eJOURNALUSA

How to Start a Business—p. 11

ENTERPRISING WOMEN, THRIVING SOCIETIES

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About This Issue

Policymakers and business experts have pitched entrepreneurship to women as a way to realize their aspirations and make a good living. Several multinational corporations have programs to promote women entrepreneurs, including Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Women, Ernst & Young's Winning Women, Coca-Cola's 5 BY 20 and Walmart's Global Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative. All of this activity begs the question: Is this merely good corporate public relations, or is there actually a business case for women's entrepreneurship?

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Study after study has shown that the economic empowerment of women leads to poverty alleviation. As countries' economic output grows, the range of options for women to contribute to the economy expands. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, citing economists, said that "women's increased participation in the global labor market in the developed world accounted for a greater share of global growth than China's" over the last decade.

Around the world women entrepreneurs are increasingly visible as they start and grow their ventures into successful small businesses or global enterprises. Yet women's business potential is far from being fully realized. In both developed and developing countries, would-be women entrepreneurs need better access to training, capital and technical resources, as well as more exposure to business opportunities in the greater global supply chain.

My portfolio, a part of the U.S. Department of State's Global Entrepreneurship Program, consists of several initiatives designed to help women realize their entrepreneurial potential. The African Women's Entrepreneurship Program brings women business owners from sub-Saharan Africa to the United States for training and valuable business networking. In September 2011, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum's Women and the Economy Summit laid a foundation for the continuing agenda of empowering women in the 21 APEC economies. And the Pathways Access Initiative (PAI) was built as a pilot program for training and connecting qualified women-owned businesses to U.S. corporations seeking to diversify and expand their supply chains. The goal for the PAI model is to "go global" in the near future.

This issue of *eJournal USA* encourages women to pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions. It cites the experiences of businesswomen around the world and features successful women entrepreneurs who can serve as role models. It also identifies barriers and best practices for overcoming them. I hope you will find the contents inspiring and useful. ■

—Jackie Piatt Spedding

Courtesy of Jackie Piatt Spedding

Jackie Piatt Spedding is the senior adviser for the Global Women's Business Initiative in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs in the U.S. State Department.

Help yourself to the products of entrepreneurship!

©Getty Images

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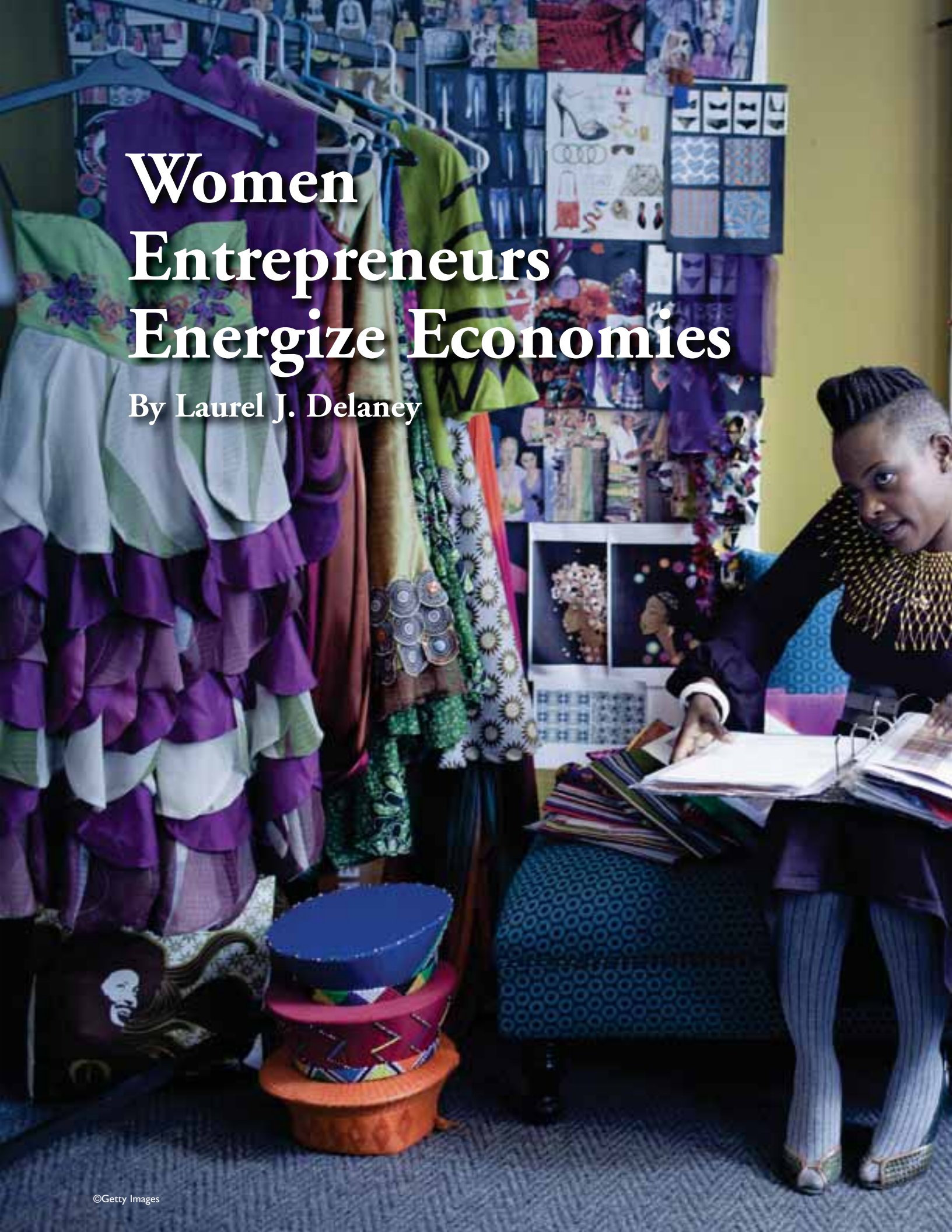
Women Entrepreneurs Energize Economies

By Laurel J. Delaney



©Getty Images

As a mother, fashion designer, entrepreneur and actress, South African Nkhensani Nkosi has mastered multitasking.

Top: Careful with your needle: Afghan-American Rangina Hamidi, right, owns a clothing business in Kandahar, Afghanistan.
Right: No shell game here: An entrepreneur arranges sea shell products in a mall in Pasay City near Manila, Philippines.

When I became an entrepreneur, I did not have a pile of money, a safety net, a mentor, or even a foreseeable customer. Nor did I have experience running a business: In 1985, I left a comfortable export position at a small manufacturing company to start what later became GlobeTrade.com, a global marketing consulting company. The risks involved in becoming an entrepreneur scared the daylights out of me. It is these risks that all women face when they take action to improve their lives or realize their dreams.

In my case, what I had was energy, passion, limited experience, a desire to learn more and a "simple" (not life-changing) idea to help companies expand their businesses internationally. Once I focused on those positive characteristics and the possibility of success, the risks started to melt away in my mind. I began to work up the courage and prepare to start a business.

My first step was to try exporting specialty food products. I had already learned how to export specialty cleaning products while working for a manufacturer. This knowledge was clearly transferable. I chose food exporting because I love to eat — doesn't everybody? — and I knew intuitively that there had to be an overseas market.

The risks involved in becoming an entrepreneur scared the daylights out of me.

I prepared by reading about 25 books on the subject, examining online resources and then took the plunge. My first sales call was to a local branch office of a major Japanese trading company that had headquarters in Tokyo. I set up an appointment with the manager of the food division, sold him on my line of cookies, and the rest is history. Up until that point, I had never made a sales call to a Japanese person, never sold a food item in my life, and truly had no idea of what I was doing. But the point is that you oftentimes must learn about starting a business the hard way — by doing it.

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©AP Images

Aren't they beautiful? Secretary of State Clinton admires jewelry made and marketed by businesswomen in Zambia.

Since that initial sale, GlobeTrade has achieved success and developed a reputation worldwide as a leading expert on global small business.

My experience is not unique. I am just one of an increasing number of women worldwide who overcome fears, inhibitions and external barriers to pursue their ideas and generate primary income through entrepreneurship.

