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Pioneer Feminist Experiences in Humanitarian and Volunteer Work

Ghiras series 12

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To historical pioneer female volunteers.

Rafidah Al-Islamiya Al-Ansariyah, a prime example in volunteerism, May Allah be pleased with her. Not only that she dedicated her life to treat the sick and care for them, but she also trained women to nurse patients. She had a notable pioneer role in medicine and nursing.

Another role model is Zobaida, Haroon al-Rashid's wife, who established Ain Zobaida, a water project to quench Mecca's pilgrimages' thirst. Also, Fatimah Al-Fihriya, who founded the world's first university at Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque.

To the female philanthropists in Qatar and the Arab and Islamic world who dedicated their efforts to support relief campaigns and did not spare any efforts to support aid campaigns, sponsoring orphans and needy families, advocating, and supporting humanitarian causes.

To social activists who have been working to achieve change and positivity in their societies and support those in need around the world.

To the young generation of women who are eager to carry out a humanitarian mission to serve humanity and realize development.

This book is dedicated to those women, both known and unknown.



Introduction 🕊

Volunteering is a great human value that plays a major role in societies' social development and promotes a sense of social responsibility and solidarity among individuals, which stems from our Islamic religious teachings.

Therefore, we are interested in monitoring female activists' philanthropic contributions within this context to inspire our younger generations interested in pursuing the same humanitarian path. Previously, we have published two books focusing on documenting notable humanitarian contributions. In 2016, we published "Youth experiences in volunteer work", which focused on five young Qatari activists' field experiences in volunteer work and their role in establishing community initiatives and projects.

In 2018, we published "Volunteers in the Field".

The book highlighted the experiences of 100 media personalities who actively participated in Qatar Charity's humanitarian work, initiatives, TV programs, humanitarian campaigns, and advocacy. As a continuation of this editorial series, Qatar Charity decided to dedicate a designated piece of work to focus on women's contributions through this book "Pioneer Feminist Experiences in Humanitarian and Volunteer Work" to document the experiences of three female personalities.



This book combines both literary biography and feature stories to highlight memories, emotions, and sentiments while providing information and facts. Through this book, we aspire to bridge the gap in humanitarian literary documentation and contribute to the humanitarian literary landscape in the Arab world.







Remarkable charitable contributions



Sheikha Rasid Al-Muftah

activities. Contributing to social development, advocacy, and cultural initiatives is my passion. I love fieldwork as well because it benefits me on many levels."

"I find myself in charity

Sheikha Rasid Al-Muftah is an educator and a social activist. She is a pioneer in the field of humanitarian work in Qatar. Since her childhood, Sheikha was an active volunteer, thanks to her mother, who instilled the value of volunteerism and social work in her. These values have guided her throughout her journey of humanitarian activism for 44 years.

Sheikha has participated in awareness campaigns, charity auctions, social development initiatives, lectures, and workshops inside Qatar and various aid campaigns in affected communities outside Qatar.

Her work has been acknowledged, and she received several awards in recognition of her contributions.



Seeds of good deeds

Sheikha's upbringing has significantly influenced her personality prompted her passion for humanitarian work. "My mother- May Allah protect her- used to make ice and wrap it in clean towels in the summer months. She used to share it with our friends and neighbors because people did not have fridges back then". Her mother is her role model. She taught her the values of giving and supported her in participating in volunteer work. Sheikha believes that the people of Qatar have a natural inclination towards philanthropy and volunteer work. For instance, one of the Qatari people's traditions in Ramadan is sharing food and warm meals with their neighbors, friends, and family members. She recalls beautiful memories from her childhood. saying: "my grandmother used to send our neighbors delicious traditional homemade dishes that she prepared herself, such as harees, lugimat, and dessert. In return, they sent us delicious

homemade dishes.

As a teacher, Sheikha started her volunteer work in social awareness and cultural work in 1976. She dedicated her efforts to spread awareness about women's crucial and positive role in their communities and to combat social misconceptions through lectures and public speeches. Inspired by her academic background in education,

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I started my volunteer journey with awareness lectures in 1976. Then, I started charity markets in Al Wakrah in 1980. After that, I expanded my activism areas to include mobilizing support for humanitarian campaigns and projects and conducting field visits in coordination with Qatar Charity. By 2004, I became a full-time humanitarian activist.



Sheikha was determined to realize social change and considered her activism part of her duties as an educator and a social activist.

When I worked as an Islamic religion teacher at Khawla bint al Azor primary school, nothing made me happy as much as kindly advising my students and seeing that positively reflecting on their behavior and their eagerness to learn new things and expand their knowledge.

Charity Markets

Since the 1980s, Sheikha became passionate about organizing charity events and markets annually with the help of her family and friends who shared the same passion with her. Together they managed successful charity markets in Al-Wakra and surrounding areas. Sheikha recalls beautiful memories from when they used to organize these events. "It was such a beautiful memory! I loved the charity market. You can see people's

good deeds and eagerness to help others manifest as they donate food and money to the needy. These markets left a powerful positive impact on our community." Sheikha said.

When we asked her about her voluntary and humanitarian work motives, Sheikha said: "My purpose is to please God Almighty and serve my community by giving back." Empathy is another motive, she added. I feel sorry when I see other human beings suffer because they cannot cover their basic needs like food, shelter, or medicine. My heart goes out to those who suffer through humanitarian crises such as displacement.



I have also realized the importance of benefitting others in Islam through which one obtains a great reward when they help people. I thank Allah that I had my mother to support and motivate me. I am also grateful for my husband's support and encouragement to carry on with my mission.

