JOINT VENTURES

FUELING BRUNEI’S FUTURE

“85-YEARS ON AND SHELL’S PARTNERSHIP WITH BRUNEI DARUSSALAM GOVERNMENT IS STILL GOING STRONG”

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

Shell prepares for Majnoon full field development
Shell achieves First Commercial Production

Through the Looking Glass
How a solar power innovation could enhance the region’s oil recovery
Partnerships matter a great deal to Shell. Operating in collaborative partnerships is a fundamental to the way we do business as a company. As the oil and gas industry ventures into more challenging areas in the future, risk sharing and excellence in partnering will become even more important for the industry and for Shell.

We are fortunate to have a long and proud history of successful partnerships. We have learnt from all of these years of experience that our biggest strength is the ability to appreciate the broader needs of host governments and national oil companies, and then to match these to our own strategic objectives and operational and technical capabilities. Whether it’s purposely developing cutting-edge technology, or supporting the development of local companies to meet the needs of our industry, we take pride in bringing our unique expertise to bear on behalf of our partnerships.

Throughout Shell’s long history around the world we have covered every imaginable type of opportunity, and we draw on this vast reference base to create innovative, flexible and bespoke solutions that suits the unique requirements of individual projects and Joint Ventures.

A top priority for Shell, and something we are passionate about, is developing national talent and capacity. This matters a great deal to our host countries, and it forms a cornerstone of our approach to collaboration and to the additional value we bring to our partnerships.

Technology and innovation right across the oil and gas value chain is in Shell’s DNA – it has always been one of the defining strengths of our company. We bring this strength to bear in our partnerships, and introduce our JV staff to a wealth of cutting edge technologies and global best practices. Amongst many examples, the value of this approach is visible in the groundbreaking enhanced oil recovery technologies being trialed and deployed in Oman and the innovative drilling techniques that have come out of Brunei.

Most importantly, we bring our uncompromising approach on personal and process safety into every partnership we participate in. We continue to raise the safety performance bar year after year, and we share what we learn around the world with all of our partnerships.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition.

De La Rey Venter,
Executive Vice President: Joint Ventures at Royal Dutch Shell

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APRIL 2014
WELCOME
Cover image: Maximising the number of local staff working with BSP and opening up a range of opportunities for Bruneians to progress

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The Seria Crude Oil Terminal (SCOT) provides collection, storage and export facilities for all the produced crude oil and condensate within Brunei Darussalam.
FUELING BRUNEI’S FUTURE

85 YEARS ON AND SHELL’S PARTNERSHIP WITH BRUNEI DARUSSALAM GOVERNMENT IS STILL GOING STRONG
Dating back to 1929, Shell’s partnership with the government of Brunei Darussalam is one of the longest in Shell’s history. Since its inception the partnership has contributed significantly to Brunei’s economy, and 85 years on it is still going strong. Today, the Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sendirian Berhad (BSP), a joint venture between The Government of Brunei Darussalam and Shell, is the largest producer of oil and gas in the country, and contributes to a staggering 60% of Brunei’s annual GDP. And, Brunei Shell’s four joint venture companies, of which BSP is the oldest, employ more than 14,000 staff and contractors, making it the second largest employer only after the government.

Shell has been in Brunei since the early exploration years before the first commercial discovery of oil reservoirs in the Seria field in 1929, when the partnership was officiated. Through technology transfer, best practice sharing and human capital development Shell is committed to the future of the relationship and the sustainability of the country. “It is really the constant stream of innovation that Brunei Shell has had in order to find and develop fields that have been producing for over 80 years,” says Ken Marnoch, Managing Director at BSP. “We’ve got a strong track record in Brunei of always asking what it will take to develop the volumes we know are there.”