Courtesy of the U.S. State Department

A U.S. business expert mentors an Indonesian entrepreneur in Jakarta as part of the U.S. Global Entrepreneurship Program delegation in 2011.

Women Entrepreneurs: Gaining Ground

Women launch businesses mostly for the same reasons men do — to build wealth, to capitalize on their ideas and to be their own bosses, according to a 2010 Kauffman Foundation study. In the poorest countries most women start businesses out of economic necessity.

In 2010, more than 104 million women between the ages of 18 and 64 were actively engaged in starting and running new business ventures, contributing significantly to the economies in 59 countries

©Getty Images

Buy your milk and cookies here: Benita Lica, a member of Peru's Collagua community, runs her grocery in the Colca Canyon.

Women launch businesses for the same reasons men do – to build wealth, to capitalize on their ideas and to be their own bosses.

studied by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), an international university research consortium. Another 83 million women were running established businesses that they had started more than three years earlier.

In recent years, the rate of business formation by women has significantly outpaced the rate of business formation by men across all ethnic groups in the United States, according to Maria Minniti and Wim Naudé of the World Institute for Development Economics Research. Similar trends are found across the developing world.

©AP Images

Iranian-American entrepreneur Anousheh Ansari flies high: She has co-founded two high-tech firms and made a voyage into space.

But the rise in female entrepreneurship is shifting from the developed to the developing world where unexplored entrepreneurial opportunities are greatest.

Women-owned companies are rising the fastest in the world's emerging economies — particularly in Brazil, India, Vietnam and the Philippines. In fact, in many developing economies the rate of female entrepreneurship surpasses that in the world's most industrialized countries, according to Joel Kotkin, a professor of urban studies at Chapman University in California.

Many women discover that they don't have to look far to find successful businesswomen in their own local communities.

Women Driving Growth and Change

Over the past decade, women have driven about a third of the world's total entrepreneurial activity, according to GEM. But many experts say lack of self-confidence, as well as insufficient education and role models, weak social status, bureaucratic "red tape," scarcity of money, and competing demands on time from family and business all create obstacles that prevent more women from starting businesses. In the developing world, these challenges are often greater than in the United States and other developed countries where female entrepreneurs' predecessors have paved the way for them.

Some of the challenges can be addressed through legislation and improvements in the general business climate that can benefit both female and male entrepreneurs. Some governments, prompted by growing evidence that entrepreneurship is a catalyst for economic development and growth, have started doing just that. For example, most businesswomen in Bangladesh surveyed by a local chamber of commerce say that the overall business atmosphere in their country is becoming more favorable for female entrepreneurs, despite traditional negative attitudes toward women who work outside the home.

Changing attitudes and related social norms in Bangladesh and other countries will require more work on the part of women advocates, supporters and activists. What might help them is a view of women as a critical driver of entrepreneurship due to their unique role in the household and the rise in female-headed households across the developing world, say Minniti and Naudé.

A number of initiatives supported by developed countries' governments, universities or corporations aim to encourage and foster female entrepreneurship. For instance, the African Women's Entrepreneurship Program is designed to increase the integration of African businesswomen into the global economy. Thanks to this U.S.-sponsored program, a Tanzanian woman has built a network of 1,000 businesswomen and set up a trade deal to have her textile designs and fabrics hanging from the racks of one of the largest U.S. department stores, Macy's.

Words to the Wise: Keys to Success

Like that Tanzanian entrepreneur, millions of women can realize their potential if they dare not only to dream, but also to act on their dreams.

Once they start down the path of entrepreneurship, many women discover that they don't have to look far to find successful businesswomen in their own local communities. Networking is a key to increase the chances of success. Other entrepreneurs can offer advice about finding customers, getting legal assistance, securing funding for expansion opportunities — and how to learn from mistakes. (See "Tips on How to Start a Business" on the next page.)

To gain self-confidence and overcome inhibiting social attitudes, women need to network continuously, support each other, look for role models, update their knowledge and skills as well as have a clear vision of what they wish to accomplish. ■

Courtesy of Laurel Delaney

Laurel Delaney (above), a business expert and entrepreneur, is the founder of Chicago-based GlobeTrade.com, The Global Small Business Blog, and Women Entrepreneurs GROW Global. She also is the About.com import and export guide and a pioneer member of the World Entrepreneurship Forum.

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Tips on How to Start a Business

©Corbis Images

Will it sell? Cheekay Chow's designer cake shop is open and ready for business in Hong Kong's central district.

1 **Find your passion.** If you love making hand-knit gloves, then continue to do just that and build a business around it because passion matters when the going gets tough or you become tired.

2 **Test your offering** with family and friends for initial reactions. If they love it, you're onto something! Oftentimes, a business idea is sparked by a remark someone makes: "This is delicious! Where can I get more?" or "That's fantastic! Where can I buy one?"

3 **Enlist the help of your government.** Look into programs, seminars or workshops tailored to entrepreneurs and new business owners. Ask to speak with representatives who have experience running and growing a business. Check whether advanced countries' development agencies, corporations or nongovernmental groups offer training or other forms of support.

4 **Seek the assistance of local support organizations or business-savvy friends.** For example, ask your business contacts if they would recommend their own accountant or attorney who typically handles this type of service for a fee. Inquire with a manager at a local bank. He or she might be able to suggest a specialist targeted to your circumstances and challenges.

5 **Identify local or online funding sources.** Leave no stone unturned in your search for seed money. For example, try Kickstarter.com, IndieGoGo.com, Peerbackers.com and RocketHub.com. Each of these Web services provides platforms for entrepreneurs to get funding from various contributors.

6 **Locate a customer** beyond family and friends. Sometimes, it takes only one or two good customers to get started. Ask them to spread the good word about your business.

7 **Determine how to get the product or service offering to your customers.** How will you deliver it? Once you decide, do a trial run. If it works, keep shipping!

8 **Make arrangements to get paid.** Will you accept payment in your local currency? A check made payable to you or your business? Or, have you considered bartering — receiving something you need in exchange for what you are offering?

9 **Toot your own horn loud and clear.** Contact the media, bloggers and governmental folks who work with entrepreneurs to share your success story. Everyone loves progress.

— Laurel Delaney

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A Close-up on Women's Entrepreneurship

IN GENERAL

- Rates of female entrepreneurship are mostly higher in developing than in developed countries.
- Women entrepreneurs in poor countries tend to be more confident about their business skills than women in more affluent ones.
- Female entrepreneurs rely more than men on extended families for support.
- Women-owned firms tend to grow more slowly in both sales and employment than those owned by men.

Source: Female Entrepreneurship in Developing Countries, Maria Minniti and Wim Naudé, UNU-WIDER, 2010

IN THE UNITED STATES

- The number of women-owned firms grew at almost twice the rate of men-owned businesses in 1997–2011.
- The industries with the highest concentration of women-owned firms are health care, education and personal care services.
- Men own more than twice as many firms in the high-tech sector as women do.
- Women are more likely than men to see a business partner's encouragement as a key incentive to start a business.

Sources: Characteristics of New Firms, 2009; Invest in Women, Invest in America, Joint Economic Committee, 2010; American Express OPEN State of Women-Owned Business Report, 2011

IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- Female-owned businesses are as productive, technology-savvy and connected to global markets as male-owned firms.
- Women-owned firms tend to hire more female staff and managers than men-owned firms.
- Failure rates of women- and men-owned firms are similar.
- Gender-biased laws, as well as social norms and negative attitudes, discourage female entrepreneurship.

Source: The Environment for Women's Entrepreneurship in MENA, World Bank, 2007

Don't worry, she can handle it: Aziza Ibrahim, above, is the first woman to run a cooking-gas delivery business in Jordan.