Since the 1980s, Sheikha has been participating in mobilizing support and donations for charitable campaigns launched in Qatar, particularly urgent assistance campaigns in crisis-stricken countries such as Palestine, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After becoming a full-time humanitarian activist, Sheikha also went on field visits to assist affected communities and support development projects.

Mrs. Sheikha Rashid Al Muftah's journey in the voluntary and charitable fields has witnessed multiple turning points. For instance, in advocacy, Sheikha worked within programs, projects, and local initiatives that had a significant impact on society.

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My mother is my role model. I look up to her. She supported me throughout my humanitarian journey and my volunteer work through donation and educating others. I must admit that my husband and my children had a crucial role too in my humanitarian mission, as they always supported me.







Proud moments

One of the programs that I am proud to have worked with is the educational. cultural program, which is the first community program of its kind launched by Qatar Charity in 2003. Through this program, Qatar Charity aimed to expand its work areas to include launching awareness and educational campaigns benefit the local community. Through this program, I was able to communicate with the public through lessons, lectures, courses, awareness, and educational discussions, targeting teachers, parents, school students, and community gatherings.

Additionally, she cherishes her experience in the "Joy and good deeds" initiative, through which the money gifted to the bride and groom at weddings was collected and donated to support charitable projects as a gift to the newly married couple.

Umm Muhammad has also participated in awareness and educational campaigns such as "Turn your bad deeds into good deeds", "My values my identity," "Your achievement is your legacy" and "Live responsibly" affiliated with the Rikaz project to enhance positive attitudes and morals in "Kuwait". In addition to school campaigns and student camps for girls, such as "Royal Leadership 2009" and "The First Voluntary Work Week" camp organized under the Abdullah Abdul-Ghani Education Center. Umm Muhammad also took part in several campaigns by the Ministry of Social Affairs campaigns targeting the elderly, such as the "Barakat Al-Bayt Campaign", which means the blessing of the house. Phase III in 2012. The campaign aimed to educate the public about the importance of providing adequate care for elderly family members and persons with disabilities.

In addition to her work in awareness campaigns, Umm Muhammad had



participated in social and development research work related to women. children, family, and civil society organizations. She participated in specialized conferences and seminars inside and outside Qatar under the name of Qatar Charity, such as the 1995 First Women's Conference in Doha. and other conferences such as the 2004 World Family Conference held in Doha, and the Preparatory Conference of the International Islamic Committee for Women and Children, held in Cairo in 2004. Added to that, she presented a research work titled "The role of Qatari women in sustainable development" at the 2007 forum "Women's Role in Sustainable Development in the Arab world" held in Rabat, Morocco.

Devoted to philanthropy

Umm Muhammad retired from her job in 2003 as a school principal. After that, she devoted more time to charity work, which positively reflected her work with Qatar Charity inside and outside Qatar. This marked a new chapter in

her life where she became the head of the women's branch of Qatar Charity. She believes that being devoted to participating more in charity activities through institutional channels is very important because it allows us to be more productive and dedicate more time to focus on realizing positive change in our communities.

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Becoming a full-time
humanitarian in
2004 allowed me to
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and network within the
sector to develop my
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focus more on delivering
lectures.



"this move allowed me to communicate with female philanthropists and network within the sector to develop my capabilities through workshops, courses, fieldwork in disaster and crisis-stricken regions, and focus more on cultural and awareness community programs." she says.

Fieldwork

Umm Muhammad's first field visit was to Kvravzstan in 2004, during which they participated in the inauguration of Doha School. During her field visit, she examined and evaluated the humanitarian needs of impoverished areas and affected communities. She also traveled to Kenya - in the same year - to provide urgent aid in response to the famine. Then, she traveled to Mauritania to participate in the Hamad Hospital launch along with an official Qatari delegation in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. She also took part in the El-Ayoun camps' inauguration to combat blindness and follow up on various projects. In Yemen, she participated in

the launch of (Dar Al-Rayaheen) – an orphanage-- in the city Al- Hudaydah that provides social care for orphans in the city. She was also among the field team that provided aid amid the events of Sa'dah. Finally, yet importantly, she attended a collective wedding ceremony that was sponsored by His Highness the Father Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani in Sana'a.

Indonesia was also among the countries that she visited, during which the Al-Rayyan Village project was inaugurated for those affected by the tsunami to provide decent housing for them. She also visited Al-Tarahom Center, which her uncle and maternal uncle have donated for.

She has also visited Djibouti for the inauguration of the "Dohat Al-Khair" model village. She has also visited Niger twice to attend the inauguration of Rohama'a village. Then, she visited Bangladesh several times to visit the "eye camps", and follow up on other development and income-generating projects. In Turkey, Sheikha worked to provide relief to refugees on the Turkish-







Syrian border and attended the launch of several Projects for their benefit. In Pakistan, she provided urgent relief aid amid the earthquake that hit the country. In Jordan, she visited the refugee camps to provide relief to Syrian refugees and follow up on Qatar Charity's social centers that provide services to Palestinians in camps, such as Gaza and Al-Baqaa camp.

Sheikha believes that such visits and fieldwork are crucial for volunteers and humanitarian workers because they get to see and evaluate the humanitarian conditions of targeted communities and learn more about the devastating impact of poverty, crises, and disasters on individuals. Such visits will instigate humanitarian activists to devote more time to serve affected individuals and victims to alleviate their pain and distress, advocate their cause, and deliver their reality.

