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With gender parity in construction still far-off, the big 5 launches Women in Construction

A traditionally male dominated industry, construction presents major challenges for equal opportunities for women.

Press Release

In 2018, the largest construction event in the Middle East, The Big 5, will launch the first “Women in Construction Seminar & Awards” in association with [Mott MacDonald](#), organisers dmg events announce. In line with the event’s broader mission to develop the construction industry, The Big 5’s Women in Construction aims at supporting its work force by empowering women in a sector that accounts for 10% of the UAE’s GDP.

Josine Heijmans, Portfolio Director of The Big 5, says:

"The UAE Government is setting an example, with federal institutions leading the way in implementing the UAE's vision to boost gender parity. Today, nine female ministries are part of the country's cabinet, and a UAE Gender Balance Council is at work to support women's empowerment and promote equality." I trust The Big 5's Women in Construction will go a long way in supporting and achieving this mission."

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Taking place on November 28 at the [Dubai World Trade Centre](#), the Women in Construction Seminar & Awards will offer strong, powerful and successful women an international stage where to share their experience and advance the entire

industry.

Cynthia Corby, Audit Partner & Middle East Construction Industry Leader at Deloitte & Touche Middle East and one of the Middle East's Most Influential Women 2018 according to Forbes, Hind Alowais, Vice President **International Participants** at EXPO 2020, and Shorouq Hamawi, **Regional Communications** and Marketing Manager at **Mott MacDonald**, are among the many high profile professionals who confirmed their participation in The Big 5 program.

"Our goal is to recognize great women in the construction sector and offer them an opportunity to meet, exchange ideas and overcome common challenges," explains Heijmans.

Although the number of women in construction has grown sensibly over the last decade, women are still outnumbered and keep facing a wide range of challenges, industry experts point out.

According to Dr. Shetha Al-Zubaidi, CEO Alfahim Avenue Group of Companies - Brookson Project Management and a speaker at The Big 5's Women in Construction, the presence and status of women in engineering has improved dramatically over the last half century. However, the progression of professional women into positions of leadership has been slow.

"Many women have worked hard to take gender out of the equation to simply be recognized for their skills and talents. Integrating leadership into one's core identity is particularly challenging for women, who must establish credibility in a culture that is deeply conflicted about whether, when, and how they should exercise authority."

Dr. Al-Zubaidi adds: *"In Dubai, women have a lot of opportunities within the world of engineering, but I still think we have some way to go before both sexes are equally represented in construction leadership positions. Engineering still needs more women."*

[Read the full interview with Dr. Shetha Al-Zubaidi]

Marcus Taylor, Managing Partner Taylor Sterling, urges to change the culture that has been prevalent not only in the Middle East, but globally.

"We need to shape a more inclusive environment, and part of this is closing the gender pay gap. The disparate pay between men and women is a barrier to attracting and retaining the construction sector's female workforce."

Commenting on the women entering the construction sector, Taylor adds: *"Over the past five years or so, some of the most talented individuals I have had the pleasure of working within the construction industry have been female. I also*

believe that more gender diverse teams are more innovative, collaborative and ultimately more successful."

[Read the full interview with Marcus Taylor]

Dr. Al-Zubaidi concludes: "The most significant reasons why you haven't got enough women in the senior side of the industry is the barriers they face re-entering the workplace after having children. But if the industry is to deliver the billions of essential infrastructure projects the country has lined up, it is essential to keep this workforce in place and attract them back into the industry after a career break."

Dr. Al-Zubaidi, will also be part of the judging panel for the Women in Construction Awards, together with Anwaar **Al Shimmari**, Chief Innovation Officer and Director of Design at the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, Christopher Seymour, the Managing Director of **Mott MacDonald**, and Ben Piper, Partner and Design Principal at Killa Design. Categories include Women in Leadership, Next Generation Woman of the Year, and Employer of the Year Championing Inclusion & Diversity.

The Women in Construction Seminar & Awards is one of the new features introduced this year at The Big 5. On November 26, the first FutureTech Construction Summit will help construction industry professionals achieve higher productivity, greater sustainability and enhanced affordability in their projects

with the help of technology.

During the four days of the show, a dedicated Live Innovation Zone will host an interactive display of the most innovative products presented in real time. Also, at The Big 5 Start-up City, selected start-ups in the construction industry will present the technologies and solutions that promise to shake-up the built world.

The popular Big 5 CPD-certified workshops will come back this year running in four dedicated theaters as BIM Talks, Architecture Talks, Project Management Talks and Design Talks. In total, more than 100 educational sessions, including free workshops and high-level summits across the six co-located events will bring a wealth of knowledge to the construction community.

From 26-29 November 2018, The Big 5 will host over 2,500 exhibiting companies from around the globe. The Big 5 Solar, the [Urban Design & Landscaping Expo](#), HVAC R Expo, Middle East Concrete and The Big 5 Heavy will all run alongside The Big 5 this year, offering a one stop shop for all things construction.

To know more about The Big 5, visit www.thebig5.ae .

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