

# Arab Women in Computing

## A Word from ArabWIC Founder and Chair: Professor Sana Odeh, New York University



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to our first edition of the Arab Women In Computing (ArabWIC) Newsletter! I would like to thank my fellow ArabWIC newsletter team members (Dr. Manar Abu Talib, Dr. Bouchra Bouqata, Rama Chakaki, Dr. Kaoutar El Maghraoui, and Noha Mahmoud) for producing the first issue of our newsletter in such a short time. The ArabWIC's newsletter is intended to provide updates about ArabWIC's projects, news, current events, technology trends, and also feature several talented ArabWIC members from the various technology sectors represented in ArabWIC: academia, industry and entrepreneurship. We encourage all of our members and friends to contribute to future issues of our newsletter and also provide us with feedback to improve our newsletter.

As a founder and Chair of ArabWIC, I'm delighted to highlight ArabWIC's accomplishments and achievements since we were established one year and nine months ago. ArabWIC was founded during the New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) Regional Collaborative Workshop on Women in Computing in the Arab World that was held at NYU Abu Dhabi in March 2012. Conference participants unanimously agreed to create an international organization for Arab women in computing. You can read more about this conference in the ACM-W Newsletter, summer 2012 issue on page 33 and 34.

Despite the recent establishment of ArabWIC, we already have many accomplishments. We have managed to build a community of about 450 Arab technical women (Academics, entrepreneurs, and industry) from 15 Arab countries and the world. We also held a 2nd successful conference at NYUAD in May 2013 where we planned for a comprehensive study on Women in Computing in the Arab World that would be published by end of 2014. The goal of this study is to explore the representation of women in IT, the opportunities, and the diverse challenges facing women in computing in the Arab world.

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### ArabWIC Newsletter COMMITTEE

Manar Abu Talib  
Bouchra Bouqata  
Rama Chakaki  
Kaoutar El Maghraoui  
Noha Mahmoud

*You are welcome to join us!*

ArabWIC study will focus on women in academia (students and faculty), women in industry working in IT fields, and women entrepreneurs (leaders of technology startups) with the goal of contributing to the national and the international debates on increasing women's enrollment in computer science. More importantly, the study will identify issues women face in the field of computing in the Arab world. The study report will be co-edited by Dima Jamali, Associate Dean for Faculty and Professor, American University of Beirut - Olayan School of Business and me. It will be produced as a collaboration between members of the ArabWIC's steering committee along with Arab academics from the social sciences, anthropology and women's studies. In the United States female enrollment in Computer Science and Engineering has fallen from 37% in the early 80's to a dismal rate nearing 20% today. But in the Arab world, it seems that females comprise the majority of undergraduate students studying Computer Science in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The percentage of female entrepreneurs seems to be higher in the Arab world than the US and Europe. We have begun to explore important trends for women in computing focusing on representation, opportunities and challenges for women in computing in the Arab World. We are also interested in learning from the experiences of women in other regions and sharing our successes and experiences with the rest of the world.

I'm proud to announce that ArabWIC is now an official chapter of the Anita Borg Institute for Women and Technology (Systems). We have our first official presence during the lunches and booths at the Annual Grace Hopper Conference for Women in Computing (GHC 2013) on October 2 – 5, in Minneapolis, MN, USA. GHC is the largest international conference for women in computing sponsored by major universities and companies such as Google, Microsoft, IBM, and Facebook. This is a great achievement as our members are now linked to internationally renowned women in computing institutions and conferences. Our members now have the benefit of leveraging existing resources that support international women in computing such as mentoring, scholarships, and research collaboration. I would like to thank Rosario Robinson, Anita Borg Systems Program Manager, for her wonderful efforts in helping ArabWIC become a member of the Anita Borg community. ArabWIC is also delighted to offer 3 complimentary GHC passes (Thanks to Anita Borg Communities) to three Arab PhD students living in Minneapolis: Eman Shehata, Sara Morsy, and Asmaa A. ElBadrawy".

Finally, I would also like to thank all of the amazing members of the ArabWIC's steering committee (especially, Manar Abu Talib, Noha Mahmoud, Kaoutar El maghraoui, Taghrid Samak, Bouchra Bouqata, sahar Idwan, Dalila Loudyi, Hwayda Hemaïd, Rama Chakaki, Eïman Nazeer Kanjo, Areej Al-Wabil, Mariam Elbadri, Dima Taji, Marianne Amir Azer, and Mona Nasr) who have been working tirelessly to build the foundation for ArabWIC and reach out to all of the Arab Women in Computing/Technology all over the world (Please see the website for the full list of steering committee members for ArabWIC). I hope that our friends and members can join our projects and also help us lead new initiatives to support ArabWIC's mission to empower Arab women in computing. **Sana Odeh, Founder and Chair of ArabWIC**

**Women in Computing in the Arab World Regional Workshop 2013**  
<http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news-events/conferences/women-in-computing.html>

**Women in Computing in the Arab World Regional Workshop 2012**  
<http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news-events/conferences/women-in-computing/2012-women-in-computing.html>

# ArabWIC's Main Projects

The goals of Arab Women in Computing (ArabWIC) are to support, inspire, and increase the visibility and status of women in computing in the Arab world, in order to achieve their career aspirations in academia, industry or as entrepreneurs. ArabWIC will also foster collaboration among its members, and build connections with other women in computing groups world-wide.