Sheikha recalls her first visit to Kyrgyzstan, saying: "After I witnessed the humanitarian conditions there, I went on to advocate their cause through lectures in schools and public

institutions in Qatar. My speeches were more influential because I was able to deliver true-life stories from the field, which in return, resulted in more engagement and generous contributions".

Umm Muhammad particularly cherishes her first field visit for two main reasons. Firstly, she raised one million Riyals for charity from philanthropists in her Wakra and Doha cities after her fieldwork. She handed over the donated amount to Qatar Charity to invest it

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I believe that I was blessed to be chosen by Allah Almighty to serve others.

Being a humanitarian is a great blessing that changed my life for the better.



in an educational and developmental charitable project. Um Muhammad was keen on following up the execution of the project with QC that was aimed at providing high-quality social care for orphans. "during my field visit. I noticed that there were no care centers for male orphans, although there was one center for females. However, a government sector allocated land to build a specialized care center for male orphans. I immediately decided to raise funds to fund the building construction", Sheikha added. The center, which comprised three floors, dormitory, activities hall, library, and a kitchen, was called "Mafateh al Khair", since most of the donation was from al Muftah family in Qatar.

We asked Um Muhammad about her favorite humanitarian field; she said, "I found myself in development work". I worked in many development projects, such as multiservice complexes, model villages, schools, health centers, drilling wells, and income-generating projects, which aim to provide a dignified life for beneficiaries. In fact, I

was able to mobilize support for such projects over a long period. I also find myself in awareness and educational campaigns inside Qatar, since I am passionate about giving lectures and influencing people," she added. Since she dedicated her life and effort to volunteer work, it has left a significant imprint on her life and her mindset, on both professional and personal levels.

On the professional level, she believes that charitable work is no longer limited to organizing charity markets once a year or charitable dishes from time to time; rather, it has expanded to focus on developmental activities that place a real change in people's lives. This includes but is not limited to building and operating projects in the educational, health, housing and water sectors, as well as activating partnerships for collective work and advocacy to mobilize support.

She added that one of the most important things and skills that workers in the humanitarian field should acquire is devotion to Allah Almighty, self-discipline and passion



for work, promotion of partnerships and cooperation, and knowledge about the work mechanisms and regulations. It is also essential to pay attention to management and other related humanitarian aspects that are continually evolving and changing.

On a personal level, she added that charity work had had a profound and long-lasting impact on her life. It was emotionally rewarding and a great source of happiness and fulfillment. I believe that I was blessed to be chosen by Allah Almighty to serve others. Being a humanitarian is a great blessing that changed my life for the better.

I think that both males and females have equal roles in the humanitarian field. Their efforts complement each other, and Allah Almighty will equally reward them. Allah Says in holy Qura'an {do good; that ye may prosper.} and, {So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it}. Besides, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said, "Women are the twin halves of men". Therefore, we are obligated to serve our communities and benefit people. She

considers women's participation in this field is vital, citing examples of women who have been role models. Islam celebrated and honored many female figures for their notable contributions and services for their community and Islam's message.

Khadija, May Allah be pleased with her, the prophet's wife, has supported him morally and financially. Islam has also celebrated the legacy of many women who had significant roles during exceptional times where they treated the wounded and the sick and

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Qatari women are natural givers and nurturers; hence, they are passionate about philanthropy and charity work, whether through volunteering or donating. They are also willing to conduct field visits.







providing food. Another role model is Zobaida, Haroon al-Rashid's wife, who established Ain Zobaida, a water project to quench Mecca's pilgrimages' thirst. Also, Fatimah Al-Fihriya, who found the world's first university at Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque.

Inspired by her long humanitarian journey, Sheikha adds, "Qatari women are natural providers and nurturers; hence, they are passionate about philanthropy and charity work, whether through volunteering or donating. They're also willing to conduct field visits." This is cultural and religious heritage, which is evident in the many humanitarian female figures who left a positive impact on their communities by volunteering and donating for aid campaigns through charity organizations or radio programs such as the Qura'an radio's "Tafreej Korba", to alleviate the suffering of those in need.

She talked about honorable examples of female social figures in Qatar, such as social activist Fatima Al-Ali, Mrs. Amal Al-Mannai, CEO of Qatar Social

Work, Dr. Noura Al-Hanzab, Al-Hanzab Qur'an Center, and Mrs. Salma and Mrs. Banna Al-Harami, Qudurat Center For development. She also mentioned the inspiring example of Dr. Moza Al-Kaabi, Ms. Buthaina Abdullah Al Abdul-Ghani. Abdullah Abdul-Ghani Foundation for Cultural Communication, her mother, Aisha Ahmed Mubarak Al-Muftah, and many other notable women who have participated in humanitarian work and empowered other women to have active roles. Umm Muhammad believes that the Qatari society, whose people are known for their generosity and love for humanitarian work, is an encouraging environment that celebrates Qatari female activists and encourages women and girls to participate in the humanitarian field actively. She also reaffirms the family's crucial role in encouraging their children to participate in humanitarian action and volunteer work and instill humanitarian values in them from a young age. Also, schools and civil society organizations' roles are vital in promoting volunteering and humanitarian activism within the society through awards, launching initiatives



and campaigns, and educating the public about the powerful impact of the civil society sector on community development.