Since the first commercial find, the Seria field alone has produced more than 1.1 billion barrels of oil. The continued success of this area over the past 85 years, in particular over the past 20 years, can be attributed to a combination of Shell’s innovative technologies and persistence. In 1998, a series of small oil reserves were discovered just off the north coast of the field, known as the Seria North Flank, but were unobtainable by traditional methods. Positioned just offshore in 2-10m water meant it was too shallow to support an offshore rig, and the coral dense water posed huge environmental risks. Over the next decade, BSP worked on a number of solutions to overcome these and other obstacles the Seria North Flank posed.

The BSP team persevered and a solution was found almost a decade later. The unique solution integrated a number of proven technologies from Shell’s sites around the world. It was the first time Shell's Smart Well and Smart Field technologies had been combined with the Fishhook Well drilling method, enabling Shell to safely and economically unlock the volumes along the coast, increasing production of the Seria field by 100%. “The magic of
“WE’VE GOT A STRONG TRACK RECORD IN BRUNEI OF ALWAYS ASKING WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO DEVELOP THE VOLUMES WE KNOW ARE THERE.”

BSP continues to set the industry pace in using innovative technology to spur on its business.

This project is that each technology enabled the other one to work,” explains Ivan Yong, a Production Technologist on the Seria North Flank project. “The original concept was the fish hook and once we proved that we could drill a fish hook well we started combining the other elements of the solution. You could describe the fish hook as the ingenious idea that made this all possible but the smart technology was what made this economically feasible because it meant that we could maximize the value from the wells by operating them remotely,” he continued.

With the offshore part of the project generating half as much oil as the land asset, the ability to unlock these reserves through technical innovation also equated to an increase in local jobs. Through a number of training and development programmes, Shell has worked hard to encourage locals into the project and to date almost 60% of the workforce at Seria North Flank is made up of local Bruneians.

In line with the government’s national vision, BSP will continue to increase this figure. The national vision, known as Wawasan 2035, was launched in 2008 by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in an effort to safeguard the future prosperity of Brunei. One of the central pillars of this vision is to build youth capacity by preparing young people for employment through education.

As the second largest employer in the country, Brunei Shell’s joint venture companies have developed a number of training programmes to ensure that there is a continuous supply of competent and capable Bruneians to fill the jobs it creates. Yong, a local Bruneian, can’t remember a time when Shell didn’t have a presence in the community. “The Seria North Flank site is located very close to where people live. The unusual aspect of this particular project is that because of its longevity, it’s really become a normal part of the community,” Yong says. >>
The Wells Graduate Development programme is one of BSP’s development initiatives. The programme delivers formal training over two years in drilling of wells, completion techniques, and well intervention, with onsite placement in rigs like the T201 in the Seria North Flank. The programme is designed and delivered by BSP engineers so the graduates are trained to the highest possible standards. It also includes a strong focus on Health, Safety, Security and the Environment (HSSE) behavior, risk identification and mitigation tactics. “Once students have completed the training, they’ll be qualified as drilling or completion supervisors working on and offshore, which is a position that carries a certain level of authority on the rig,” says Mark Vandevelden, Head of HSSE Wells & Capability Coordinator at Brunei Shell Petroleum.

This comprehensive programme builds competency and capability and provides local engineering students with access to world-class domestic employment opportunity after graduation. It is designed to gradually replace more and more expatriates with local Bruneians. Boasting a 98% pass rate in 2013, the programme currently has 64 participants, and 26% of graduates are female. Through the Wells’ Diversification and Inclusion programme, the aim by the end of this year is for 1 in 3 participants to be female.

A point of difference for the Seria North Flank project with its high percentage of Bruneians and an outcome of the training programmes is that the workforce is uniquely young. “We have quite a young team on average, compared with other teams. But they are very driven, which is a key aspect to our success,” says Yong. “It’s a good place to develop talent,” he adds. “We have a lot of faith in our younger staff to be able to deliver for the company and they’ve proven that they can.”

Shell’s long-term presence in Brunei has enabled it to make a lasting contribution to the sustainability of Brunei’s oil and gas industry, economy and the overall development of the country. Shell hopes through its continued commitment and initiatives to see the partnership continue well into the future.