ArabWIC has the following main projects:

- 1) Conduct research about Arab women in computing.
- 2) Convene an annual conference on Arab women in computing. This year, it will be held in Abu Dhabi at NYUAD in May 2014.
- 3) Develop a mentoring program to support Arab women in computing (academics, entrepreneurs, and women in industry).
- 4) Publish a newsletter and other research publications.
- 5) Fundraise for scholarships for graduate study and conferences, awards to promote and support Arab women in computing at all levels.
- 6) Develop a comprehensive database to support networking and visibility for ArabWIC.



## ArabWIC Steering Committee

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Abeer Abu Ghaith, Palestine  | Mireille Raad, Lebanon      |
| Amir Zeid, Kuwait            | Mona Nasr, Egypt            |
| Areej Al Wabil, Saudi Arabia | Nada Ghanem, Yemen          |
| Arwa Al Eryani, Yemen        | Noha Mahmoud, Egypt         |
| Dalila Loudyi, Morocco       | Noha Sabour, Egypt          |
| Dareen Alhiyari, Jordan      | Ouafa Benterki, Algeria     |
| Dima Taji, Palestine         | Rama Chakaki, UAE           |
| Eiman Kanjo, Saudi Arabia    | Rasha Salahaldin, Palestine |
| Fatima Abu Salem, Lebanon    | Sahar Idwan, Jordan         |
| Joumana Dargham, Lebanon     | Saida Bouhmidi, Morocco     |
| Hwayda Hemaïd, Palestine     | Sana Odeh, USA              |
| Kaoutar El Maghraoui, USA    | Semya Elaoud, Tunisia       |
| Susan Malaika, USA           | Sarah AbdelHafez, Egypt     |
| Maha Ashour, Egypt           | Taghrid Samak, USA          |
| Manar Abu Talib, UAE         |                             |
| Mariam Masoud, Libya         |                             |
| Marianne Azer, Egypt         |                             |

**Ms. Rama Chakaki** has 22 years of experience in management, strategic planning and communications. Her passion is to promote a collaborative approach, invest in social enterprises, use technology for social development and nurture a generation of social entrepreneurs among youth and women in the Arab world. **In 2007**, Rama setup Baraka Ventures investing in social enterprise. The company spun off three businesses successfully. In addition to a grassroots community engagement approach, Rama worked with Regional institutions in the public, private, non-profit and education sectors to deliver the Baraka Ventures 'vision of being a positive change agent to build and support social ventures and sustainable businesses with a triple bottom line. **In 2012**, Rama established Dubai-based B Street Advisors, a digital communications agency rooted in the region's culture and values and aiming to socialize business. The agency supports NGOs, the private sector and Social Entrepreneurs in engaging stakeholders. Among her other activities, Rama runs women and youth leadership, entrepreneurship and civic engagement workshops, advises regional government and large enterprises on social investments in youth and women-led social enterprises, and incubates sustainable social ventures and web technologies. **In 2013**, Rama co-founded BarakaBits, a new media venture delivering Good News from The Middle East.

Rama holds a Master's in Computer Science and a Master's in Engineering Management from George Washington University.

**Dr. Sahar Idwan** is an Associate Prof. in the Computer Science Department at the Faculty of Prince Al-Hussein Bin Abdullah II for Information Technology at Hashemite University in Jordan. She received her Ph.D. in Computer Science from Colorado School of Mines, USA, 2005. She served as a Vice-Dean in the Faculty of IT from August 2006- August 2009, as a Head of the Department of Computer Information System from August 2006-August 2007, and as a director of the e-learning center from 2011-2012. In addition to the usual responsibilities of these positions, she created an undergraduate research group which motivated its attendees to pursue graduate studies; she mentored female students; she helped students with special needs by giving extra lectures to aid them in adapting to college; she encouraged her students to participate in various events and activities such as the Imagine Cup and the IT student's activities fair; she encouraged her colleagues to create e-courses for different subjects. She developed online courses in Software Engineering for the benefit of students in remote areas, initiated programs to help under-privileged youth through volunteerism from the students in the Operating Systems class, and developed user interfaces to help children with cerebral palsy.

She has sixteen publications resulting from her research in computer science. In particular, her research interests include applied algorithms, moving objects, mobile computing, graph theory, mobile applications, and application of computing as a scientific paradigm.