All these women inspired her journey. She believes that their influential role has guided her humanitarian mission and kept her motivated to realize real change in her local community. She states that the perfect role model is Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who had a tender heart for the poor, orphans, and vulnerable people. Muhammad, peace be upon him said "I and the one who takes the responsibility of an orphan will be in Paradise". He, PBUH, also said, "The most beloved deed to Allah is to make a Muslim happy".

Her Mother, Mrs. Aisha Mubarak al Muftah, she adds, is another role model that influenced her passion for humanitarian work as she supported her throughout her journey and was proud of her mission from the very beginning. She recalls her when her mother received the Supreme Council for Family Affairs' award on international

women's day a few years ago for her humanitarian efforts. When her mother received al Majlis award, which was worth 25.000 QR at that time, she donated it to buy a house for Zalfia as a wedding gift, an orphan girl she met in Kyrgyzstan, who also worked as a supervisor in the orphans' social care center. A house for orphans like Zalfia in Kyrgyzstan was unattainable as houses there can cost at least the equivalent of 36.000 QR. So, Sheikha says, my mother decided to cover

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the costs of the house for the married couple.

Among those honorable persons who inspired Sheikha's journey was Dr. Abdulrahman Sumait- May Allah has mercy on his soul- who had left a mark through his humanitarian work and charity contributions. His mission and influence have impressed Sheikha and motivated her to pursue the same path.

As Sheikha reflects black on her humanitarian journey, she recalls many emotional and joyful moments that had a profound and deep impact on her life. Among these moments was when she worked with blind patients in the medical camps 'eye camps', where surgeries and medical treatment was provided for local patients. Her soul, she recalls, was immersed in great joy and gratitude the moment these blind people restored their vision. This moment of joy encouraged me to work more to mobilize support and raise donations to expand our medical projects. She has succeeded in raising one million Riyals in funds to build six more medical camps in Sudan,

Bangladesh, Morocco, and Somalia.

Another reflective moment was in the horn of Africa, where Sheikha was working to provide aid to the local communities that were heavily affected by the drought in 2006. She remembers animals seeing dead shepherd devastation for losing their cattle, which was all they had. I cannot forget that moment, she says, when a shepherd asked Qatar Charity to provide him with cattle to compensate for his loss. One of the field team members asked him, and how will you feed them? He replied with astonishing affirmation, saying: Allah will surely provide them. That moment changed me. His words deeply touched me, and I was overwhelmed with his faith and assurance.

Sheikha witnessed many joyful and rewarding moments during her charity mission as well. Among those moments was when her mother was awarded the Supreme Council for Family Affairs' award for her humanitarian efforts-as she mentioned earlier. Sheikha believes that her mother deserves this recognition for her positive influence on



her children and her community. She is a role model that should be celebrated.

Sheikha, herself was also received the volunteer work award from the organizing committee for volunteer work in Qatar in 2009- individuals category- in recognition for her efforts and contributions in the field of community development.

She has also received an award from the Mo'meneen organization in the Emirates of Ajman in 2009 as a pioneering personality in the development field –community service category. She considers these awards an acknowledgment of her role in the social and humanitarian sector and an appreciation of its influence, which, indeed, motivates her to make greater efforts in the future.

We asked Sheikha about the best way she proposes to transfer this knowledge to the younger generations. She said through workshops, meetings, seminars, and conferences. Moreover, we should utilize modern technologies and social media to exchange ideas

and transfer experiences, organize field visits with younger cadres, record and document experiences. Worth mentioning that Mrs. Sheikha has a notable media presence in local media. She is a regular guest on local morning shows such as Al Rayyan TV morning show, where she discusses the latest volunteer and charity initiatives. particularly during religious occasions such as Ramadan and pilgrimage season. She had also presented her own program on Al Rayyan TV in 2013.

Finally, in order to ensure expand the community development sector, Umm Muhammad advised young cadres wishing to engage in voluntary work to arm themselves with professional knowledge through training and benefit from the experiences of others, devotion, and motivation.







A long humanitarian journey



Badriya Muhammad al-Yakout

"I vowed to devote my time to contribute to different charity activities"



The second female Qatari humanitarian figure intended to be highlighted in this book is Badriya Muhammad al-Yakout, who started her journey at an early age, and has been active for 25 years.

Badriya had distinguished contributions in a broad spectrum of charity and development fields, including awareness and advocacy, workshops, campaigns, fundraising, lectures. charity markets, and youth camps cooperation with government organizations civil and society organizations.

She has also participated in humanitarian work with humanitarian institutions (relief and development) through field visits to refugee camps, participation in medical camps, and following-up development projects in underprivileged communities, whether in the field of health, education, shelter, water, social care, or economic empowerment projects.



Malfa al Ajaweed

Her family instilled the love for charity and philanthropy in her at a very young age. I grew up seeing my parents' passion for charity and volunteering, she said. I witnessed their keenness to help others. Our house was open to everyone in our neighborhood which was called Malfa al Ajaweed. Even after her marriage, Badriya continued to lend a helping hand to those in need. She believes that her charity work was a blessing. Inspired by my family, I continued my volunteer work after marriage, and I was lucky to have a supportive husband who motivated me to continue working and volunteering, she added.

Since her childhood, Badriya grew up believing in the power of humanitarian work and its vital role in transforming our communities and instigating a collective sense of social responsibility.

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My parents instilled the love for philanthropy at a young age.

Our house was open to everyone in our neighborhood, and it was called Malfa al Ajaweed.





