

# Great expectations

From around the globe, 35 women with something special to offer the planet: wealth creation that's not at others' expense

BY Emilie Filou

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**W**hen *World Business* and its panel of judges started to scan the globe for women of outstanding achievement under the age of 35, the decision was made to cast our net widely: to include social entrepreneurs as well as corporate entrepreneurs and women climbing the corporate ladder in small and big businesses alike. More and more it seemed that ambitious women were using their energy, intelligence and drive either to make money or to do good – and sometimes the two goals were intertwined. The women in the very first *World Business* Global 35 under 35 listing – produced in association with Shell – are immensely inspiring.

But they are also extremely diverse, reflecting the different experiences people have in the richer and poorer parts of the world. Our Global 35 under 35 come from 27 different countries and the youngest is just 24. They work in the media, finance, IT, oil rigs and agro-tourism; they are bankers, manufacturers, social entrepreneurs, consultants and senior execs.

For many, it is the determination to do good that has propelled them so far. Just like their parents, they want to make the world a better place. Unlike them, they have meticulously applied business skills and efficiency to their cause.

Most of these women would not be on our list had they not paid attention to the bottom line. But the wealth creation rare-

ly seems to have come at others' expense. Many are involved in women's networks, teach, or run projects for young girls. This solidarity is a world away from the cut-throat environment generally associated with success.

In the West, there is much talk of the glass ceiling, of women getting ever so close to the top yet never quite reaching it, while in developing countries, girls don't always even get a chance to go to school, the foundation for any kind of future.

Many of our nominees have in fact succeeded in traditional male environments, such as oil rigs, construction or finance. They have trodden new ground and broken taboos. But several experienced discrimination on the way up. When Nadiya Cherkasova, 35, one of Russia's leading microfinance experts, started work, it became obvious that all the interesting projects went to men. "I just had to show I was even better," she says.

A sign of the times, the sustainability theme runs strongly through the list, be it in green ventures, corporate social responsibility or poverty relief.

The *World Business* Global 35 under 35 in association with Shell is a celebration of these women's incredible success, not quite against the odds, but often without much of a helping hand. It is also a celebration of how diverse success is: from achieving big numbers to changing mindsets to helping others make a decent living. *World Business* wanted to showcase this international kaleidoscope of success; we hope you find this list as refreshing and inspiring as we did.

## THE JUDGES

### MICHAEL BACKMAN

Australian-born Backman is an author, columnist, consultant and collector on Asia. He has written extensively on business and politics on the continent, Southeast Asia in particular. His latest book is *Big in Asia: 30 strategies for business success* (McGraw-Hill).

### LOURDES CASANOVA

Lecturer at the strategy department at

INSEAD, Casanova specialises in international business with a focus on Latin America and multinationals from emerging markets. She has taught at INSEAD since 1989. Central to her research is the future role of Latin America in the global economy.

### TASHI LASSALLE

Lassalle is vice-president global brand and communications at executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles. A Cambridge graduate with an early

background in political media and communications at the House of Commons, GMTV and the UK Foreign Office, Lassalle lives in New York.

### MALINI MEHRA

Mehra is chief executive of the Centre for Social Markets (India/UK). Mehra's career spans academia, business and the voluntary sector. She consulted on the UK Government's 'Sustainable Development Dialogues' and the Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations.



35  
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35

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**SALWA IDRISSE AKHANNOUCH, 34, MOROCCO, FASHION ENTREPRENEUR**

Akhannouch started off her career in 1993 and in the early Noughties started to focus on new growth areas: real estate and high street fashion franchises. In 2001, she struck a deal with fashion giant Inditex, which led to the opening of the first Zara store in Africa in 2004, in Casablanca. Her company, Groupe Aksal, now employs more than 300 people.

**ABEER AL-ZUBAIDI, 27, OMAN, HR MANAGER**

Al-Zubaidi has chosen her career: to work in HR. Earlier this year, she joined BP, where she will help launch the company's gas operations in Oman. Al-Zubaidi recently wrote to the sultanate's ministry of manpower to suggest a change in maternity leave provision. She also submitted a proposal to Muscat's Sultan Qaboos University to coach students on career choices.

