Happiness among Omani Women
Risk Management

Risk management in an organization promotes a deliberate, coordinated, and anticipatory approach to risk identification, evaluation, and management. Proper risk management implies control of possible future events and is proactive rather than reactive. It helps reduce not only the likelihood of an event occurring, but also the magnitude of its impact. By evaluating the plan for potential problems and developing strategies to address them, you will improve your chances of a successful, if not perfect, project.

In a university, every staff member and student has a responsibility to identify and manage the risks associated with their activities; the office of risk management is a resource for risk management advice so that activities are carried out in a manner that considers safety, financial, reputational, or legal risks. Employees, students or contractors can approach the risk management office with any queries or concerns related to proposed activities, with respect to loss prevention, life safety, premises liability, automobile liability, or any risk related matters.

The Risk Management Office (RMO) at Sultan Qaboos University started functioning recently. The setting up of RMO is out of the realization that the University, by its very nature, is a constantly changing, dynamic entity. The aim is to protect the institution, not by avoiding the various actions that make the university function as a university, but rather by bringing about a realization that there can be rational planning incorporated within every function to minimize the loss exposure. The RMO will collaborate with each campus community to encourage university staff and students to adopt a risk management philosophy. It will work closely with the campus to identify and manage the university’s risks, consistent with the university’s mission of teaching, research and community service. The RMO is keen to maintain a high standard of service to each of the campus community that make up the university system by promoting a safe learning and working environment.

Challenges arise because people perceive or assess risks in different ways at different times. Everyone must realize that risk management and safety are responsibilities we all share. For these reasons, let us hope that the RMO maintains its focus on issues of fact, creates constructive relationships, continuously undertakes improvement initiatives, and leads by examples.
The SQU Career & Training Opportunities Fair 2016, organized by the Centre for Career Guidance at SQU was held at the university’s Cultural Centre under the patronage of H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Nasser Al Harassi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Radio & Television. As many as 43 institutions from the private and public sectors in the Sultanate participated in the Fair which witnessed a huge turnout of students and graduates. The organizations have been selected based on the quality and quantity of offered jobs and training opportunities. The employers came up with 334 vacancies for permanent jobs and 268 training opportunities.

SQU Career & Training Opportunities Fair helps the students and graduates of SQU to find job and training opportunities. It also helps them enhance their abilities, develop skills, and prepare them for the labour market. The Fair offers excellent opportunity for students who are in the stage of choosing their academic specializations and it sheds light on the most demanded jobs in the Omani labour market. The Fair was accompanied by several activities including career guidance sessions, lectures and workshops.

Dr. Igor Marzalyuk, Head of the Belarusian side in the Parliamentary Friendship Committee between Oman State Council and the Council of the Republic in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation visited Sultan Qaboos University within the framework of his official visit to the Sultanate. The delegation was received by H.E. Dr. Ali bin Saud Al Bimani, the Vice Chancellor of SQU, Hon. Dr. Ali bin Ali Al Mashyakhi, Head of the Omani-Belarusian Friendship Committee at the State Council, and Hon. Dr. Said Al Muharrami, Dean of the College of Economics & Political Science. The delegation was briefed on SQU and its colleges, research centres and SQU Hospital.

The visit comes as per the invitation from the State Council for the Belarusian side to visit the Sultanate in order to enhance the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries in various fields, besides promoting the parliamentary relations and exchanging experience between the two councils. Dr. Marzalyuk praised the Sultanate for being able to maintain its heritage and culture while keeping pace with modern world technology.

The Water Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University organized the International Water Conference 2016, “Water Resource in Arid Areas: the Way Forward”, under the patronage of H.E. Ahmed Abdullah Al Shehi, Minister of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources. The four-day conference discussed water resources in arid areas and their problems, ways to tackle water pollution, water governance, economic and social aspects of water, drought policies, innovation and technology to cope with water scarcity and drought, water resource management for control of drought, integrated management of water resources in arid areas and semi-arid and conservation of water resources. The event was held in association with The Research Council (TRC), Ministry of Regional Municipalities and Water Resources, Haya Water and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA).