BSP contributes to 60% of Brunei’s annual GDP
SHELL PREPARES FOR MAJNOON FULL FIELD DEVELOPMENT

SHELL ACHIEVES FIRST COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

The 20th of September 2013 is a date that Simon Daman Willems, Managing Director at Shell Iraq Petroleum Development (SIPD) will remember for a very long time. It was on that day that the Majnoon Oil Field in Iraq produced its first oil and SIPD took a giant step towards reaching its First Commercial Production (FCP) milestone.

Within one month of the start-up, the field has consistently produced well in excess of the 175,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) SIPD was required to produce, by the contract with permit holder the South Oil Company (SOC). “To put this into context, the first phase produces substantially more oil per day than Shell’s output in some European countries. This is a truly world-class producing asset for Iraq and it’s our job to help reach its full potential,” says Daman Willems.

“There was a huge feeling of relief and triumph to get this far and to reach our First Commercial Production goal safely and responsibly.”

“This achievement will help increase Iraq’s oil production and generally establish a better economic prospect for the Iraqi people,” says Dheyaa Jaafar Hajam, Director General, South Oil Company.

The successful completion of the 90-day period of continuous oil production signifies the completion of the First Commercial Production phase and importantly, has confirmed Shell’s capabilities to the permit holder SOC. Davesh Patel, Asset Manager for Majnoon Oil Field stated, “In order for SIPD to take steps towards Full Field Development (FFD) it first had to demonstrate its capability to develop a field the size of Majnoon through First Commercial Production.”

With the project successfully up and running, SIPD is now discussing Phase Two - Full Field Development (FFD), which could see a substantial increase of oil production in the coming years.

In order for Shell to progress the project to the second phase, subsurface data acquisition and infrastructure planning are key. To realise the full potential of Majnoon’s deposits, Shell plans to first conduct a 3D seismic survey of the entire field. It will be the largest 3D seismic survey ever undertaken in Iraq and is expected to take around two years to complete. The survey will give the geologists a better understanding of the oil reservoirs and help to plan future infrastructure developments more effectively. “Majnoon is one of the largest oil fields in the world and as of yet we don’t have an awful lot of information about the reservoirs. Conducting a 3D seismic survey allows us to build a state of the art computer model of what the field looks like,” Daman Willems says. “This would be essential to our ability to plan and effectively execute Phase Two.”

Without the survey, it is likely a large volume of oil may not be optimally recovered from the reservoirs. The survey is also expected to create jobs for the local workforce. “Seismic surveying is man-power intensive, which means that this part of the project is expected to translate to approximately 600 local jobs for the neighbouring Basrah and Missan provinces. It also gives us an opportunity to build local capabilities around this technology,” Daman Willems explains. It is predicted that in a next phase of the project 15,000 - 20,000 additional workers could be required to complete the major expansion and reach the Full Field Production volume. >>

Personnel onsite at Majnoon will grow as the project ramps-up, predicted to reach up to 15,000-20,000 additional workers.
“THIS IS A WORLD CLASS ASSET FOR IRAQ AND IT’S OUR JOB TO HELP REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL”

- Dheyaa Jaafar Hajam and Simon Damian Willems commemorating the startup of Majnoon Oil Field in September 2013
- Impressive structure onsite at Majnoon Oil Field
In focus; safety has been a key driver in the responsible development of Majnoon Oil Field.

Developing sustainable infrastructure

Whilst infrastructure is not part of SIPD’s original contract, the need for such developments has become increasingly apparent for the success of the project. Water is just one requirement that Shell has identified as increasingly critical to the expanding operations. To combat this issue, SIPD is developing the first of many water treatment facilities. Using Shell’s water treatment technology, the facility will turn waste water, a by-product of oil production, into water that can be used for other purposes on site.

Trust, the key to success

The trust that has developed between the Majnoon partners has been key to the success of the project, and the continued strength of this partnership will be integral to the success of future development phases.