**IMEN BAKHOUCHE, 30, TUNISIA, WEB ENTREPRENEUR**

Algerian-born Bakhouche (*below*) caught the dotcom fever while studying for her MBA in New York and launched a start-up with two friends. NetConcept, a Tunisian web-development company, got off the ground thanks to help from friends and family, and now employs 15 people. She also teaches IT at Tunis University and hopes to promote the next generation of entrepreneurs.



**FRANCESCA BOLDRINI, 34, ITALY, PUBLIC SECTOR EXECUTIVE**

In 2002 Boldrini (*above*) gave up a senior position at Procter & Gamble to work at the World Economic Forum. Applying her private-sector skills to public-sector benefit, she pioneered the concept of tuberculosis management in the workplace. The scheme now benefits 10 million employees in India. Boldrini has also brought significant financial and practical support to Aids and malaria projects.



**CAROLINE CASEY, 35, IRELAND, DISABILITY CAMPAIGNER**

Visually impaired herself, Casey (*above*) founded the Aisling Foundation in 2000 to promote a change in attitudes towards disabled people. She has also completed projects aimed at challenging people's perception of disability: she notably undertook a 1,000 km trek in India on elephant back in 2001.

**NADIYA CHERKASOVA, 35, RUSSIA, BANKER**

Cherkasova trained as an economist in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia's third largest city. During her first job as a loan officer, Cherkasova observed that there were no banks serving people on low income. In 1998, she joined the emerging SME department of KMB Bank and went on to specialise in microfinance. "I thought I might be able to help the Russian economy; SMEs only make up 18% of GDP but in the US, it's 60%," she explains.

Eighteen months ago, she joined National Bank Trust to set up the bank's new SME division. Within a year, she had built a team of 500 employees providing services to more than 10,000 SMEs in 65 cities across Russia for a value of \$200 million. Cherkasova says that NBT's advantage is the quality of its network and staff.

"The majority of our loan officers are in their early 20s so we have the opportunity to train them and give them a great career. Also, in microfinance, 65% of employees are women. I think it's because SMEs are often led by women: women will fight hard to make sure they can support their children."

**MELISSA CLARE, 32, UK, OIL RIG MANAGER**

In 2005, at 30 years of age, Clare became the first female oil rig manager at GlobalSantaFe (GSF), one of the largest drilling companies in the world. The only woman on her mechanical and offshore engineering course at university in Aberdeen, Scotland, Clare started off as a trainee in 1998 and gradually moved up the ranks at GSF.

Despite the very macho nature of her industry, Clare has only got praise for her mostly male colleagues. "From my time offshore to my current onshore role in rig operations, the guys have been very supportive. The rig manager role is very intense and there is a great sense of camaraderie within the team," she says.

Clare is currently responsible for the GSF Galaxy III, a \$500

million jackup oil rig (a self-contained, moveable drilling rig and barge fitted with long supporting legs) with a crew of 112 at the heart of the UK's largest North Sea field, Nexen Buzzard.

Her role, based onshore at the company's Aberdeen office, covers all aspects of the rig's safety and operational performance and management of the rig's maintenance and enhancement budget.

"I thrive on the buzz of rig operations, so my ambition is to progress to operations manager and beyond," she concludes.



**CATALINA COCK DUQUE, 31, COLOMBIA, ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNER**

Cock Duque (*above*) felt privileged to have been able to study sociology and political science in the US and UK and wanted to give something back to her native community in Colombia. She became involved with campaigners aiming to encourage local miners to extract metals without seriously damaging the environment.

In 2000, Cock Duque helped to set up the Corporación Oro Verde (Green Gold Corporation) to promote green, small-scale gold-mining practices in Colombia and encourage locals to take mining into their own hands. Cock Duque's idea was to promote ancient, non-polluting extracting techniques, fair pricing and commercial contacts. Her organisation developed the Certified Green Gold Programme (GGP). Certified gold and platinum are sold internationally at a higher price in a similar way to fair trade coffee. Consumers can be

assured that the metal goods they buy come from mines that are ecologically sound and have helped small miners to exist. Almost 1,400 miners have joined the scheme. Together, they protect 7,900 hectares of some of the world's most biodiverse forests. Fifteen people now work for Oro Verde.

Building on the success of the certification, Cock Duque set up the Association for Responsible Mining. Cock Duque is also involved in setting up fair trade gold. Pilot projects are scheduled in five Latin American countries and are due to be extended to Africa.



