



The people's champion

For Bahrain's underprivileged and disadvantaged, Dr. Fatima Al-Balooshi is the go-to woman. The only female minister (of social development) in the country is working tirelessly to help the causes of the poor, elderly and children in the kingdom. BY CHRISTINA FERNANDES

“I have been in this position for three years now, but sometimes it feels more like 300 years,” Dr. Fatima jokes. Since Dr. Nada Haffadh left her post as health minister last year, Dr. Fatima has been the only female minister in the country, but she is not concerned about this.

“In Bahrain, we women have always been working with men, especially as nurses and teacher, but also in other professions,” she says. “We have no problems working with them. I have personally never had any problems. In fact I have experienced a lot of kindness and respect from my male colleagues and they welcomed me and my former colleague Nada as women in the government.”

Dr. Fatima says there is not as much discrimination in Bahrain as there is in some of its neighbouring countries. “I am the daughter of an employee at the Alba plant,” she says. “I received a Bahraini scholarship to study in Canada and I was

not from an influential family. It didn’t make a difference that I was a girl. The year I went, most of us were girls; there were only two or three boys. This is what Bahrain is like.”

After receiving a Bachelor’s degree in science from Concordia University in Montreal, Dr. Fatima returned to Bahrain and worked as a high school teacher for a year. “I was supposed to go into medicine,” she recalls. “I started my graduate degree in human anatomy at Columbia University in New York, but then I switched to computing and education. Eventually I got my doctorate in education, focusing on instructional technology and media.”

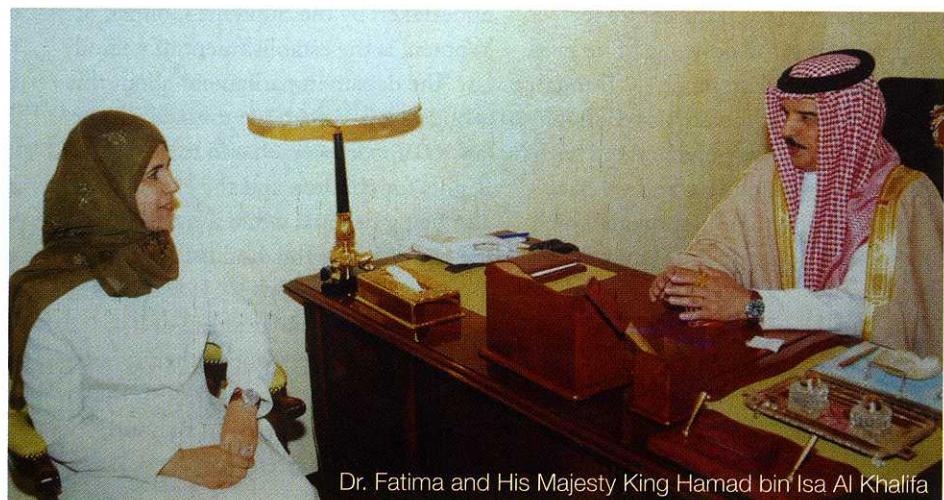
Upon her return to the kingdom, Dr. Fatima began working at the Ministry of Education, where she was responsible for introducing computers into Bahraini schools. She then moved on to the University of Bahrain where she eventually became the dean of the College of Education, before being appointed by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to her current position as minister of social development.

“At the ministry, we work for all citizens, for families as a whole, for parents, for

With the new of era of democracy in Bahrain, many rights have been established.



Dr. Fatima Al-Balooshi



Dr. Fatima and His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa