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Osman Abdalla, Director of SQU’s Water Re-
Progress of women in the last decades globally is remarkable as wage gap has partly closed; educational attainment has risen and women achieved technological knowledge and freedom from domestic hard works. Omani women also have achieved much progress in education and knowledge during the prosperous era of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. They have been privileged to become a part of different ministerial portfolios in Oman. Moreover, the government’s strategic planning has given immense space for women in different sectors of labor market and other key areas. There have been changes in social norms too like, educated Omani women generally want only smaller families and make better use of reproductive health and family planning information and services to achieve their desired family size.

In this context, we conducted a study to know the insight of Omani women on their happiness, through identifying certain areas where they can feel the happiness and to what extent they think they are happy. The study collected primary data from a sample of 500 Omani women, between the ages of 23 to 45 years, with a structured questionnaire. The study partially adopted GNH methods and SWLS scale, widely accepted as the measures of subjective wellbeing, or happiness. The study took few research questions: are Omani women aware of good governance? Are they having sustainable socio-economic development? Are they feeling happiness while Oman’s cultural preservation? Do they feel psychological wellbeing?

While the question arises on how Omani women perceive good governance in Oman, the variables under concern are health, opportunities, peace and security and government regulations in the country. 45% respondents have admitted that they are happy on the governance in Oman. While the question about opportunities for Omani women compared with other woman in the gulf region, they opined that they are happier. 70% of women are feeling the most secure and happiest, comparing with others, women in this domain. 55% of respondents highly agreed that equal jobs opportunities exist in Oman. 50% respondents are happy in their health domain. 60% of respondents highly agreed that going for work will not affect their health and it will add value to their life. Therefore, we can infer that more respondents are happier in this capacity and their outlook is positive. Whereas the question on whether or not they are having sustainable socio-economic development for their personal growth, the variables under concern are education, monthly income at their disposal, employment, empowerment, family status and community living, more respondents are not happy in terms of their income. 55% women are happy in the education domain. They feel that educated people can achieve their objectives faster than others can. 29% of women highly agreed that employed or business-women are happier than others. 70% of working women agreed and are happy that they are getting equal pay to Omani men. 30% of the women surveyed greatly believe that they are empowered and they feel that they have autonomy in taking decisions. So we can conclude that almost 50% of our respondents are happy.

Almost 65% of our respondents are happier in Community liveliness in Oman. 40% respondents are happy about their family status in the society. 65% of respondents are strongly agreed that the religion encourages women to continue her study. Omani women are happy with their religious norms in Oman. Almost 60% of them are happy on the value system and cultural preservation in Oman. Question arises on psychological satisfaction, the variables are time, age, marital relations, living standards, feeling of achievement, and thinking over children and their future, 55% of respondents are happier, compared to their counterparts, with their age and their achievements. However, almost 60% of respondents are not happy with the use of their time and they felt it could have used it in a better way. The study indicates that 35 to 45 age group respondents are happier than the rest of the group. It is an interesting finding that married women are happier than the rest. 33% of respondents feel happier to raise their children in Oman. Others are happy about the country’s care and support for their children. This study acknowledged Stroup (2011), that woman’s ability to achieve greater individual prosperity like employment and doing business can enhance their happiness.

However, it is little alarming that many Omani women graduates are still waiting for job opportunities. We feel that there is a relation between happiness and employment via income so the study findings suggest that those who work for money outside their home are happier than others. Therefore, the study concludes that if women get suitable employment, one would have happier women in Oman. The study confirms with Varghese (2011) findings which evidencing that Omani women are empowered. As they are empowered, they are happy as well. This study finds that most Omani women are happy with government policies and they feel they are secure under the rule of His Majesty. Many women feel empowered in their homes. Apparently, health and education are the crucial areas where women need more support from the government, especially in the health sector. The authorities should act accordingly since Oman needs happy and satisfied women to contribute towards the whole society.