The partnership commenced in 2010 when Shell was awarded a 20-year contract by the Iraqi Ministry of Oil with partners Petronas and Missan Oil Company, to develop the Majnoon...
People here are proud of what they do every day and what they’ve achieved.”

There have been some unique challenges in reaching FCP at Majnoon but ones we have embraced and resolved safely. However, that would not have been possible without the support and partnership between UI and PT during this project. Our seamless cooperation strategy has underpinned the progress we have made to date enabling us to successfully move forward in several different areas, most importantly safety.”

Tom Hooft van Huysduynen, Project Director Majnoon.

Oil Field and begin production within three years. For this partnership to evolve, it became apparent to the SIPD team that a shift in mindset was needed. The team also discovered that while delivering what is promised is vital, complete transparency has really helped to build trust and pave the way for an open and collaborative partnership.

Daman Willems remembers a time when he needed to provide an update about the project with the Deputy Minister of Oil. After discussing the challenge at hand, the Deputy Minister, H.E. Fayadh Hassan Nima shared an old Arab saying that it is sometimes better to listen to those who make you cry than to those who make you laugh. Even though he was sharing bad news, demonstrating a willingness to be up front and treat the Ministry as a true partner actually helped strengthen the relationship.

There is a sense of shared pride about what is being achieved in Majnoon amongst everyone involved. “People here are proud of what they do every day and what they’ve achieved,” says Daman Willems. With the First Commercial Production achieved and the project team moving forward, they do so with an air of excitement, determination and confidence.

“The First Commercial Production from the Majnoon field is a significant achievement as it comes from a battlefield once covered almost entirely with ordinance and mines which had to be removed using innovative means prior to being able to work on the site,” says Dheyaa Jaafar Hajam. “As Director General of the South Oil Company, I am proud that this field has been developed in cooperation with Shell and our national staff from the South Oil Company.”

Majnoon is the largest development of its kind in the oil and gas sector of Iraq, explains Davesh Patel. “In due course our expectation is that our Iraqi colleagues and partners will be managing the operations. We want to transfer our skills, technology, safety standards and best practices to make Majnoon the success this country deserves – now and for many years to come.”
THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

HOW A SOLAR POWER INNOVATION COULD ENHANCE THE REGION’S OIL RECOVERY

In southern Oman, in a remote spot miles from anywhere, among the dust and the oil derricks, stands a large glasshouse. Is this, you might ask, the work of an eccentric Dutchman desperate for a reminder of his homeland? Or a piece of modern art, an installation designed to shock its viewers? The answer is neither. The glasshouse represents the latest innovation in enhanced oil recovery (EOR) technology. Inside the glasshouse, protected from dust and wind, lightweight parabolic mirrors hang from the structure, focusing the sun’s rays onto a pipe carrying water. When the sun’s heat is applied, the water in the pipe is turned into steam, which is then used for EOR, a technique that pumps steam into subsurface reservoirs to help extract the oil.

The glasshouse is an elegant answer to a technical issue that has plagued developers of solar power in the region for years — wind. Wind is the biggest cost driver for Concentrating Solar Power (CSP) technologies, whose large mirrors act like sails in outdoor environments. The glasshouse innovation protects the mirrors and delicate components from the elements, allowing the use of low-cost, lightweight materials that are a fraction of the cost of older solar designs. The absence of wind also allows a tighter focus point and smaller receiver pipe than older solar troughs, further reducing cost and heat losses. Daniel Palmer, director of business development in the Middle East for GlassPoint Solar, which developed this Enclosed Trough technology to produce steam for use in oil production, explains. “Oman is blessed with abundant sunshine, but until now there hasn’t been a practical way to put it to use. The big issues in Oman and other parts of the Middle East are wind and dust. Oman, for example, is up to 30 times dustier and two to three times windier than the sites in California where large solar power projects have flourished. The glasshouse shields the mirrors, protecting them from sand, dust and wind, thus allowing them to be both lighter and more efficient.”