The beginnings in Japan

Reflecting on that thought, she said, "I vowed to devote my time to contribute to different charity activities". That is why you will find me working in cooperation with ministers and institutions on different charity and awareness campaigns. She prays for Allah almighty to grant her devotion and dedication to carry on with her mission and inspire her children to follow the same path. Muhammad PBUH said, "The most beloved people to Allah are those who are most beneficial".

When we asked her about her first participation in volunteer work, she said: It was in 1983 when she was in Japan, where her husband was working in the diplomatic corps. She participated in organizing a charity market whose proceeds were allocated to the affected residents of Palestinian camps in Lebanon, with the participation of most of the embassies in Tokyo at that time. The contribution was influential because it made her believe that charity work should not be limited by distance or borders. It should be for everyone

everywhere, regardless of their color, gender, race, and religion. She considers this participation as a starting point for her contribution to subsequent volunteer activities and initiatives within her country and across the world.



Life Maker

Badriya started her professional career as a teacher, an experimental research teaching member. She began her work with female students in universities and schools through camps, initiatives, and youth clubs within the Qatari charity organizations' local activities.

Mrs. Badriya worked as a member of the Board of Directors of the Life Makers (for girls) under the Doha Youth Center, through which she worked on several religious, social, and educational programs from 2004 to 2014. She is proud of all the girls in the Life Makers program who became leaders and activists.



Additionally, she also worked as a supervisor in the "Nawarah" campaign, an educational campaign that Qatar Charity launched in 2010 and 2011 to promote positive behaviors among female students in girls' schools. Badriya has also participated in the "Celebrate your modesty" campaign, organized by the Qatari women association in cooperation with the Qodorat development center, aimed to promote modesty and Qatari identity.

Volunteering is a great humanitarian that plays a major role in the development of societies and promoting a sense of social responsibility and solidarity among individuals.



Awareness campaigns

Among the important campaigns that Badriya participated in was Rikaz, which aimed to promote morals and ideals in Qatar under the supervision of Eid Charity. The campaign included "Turn your bad deeds into good deeds", "My values my identity", "Let's live responsibly". Moreover, she participated in an educational program on marriage, which was held in Moza bint Muhammad, under the ministry of endowment and in cooperation with E'faf under Raf institution, and Life makers under the Doha Youth Center. Furthermore, she took part in the "shine" awareness campaign for middle schools and high school girls from 2010-2017 in Kawthar high school for girls.

She has also managed Nawarah program, which aims to instill positive values and morals among schoolgirls. Moreover, she participated in the "Child's well personality" awareness campaign, and another specialized initiative on elderly care under Ihsan Qatari center implemented across middle schools in







Qatar between 2015-2016. In addition to the blessing of the house under the ministry of social affairs and the "Don't touch me" campaign, a national campaign that aims to raise awareness about child abuse and harassment. The campaign was launched by the Social and Rehabilitation Community Center (Aman). She has also taken part in organizing the activities of the "New converts" event organized by Qatar Guest Center in 2012.

In 2015, she was chosen as an ambassador to the fourth edition of the National Program for Promoting Values for School Students, "Sanafi Wa habat al Rih" of Qatar Charity.

Girls camps

Umm Ahmed has also worked as a youth camp supervisor and has delivered educational programs to promote positive values and promote constructive behaviors. Among these programs are "Omrah .. My beginning", which is an Umrah trip organized by "Summit" Girls Club of Qatar Charity with the participation of (30) female

university students over two consecutive years, 2007 and 2008. Also, she took part in the "Sea and Sky" camp for girls and their families, organized by Summit center for girls in 2009, in cooperation with several coaches and educators from Qatar and outside Qatar. Among the participants were Ms. Widad al Essa, Dr. Ayoob al-Ayoob, and Dr. Abd al Rahman al Harami. Besides, Badriya was among the first volunteer week camp organizing committee under the Abdullah Abd al Ghani center.

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I am proud to be an ambassador for many awareness and educational programs.



Jury committees

She also chaired many jury committees in educational and cultural events and competitions in Qatari schools, e.g., "The chanting pearls" for girls, "Qura'an Pearls" under the title "The Spring of Our Hearts" in cooperation with al Resala high school for girls among others.

As of 2006, Umm Ahmed became devoted to charity work. She was appointed head of the philanthropy liaising department at Qatar Charity, a significant milestone in her path and an opportunity to focus her efforts on humanitarian work in mobilizing support, fundraising, awareness campaigns, conducting field visits, charity auctions, and launching development projects.

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I devoted my efforts and time to mobilizing support and raising funds through Qatar Charity since 2006, through which I was able to visit camps and deliver humanitarian aid.

In the field

Since 2007. Badriya has been conducting field visits through Qatar Charity. Her first field visit was to Mauritania. where Qatar Charity inaugurated Hamad Hospital in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Then, in 2008, she traveled to Banda Aceh in Indonesia to attend the inauguration of Al Rayyan village, which was heavily affected by the tsunami. She also attended a collective wedding in Yemen in 2013. The year 2017 was busy with fieldwork,



including a trip to Djibouti to inaugurate Dohat Al-Khair village and deliver relief aid. She also visited Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in the same year to work on several development projects and providing relief aid.

And last but not least, she headed to Morocco to attend a collective wedding of 200 couples. In 2018, she made two visits, the first to Sudan to inaugurate development projects and the other to Indonesia to inaugurate the "Tamim Al Majd" educational complex in Subang and other projects. Besides, throughout the past few years, she organized and operated several medical convoys and camps in Bangladesh, Morocco, Sudan, and Sri Lanka to perform ophthalmological surgeries patients in cooperation with Al Basar international organization. Last year, she visited Syrian refugee camps on the Syrian-Turkish borders to deliver urgent aid and follow up on the designated community centers.