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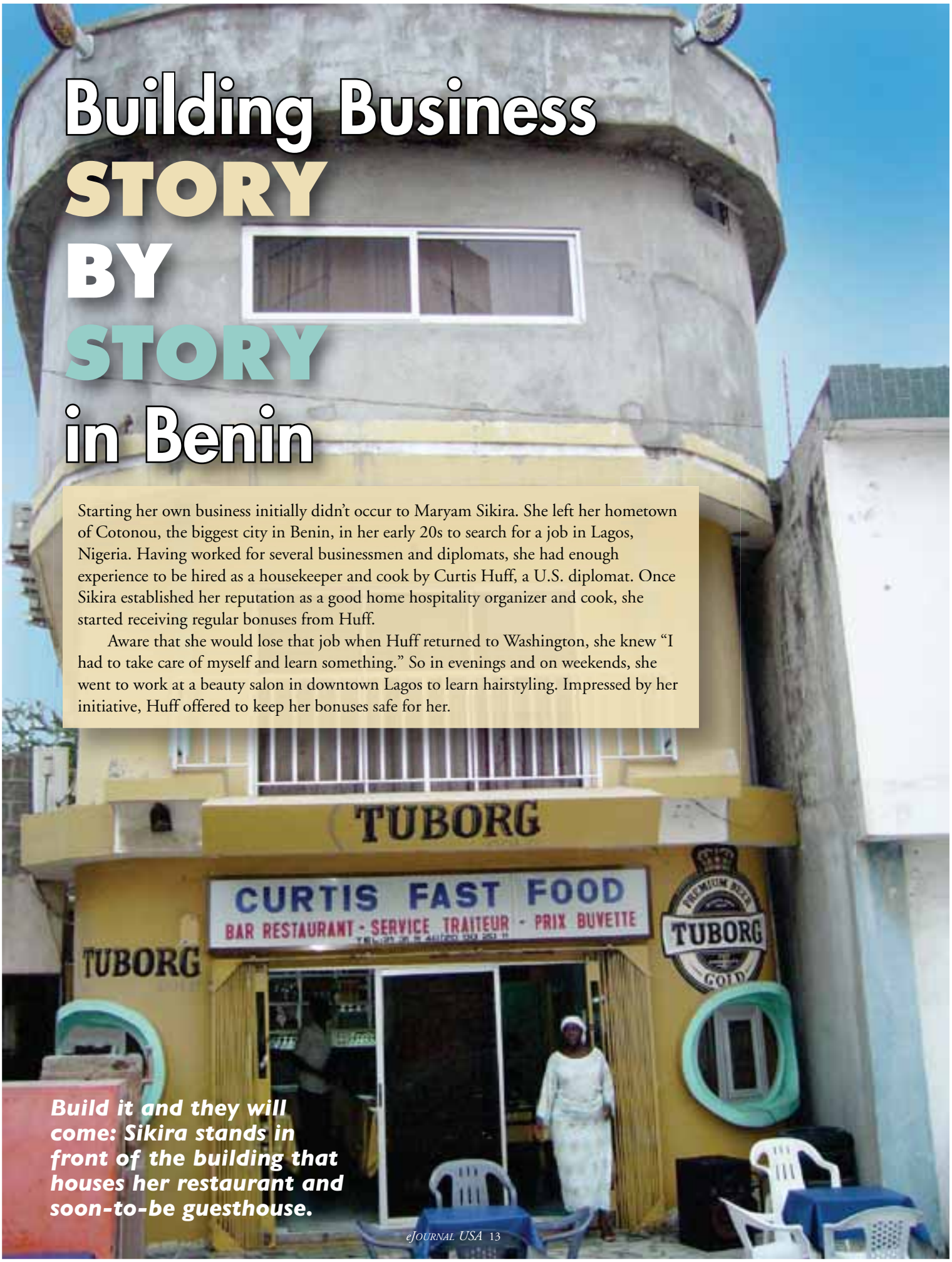
Building Business STORY BY STORY in Benin

Starting her own business initially didn't occur to Maryam Sikira. She left her hometown of Cotonou, the biggest city in Benin, in her early 20s to search for a job in Lagos, Nigeria. Having worked for several businessmen and diplomats, she had enough experience to be hired as a housekeeper and cook by Curtis Huff, a U.S. diplomat. Once Sikira established her reputation as a good home hospitality organizer and cook, she started receiving regular bonuses from Huff.

Aware that she would lose that job when Huff returned to Washington, she knew "I had to take care of myself and learn something." So in evenings and on weekends, she went to work at a beauty salon in downtown Lagos to learn hairstyling. Impressed by her initiative, Huff offered to keep her bonuses safe for her.



Build it and they will come: Sikira stands in front of the building that houses her restaurant and soon-to-be guesthouse.

Courtesy of Maryam Sikira

What are you in the mood for today? A hairdressing salon in the outdoor Oshodi Market in Lagos.

©Corbis Images

An Entrepreneurial Itch

When Huff left Lagos, Sikira returned to Cotonou to take advantage of the improved business climate there and to be closer to her family. She had an urge to open a hairdressing salon, and her accumulated bonuses kept by Huff came in handy as startup capital. So she leased from the government a centrally located piece of public land, which turned out to be an unofficial dump for local residents.

"My family helped me clean it and put up a shack of corrugated iron," she said.

In that "shack," Sikira opened a hairdressing salon, which she called Coiffure Americaine. The electrical installation was so bad that she got electric shocks many times. But customers, both female and male, started arriving after she ran an ad on a local radio station and her good reputation spread through word of mouth. Later, she constructed a safer, more solid building, which expanded into a beauty salon once she added manicures and pedicures to her services.

Managing Little by Little

Whenever she faced challenges, Sikira said, she got encouragement and ideas from local friends and Huff (now an exchange program officer at the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in Washington).

"Curtis was always there for me, ready to give me advice or arrange things," she said. "So I managed little by little."

Sikira offered drinks to her customers, at first for free, later for cash. Then she had a flash of inspiration: If I serve drinks, why not serve food as well?

She added a second story to her building where she opened a restaurant. Initially she wanted to call it McDonald's. But she settled for Curtis Fast Food after Huff explained to her that was out of the question because of intellectual property laws. The restaurant, which serves both small meals and large feasts, has become so popular that Sikira, its owner, manager and chef, had to hire a few workers. She has also taken in orphans as informal interns.

Sikira noticed that a lot of visitors, mostly from other African countries, were looking for a place to stay and realized that her location was ideal for a hotel. So she closed the beauty salon, took a small loan from a local bank and added another story to the building to make room for a guesthouse. For that business, she wants to set the best standards she can.

"I hope to get more money to make the place tidy and clean," she said. ■

— Andrzej Zwaniecki

Women Can Have FUN as TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEURS

Go online! Entrepreneur Janette Toral espouses the benefits of e-commerce in her workshop for government employees in the Philippines.

By Vinita Gupta

These excerpts are from an interview published in a February 2011 issue of the online business journal India Knowledge@Wharton.

Technology … doesn't require physical work, and it gives a woman entrepreneur a lot of flexibility. Technology is a great place to be, and women should dream of that. They should know there is nothing that should hold them back. But it is not gender neutral, although it can be.

What many women don't realize is how much fun it can be, and how the skill sets they learn in their engineering education come into life in all aspects. They gain enormous critical and analytical skill sets that make them better human beings in all respects. It is a lot of fun, especially solving a problem if you are an engineer. The day you come up with an elite solution to a problem or you innovate something, you are in seventh heaven. Nobody can give you recognition as much as you can give yourself.

The chances of women becoming technology entrepreneurs are higher in the United States than in India. Women in India are less of risk-takers than women in the United States. The reasons for that are differences in the socio-cultural settings and in the education systems. … [However,] the United States … is far more traditional in putting women in traditional roles. For example, there is a misconception … that women are not as good in math and science. I don't think that perception exists in India.

When women innovate, they feel elated.

Women in India have the family support structure to raise their children in a safe setting. On the other hand, they could be held back culturally because of other expectations from the extended family. In the United States, the woman is in charge.

Every time a woman has to work full time or launch herself as an entrepreneur, she has to home-craft a solution to take care of her family at home. As a family unit we have to come up with solutions. There has to be a more systematic approach; there has to be resources that are available and affordable. Society needs to evolve in that way — and it will. This is true for both the United States and India. ■

Vinita Gupta is an Indian-American technology entrepreneur who founded and ran Digital Link Corporation (now Quick Eagle Networks).