**CHARLOTTE CROSSWELL, 35, BRITAIN, PENSIONS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

Previously head of Nasdaq International (non-US listed companies) for three years, with a \$400 billion portfolio, Crosswell (*above*) is now head of business development for the Pension Corporation, an annuity buyout business. Crosswell is in charge of managing sales, marketing and corporate communications. The company is tackling the difficult pension segment of the financial market and bringing new solutions to solve the pension fund deficit many companies face.

**LAURA DZELZYTE, 26, LITHUANIA, INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANT**

Dzelzyte (*next column*) started helping Lithuanian businesses set up shop in Britain and created her own consultancy, Bloomicon, to promote cultural understanding between British and Eastern European businesses. Dzelzyte has been developing the GreenIndex, a scoring system which calculates



the environmental cost of a product. The initiative has received strong support in the manufacturing sector, and is expected to launch globally shortly.

**RAGHDA EL EBRASHI, 24, EGYPT, NGO ORGANISER**

From the age of 12, El Ebrashi (*below*) has been involved in development work in Egypt. Her parents encouraged her to volunteer and she focused her energy on anti-drug awareness, illiteracy eradication and cultural development for children living in shanty towns in Cairo.

As a student at the American University in Cairo, she set up Alashanek ya Balady ('For you, my country' in Arabic), an organisation which set itself the goal of shifting the development paradigm away from charity to economic, social and cultural empowerment. AYB is now an NGO and provides micro-credit, training and support services to women wishing to set up a business, no matter how small.

Tellingly, El Ebrashi studied business rather than development studies at university. "I want to tackle the problem of poverty through creative management and



innovation," she says. Crucially, all the work carried out by AYB involves young people. "I see about 400 students each semester through my course, and if they realise early that setting up a business is not that difficult, we have a chance to make a real difference."



**ASYA ELAHI, 32, CANADA, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR**

Elahi (*above*), a Canadian of Pakistani origin, is a multi-tasker. Elahi notably produced for Amnesty International the documentary on honour killings in Pakistan, *Against My Will*. She now works in Egypt, where she runs the NGO, 4 Our Kidz, works for a PR company on CSR and is director for business development at the American University in Cairo.



**NOELIA FERNÁNDEZ-ARROYO, 35, SPAIN, INTERNET EXECUTIVE**

Fernández-Arroyo (*above*) is the co-founder and director of products and services of Yahoo! Iberia. She joined Yahoo! in 1998 at the age of 25 to spearhead the production of Yahoo!'s dedicated Spanish version. Fernández-Arroyo already had three years' experience of setting up and running her own

digital media company. She also knew the Spanish market well.

Today, Yahoo! Iberia has six million users and is one of the most successful members of Yahoo! The company survived the dotcom bust, a feat of hard work and dedication. Fernández-Arroyo herself kept on training and took a part-time MBA over two years.

Interestingly, she says that her age proved more of a problem at the beginning than being a woman. "People were not sure whether they could trust me because I was young. But I never had difficulties being a woman because it's a new industry - they needed people who were good, full stop."



**TAMARA GILTSOFF, 33, UK, ECO BUSINESSWOMAN**

Giltsoff (*above*) moved to the US, where she met Jordan Harris and Roo Rogers, the founders of Ozocar, which they claim was the first luxury hybrid car service. She became managing director of its Ozolab, established to "create, incubate and market" a portfolio of eco-businesses. The concept played to her strengths: brand, innovation, sustainability, business practice and design.

**POOJA GUPTA, 31, INDIA, INTERNATIONAL FINANCE**

Chartered accountant Gupta joined the corporate finance team at Ernst & Young in India. Then she went to Honeywell Europe, where, last year, she was asked to manage a \$200 million business unit. Gupta has now returned to India where she has taken a post at Johnson & Johnson as CFO Asia Pacific for a medical business unit called Ethicon.

**THAISE GUZZATTI, 31, BRAZIL, AGRO-TOURISM ENTREPRENEUR**

Guzzatti fuels rural development through an agro-tourism model. Communities are involved in building infrastructure and creating new products and services suitable to agro-tourism. They then become part of her quality-certified network of "Solidarity Tourism" and thus gain access to tourists.