One of the most enthusiastic supporters of the project is Dr. Syham Bentouati, head of new technology implementation at Petroleum Development Oman. “The genius idea was to put the mirrors inside a glasshouse,” she says. “Now the challenge is to make it financially competitive so that it can be implemented at large scale.”

The pilot project was commissioned in late February, and the trial programme will last a year. The early signs are positive. “We have proved that we can generate steam at the specifics we need in terms of temperature and pressure,” says Dr Bentouati. “In other words, the glasshouse does what it says on the tin. Now we need to show that we can operate for a year delivering an average of 50 tonnes of steam daily.”
There are a number of reasons why this technology is exciting. First, it is an alternative to using gas to heat the steam. The gas that's saved can be used for other purposes to grow Oman's economy. Oman uses some 22% of all its gas for EOR, more than is used for domestic purposes, and has urgent needs for gas to power industrial growth, power generation and desalination. GlassPoint's solar steam generators can replace up to 80% of the gas currently burned for EOR. The gas saved can then be exported as LNG or redirected to the private sector, fuelling economic growth and creating thousands of jobs. Second, using solar power does not create greenhouse gases. And third, sunshine is free and limitless, and in abundant supply in the Sultanate.

Shell is an investor in GlassPoint, a four-year old company based in California that is developing the technology. “Shell has been very supportive, both financially and technically,” says Palmer. “It has some very good advisers who have been really helpful.” But it is Petroleum Development Oman that gave the company the opportunity to trial its technology on a large scale. “We gave them the chance to do it, they were initially looking at the construction industry,” says Dr. Bentouati. “Then they read a paper we had published on the topic of solar steam generation. We think we could create a whole industry in Oman, that’s why we are very serious about it, but it has to make economic sense. At the moment it is not cheaper than gas, but it is certainly cheaper than any other solar method.”

One of the challenges will be scaling up the output from the glasshouses. At the moment the trial is producing 50 tonnes of steam a day. Even a small EOR field needs around 5,000 tonnes a day, so rather than covering two football pitches it would need to be as big as 100 pitches. EOR is a key technology for Oman, with a diversity of challenges and opportunities. Oman’s geology is not straightforward, and the carbonates in the north and the sandstone in the south both require special treatment to extract their oil. “We do thermal, chemical and gas injection EOR in Oman, because we have to, given our complex geology,” says Dr. Bentouati. If the trial proves to be a success and a decision is taken to proceed on an industrial scale, GlassPoint will be moving its manufacturing base to Oman.

“We think we can get 80% local content,” says Palmer. “Other countries in the GCC could be interested in this technology, particularly Kuwait which will do a lot of thermal EOR in the future. But there are other applications too, including water desalination. We can generate thermal energy at a fraction of the price of anybody else.”
The key challenge is for the technology to be competitive with other available sources of steam. “Our goal is to be price competitive with gas or be cheaper,” he says. “We are relentless about manufacturing discipline and cost reduction. Our business is based on being competitive, without subsidies or special tariffs. Deploying our technology will expand Oman’s primary energy supply, industrial base, energy independence and technology leadership. Solar EOR in Oman both expands today’s energy supply and lays the foundation for tomorrow’s.” The deployment of solar EOR in Oman will create a world-class solar industry alongside a world-class oil and gas industry.

The idea of focusing the sun’s rays is not a new one. It was first used in the region in the time of the ancient Egyptians, who built homes that stored energy from the sun during the day, and released it during the night. However, this could finally be a feasible and cost-effective method that will also create a local industry. “I’m really looking forward to seeing solar technologies deployed at large scale and for many applications in the oil and gas industry,” says Dr. Bentouati.