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Courtesy of Janette Toral

Janette Toral

Betting on E-Commerce

"I spend almost half of my life nowadays online. I use the Internet as the sounding board of my advocacy, thoughts, dreams and success. I experience failure through it as well. Without the Internet, I wouldn't be anywhere near where I am today." The writer of these words today is at the top of the information technology (IT) industry in the Philippines. She is Janette Toral, a business leader and one of the most successful IT entrepreneurs in the country.

Keeping up with Technology

Toral became fascinated with computers at a time when not many people owned them. As a teenager, she played with a spreadsheet program on her aunt's machine. In the mid-1980s, Toral studied computer languages and programs on her own and in computer schools. In 1989, she got her first job as a computer tutor. Since then, her professional career has branched out in many directions, following the Internet's development and IT sector expansion.

"I realized early that information technology keeps changing fast," she said. "So I knew I couldn't focus on just one type of software or activity."

As she acquired new skills, her activities covered many areas. Toral has been called a consultant, trainer, educator, lobbyist, blogger, researcher, writer, ambassador, community leader and "the mother of electronic commerce law in the Philippines." These labels describe not only the broad range of her professional ventures, but also the passion she invests in them.

Boosting People's Potential

However, the term Toral believes characterizes her best — social entrepreneur — is not among those used in her profiles. "I deal with issues not only to earn profits, but also to make things better in the market," she said. For example, she created the DigitalFilipino online community to educate her compatriots about e-commerce and facilitate knowledge sharing and business networking.

> I realized early that information technology keeps changing fast.

The club offers members free training, for example, in search-engine and social-media marketing.

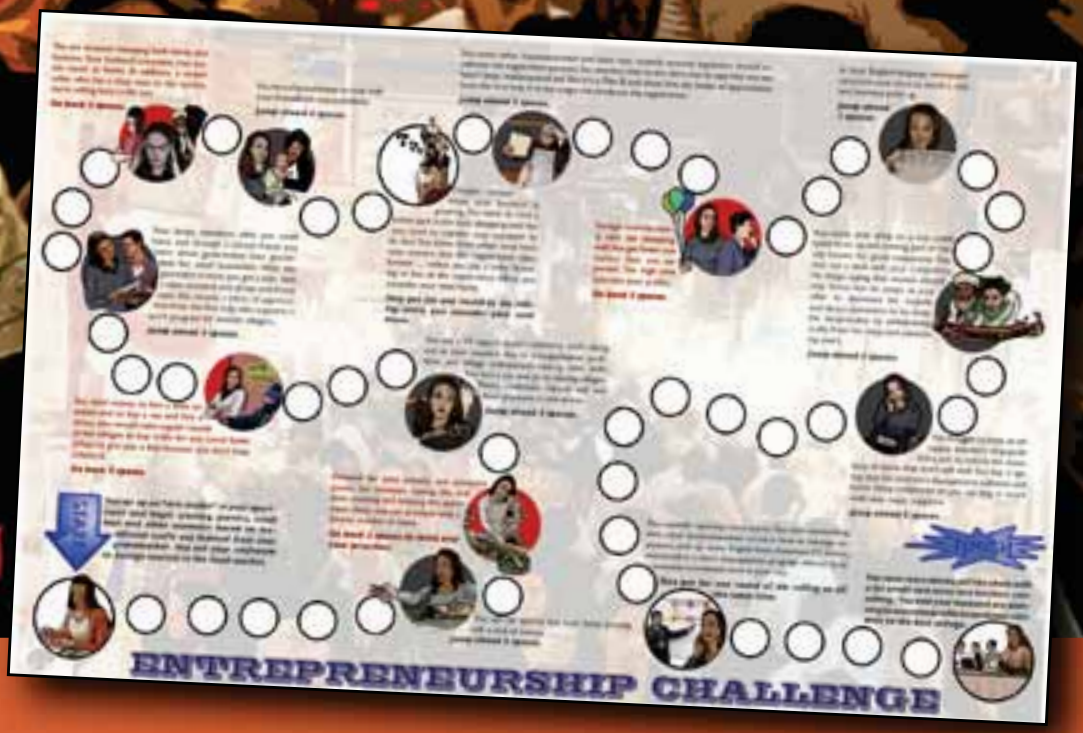
Toral is also called an Internet "evangelist," for good reason. She believes the Internet is reshaping the world and boosting people's potential because, thanks to it, "you can be who you want to be" and nations can accelerate their development and advance economically. That is why, in 1997, she founded the Philippine Internet Commerce Society and lobbied hard for the passage of an e-commerce law. The law passed in 2000, making it much easier for Philippine companies to conduct online business worldwide.

Toral views her greatest accomplishment, for which she received solid backing from other IT leaders, as somewhat incomplete. Since 2002, she has been campaigning for the application in the Philippines of the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) of standards — and later its successor, Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) — in developing software. CMMI certification, she said, would ensure a higher quality of software development and help Philippine software companies compete more effectively, particularly in the international market.

To help spread the idea, Toral used her own money to hire certified trainers from India and lobbied the government to lend its support to the concept. The government eventually agreed to do it, but it didn't address the issues she views as the ultimate goal — to make the Philippines capable of depending on its own CMMI trainers and assessors. "I continue to work on it," the tireless Toral said. ■

— Andrzej Zwaniecki

PLAY THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE



THE SCENARIO:

You live in a lower-middle-income country, which 15 years ago moved toward a market-based economy. Women are not discriminated against in hiring, but in keeping with tradition, most women stay at home. Few women run businesses.

You have finished secondary school and reside in a city. You are married and have two small children. Your husband, who works as a primary-school teacher, brings in too little money to support the family. You need to augment your family's income.

HOW TO PLAY:

- Any number of people can play.
- You'll need tokens (small coins are handy), one die, a piece of paper and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- You take turns rolling the die, moving your tokens accordingly, and experiencing the trials and triumphs of an entrepreneur along the way.

WHO WINS:

The player who finishes first wins.

You are stressed managing both family and business. Your husband complains that you are never at home. In addition, a carpet seller, who has a shop next to the market, starts selling local crafts too.

Go back 3 spaces.

You hire a housekeeper to help with your household responsibilities.

Jump ahead 4 spaces.

You meet other businessw
celerate the registration pr
hasn't been implemented y
from the first lady. It is like

Jump ahead 5 spaces.

Despite competition, your business is growing. You want to rent a prime spot in the local shopping mall, but you need to register your company to do that. You know from other local business owners that the registration takes forever … unless you pay a bribe. Standing in line at the registration office, you consider your next move.

Stay put for one round of die rolling while you consider your next move.

Your family members offer you small loans, and through a school friend you learn about government loan guarantees for small businesses. With the guarantee in hand, you get a loan, hire a sales assistant and driver, and boost sales. You receive a letter of appreciation from the first lady, who supports a work program for women villagers.

Jump ahead 5 spaces.

You see a TV report about tradit
out in your country due to tran
lems and village craftspeople la
You hire a car and go
There, craftsmen
their products at

Jump ahead 5

You need money to hire a sales assistant and to buy a van and hire a driver, who would make regular rounds of the villages to buy crafts for you. Local banks refuse to give you a loan because you don't have collateral.

Go back 5 spaces.

Demand for your jewelry and souvenirs grows, but between rearing the children, cooking and keeping the apartment clean, you can produce only a limited number of items.

Go back 3 spaces to think over your priorities.

START

You set up an "arts studio" in your apartment and begin creating jewelry, small toys and other souvenirs based on traditional crafts you learned from your grandmother. You sell your craftwork to foreign tourists in the local market.

You sell out quic
with a wad of mo

Jump ahead 5 spac

ENTREPRENEURS

omen and learn that recently enacted legislation should ac-
ocess. You mention that to the clerk, but he says that the law
et. You try a Plan B and show him the letter of appreciation
magic: He produces the registration.

A local English-language newspaper mentions your store as worth a visit, and business picks up.

Jump ahead 3 spaces.

Foreign tourists rarely visit the shopping mall. You get fewer customers than you expected. The high rent eats into your profits.

Go back 3 spaces.