Various humanitarian contributions

Umm Ahmed participated in Preparatory Committee for the First Humanitarian Forum in Support of the Palestinian People (Palestine.. We are all for You) in 2014. In addition to the Preparatory Committee of the Humanitarian Development Forum in Support of the Palestinian People held March 2017, organized by Qatar Charity. She took part in organizing the charity dinner that was held in cooperation with the Turkish Embassy in the State of Qatar in 2019 to mobilize support for various projects for the benefit of Syrian refugees. Umm Ahmed believes that dedicating her time to a broad spectrum of volunteer activities and humanitarian work is a blessing that changed her life. Such work has broad prospects; therefore, mobilizing diverse efforts complement sectors' collective mission to achieve the intended goals and targets. Badriya has been active in Qatar in the awareness and educational fields. e.g., planning and executing programs,







projects, and awareness campaigns, through delivering lectures workshops, managing girls' camps and competitions ... etc. The aforementioned programs and initiatives were carried out in cooperation with government institutions. charity organizations, youth community centers, schools, and universities. Badriva has actively participated in humanitarian campaigns through advocacy, charity auctions and markets, conferences, and forums. She has also taken part in many field visits to deliver aid in communities affected by disasters or crises and follow up on development projects. Umm Ahmed believes that such diversity in the sector reflects positively on the outcome of collective work, increases the experiences of the humanitarian workers, and contributes to developing their skills and refining their potential.



Despite the expansion of the volunteer and humanitarian activities in which Umm Ahmed worked - and still does - she finds herself particularly in organizing activities for girls as she believed in women's vital role in serving society. Such activities include awareness and education initiatives, e.g. lectures, courses, workshops, or camps targeting young girls of all ages to prepare them to be future mothers and leaders. She stresses the importance of women's participation in field visits since women are already generous contributors.



Notable Qatari female humanitarians

Badriya pointed out that Qatari women have a notable and influential role in the humanitarian sector, whether through working in charity organizations or volunteering. Noting the prominent role of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, may Allah preserve her, in social and humanitarian work and her support for women's empowerment and roles in Qatar and in underdeveloped countries. Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser is a role model that inspires many women in Qatar to follow the same path. Badriya has praised current policies aimed at promoting volunteer work, including introducing volunteer work (volunteer hours) as a mandatory component of the academic requirements. She has also stressed the importance of promoting such activities among Qataris and residents, especially the youth segment, through incentives and highlighting young activists' roles. In addition, it is essential to involve young people in volunteering and humanitarian activities to raise

awareness about the importance of charity and volunteer work and encourage them to engage in it through social media and other effective communication means

Although Mrs. Badriya has been a full-time humanitarian worker since 2006, she believes charity work does not necessarily require full-time devotion, rather time management. Any individual can dedicate time to participate in volunteer work. Umm Ahmed advised all those wishing to volunteer and engage in humanitarian

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Qatari women's contributions in the humanitarian field are notable whether through donating or as a humanitarian worker.



activities to do so if they are passionate about it. Your contribution, she added, should stem from one's belief in the importance of volunteer work and devotion to please Allah SWT. She also stresses the importance of collective work and activating partnerships to realize tangible change.

An influential man

Badriya believes that it is vital to shed light on inspiring role models to encourage and motivate philanthropists who want to follow the same journey. She recalls one of the most inspiring activists in the field is her brother, Dr. Farid al-Yaqout, who devoted himself from a young age with a group of young people of his generation to carry out voluntary and charity work. Together with his friends, they overcame many challenges to work in poor communities. After 30 years of hard work, they were able to start their own foundation Al Basar foundation- registered in the UN-

that operates in vulnerable African and Asian communities. She also praises Dr. Abdulraham al Sumait, whom she considers one of the most influential men in our nation. She also praises many international figures in the humanitarian and philanthropy field, adding that such values stem from our Islamic faith.

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Exchanging knowledge and experiences comes with active participation, seminars, events, forums, and field visits.









Unforgettable moments

Among the unforgettable moments that I lived was in Indonesia, where I was supporting an orphaned child. I visited Jakarta in 2018 with a field team from Qatar Charity to deliver aid. After my arrival, I asked to meet with the boy to check on him. He was a high school student at that time. When I saw him, I assured him that I would keep supporting him until he graduates from college. However, I learned something that I was not prepared for. The young man has lung cancer. I could not hold my tears. The news was devastating. My humanitarian journey is full of breathtaking and astounding moments. Unforgettable moments that brought me tears, joy, content and extreme gratitude.



Closing remarks

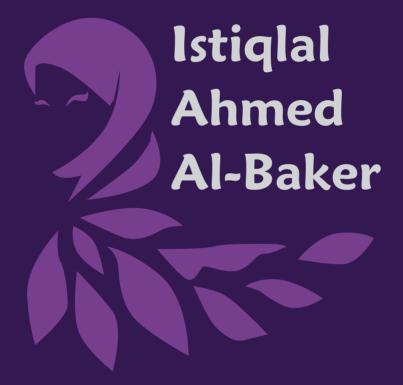
As we approached the end of our conversation, I asked her to give the younger generation a piece of advice. She said the value of a human stems from his or her sense of humanity, empathy, morals, and knowledge. Devotion to serving the community and our religion is the true value of an individual. Keep working and building your selves with knowledge and dedication to realize renaissance and development.