**“SUNSHINE IS FREE AND LIMITLESS, AND IN ABUNDANT SUPPLY IN THE SULTANATE”**
"As the world becomes more connected, young people have increasing access to a much wider range of opportunities," says Clare Woodcraft, CEO of Emirates Foundation. While this is positive, the decisions facing young people about how they want to develop as professionals, and individuals, are far more complex. Change is becoming the new norm in the United Arab Emirates with its relatively young history of unification, rapid economic expansion and industrial development. A growing presence of international companies and expatriate workforce brings with it new and diverse opportunities for the region’s youth.

In 2005, The Emirates Foundation was established by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, and His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. The foundation was set up to create a bridge between the private and business sectors, and the community with a primary mission to guide, empower and inspire young people towards full participation in the community and the workforce.

The Emirates Foundation delivers six core programmes that encourage social inclusion, community engagement, and leadership and empowerment. “Our goal is to help young people navigate this complex new world of opportunities that they face and ensure that they receive as much guidance as possible. We ultimately want to instill a sense of leadership and citizenship,” says Woodcraft.

The Foundation is run by 100 dedicated full-time staff and is funded in part by the Government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and corporate partners, one of which is Shell. “Shell was one of the first companies to come on board as a partner, and has been a loyal and valued partner since we started working together,” says Clare. In addition to this strong corporate partnership, the Emirates Foundation is also working closely with the Shell Foundation, an independent charity established by Royal Dutch Shell in 2000 that works to create and scale sustainable solutions to global development challenges.

More than ten years ago, Shell Foundation began a journey to redefine its approach to philanthropy. “After our first three years we discovered that our early way of working, essentially supporting a huge number of short-term projects through existing NGOs, simply wasn’t working”, says Richard Gomes, Head of Policy and Advocacy at Shell Foundation. “We realised that if we wanted to achieve social and environmental impact on a global scale then we’d need to do something radically different.”

Ten years on, it’s supporting the Emirates Foundation on its own journey, sharing knowledge and lessons garnered over a decade pioneering a new model known as venture philanthropy. The two organisations are part of a small group of foundations that are trying to dramatically improve the effectiveness with which philanthropic resources are deployed. >>
Clare Woodcraft-Scott is the Chief Executive Officer of Emirates Foundation, the national foundation of the UAE, and is responsible for driving its vision of supporting youth development in the country.

Some of the key highlights from the Emirates Foundation Philanthropy in Transition Summit recorded as a graphic.
Emirates Foundation’s Philanthropy Summit brings together philanthropists, corporate and government representatives in a debate about how philanthropic capital can be used more effectively to create sustainable socioeconomic value.

“We ultimately want to instill a sense of leadership and citizenship.”
Shell Foundation’s model centres on identifying market failures that underpin global development challenges and co-creating independent social enterprises to solve these in ways that are ultimately financially viable and self-sustaining. “Instead of making lots of smaller financial contributions to lots of organisations, we now form close partnerships with a small number of social entrepreneurs and provide a blend of grant funding and business support over a long period of time – sometimes 10 years – to help them expand their operations across regions,” says Gomes.

Shell Foundation’s evaluation of its philanthropic efforts in its early years showed that 80% of grant recipients failed to deliver impact at scale. Yet in the next ten years that followed their strategic shift they managed to achieve an 80% success rate. Their programmes to address issues such as job creation through SMEs, access to energy and urban mobility have now benefited over 20 million people and created nearly 30,000 jobs.

“Many of the world’s problems stem back to a market failure of some sort,” says Gomes. “We use philanthropy to catalyse markets to create a self-sustaining response, and this can deliver benefits on a far greater scale. There are many synergies between this approach and the Emirates Foundation’s new strategy.”

Building youth capacity is the prime objective of the Emirates Foundation – and they are now building the capacity and skills within the foundation to deliver this new kind of support. Having open access to the Shell Foundation team has been invaluable, says Maytha Al Habsi, Chief Program Officer. “We’ve travelled to London where we’ve met their senior teams and learned from their experiences.” Before joining the Emirates Foundation Clare Woodcraft was Deputy Director at Shell Foundation – and she has been instrumental in creating a new strategic direction for the organisation and exploring new partnerships to achieve this.