You move your shop to a less costly space in an up-and-coming part of the city known for good restaurants. You also cut a deal with your competitor. He keeps saying that women should stay home, but he jumps at your offer to showcase his carpets and direct customers to his shop. He reciprocates by withdrawing crafts from his shop and advertising yours.

Jump ahead 4 spaces.

tional crafts dying
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to nearby villages.
happily sell you
low prices.

5 spaces.

You struggle to keep an adequate inventory of popular items and to reduce the inventory of items that don't sell well. You buy a laptop that has inventory management software and some cheap cellphones so you can stay in touch with your major suppliers.

Jump ahead 5 spaces.

You consider opening more stores. You start networking with other businesswomen to learn how to manage expansion, pick up some English from American TV shows, and enroll in a short management program offered by an overseas investment fund in your city.

Stay put for one round of die rolling as all this takes time.

You open more stores, sell the chain with a fat profit and move into business consulting. You and your husband are planning to use some profits to send your children to the best college.

ckly and head home proudly
ney.
es.

SHIP CHALLENGE

PROUDLY MADE IN ALBANIA

Desperate times followed the collapse of communism in Albania in 1991. But the new era has brought tremendous opportunites.

When Donika Mici decided to start a shoe company in her native Albania, the odds were stacked against her. The collapse of the harshest form of communism in Europe had left Albania a wasteland of bankrupt state-owned companies, jobless workers and governmental incompetence or corruption. But Mici saw opportunities in empty shop shelves, low workers' pay and nonexistent competition.

Tough Going

In 1992, she took over a failing, state-owned shoe company and founded a private firm, DoniAnna, one of the first in post-Communist Albania. She hired 120 workers, including former engineers, professors and doctors, and started making shoes.

"I knew I had to be tough to survive because we were starting with nothing," she said.

As an economist, she knew that exporting made the most economic sense, Mici said. But at that time Albania was so isolated that "I was the only woman in Tirana driving a car," she said. What was more important, credit was unavailable and the country's telecommunications infrastructure was so outdated that identifying and getting in touch with potential buyers was a huge challenge.

Mici's in-laws were complaining that she wouldn't be able to take good care of her child and husband. So she

> I wanted to prove that a 'Made in Albania' label isn't an impediment to international success.

> I knew I had to be tough to survive because we were starting with nothing.

hired a nanny and a cook/housekeeper, and the in-laws reluctantly relented.

The business environment, as impoverished as it was, was dominated by men. When Mici met with suppliers, they would look around and ask to see her boss. She would stare them down and say that she was the boss. By hook or by crook, she managed to keep the business afloat. She found and persuaded Italian buyers that "Albanians could make quality shoes cheaply," she said. She got credit from those buyers and hired Italian specialists to train her employees and improve manufacturing operations so that DoniAnna could meet international standards. Within a few years, the company was exporting hundreds of thousands of pairs of shoes a year to the United States, Italy, France and other countries. DoniAnna has been able to compete with low-cost manufacturers in China and other countries because, being close to fashion centers and major retail outlets in Europe, it can fill orders faster, Mici said.

That's something Mici wasn't prepared for: An explosion at a weapon depot destroyed a DoniAnna plant and many other buildings, but the business survived.

Courtesy of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana

Her shoes are good for walking from communism to capitalism: Mici, middle, with Deputy Chief of the U.S. Mission in Tirana Deborah Jones, right.

In 2008, her factory burned to the ground as a result of an explosion in a former military ammunition depot nearby, setting her back by almost $1.5 million. But the disaster did not break her. In 2009, DoniAnna registered about $40 million in sales and employed 1,400 workers, and Mici's ambitions only grew.

"Made in Albania" Label

Most of DoniAnna's Albanian competitors manufacture at least part of their shoes in Italy to gain the cachet of a "Made in Italy" label, she said.

"I wanted to prove that a 'Made in Albania' label isn't an impediment to international success," she said. So in 2009, she launched her own brand of shoes, and today, Macy's, Bata, Aldo and Kenneth Cole are among her clients.

DoniAnna has become one of the largest exporters in Albania. Its manufacturing operations are located in poor areas of Tirana, which gives Mici particular satisfaction.

"I am proud of the business I've created and opportunities it has brought to others," she said. ■

— Andrzej Zwaniecki

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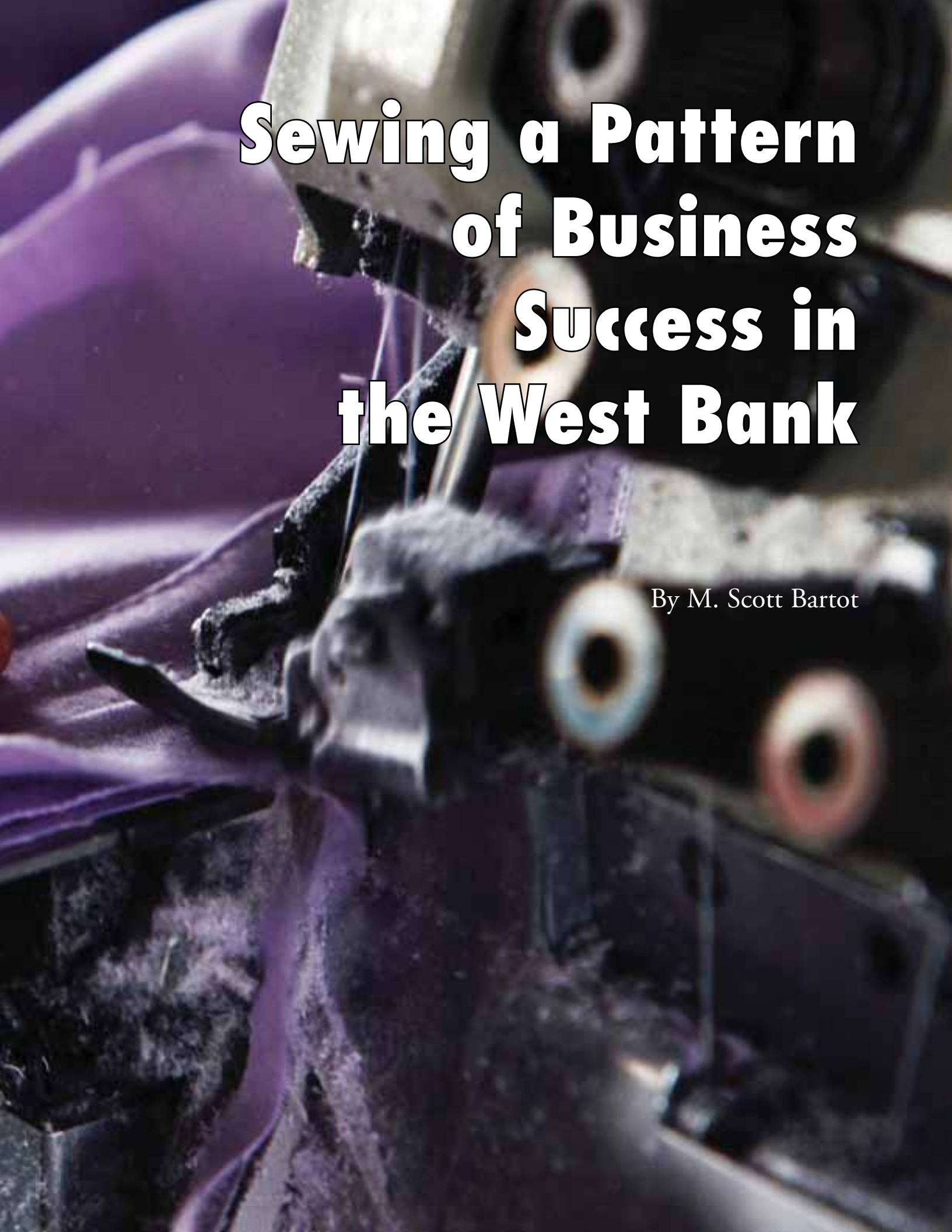

Sewing a Pattern of Business Success in the West Bank

By M. Scott Bartot

Courtesy of the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem

Fatima al-Jada

Fatima al-Jada from the West Bank village of Habla established her business at home with a gift — a sewing machine — from her father in 1987.

