

The youth of the nation

Qatari government agency the General Secretariat for Development Planning (GSDP) produced the National Development Strategy 2011-2016 as the practical short-term result of the National Vision 2030. The secretariat reports to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, crown prince and current heir apparent to the Qatari throne, and was created in 2006.

In the public sector, one of the largest employers of young people, wages are rising abruptly. What can be done to find Qataris work elsewhere? Part of the solution is to further encourage established entrepreneurship initiatives and to help launch new ones. We must encourage young people to be more interested in private sector opportunities. For higher skilled workers there are great earning opportunities in the private sector. Young entrepreneurs can act as catalysts to change Qatar's current hydrocarbons-dependent economy to a diversified one.

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The government should study barriers to entrepreneurship and launch initiatives for training in business and capacity building at home and abroad in areas relevant to our labour market needs. Private companies also need further economic incentives. Finally, Qatar needs campaigns to change attitudes regarding female Qatari employees in the private sector.

What role should oil and gas companies play in providing opportunities for Qatari youth?

In addition to providing academic training, Qatar is increasingly focused on providing young people with technical and vocational training pathways to employment. This is in recognition of the fact that technical experts, such as engineers and electricians, as well as information technology experts, designers, health and media specialists, are the backbone of all economies.

Qatar's energy industry is currently playing a very important role in providing young people with technical training and employment opportunities. Our agency is supporting the creation

of second chance programmes for Qatari youth who have not completed secondary education, thereby giving them the opportunity to salvage their career prospects, making better use of valuable human resources and increasing the number of Qataris in the labour force. The energy industry can help provide programmes for this group, in partnership with educational institutions with skills and training that are in demand, offering accredited qualification of acceptable standards to the industry. One precondition for the success of such programmes is a favourable attitude among Qatari youth, and more generally Qatari society, to technical employment.

According to the Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016, Qatari labour productivity is falling across many sectors. What steps can be taken to rectify this process?

It is true that recently, productivity levels in some sectors have been slipping. This trend must be reversed if the goals of the 2011-2016 strategy are to be realised. To sustain prosperity over the long term, Qatar will need to see advances in productivity growth. Therefore, the country is investing in the education and health of its citizens and putting in place critical information and communications technology and other infrastructure. However, tackling productivity declines will also require a fresh look be taken at the incentives and regulations that encourage the use of highly labour intensive processes in many sectors, including in the construction and services segments.

What steps can be taken to improve opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Qatari economy?

The Qatar Development Bank's Al Dameen product aims to improve access and cut the cost of borrowing for SMEs. Enterprise Qatar is providing a range of new financial and non-financial support services to start up and other small businesses. It will be offering a full suite of integrated services that will assist SMEs through the various stages of their lifecycle. Furthermore, the Social Development Centre, Silatech and Roudha Centre are also making progress. One area where I would like to see more developments made is in state and other procurement regulations that would give SMEs a fairer chance to win new business. ■



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EDUCATION

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2011-present: Secretary general, GSDP
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IN FIGURES

Qatari labour force annual growth in 2001-11
5 percent

Growth of Qatari participation in labour force 2001-10
3 percent

Proportion of Qatari men aged 20-24 employed in the public sector
67 percent

Proportion of Qatari women aged 20-24 employed in the public sector
47 percent