Both parties are now collaborating on a global initiative through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Foundation Network to advocate for change in the philanthropic sector, and have contributed to a recently launched OECD report on Venture Philanthropy that champions the virtues of moving away from grant giving towards a hands-on approach that builds capacity amongst social enterprises and market enablers.

Late last year, the Emirates Foundation lead the Philanthropy in Transition Summit which brought together philanthropists and representatives from government and the corporate sector to debate how philanthropic capital can be used more effectively to create sustainable socioeconomic value. Leading discussions like this positions the Foundation to advocate for a collaborative effort to drive greater value for the philanthropic sector.

There’s a genuine sense of enthusiasm and excitement for the journey the Emirates Foundation is on and the potential for widespread impact. “It’s one of the most exciting jobs in the country. We’ve already impacted thousands of people and thanks to our work with partners like Shell and Shell Foundation we have the potential to impact many thousands more.” Al Habsi concludes.
LEARNING LIFE VALUES THROUGH SPORTS

HOW A UNIVERSAL LOVE OF FOOTBALL CAN BE USED TO TRAIN TOMORROW’S LEADERS

When Hamad Al Kuwari was a young boy, he used to play football anywhere he could, often with very poor equipment. “We would find an empty bit of ground, divide ourselves into two teams and just play,” he remembers. “We didn’t have access to all the facilities kids have today but that didn’t matter. We just wanted to play the sport we loved.”

Fast forward 15 years and Al Kuwari admits to seeing a very different Gulf region. For a start, he himself is Deputy Director of Marketing & Communication for the Qatar Football Association whilst the Middle East region is home to some of the world’s newest and most advanced football venues, including the ground-breaking FIFA World Cup Stadium in Qatar. Al Kuwari concedes that the world has changed, and not all for the better. In fact, despite sports facilities being better equipped and more accessible than ever before, physical activity levels among young people in the region are actually decreasing. In short, kids all over the Gulf are losing interest in being active. But why?

The answer, it seems, lies in some of the region’s wider health and social challenges. Among the main causes for health issues in the region are bad eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle, often as a result of growing popularity of computer games and other technological
entertainment. And as these issues become more prevalent and participation in sport declines, positive life skills like teamwork and leadership are also being impacted.

In an effort to help address this issue, Shell has joined forces with the FC Barcelona Foundation. Together with partners including Qatar Football Association, the Ministry of Youth & Sports in Iraq, and the Ministry of Education and Sports Affairs in Oman, Shell has set up an innovative initiative to empower young people to be more active and engaged across the Gulf. The programme, about to enter its second year, is known in Iraq and Oman as FutbolNet, and in Qatar as Il’Ab We’Yana – meaning in Arabic, ‘play with us’. At the heart of the programme, is football and so far, it has reached a significant number of children in all three countries – with an aim to inspire many more in 2014. In Qatar, around 20% of those involved were girls, with programme leaders hoping to replicate that success in Iraq and Oman this year too.

Wassim Berro, Social Investment Advisor at Qatar Shell, is tasked with delivering the programme in Qatar. “We wanted to deliver a Social Investment project that focuses on youth in Qatar, Iraq and Oman. In FutbolNet we found a single programme that could be tailored to reach the needs of young people in each country.”

But why football and FutbolNet in particular? “Football is the most popular sport in the world,” Berro explains. “Everyone loves it and has probably played at some stage in their life. Given we want to make it easier for young people to get active, lose weight and stay in shape, it makes sense to use the sport they are most likely to enjoy.” For Berro, success is not just down to the popularity of the sport. Equally key, is the partnership with FC Barcelona Foundation. “A key driver for Shell to partner with FC Barcelona Foundation is the fact that the football club is not only globally recognized for its sporting excellence, but also for its unique social commitment.”