She learned how to sew after economic circumstances forced her to leave middle school. Once she began making clothes at home, her father encouraged her to learn to drive and sell her products around the West Bank.

By 1990, al-Jada had expanded beyond home and started a factory in a rented building, which she called Al Hanna Textiles.

Today, she employs about 160 people, mostly women, at six sewing facilities in Qalqiliya and other West Bank locations.

Al-Jada said she encountered no barriers to her business because she is a woman and employs mostly women. But she has faced other challenges, which she has met with patience and resilience, the dedication of her workers and some help from the government.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place

In 1990, disaster struck.

"In the morning, I found all of my machines and equipment gone," al-Jada said. "It was really hard on me."

She rebounded by selling the inventory and buying the equipment needed to start over.

Qalqiliya has been hard hit by the separation barrier, and political tensions have sometimes impeded her factory's operations. In 2002, Al Hanna nearly shut down because of difficulty getting her goods out of the West Bank to export markets in Europe and the United States. The company makes ready-made clothing and fabrics. Reliable access to the U.S. and European markets through crossing points subject to Israeli closures is her business's lifeline.

"They are outstanding," al-Jada says about her employees. When she couldn't pay them, they kept on working.

"The goods made for foreign markets have to be delivered by a certain time and it can't happen when the crossings are closed," al-Jada said.

Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, then the finance minister, took a personal interest in al-Jada's plight.

He "really stood by me," al-Jada said. When she couldn't pay her employees for six months, the Palestinian Authority covered two months' worth of their salaries.

To survive, al-Jada sold property and took out a $40,000 loan. She said that over the following two years she worked nearly 24 hours a day and workers' shifts were increased to recoup losses.

Workers' Support

Al-Jada's business helps provide employment in the economically depressed area. Arab media reports say women at the factory and its distribution centers are proud to work for her.

Apparently, the pride runs both ways.

"They are outstanding," al-Jada said about her employees. When she couldn't pay them, they kept on working, she said.

The Palestinian entrepreneur believes that, if you treat your employees fairly, "your return on investment gets greater."

"They are outstanding," al-Jada says about her employees. When she couldn't pay them, they kept on working.

She encountered no barriers to her business because she is a woman and employs mostly women.

©AP Images

Women were among Palestinian entrepreneurs who in 2009 launched G.ho.st Virtual Computer, a computer operating system, near the West Bank town of Beit Jalla.

In 2010, Al Hanna received from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) a grant, which helped the firm buy new sewing and packaging machines and add about 50 jobs. As a result of the investment, Al Hanna's sales increased by 50 percent, according to USAID.

Invited to attend the 2010 Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship, al-Jada came to Washington with hope for new trade opportunities.

"I've worked with Americans, and all of my dealings with them have been better than with anyone else," she said. ■

M. Scott Bartot is a staff writer with the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs.

©AP Images

Olives are the backbone of Palestinian agriculture, and agriculture is the backbone of the Palestinian economy.

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A Bodytech gym on a lazy Bogatá afternoon.

Courtesy of Bodytech

FROM GYM TO FITNESS TRANSFORMATION IN COLOMBIA

Gigliola Aycardi became an entrepreneur because she did not want to work for someone else and have a set schedule.

"How naive I was," Aycardi sighs. As vice president of Bodytech, a Colombia-based fitness center chain she started with her partner Nicolás Loaiza, she worked 18 hours a day, seven days a week. And loved every minute.

Aycardi is happy because Bodytech is doing really well.

Show Me Your Wares

Aycardi and Loaiza graduated from Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá with master of business administration (MBA) degrees in 1997 at the time of a severe economic crisis in Colombia. After a few failed attempts to get decent jobs, Aycardi and Loaiza dusted off a gym-marketing plan they wrote together as their MBA thesis and decided to start a gym.

They found a high-traffic location on a main avenue in an upper-class neighborhood of Bogotá, but the only capital they had were loans from family and friends. Banks refused to lend them money. With no funds for promotion, they installed floor-to-ceiling windows in their gym to show exercising patrons to drivers of cars passing by. We wanted the windows to be our banner, our ad, Aycardi said.

She and Loaiza opened their first gym in January 2008. Just one month later — she remembers the exact date, February 28 — came a sweet moment of satisfaction when they learned that Bodytech registered 1,800 members in one month, almost doubling their most optimistic projection for six months. "It was like ecstasy," Aycardi said. Then things started to accelerate as the two entrepreneurs began focusing on middle-class and lower-income customers.

Growing Ever Faster

At one point, Aycardi and Loaiza were opening an average of one fitness center a month while planning their next moves — entering into merger and acquisition agreements, adding new franchised locations and institutional clients, and creating a fitness training institute. The rapid growth was possible due to capital injections by various private investors, and a larger stake taken by a private equity fund.

Aycardi said Bodytech succeeded because she and her partner jumped on the wave of the healthy lifestyle trend hitting Colombia in the late 1990s. At that time demand for gym services in Bogotá was high while supply was meager, she said. It was the right moment to start something like this.

That "something" became more than a simple gym. The two entrepreneurs have hired sports medicine doctors, physical therapists and nutritionists in addition to gym trainers, who together design customized exercise programs and help members achieve their personal health goals. "We are really different," Aycardi said, comparing Bodytech to its competitors. This new approach changed the entire fitness industry in Colombia, according to Endeavor, a U.S. nonprofit group that supports high-potential businesses in emerging markets.

Wellness is a Balance

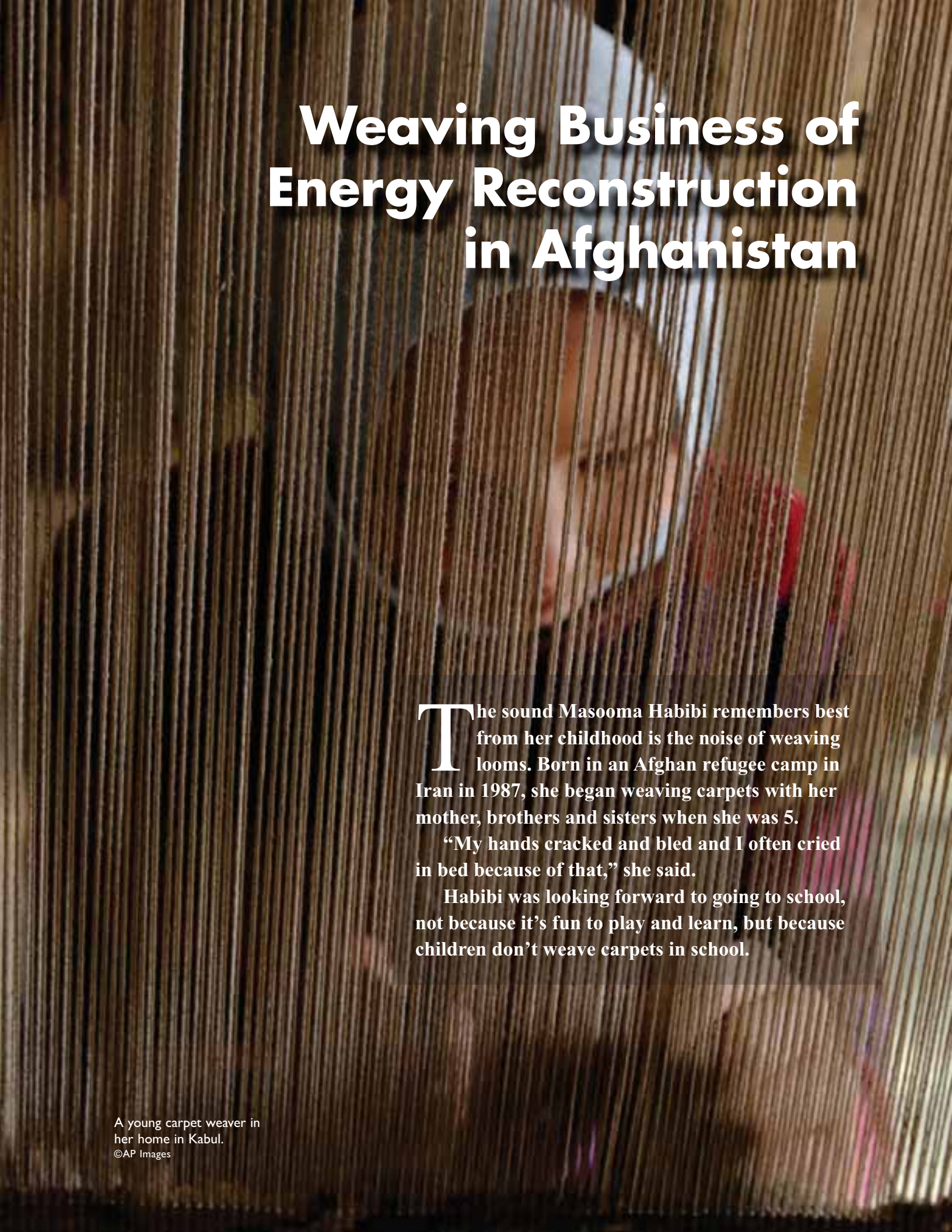
In 2007, Aycardi was recognized by Endeavor as a high-impact entrepreneur. This earned Bodytech access to the Boston Consulting Group, which helped it design an international expansion strategy.