(The findings of this research was reported in “Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews” Vol 4, No 1, January 2016. The author is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Business at Sohar University, Oman. She may be contacted by email to tvarghese@soharuni.edu.om)
Call for Paradigm Shift in Agricultural Sector

Groundwater is a common resource, quite similar to roads a public property. The state of the groundwater sector now is similar to roads without traffic signals and traffic police. Introducing smart water meters is equivalent to radars in roads. Those who are using the groundwater inefficiently are causing harm to others as well to themselves. This has to change for the interest of the farmers and the society as a whole. Excessive groundwater pumping is a global problem that severely affects the dry areas where surface water is scant or inexistent. The coastal areas of Oman are primarily concerned because groundwater over-pumping results in seawater intrusion and causes degradation of the unique renewable water resource. Despite the implementation of several measures, such as the diffusion of water-saving technology, building recharge dams, freezing on drilling new wells, encouraging the re-use of treated wastewater for landscaping, groundwater levels continue to decline and seawater intrusion is steadily progressing in most of the coastal areas.

With support from an open research grant from the Research Council of Oman (TRC), Dr. Slim Zekri, Associate Professor in the Department of Natural Resources Economics of the College of Agricultural & Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University and colleagues, conducted a study entitled “Monitoring groundwater using energy water smart meters and precision irrigation”. The project introduced smart water meters and addressed the issue of the volume of water to allocate to each farmer to make sure that there will be no economic losses due to the water quota. Forty smart electricity-water meters were installed in forty farms of different sizes and using different irrigation technologies.

Results of the study show that flood irrigated farms use more than double the volume of irrigation water the farms equipped with sprinklers or dippers pump. Adoption of smart irrigation increases productivity of farming and fundamentally reduces the demand of groundwater as the system is operated automatically to respond to crop demand. The farmers thus have no subjective decision to make regarding when and how much water should be given to any crop during any season.

An interview with 120 farmers showed that most farmers are quite aware that over-pumping is the major cause of groundwater depletion and quality degradation. Furthermore, 57% of farmers agreed on the need to implement the water quota system provided that groundwater should be free, the allocated quota should cover the crops’ water requirement and that the quota should be enforced on all users without favoritism.

From an economic and efficiency point of view, the researchers applied a combination of dynamic optimization with numerical groundwater modeling. This study determined how different optimal management levels and cooperation can reduce the amount of adverse effects of seawater intrusion. The results of the economic modelling have shown that the business as usual scenario will lead to a deterioration of the groundwater quality and 46% loss of cropped land by year 2084. On the other hand, if farmers accept a collective-efficiency approach to manage the aquifer for groundwater abstractions, the net present value of the potential benefit of collective-efficiency arises to $405 million after subtracting the cost of smart metering. The agricultural cropped area could stabilize at a level of 3,300 ha compared to 3,300 ha in absence of collective-efficiency by end of year 2084. This has strong implication in terms of food security.

The adoption of the collective-efficiency approach will result in more than 3,500 farms having to quit farming. These farms are located in beach front area and are heavily affected by salinity. Another 1,500 farms will see their benefit decrease slightly and around 2,200 farms will highly benefit from the “centrally planned” approach, as their present value of benefits would reach $485 million. These results call for a solution to the farmers who will quit farming and those who will lose due to the centrally distributional effects of groundwater pumping. Given that there is a high demand of urban land on beachfront areas, the government can ease the transformation of agricultural land into urban land to compensate farmers for quitting the business and stop groundwater pumping in order to ensure agricultural sustainability.

The results of the study show that the sustainability of the agricultural sector in Oman requires a paradigm shift. Business as usual will have drastic consequences on farmers’ income, consumers’ access to fresh vegetables and food security. Reforms require audacity and include groundwater-metering, regulation and implementation of quotas in light of what is prevailing in the Aflaj systems. In fact Oman has excellent traditions and inherited laws in groundwater management in the Aflaj that should be revived and applied properly to individual wells. A planned reduction of the cropped area accompanied by a market mechanism of compensation of farmers willing to quit should be put in place. Crop mix should be more oriented towards vegetable production than tree crops or field crops. All these reforms will be accepted by farmers if properly implemented. The role of the government is to monitor the change and all compensations will flow from private to private businesses without the need for public subsidies.
Prof. Susan Carolyn Breau, Head of School, School of Law at the University of Reading, UK, visited the College of Law at Sultan Qaboos University recently. She was received by Dr. Rashid Hamed Al-Balushi, Assistant Professor, Khamis Ali Almoharbi, Administrative Director, College of Law, and other academicians from the College of Law at SQU. The two sides discussed on ways to promote academic and research ties between the two institutions.