FC Barcelona Foundation’s proven approach sees educational messages around diet, health and lifestyle delivered in a fun and engaging way. Crucially, topics can be tweaked to match the specific needs of each audience. “For Qatar, obesity is a key challenge,” Berro says. “Social interactions tend to take place around food, and for youth often junk foods. Plus, sport isn’t promoted very strongly in schools, with most kids only playing around one hour a week. In Oman however, the programme addresses the development of youth leadership skills, while in Iraq we are seeking an outcome of community stability and school performance improvement. FutbolNet uses something that is fun – football – as a tool to encourage various positive behaviour changes in young people. Sessions can be designed to fit the participants and that’s what makes it so successful. We were impressed with how FC Barcelona Foundation was able to tailor the programme to the different needs in each of the three countries. ”

“BEFORE, I HAD TO SUPERVISE HIM SO HE WOULD DO HIS HOMEWORK. NOW, HE DOES IT WITHOUT ME NEEDING TO REMIND HIM.”
Delivered in 5 regions in Oman
Muscat
Al Batina
Al Sharqia
Al Dahkelia
Al Dahira

Delivered in 6 regions in Iraq
Azubair
Abu Khaseeb
Al Jumhoria
Khamesa miles
Adyer
Nashwa

Delivered in 4 regions in Qatar
QFA Technical Committee
Al Thakira Youth Centre
Aspire Zone
Al Jazeera Academy

>> FC Barcelona CEO, Antoni Rosich, commented that Shell’s local insight was a great asset in adapting the programme to the needs of each country. “Shell has great knowledge of the situation in all three countries, and therefore, we were able to tailor the programme to meet the exact needs of each community, enhancing its impact,” he said.

FutbolNet is a 24-week, results-based initiative for children aged 7-12 years. Participants receive 96 hours of face-to-face sessions from a volunteer trainer focusing on nutrition, commitment, respect, teamwork, tolerance and responsibility. A full report is delivered at the end of the programme, detailing the impact on youngsters’ health and general lifestyle behaviour. Initial results in all three countries have been impressive, with the majority of children exhibiting clear improvements in their physical performance and their understanding of positive life values. Almost all participants surveyed say they are applying positive behaviours they learnt in the programme to their everyday lives.

“At the start of the first year in Qatar, lots of the participants had trouble eating fruit,” Al Kuwari recalls. “We would put some out at the beginning of each session but it would go untouched; the kids just weren’t interested. But as they continued with their sessions and started to understand why fruit and vegetables are an important part of their diet, we started to notice that all the fruit was being eaten. As a parent myself, I can appreciate what an important step that is.”

Similarly, Shadha Al-Naser, Shell Iraq Community Liaison Officer, is responsible for delivering the programme in Iraq and is clear about FutbolNet’s aims in her own country. She has no doubts about the difference it can make to people’s lives. “The vision for this programme is not to develop the next generation of football stars,” she confirms. “Instead, it addresses very specific social and behavioural challenges in Iraq by promoting positive life values, like mutual respect and understanding, teamwork, self-confidence and responsibility. The key to doing that is dialogue, which is why there is such a heavy focus on recruiting local trainers.”

It is certainly a challenging remit yet according to Hilal Al Mawali, Shell Oman Development Communications Manager, the qualities many participants learn may actually have even far-reaching consequences.

“The search for employment is a challenge for many of our region’s young people,” he explains. “Therefore, the positive values they pick up will be of huge benefit to them in the future, particularly when it comes to finding the right job or simply growing up to be good adult citizens.”
Yet it is against the backdrop of the ongoing challenges in her own country that Al-Naser offers perhaps the most telling assessment of the impact FutbolNet could have for young people in the region. “My vision for this programme is to instill in Iraqi children the values that we all need to put an end to fighting in our country,” she says. “By teaching kids how to resolve conflict peacefully and respect each other at a young age, I am hoping that when they grow up to be adults, the fighting will finally stop.”

“When my son gets home he asks me for healthy food just like he’s been taught in the programme.”