Today, with 45 branches in Colombia, Chile and Peru, more than 70,000 members, and almost 1,300 employees, Bodytech is the largest fitness center chain in Latin America, and it is still growing.

But Aycardi had an epiphany three years ago: She felt a desire for a more balanced life. Following her heart, as she put it, Aycardi got married and had a daughter, Antonia, who now is 3 years old. "Having Antonia was a miracle," she said. "Now we have a higher purpose in life." ■

— Andrzej Zwaniecki

Weaving Business of Energy Reconstruction in Afghanistan



The sound Masooma Habibi remembers best from her childhood is the noise of weaving looms. Born in an Afghan refugee camp in Iran in 1987, she began weaving carpets with her mother, brothers and sisters when she was 5.

"My hands cracked and bled and I often cried in bed because of that," she said.

Habibi was looking forward to going to school, not because it's fun to play and learn, but because children don't weave carpets in school.

A young carpet weaver in her home in Kabul.
©AP Images

Among 10,000 Women

She finished secondary school with top grades in Iran, but when her father became sick and couldn't work anymore, her family went back to Afghanistan.

In Herat, where the Habibi family landed, the reality of Afghanistan turned out to be far from the fabled country her mother had depicted. Habibi spoke decent English and had computer skills, but she couldn't get a job in the city, where attitudes against women working outside the home remained strong.

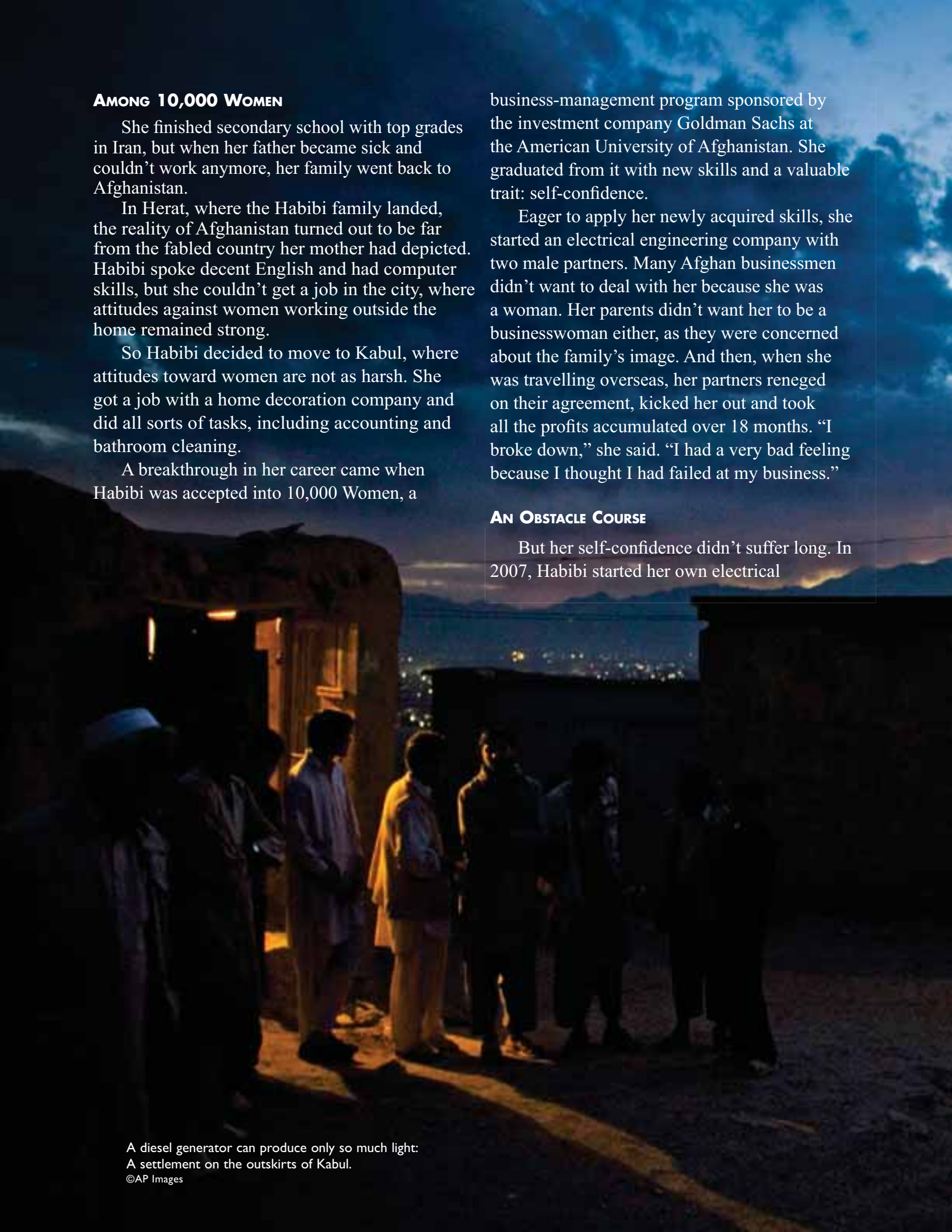
So Habibi decided to move to Kabul, where attitudes toward women are not as harsh. She got a job with a home decoration company and did all sorts of tasks, including accounting and bathroom cleaning.

A breakthrough in her career came when Habibi was accepted into 10,000 Women, a business-management program sponsored by the investment company Goldman Sachs at the American University of Afghanistan. She graduated from it with new skills and a valuable trait: self-confidence.

Eager to apply her newly acquired skills, she started an electrical engineering company with two male partners. Many Afghan businessmen didn't want to deal with her because she was a woman. Her parents didn't want her to be a businesswoman either, as they were concerned about the family's image. And then, when she was travelling overseas, her partners reneged on their agreement, kicked her out and took all the profits accumulated over 18 months. "I broke down," she said. "I had a very bad feeling because I thought I had failed at my business."

An Obstacle Course

But her self-confidence didn't suffer long. In 2007, Habibi started her own electrical



A diesel generator can produce only so much light: A settlement on the outskirts of Kabul.
©AP Images

engineering business — Check Up Company — with capital from two private investors and enlisted her two brothers, both engineers, as experts. She hoped to seize opportunities in the power market, where many people lack access to electricity or have to endure frequent outages. It has not been a smooth ride.

Competing with well-financed, experienced foreign companies for contracts has proved to be difficult, and Taliban attacks have disrupted the company's operations on many occasions.

"Sometimes, I wanted to stop and quit," she said. But she hasn't. "Something in my heart said: 'Don't stop! Try harder!'" Habibi said.

Check Up, which employs 22 people, hadn't broken even through 2010. But it presses ahead.

It has worked on building projects in Mazar-e-Sharif and a hospital project in Herat. To win some contracts, Habibi had to overcome distrust of women on the part of some businessmen. She did it by appealing to their self-interest, delivering better service at a lower price than her competitors.