**Dr. Kaoutar El-Maghraoui** is a research scientist at the IBM T.J Watson Research Center in Yorktown Heights, New York. She is a member of the scalable systems groups, where she has conducted research on several aspects of the AIX operating system such as performance, multi-thread and multi-core scheduling, Flash SSD storage, OS crash diagnosis and recovery, interactions with systems architecture, and applications of analytics techniques for OS problem diagnosis. Her primary research interests are operating systems, high-performance computing, and distributed systems. Kaoutar has co-authored several conference and journal publications in the areas of systems research, distributed systems and high performance computing. She has served in many technical conferences as a co-chair, a member of the program committee, and a reviewer.

## Press Coverage of the NYUAD Regional Conference on Women in Computing

New York University Abu Dhabi  
(NYUAD) hosts the first regional  
workshop on Women in Computing in the  
Arab World (ACM-W Newsletter,  
summer 2012 issue on page 33 and 34)

[http://women.acm.org/newsletter/newsletter\\_v0401.pdf](http://women.acm.org/newsletter/newsletter_v0401.pdf)

More UAE women join InfoTech  
Programs  
(Gulf News)

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/education/more-uae-women-join-infotech-programmes-1.992570>

NYUAD Professor Establishes Regional  
Collaborative Workshop on Women in  
Computing in the Arab World  
(NYUAD Official Salaam Blog)

[http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news-events/salaam/2012/03/nyuad\\_professor\\_establishes.html](http://nyuad.nyu.edu/news-events/salaam/2012/03/nyuad_professor_establishes.html)

Kaoutar obtained a PhD degree in Computer Science in 2007 from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York and a Masters degree in Computer Networks in 2001 from Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco. She was a lecturer of Computer Science in the School of Science and Engineering at Al Akhawayn University in 2001 and 2002. Kaoutar has received several fellowships and awards including the American Association of University Women fellowship, the Robert McNaughton Award for best thesis in computer science at RPI, IBM's Eminence and Excellence award for leadership in increasing Women's presence in science and technology, and IBM's Tier II award for contributions to the foundational POWER software technologies and promoting these systems in Africa. She is a member of the IEEE Computer Society, the Society of Women Engineers, and the ACM.

Kaoutar is very passionate about mentoring and promoting the participation of women in STEM fields. She is a co-chair of ArabWIC Systems' community. This year, she is serving as the Student Posters' co-chair as well as co-chairing the ACM student research competition at GHC' 13.



Ms. Rama Chakaki, Dr. Sahar Idwan & Dr. Kaoutar El-Maghraoui

## In Memory of Dr. Houda Lamahamedi



**Dr. Houda Lamahamedi**, passed away on June 4th, 2013, after losing her courageous battle with breast cancer. Dr. Houda Lamahamedi received her M.S in Computer Science from Al-Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco in 1998 and her PhD in Computer Science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Troy, NY, in 2005. Dr. Lamahamedi joined Oracle in Portland, Oregon, as a Research Scientist in 2006. She was a member of the Oracle WorkLoad Management and the Oracle Virtualization Assembly Builder teams. After five years in Oracle, she decided to join l'Université Internationale de Rabat, Morocco, in August 2011 as an Assistant Professor of Computer Science. Her research interests included cloud computing, distributed high performance computing, service oriented architectures, and science education for underprivileged youths.

Dr. Houda Lamahamedi had great passion for contributing and supporting the attraction, retention and advancement of women and young girls in Science, Engineering, Technology and Math (STEM). Dr. Lamahamedi was affiliated with many professional organizations such as IEEE and ACM. She was also affiliated with the Anita Borg Institute for Women in Technology Systems group through her participation in panel discussions and as a reviewer in the Grace Hopper Conference Celebration of Women in Computing for several years up to her last days. In addition, Dr. Lamahamedi was one of the founders of ArabWIC and a co-organizer and reviewer for the NYU Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) 2012 and 2013 regional workshops. Dr. Lamahamedi will be greatly missed!

Dr. Lamahamedi is remembered by her colleagues and friends as a wonderful and an excellent colleague, collaborator and friend. Dr. Lamahamedi was always eager to help others and assist with great causes as she was full of creative.

## Follow Us @

\* **ArabWIC - Arab Women in Computing FB:** <https://www.facebook.com/arabwic.org>

\* Join Arab Women in Computing (ArabWIC) LinkedIn, an Anita Borg Institute Systems's Community affiliate:

[http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=4933194&trk=anet\\_ug\\_hm](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?home=&gid=4933194&trk=anet_ug_hm)

\* Join the ArabWIC (systers) mailing list: <http://systers.org/mailman/listinfo/awic>

\* Follow us on **Twitter:** @ArabWIC

ArabWIC Official Website: [arabwic.org](http://arabwic.org)

### Feedback?

We encourage you to share with us:

- Your recently accepted research papers.
- Upcoming Women in computing events and conferences.
- Sponsorship Opportunities.
- Research opportunities.
- Others...

ArabWIC at a Glance

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DIFFERENCE**

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