultant for Microfinance, Women's Empowerment, Coaching & Mentoring, Jordan
- Lauren C. Anderson, international consultant, U.S.A.
- Ana Birchall, member of Parliament, Romania
- Paula Dominick, Global Compliance executive, Bank of America
- Donna Langley, chairman, Universal Pictures, USA
- Denise Menelly, head of Operations, Global Wholesale Banking, Bank of America Merrill Lynch
- Laura Whitley, head of Consumer Banking Services, Bank of America
- Manal Zraiq, general director, Massar International, Palestine

The mentees are:

- Fatima Al-Mohannadi, Corporate Planning analyst, Qatargas Operating Company, Qatar
- Suaad Allami, founder and chair, Women for Progress Center, Iraq
- Ayat Ata-Allah, founder, Takween, Palestine
- Abeer D. Abu Ghaith, managing director, StayLinked, Palestine
- Sahar Dwaikat, founder and chief executive officer, Flyer Ad for Graphic Design, Palestine
- Eman El Garhi, Finance and Marketing director, Unitak for Investment in Real Estate and Tourism, Egypt
- Rana Kotaiche, CEO and co-owner, Blessing, Lebanon
- Dalia Saafan, partner and head of Coaching, Edge Consultants, Egypt

"We're proud to partner with Bank of America on this innovative global program to further our collective goals of strengthening women's economic empowerment and fostering the next generation of women leaders in the Middle East and North Africa," said Alyse Nelson, president and CEO of Vital Voices. "By investing in their potential and enhancing their participation in the economy through intensive one-on-one mentoring, training and expanded networks, this initiative will provide them with increased access to opportunity and business growth."

The Global Ambassadors Program is part of Bank of America's and Vital Voices' ongoing commitment to investing in women's

leadership development, a goal guided by the belief that strong leaders are vital to healthy, vibrant communities and help advance economic growth. Over time, mentors help their mentees build critical communications, advocacy and business skills and develop strategies to advance their work. This is the last Global Ambassadors Program to take place in 2013, with previous mentoring forums held this year in Singapore and Brazil. Future locations will be announced in early 2014.

For more information on the Global Ambassadors Program, visit [www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors](http://www.bankofamerica.com/globalambassadors).

#### Bank of America

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#### Vital Voices

Vital Voices Global Partnership is a leading non-governmental organization that identifies, invests in and brings visibility to extraordinary women around the world by unleashing their leadership potential to transform lives and accelerate peace and prosperity in their communities. Founded by former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 1997, the organization trains and mentors women leaders as agents of transformative change in economic development, human rights and political participation. The Vital Voices Global Leadership Network includes more than 14,000 leaders representing 144 countries who have trained and mentored 500,000 additional women and girls in their communities. Visit [www.vitalvoices.org](http://www.vitalvoices.org) to learn more.

**[www.bankofamerica.com](http://www.bankofamerica.com)**

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