In 2011, she was pursuing a three-year business course at the Dubai Women's College in the United Arab Emirates while running Check Up. Eventually, Habibi wants Check Up to become the top power company in Afghanistan and create many more jobs. But for now, she wants her firm to gain more experience and upgrade its services while waiting for security to improve.

"Our business really depends on the country's stability," she said. But "we Afghans are patient people." ■

— Andrzej Zwaniecki

Courtesy of Masooma Habibi

Masooma Habibi, standing, works with a fellow participant of a business management program at American University in Kabul.

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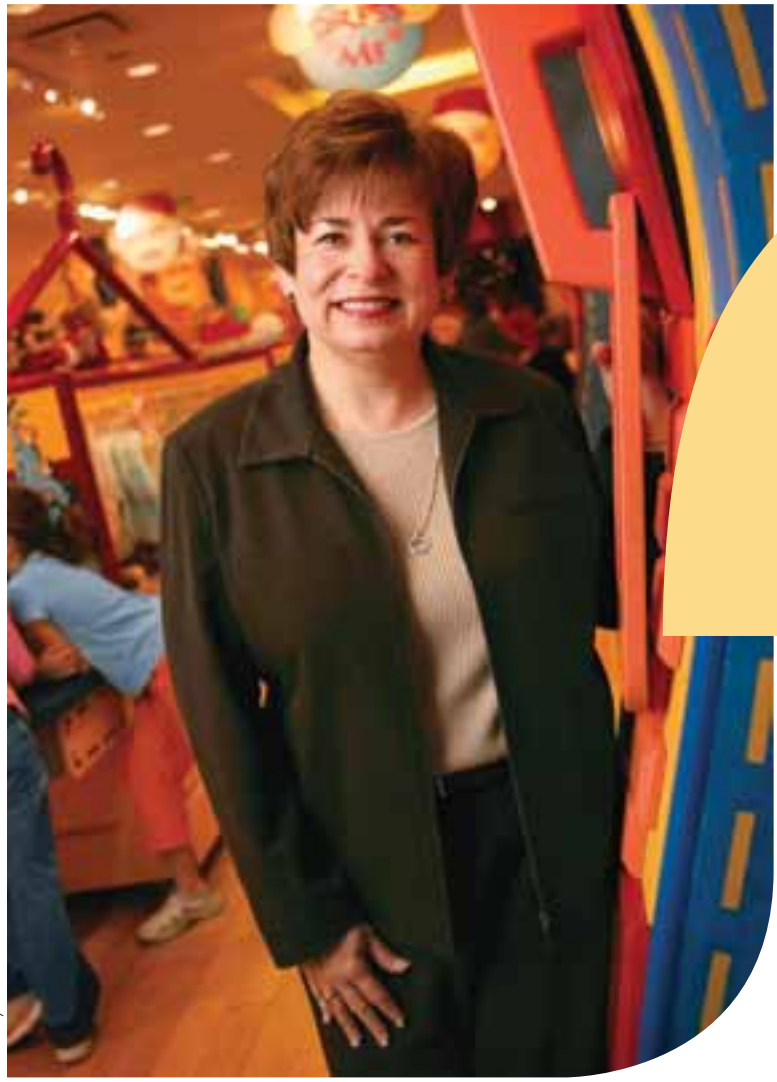

Courtesy of Maxine Clark

HOW DID YOU START YOUR BUSINESS?

MAXINE CLARK

The idea came to me while shopping for Beanie Baby toys with my 10-year-old friend, Katie. When we realized the store was sold out, Katie said: "These are so easy, we could make them." She meant starting a craft project, but what I heard was much bigger. I spent almost a year writing the business plan before opening the first Build-A-Bear Workshop store at the Saint Louis Galleria in 1997.

Maxine Clark founded Build-A-Bear Workshop, a retail chain with more than 400 locations worldwide that sells teddy bears and other stuffed animals that children can customize on site.

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Courtesy of Chloe Dao

CHLOE DAO

As a child I worked hard for my parents at their many different businesses. Entrepreneurship was in my blood, but my passion was for a business they never owned — fashion designing. As a teenager, I was redesigning vintage clothes. After graduating from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, I held different jobs in the fashion and clothing industry while developing a plan for my own boutique.

Chloe Dao is a fashion designer and owner of LOT 8 design boutique in Dallas, Texas. Her creations, featured on several TV shows, are sold through LOT 8.

Courtesy of Terry Guen

TERRY GUEN

I started my own architectural practice to realize my passion for designing highly visual, ecologically sound public landscapes. I was inspired by my teachers, my activist parents, my children, and many colleagues who share my vision. I thought that by designing with ecology, city history and innovation in mind, we can enhance local cultures and regenerate dense urban neighborhoods. I got my first project after many calls and meetings with potential clients.

In 1997, Terry Guen started Terry Guen Design Associates Inc., a landscape architecture and urban design firm that specializes in environmentally sustainable projects. Her projects include Chicago's Lakefront Millennium Park.

Courtesy of Theresa Alfaro Daytner

THERESA ALFARO DAYTNER

I have always wanted to be a businesswoman. My father, a hairdresser, had a few hair salons. I wasn't sure what kind of business to start, so I studied accounting in college to understand business finance. As I was always interested in being a carpenter and had built some furniture at home with my father, starting a construction company was aligned with my interests.

Theresa Alfaro Daytner is the founder and head of Daytner Construction Group, a nine-year-old construction management and consulting firm. She was named one of the Ten Most Powerful Women Entrepreneurs in 2010 by Fortune *magazine.*

HOW

JANET RICKSTREW

In the late 1990s, my friend and now my business partner, Mary Tatum, and I were each doing our own home improvement projects and sharing tips about them. The idea for Tomboy Tools came when we attended a "home party" organized to sell cooking products. We thought direct selling was a perfect and fun way to teach women to feel more confident using tools and to share with each other knowledge on home improvement.

Janet Rickstrew started Tomboy Tools, Inc., in 2000 to provide ergonomically designed hand and power tools and home-improvement education to do-it-yourself women. The company has more than 1,600 sales consultants throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

Courtesy of Janet Rickstrew

Courtesy of Lisa Druxman

LISA DRUXMAN

To get back into shape after my son was born, I created a workout that I could do with him. I thought it could also help other moms who just had babies. And they, I hoped, could teach me a thing or two about mothering. Having a background in the fitness industry, I started a class and then another in my neighborhood. The classes exploded and we ended up franchising the concept.

Lisa Druxman is the founder and head of Stroller Strides, an 11-year-old franchise company that offers a stroller-based workout with over 1,300 locations nationwide.

Additional Resources

Websites for women entrepreneurs and small business owners

Astia, a global nonprofit organization that promotes women's entrepreneurship in high-growth businesses, including high-tech and biotechnology.
http://astia.org/

Entrepreneurship.org, the Kauffman Foundation's free international resource for entrepreneurs, policymakers, investors, mentors, researchers and academics.
http://www.entrepreneurship.org/

eWomenNetwork, a networking site for women entrepreneurs.
http://new.ewomennetwork.com/

Global Entrepreneurship Week, a worldwide celebration of young entrepreneurs and innovators.
http://www.unleashingideas.org/

Inc.com, which offers tips on the elements involved in starting a business.
http://www.inc.com/guides/start_biz

National Association of Women Business Owners, a group that offers information and educational resources to women business owners.
http://www.nawbo.org/

Path Forward Center, a nonprofit educational and support group that promotes women's entrepreneurship worldwide.
http://www.pathforwardcenter.org/

StartupDigest, a selection of articles, videos and events on high-tech and other high-growth startups.
http://startupdigest.com/

Women 2.0, an information and networking website that provides help in launching innovative ventures.
http://www.women2.org/

Women Home Business, an information resource for women on how to start and manage a successful home-based business.
http://www.womenhomebusiness.com/

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Sinead Fyda travels between Tanzania and Hilliard, Ohio, to manage Jishike Social Couture, which markets purses created by Tanzanian women.

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April is Energy, Environment, Science and Technology Month

NEXT in eJournal USA

Growing Up Green

Youth are leading the way to a sustainable future by creating innovative solutions to global problems. Read about some of their amazing accomplishments and ambitious plans for the future in the next issue of *eJournal USA*, "Growing Up Green."

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