Guzzatti's organisation, Acolhida Na Colônia, currently brings tourists to 32 municipalities in the state of Santa Catarina in southern Brazil and is expanding rapidly.

rule. She was liaison officer for Mexican migrants in the US. She is now director of the Centre for Civic Collaboration.



**SYANIZA HISHAM, 33, MALAYSIA, FILM PRODUCER**

Hisham has been working for one of the biggest TV/movie production houses in Malaysia for the last 10 years. A family business, Nizarman Productions makes one to two movies a year and about six major drama series. Hisham is now taking over the reins as her mother retires. Hisham, as 'Syanie', is also a celebrity in her own right, a comedian/actress/singer.

Defying conventional concepts of beauty, she is a larger-than-life character, both physically and charismatically. "I am on the obese side," she says, laughing. "I have learnt to be who I am."

She is an inspiration to many people who lack confidence and regularly answers questions via her extensive Web 2.0 presence (Facebook, Tagged.com etc). She has also become a fashion icon for larger women. "People ask me where I buy my clothes, even my undergarments!" As a result, Hisham is planning to start her own line of clothing for sizes 16-18 specifically.

Hisham is also active in politics, and a member of Wanita Umno, the women's section of the governing party.

**MAYA KARANOUH, 33, LEBANON, DESIGNER AND BRAND STRATEGIST**  
Since Karanouh (*next column*), an architect by training, set up

brand strategy and design firm Cleartag in 1999, it has grown steadily at about 20% per year, with annual revenues of just under \$1 million. Karanouh has pursued her passion for design and entrepreneurship by teaching design at university level. She coordinated the Arab Business Plan Competition organised by MIT to encourage budding entrepreneurs.



**SIDONIE KINGSMILL, 33, UK, NEWSPAPER MARKETING**  
Kingsmill (*below*) has navigated her way through the FTSE 100. After joining Procter & Gamble as a graduate, Kingsmill moved to Nestlé. She is now global marketing director of Metro International, one of the few female newspaper board directors in the UK, responsible for the development and implementation of a group-wide brand strategy across 21 countries.



**MAGDALENA KRUPA-HERNANDEZ, 31, POLAND, GLOBAL CAMPAIGNER**  
Krupa-Hernandez (*next column*) joined Unicef Poland in 2003 and was promoted to acting executive director in 2006. She turned the organisation from generating losses and negative cash-flow to contributing over \$1 million to Unicef, thanks to an



innovative SMS fundraising campaign, while the income of Unicef Poland has risen 400%.

**MELISSA KWEE, 34, SINGAPORE, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR**

During her four years as president of the Singapore Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, Kwee initiated groundbreaking projects against commercial sexual exploitation of women and for financial education for migrant women workers. Kwee is now head of the Halogen Foundation, which seeks to help youths lead themselves as well as others. She is also a consultant to Singapore's government.

**SHALINI MAHTANI, 35, HONG KONG, CSR EXECUTIVE**  
In 2003 Mahtani (*below*) founded Community Business, a charity providing corporate social responsibility advice and training to leading multinationals. She is now a renowned expert in CSR and community investment, and has worked on issues of discrimination against women, race and ethnic minorities.

In 2005, she was awarded the Chief Executive's Commendation for Community Service by the Hong Kong government.



**DINA HEGAZY, 32, EGYPT, MANUFACTURER**

After studying engineering, Hegazy (*above*) taught engineering for a couple of years before joining KPMG and then Cemex. Last year, she took over the reins of the 80-strong family business, Prefabco Hegazi, which specialises in prefabricated structures.

Hegazy wants it to become market leader in North Africa and the Middle East. She seems on the right path: sales for 2007 are set to double from 2006.

**MARA HERNÁNDEZ, 32, MEXICO, DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGNER**

Hernández (*next column*) focuses on empowering civil society to promote democratic change. She worked in a non-partisan way during the election of Vicente Fox as president of Mexico in 2000, which put an end to 70 years of one-party

**SHAKIRA ISABEL MEBARAK  
RIPOLL, 30, COLOMBIA,  
RECORDING ARTIST**

Shakira is one of Latin America's most successful artists. She has sold more than 50 million albums worldwide and earned two Grammy awards. Shakira writes her music and lyrics, and has produced and promoted her latest albums. Shakira also founded and is the main funder of the Fundación Pies Descalzos, an NGO which funds special schools for poor children in Colombia.