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Humanitarian work does not necessarily require being a full-time worker, rather time management.









Family
is where
altruism values
are made



Istiqlal Ahmed Al-Baker



"I feel compassion
and blessings fill my
heart whenever I
work with orphans,
underprivileged, or a
woman in need. This is
the essence and the true
gift of humanitarian
work."

Istiqlal Ahmed Al-Baker or Umm Ahmed grew up in a household that valued independence from a young age and the importance of empathy and compassion with one another. Her mother did not depend on helpers to manage to housekeep; instead, she involved her daughters. Istiqlal recalls being having responsibilities in the household.

Such upbringing did not just lead her to value independence and self-reliance but also initiated her love and passion for volunteering. Therefore, she grew up with a sense of responsibility towards her family, community, and nation.



Despite her long and diverse experiences in the field of volunteering, she believes that the family is the most critical factor to promote the value of volunteering.

What does she mean by this?

She wanted to emphasize several values associated with charity and humanitarian work. Such values can only be toughed- she believes- through parents and a continuous process of modeling. It also starts with the family because this is where children can practice helping family members and volunteering to help others. For Istiqlal, she still does so within her extended family.

She helps her daughters with their children, whom she cares for from time to time if their parents are busy. In fact, she is instilling the values of helping others, empathy, and compassion as well.

Her daughters were actively participating in volunteering initiatives since high school and college as well. When her daughters studied in England, they were keen on volunteering to help first-year female students through advising them and supporting them academically.

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Participating in diverse volunteering activities was a blessing from Allah.





Main supporter

Umm Ahmed is grateful for her husband's, Abdullah bin Hussein Al-Neama, role in supporting her journey, describing him as: "My main supporter and primary source of encouragement. Even when I worked for many or when I had to travel to attend meetings and fields work. She stressed the great importance of family and community support for the volunteers, noting that she and her husband traveled together many times on humanitarian missions.

Initial passion

Estiqlal traces the beginnings of her volunteer activity to the first book fair held at Qatar University during her second year of university in 1981-1982 when she was one of the organizers. The fair's proceeds were then allocated for the benefit of a humanitarian cause in cooperation with a charity organization in Qatar.

This event, she recalls, instilled a passion for volunteering within me. Since my participation in the exhibition, I became passionate about volunteer work, and I devoted my free time to charity.

After she graduated from Qatar University's College of Science - Geology, "Umm Ahmed" continued her volunteer activities-particularly charity markets- through charity events that were organized and supervised by the activist and educator Sheikha Rashid Al Muftah in Al Wakrah in the eighties and nineties. This was a critical phase in her life as she became invested in volunteering and serving her community.



Parks activities

Umm Ahmed started her professional career in the mid-eighties at the Ministry of Municipality and Agriculture. She was appointed as a manager of three local parks for women and girls: Al-Muntazah, Al-Khalifat, and Al-Lugta. Over her ten years of work, she organized and supervised several activities for children and teenagers (including skits, competitions, games, handicrafts workshops, charity potluck in cooperation with Qatar Charity ... etc.). Female employees from the three parks assisted her in carrying out the activities, in addition to female volunteers from the neighborhood. Throughout these events, Umm Ahmed left influenced many women, girls, and families who visited the park and participated in the events.



The second Women's Conference

Among the volunteer activities that Mrs. Estiqlal is proud of is organizing the "Second Women's Conference" under the slogan: Women and Community Development ... Roles and Spheres ", sponsored by the Doha Youth Center in 1996, and in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser. She considers participating in this event- which was her second volunteering initiative- was a turning point that promoted her understanding and helped her develop a unique vision.

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Qatari women and girls must support local voluntary efforts, especially during exceptional times.







By the year 2000, she embarked on a three-year experience in the Khebra (experience) center for training and development. She joined 30 other Qatari girls to study an integrated course by Dr. Jassem Al-Sultan. The course covers various topics such as evaluation, education, volunteering, skill development, and leadership. which improved her skills and raised her awareness about societal roles and leadership. This was a solid foundation for her following volunteer work as the director of Qimam Club of Qatar Charity in 2003, which continued for seven years. She achieved remarkable developments by organizing many community and creative activities for girls.



Istiqlal considers this phase of her life, which Qatar Charity has supported, among the most pleasant experiences where she organized awareness and skills development programs for the

young girls. All our team members including, volunteers, supervisors, and participants, were charged with motivation and power. You could sense the devotion for Allah SWT and dedication to realize positive change through our work on the girls that we were working with in the club.

Among the important activities implemented by Qimam Girls Club:

 "My Journey is My Beginning": It is an Umrah trip for university girls, accompanied by a program of activities, under the supervision of several educators. These trips for girls were new at the time and were carried out over a period of two years.

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Heading the Qimam

Center for girls was one of my favorite experiences in this field that influenced the youth through its programs.



 The participation of Qatar Charity volunteers in a youth forum for girls over two years under the supervision of Mrs. Buthaina Al-Ibrahim

Bahar and Sama (Sea and Sky) Program:

"Bahr and Sama": A week-long spring family camp, with the participation of 150 high school girls with their families, and it included lectures and workshops by specialists, consultants in the social, psychological, and health fields such as Dr. Ayoub Al-Ayoub, Dr. Musa Al-Juwaiser, Dr. Wedad Al-Issa, and others. It also included an exhibition of pioneering women's paintings. photography, and more. Umm Ahmed is proud of the girls who took part in the program, and are now setting an example in leadership and volunteer work, such as Aisha al-Nasr, Hesa al-Nasr, and Aisha al-Nisf, to name a few.