The School of Law is part of the world-ranked University of Reading, rated among the UK’s most research intensive institutions and one of the UK’s largest, best-known and most successful campus universities. Prof. Susan Breau, invited the faculty members in Law at SQU to collaborate with the School of Law at Reading, which offers inclusive, dynamic, and thriving research environment where individual researchers are stimulated to undertake significant and high-quality work. The academicians from the College of Law at SQU evinced interest to learn from the experience of the School of Law at the University of Reading in Pro Bono projects and other practical experiences for law students.

Prof. Susan Breau opined that collaboration with a law school in Oman is very important for her School considering the importance of Oman as a mediator in resolving the crisis in the Middle East and the Arab region. She said that, first time in the world, the Reading School of Law is offering a postgraduate program in Global Crisis, Conflict and Disaster Management. Many Omani students are pursuing higher studies in law at the School of Law at the University of Reading.

The Babson College of Advisory Board Members interacted with a group of academics from SQU who explained on SQU’s activities in promoting the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among its students. The panel included H.H. Dr. Adham Al Said, Hon. Dr. Said Al Muharrami, and Dr. Shahid Al Balushi from the College of Economics & Political Science, Hon. Dr. Rashid Al Yahyai from the College of Agricultural & Marine Sciences, Dr. Salim Al Harthy from the Academic Innovation Assistance Program, and Dr. Mahmood Al Kindi from the College of Engineering.

SQU conducts several courses and activities to expose students to entrepreneurship and innovation so that they can start own companies and businesses in future with the support of the government which promotes small and medium enterprises of youngsters. SQU’s courses in entrepreneurship and innovation at SQU focus on idea generation, opportunity assessment, creative thinking methods, IP protection and business plan development.

Passion combined with purpose is enough to sustain the motivation to do innovative things and persevere, said Hilal Al Busaidi, CEO and CO-founder of Gulf Energy, a leading oil field service provider in the region. He was talking about “Success story in technology industry: what does it take?” at the symposium on the “Role of universities in generating technology-based start-ups” organised by the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Department at SQU. “A person does not have to be smart in order to be a successful entrepreneur. In fact, the journey to become a successful entrepreneur should start from the first day at the university. One should grab the opportunities and ready to take challenges”, Hilal Al Busaidi said.

According to Hilal Al Busaidi, the success of Gulf Energy is the result of scientific approach in its day-to-day functioning clubbed with technical success that lead to commercial success. In order to become successful, an entrepreneur should have a good team around, to share success and failures. We should learn the art of celebrating failures too; otherwise we would not learn anything in life”, he said. “Omanis have a strong tradition of entrepreneurship in trade and maritime activities. In the past, the conditions were primitive and our ancestors had to go through many hurdles to become entrepreneurs in intercontinental trade and seafaring. Now the world has changed a lot, and has become highly competitive as well. Hence, the young generation should have innovative ideas to succeed in lives”, he added.

The symposium was held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Dr. Fahad bin Aljulanda Al Said, Assistant Secretary General for Innovation Development at the Research Council. The seminar was aimed at highlighting the importance of academic institutions in the establishment of high-tech start-up companies, explain the industrial and commercial utility of high-tech innovations, from the laboratory stage through industry.
Why is celery good for you?

Celery is one of the popular Mediterranean herbs recognized for its strong aromatic flavor that it imparts to variety of cuisines. It is a small biennial herbaceous plant originated in Europe. Celery is grown easily as a potherb in the home-gardens for its flavorful leaves, shoots, roots, and seeds. It is a small plant; reaching about half a meter in height and requires fertile, moisture rich soil to flourish.