**GOULNARA PANINA, 31,  
RUSSIA, BANKER**

Panina (*below*) joined KPMG in 1993 and in 2003 got involved in the development of valuation services, a new area of work for KPMG in Russia. It is now an established unit, providing services to Russian and international companies in M&A transactions, financial reporting and value management. In 2006 Panina became head of the valuation services group and is now a KPMG Russia partner.



**KOUSALYA PERIASAMY, 33,  
INDIA, AIDS CAMPAIGNER**

Periasamy married at the age of 21. Within months she was diagnosed with Aids. Her husband knew but never told her. When her husband died, Periasamy set up Positive Women Network, a network of care and support for the 2.5 million HIV-positive women in India. Periasamy's ambitions are to end the stigma and discrimination towards HIV-positive women, to improve access to care, promote prevention, and help women

infected by the virus lead normal lives through better employment, education, access to credit and training.

**RITU PRIMLANI, 33, INDIA,  
ECO ENTREPRENEUR**

Primlani (*below*) has been lobbying US urban authorities relentlessly for the past nine years to improve their green commercial infrastructure. With her company Thimmakka, an educational charity, she convinced authorities in San Francisco, Vancouver and Miami that green facilities made financial and environmental sense. Primlani hopes to expand her work in the US, as well as Europe and Asia.



**YEWANDE SADIKU, 35,  
NIGERIA, BANKER**

In her 12 years at IBTC Chartered Bank, Sadiku has helped transform it into one of the biggest in Nigeria. She has also handled landmark deals, including the largest Nigerian IPO. Sadiku chairs the rules and regulations sub-committee which advises the Nigerian Securities & Exchange Commission on capital market regulations. She is a member of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group thinktank.

**KAREN SETO, 35, US, BANKER**

UK-based director in equities at Lehman Brothers, Seto has played a major role in attracting new talent to the bank. She is well-known for her formidable networking skills: she is a member of the internal women's network €-Will, and sits on the management committee of Women in Banking and Finance. She is also a graduate/diversity recruiter.



**WINNIE SO, 34, US, LUXURY  
TRAVEL PUBLISHING**

After a few years in journalism, So (*above*) decided to exploit a gap she'd observed in the travel market: enlightening, luxury bespoke travel. Wanlilu, her company, opened just before Sars hit Asia in 2002, but weathered the storm and has since flourished. It now publishes the Little Cream Book series of luxury travel guides.

**GRETCHEN STEIDLE WALLACE,  
33, US, SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEUR**

Following a trip to South Africa, Steidle Wallace realised that women's lack of sexual and economic rights played a critical part in the spread of Aids. She set up Global Grassroots, a social entrepreneurship organisation promoting women's wellbeing in developing countries. She is co-author of her brother's memoirs, *The Devil Came on Horseback* (he witnessed the genocide in Darfur) and produced a documentary on it.

**CRISTINA STENBECK, 30,  
SWEDEN/US, CORPORATE**

When Stenbeck, aged 24, took over her father's investment company, she had a lot to prove. She consolidated the group's holdings into Investment AB Kinnevik and recruited respected businessmen, Pehr Gustaf Gyllenhammar, former CEO of Volvo, as chairman. Kinnevik has since outperformed the overall Swedish stock market, rising 400% since the end of 2002. Stenbeck is now chairman of Kinnevik.

**MARIKA TAMM, 31, ESTONIA,  
BUSINESS CONSULTANCY**

At the age of 25, Tamm (*below*) co-founded BDA, a consultancy in business development, economic policy, European integration and regional development. The list of prestigious clients has kept growing: the Estonian ministry of economic affairs, KPMG Estonia and the British Embassy, to name just a few. BDA now employs 15 plus a network of 30 experts. Turnover has reached \$1 million.



**GALA TONCONOGY, 32,  
ARGENTINA, INDEPENDENT  
CONSULTANT**

During her two years at US NGO, Endeavour, supporting emerging markets, Tonconogy (*below*) specialised in Argentina and met hundreds of entrepreneurs. As a partner in Zaiteki Search Fund, she also specialised in identifying SMEs worth investing in. She is now an independent consultant, which allows her to work with small ventures unable to afford the fees of big management consultancies. ■

