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# The Queen of Qatar Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al- Missned Education Above All



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## Why is Education Important?

To ask why knowledge and education is important is to ask why “society” is important to us. Society is central because we cannot survive alone and isolated, as human beings we need “community” to satisfy our most basic needs. Education is crucial because as infants, we are highly curious and self-aware, it is in our nature to explore, to ask why, until we finally arrive at an answer. Education matters because it is necessary for the development of an individual and to understand their role and contribution to their society. Many inventions and discoveries exist in our world because of brilliant thinkers that identified problems and developed solutions. The building of structures or the cure for diseases did not come to us in a dream, it came through generations of learning, research and teaching, trial and error, and a devotion to scholarship. In Ancient Greece, the most important relationship was the one between a teacher and its pupil, so that one day that student would reach enlightenment and become the teacher themselves.

Having access to free and safe education is a privilege many of us take for granted. We are fortunate enough to wake up for school and attend our classes without fear of violence being committed against us, nor having the anxiety as to how we will afford another day. But unfortunately, this safety net is not extended to every child in the world. Many children cannot afford their school uniform, much less a year’s worth of classes. Children drop out of school every day so that they may work and help support their families. Young girls stay home to help care for siblings and keep the house in order. While some students pray for classes to be cancelled, other student’s schools are being obliterated by wars and economic devastation. The very institutions we take for granted are the ones that educate us, propel us, and prepare us for a more hopeful future than that of our predecessors. Access to education is a fight we all must take part in, so that children with outstanding potential can obtain the means and resources necessary to make their dreams possible.



Sheikha Moza at the 2021 WISE Summit highlighting the importance of equipping the youth with the educational resources necessary to be future leaders. Photo Credits: @mozabintnasser on IG

## **The Queen of Qatar**

Of the many philanthropists for youth education, a prominent figure at the forefront of the education movement is Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, also known as the Queen of Qatar. In 1977, Sheikha Moza married Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the former Emir of Qatar, securing her place in Qatar's royal family. Because royal families have a history of marrying spouses rich in wealth and political power, this marriage was radical, impelling modernity and challenging tradition. Sheikha Moza's father was a humble businessman and an advocate for equal wealth distribution in the country, so unsurprisingly, she too developed an altruistic and benevolent spirit, pursuing a degree in Sociology in Qatar University. Proposed to by the prince, and becoming the second of three wives, the Sheikha did not mold into the expected wife's role, like most consorts do. Instead, her Highness took advantage of her position to empower the youth, to represent Qatar in interna-

tional events, to create and hold positions on councils, and to work towards education and health reforms. She stands as a role model for Middle Eastern women by rejecting cultural norms and making the space for change where it is necessary and often ignored.

There exists a Western misconception that Islam is a faith that seeks to diminish and subjugate women, to reduce women as vessels for babies and chores, but Sheikha Moza proves these stereotypes to be untruthful and ridiculous. Through her modesty and humility, she has and continues to improve the quality of life in Qatar through various initiatives, giving children the opportunity to flourish and simultaneously proving that women in Islam can hold positions and responsibilities equal to men, without discrimination. Instead of fading into the sidelines, her highness has built a reputation for herself, one of grace and class, one of modesty and generosity, and one of humanity and compassion.

## **Qatar Foundation**

Of the many projects Sheikha Moza is involved in, a significant and well known one is the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development, founded by both her and his Highness. Sheikha Moza has been the Chairperson of this non-profit organization, from 1995 to the present day, providing quality education to Qatar, through centers, academies, and programs. With a goal in mind to unlock human potential, this foundation embraces creativity, innovation, intelligence, and entrepreneurship, building a community known as “Education City” to foster these developments, and accommodate students with learning disabilities. Education City is a campus that is 12 sq km (about half the area of JFK Airport) large, with three research institutions, 13 schools/academies and 9 universities, including Georgetown University and Northwestern University, and more than 10,000 students. It establishes a sense of community and belonging through entities like a stadium, museum, library, mosque, and garden, building a massive education empire for Qatari and international students in the city and country. A point of pride for the Sheikha Moza is the immense success of the Education City. It has expanded and accomplished its goals, despite the blockade and neglect of Qatar by neighboring Middle Eastern countries for political reasons. Besides hosting campuses and conferences in Education City, the foundation is also a hub for research and development, granting Arab innovators the training, resources, and funds to start and launch products, and



modern inventions and technologies pertaining to artificial intelligence and environmental sustainability. The existence of this city and foundation is indispensable, standing as a symbol of youth empowerment, and the long-lasting impact on their futures. A branch of this foundation is known as Msheireb Properties, which focuses on ecologically friendly technology and sustainable real estate expansion. A recent addition to the city is Sidra Medicine, a research hospital with a specialty in women's and children's care.