The punchy flavor and refreshing juicy crunch make celery a heavy-hitter in the salad department. However, there are many more uses to this vegetable than just sticking it in a dip. If raw celery is brash, soft-cooked celery is subtle, yielding sophisticated flavors like those of the classier artichoke and asparagus. A silky celery soup, for instance, takes some beating.

Modern scientific studies confirm celery’s folk medicine profile for lowering blood pressure. This may be due to its potassium content, and the presence of phthalides, compounds that relax muscles around arteries. Coumarin, another antioxidant in celery, appears to enhance the activity of white blood cells. Celery has a diuretic effect, so it can play a role in eliminating excess body fluid. In many countries, celery is recommended as a cleansing vegetable with tonic properties. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, wrote that celery could be used to calm the nerves, and it has a history of usage in treating nervous disorders.

Celery is has been identified as literal ‘superhero’ among all nutritious and beneficial food sources. So, we need to eat it regularly and we can drive away a whole range of health issues such as; arthritis, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and even ED. Moreover, it’s one of the most powerful weight loss secrets and one of the most nutritious and hydrating vegetables we can consume.

Celery leaves are a good source of vitamin A whereas the stems are rich in vitamin B1, B2, B6 and C. Apart from being a vitamin powerhouse, celery is rich in the minerals, calcium, iron, phosphorus and sodium. It is also a good source of amino acids, plant hormones and essential oils.

The sodium content in celery is very different from the table salt most of us consume too much of. In celery, it is present in an organic form that is soluble and essential for body salt balance. Celery juice, in fact, is an excellent rehydration that replaces the salt lost due to activity.

Below are just a few of the amazing benefits of celery:

- Celery is loaded with nearly 8 anti-cancer compounds that fight against different types of cancer including prostate, colon and stomach cancer. It lowers cholesterol by as much as 7 points even when just 2 small stalks of celery are consumed every day. Celery is a natural laxative that improves digestion and relieves constipation. It also relaxes nerves stressed out by artificial laxatives. The sodium and potassium minerals present in celery helps regulate body fluid. Celery is a great food source for reducing inflammation caused by different ailments like arthritis, sinusitis, gout, asthma and bronchitis.

Drinking a glass of celery juice every day for one week results a serious drop in blood pressure. The chemical compounds in celery have a soothing effect on the nerves and helps induce sleep. Celery juice helps eliminate toxins from the body and dissolves urinary and gall bladder stones.

Celery has even been shown to have the power to increase sexuality without causing side effects of pharmaceutical drugs. And since it’s a negative calorie food we burn more digesting it than we get calories from eating it. The more celery we eat, the slimmer we will get. Thus we should not forget to stock up on celery, and include it in our diet every day for amazing benefits and good health. (Source: Blue Heron Health News, posted on 8 June, 2015 & The Guardian, posted on 12 October 2013).
Mr. El Zein Mustafa El Muzamil is the Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Oman. FAO and Oman have been working closely over the last three decades and in 2012 the FAO Representation in Oman was established to further strengthen this partnership. FAO works in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to support the sustainable development of the agriculture and fisheries sector in line with government priorities. FAO is also collaborating with Sultan Qaboos University on issues related to the FAO mandate. We met Mr. El Muzamil at the regional workshop on brucellosis, organized by the Animal & Veterinary Sciences Department of the College of Agricultural & Marine Sciences in collaboration with FAO, and talked to him to find out more about FAO’s work in the Sultanate.

Horizon: Can you tell us about other areas in which FAO is supporting Oman?
El Muzamil: FAO is currently collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the formulation of the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy towards 2040. The aim of the Strategy is to enhance the competitiveness and value added of the agriculture sector, promote sustainable natural resource management, promote rural livelihood opportunities, and increase the resilience of the sector and rural livelihoods through improved disaster risk management and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, have recently signed three project agreements focusing on the development of the fisheries sector; these recent projects aims at (i) enhancing the role of the fishmeal and oil subsector as a contributor to the economy; (ii) improving the monitoring of fishing vessels; iii) assessing the economic performance of the artisanal and coastal fishing production and its contribution to the country’s economy throughout its value chain.