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The future of volunteer work is bright. This is evident in the progress we made in the field and the wide participation.

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Unforgettable visits

"Umm Ahmed" had the chance to conduct humanitarian fieldwork in 2003 in underdeveloped and affected communities that were exposed to disasters and crises. These visits, she added, were a major turning point in her life. She says: These visits will forever live in her memory because she has always felt that it was a great blessing that changes her life. She also believed that humanitarian field visits are vital to connect with those in need and see their struggle and suffering. Such images will change your perception forever, and you will perceive life in a different way, which will also instigate



you to offer and mobilize more support to help those in need. Among the countries that she visited to provide relief aid, follow-up projects, and launch development projects were Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Jordan, and others.

Key moments

One of the extraordinary situations was in Kyrgyzstan, where she visited an orphans' center and met with orphans sponsored by Qatar Charity there to check on them. Moreover, she recalls a beautiful memory when some children wanted to offer the field team members. some fruits and candy as a welcoming gesture. That moment touched her and left an everlasting impact on her heart. She notes that the lesson learned here is that the love of giving and altruism is an inherent value in the human soul. and it has nothing to do with poverty and wealth; rather, it is the willingness and intention to share and give, no matter how little you have.

Umm Ahmed will never forget her visits to Morocco to visit Qatar Charity's sponsored orphans there. She says-Qatar Charity was their protective companion from childhood to adulthood. The charity worked to provide care and protection to these children and improve their mothers' lives through income-generating projects.







Family counseling

In 2005, Um Ahmed obtained an online family certificate diploma to help families. This diploma has benefited many young girls and families through offering free online counseling sessions on specialized forums. She has also presented a well-received research paper in scientific conferences on family communication, which was cited as a reference in many research works.

Mrs. Istiqlal does not believe that volunteer work and community service should be limited to one field; instead, one should invest their talents and energy in its broad spectrum. She believes that the willingness of giving that God Almighty instills in human beings has no limits. For instance, there are those who can be innovative in one field, and there are those who can demonstrate a great deal of creativity in more than one field.



Temporary leave

Mrs. Estiqlal had to temporarily pause her volunteer and humanitarian activism in 2012 to focus on family members. She had to relocate to accompany her daughter to study abroad. She invested this period in continuing her studies. She obtained an MA degree in human resources. However, being distant from the humanitarian field has affected her wellbeing, and she suffered many health problems.



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I was saddened when
I moved to another
country; I was longing
for my volunteer work
and activism. This greatly
affected my health and
wellbeing.



When we asked her about the development of volunteer work and sector in the State of Qatar after four decades of continuous work and growth, as one of the pioneering activists, Umm Ahmed said: the future is promising. Moreover, the past years have contributed to promoting volunteering on different levels. "Young men and women are keen on participating in voluntary activities now. I see that many young activists are now launching many volunteer initiatives that are

supported by our local institutions and civil society organizations", she added. Volunteering is now a prevalent culture in our society,, as evidenced in the large turnout this year by citizens and residents to participate in volunteering initiatives aimed at combating the Coronavirus and raising awareness among our community members. The State of Qatar encourages and supports such efforts and gives all community members- including women and girls- the support and opportunities needed in this field, she added. The wide participation of women in our community is a result of the support and encouragement that they received over the years. She believes that Qatari women and girls must support local voluntary efforts, especially during exceptional times.



A golden advice

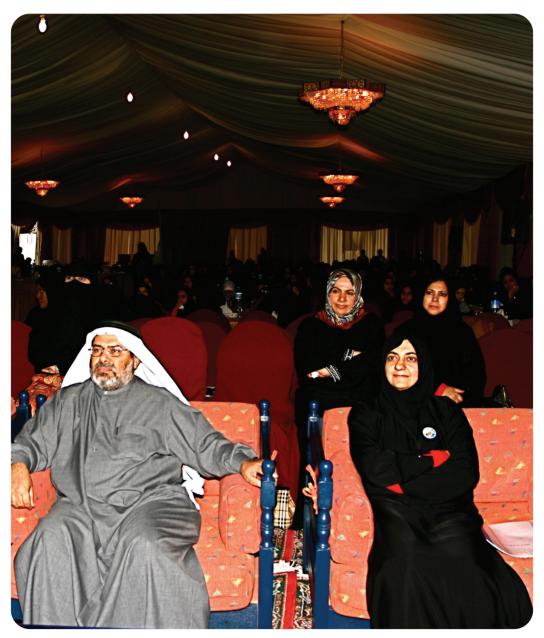
Umm Ahmed believes that exchanging volunteers and workers' knowledge and experiences from the field is crucial to instill the love of philanthropy in younger generations. Furthermore, encouraging their participation this field is significantly essential to connect them with experienced workers and organizations within the sector. I also recommend documenting their experiences on publication and media platforms. However, she said that she was hesitant to share her knowledge through this book, fearing that pride might linger to her soul. Yet, her husband and many of her family members encouraged her to document her experience to make it available to the audience to inspire young women and girls who want to follow the same path.

Last but not least, building on the knowledge she acquired through three decades of activism, she advises those who work in the sector or serve the community to call to mind what Allah SWT says in Qura'an { So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it}. Besides, it is important to have pure intentions and serve your community and people for the sake of Allah and the great reward, thawab.

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Seeing people's lives transforming during my fieldwork gave me great hope.







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