

The Honorary Graduand: Shirine Khoury-Haq

Honorary Doctor of Business Administration

Shirine Khoury-Haq was born in Beirut to a Palestinian father and a Turkish mother. She grew up all over the world due to her father's work. Shirine has worked in Finance, Consulting, and Operations at organisations such as McDonald's, IBM, Lloyd's of London, and the Co-op. Her career has involved leading large global programmes of change and technology, including the modernisation and digitisation of the London insurance market, which spanned 200 countries.

Shirine holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the Australian National University, an MBA from Ohio State University, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Management and Leadership from UWE's Bristol Business School. She is also a US Certified Public Accountant.

As the Co-op's first female and first global majority CEO in 180 years, Shirine led a turnaround of the business, reducing debt by 95%, increasing profits by 35%, and growing membership by 2.3 million to 6.5 million.

She has also promoted Co-op's work on community, social value, and inclusion. Under her leadership, global majority senior leadership rose from 6% to 11%, and women in leadership increased from 31% to 39%. Shirine has been an advocate for LGBTQ+ equity, including trans rights. This year Co-op published its first integrated pay gap report covering gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and disability, enabling an intersectional perspective for improved equitable outcomes. It actively campaigns for socioeconomic status to be a protected characteristic.

In response to global conflicts, Shirine has worked to ensure that all colleagues at Co-op have a voice and feel supported in an increasingly polarised world. This includes working with Israeli and Palestinian colleagues, as well as colleagues of all faiths, to provide opportunities for learning, conversation, and community.

Shirine has sponsored Co-op's longstanding work in communities in the UK and abroad. In the UK, Co-op Members raised £114m for over 36,500 unique causes since the Local Community Fund launched in 2016. Shirine's work includes collaborating with the Princess of Wales, The Royal Foundation, and other businesses to create 600 early years apprenticeships, with 160 already delivered, and working with Barnardo's to raise £5m to support 750,000 young people across the UK.

Shirine actively supports the Co-op Academy Trust, consisting of 39 academies serving 20,000 children in economically challenged parts of the North. The Co-op Academies' NEET rate is 1.9%, compared to the UK's 11.9%, due to its cooperative approach to education and focus on the child at school, at home, and in their community. The Co-op has also worked with partner organisations to grow community fridges and pantries, providing food with dignity to those in need, and to provide over 3 million people in Africa with water and sanitation as part of Co-op's commitment to Fairtrade. This has life changing consequences for women and girls who are able to work and study rather than spending their time procuring water.

Shirine is an advocate for climate justice and co-chairs the Net Zero Council with Ed Miliband, working with other businesses and the wider economy to achieve the UK's net zero ambitions.