The Minaretein Center in Education City, The Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies & Education City Mosque Photo Creds: @sajad\_machu on IG

## **Previous Projects**

Besides the Qatar Foundation, Sheika Moza Bint Nasser has been involved in other prestigious projects. Since her first role as the President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs from 1998- 2009, Sheikha Moza went on to serve as Vice President of the Supreme Education Council for six years and the Vice President of the Supreme Council of Health for five years. She served as Ambassador for the United Nations in two separate areas - the Millennium Development Goals in 2005 and the Alliance of Civilization from 2010-2015. She was an active member in the UN's Secretary General Global Education First Initiative from 2012-2017. A year later, she was granted the title of Honorary Chair for the Fashion Trust Arabia Organization, which gives Arab designers a platform to fashion their brands. Sheikha Moza's roles are too plentiful to sum up in a few sentences and fail to capture the full scope of her responsibilities and accomplishments. She has done exceptional work improving the quality of learning, building a health system, and implementing legislation that positively affects families.

## **Current Projects**

Creative projects worth mentioning are Silatech and Education Above All, all launched by Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser. Silatech is a nonprofit organization that was established in 2008 and operates in 17 countries in North Africa and the Middle East, with a goal to reduce youth unemployment rates in the Arab world. It operates as a vast network of job opportunities, such as careers in government or media outlets, so that young people can connect with the employers and experiences that appeal to them and build their careers and future.

Education Above All is an organization composed of four programs, Educate a Child, Reach out to Asia, AlFakhoora, and Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict. Each program serves a different role in the fight for access to education. Every day there is a fight against education, especially in countries strained by wars and poverty. When airstrikes hit, it is schools that are targeted and destroyed, in an attempt to dismantle both the spirit of a nation, for schools are a fundamental element of civilization and society. These programs rebuild schools and provide education to marginalized communities across 55 countries, teaching them the skills necessary to further social and economic development.



Sheikha Moza visiting the Education Above All Else Assalam Schools in Doha, Qatar in April 2022  
Photo Credit: @educationaboveall\_eaaon Instagram

The right to education is a right no child should be deprived of, regardless of their gender, sex, ethnicity, religion, or politics. Children should not be punished but instead embraced for their diversity and divergence; different schools of thought and visions are healthy, promoting inclusion and enriching our experiences in academia. Education is necessary for the advancement of society and the individual; it improves the quality of life for disenfranchised groups by opening doors and creating opportunities where there was once nothing. No one understands this better than Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, a diligent and committed woman, with a longstanding passion for education equality and reform. From serving on councils, to launching her own projects, her vision continuously grows to unimaginable heights, implementing staggering changes throughout Qatar. Sheikha Moza is a role model for all women, especially Arab and Muslim women, women who are told they cannot live up to a man's position in society, women that are underestimated, and women that are not given enough credit. You can always count on a woman to achieve the impossible and set a higher standard than ever imaginable.

On behalf of the America-Eurasia Center, we thank you.

الف شكرأ وتحيه وتقدير لمجهودات الشيخه موزه بنت ناصر المسند من أجل الإنسانيه والأطفال المعذبون في أماكن الصراع في جميع أنحاء العالم وهيه القلب الحنون لكل طفل فقد الامنان والأهل واخذت علي عاتقه تعليمهم فيه ام لكل أطفال المنكوبين في أماكن الصراع فهيه الملاذ ولأمل الاخير لهم تحيه من القلب لارق قلب حامي الطفوله

A thousand thanks, greetings and appreciation for the efforts of Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al-Missned due to her humanity, and the children suffering in conflict places all over the world she is a tender heart to every child who has lost his security and parents, and she has taken upon herself to teach them, there is mother to all afflicted children in the places of conflict, for she is the refuge and the last hope for them, a greeting from the heart to the most tender heart of the protector of childhood.

Citations:

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