

Tugba Abadan, head of Africa at Paxful, finds success in the crypto space



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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As one of Paxful's brightest young leaders, Tugba Abadan is helping the global next-generation peer-to-peer (P2P) Bitcoin marketplace bring financial inclusion to the underbanked and unbanked in underserved communities across the emerging markets of Africa and the Middle East.



Tugba Abadan, Head of Africa, Paxful

Passionate about developing crypto-entrepreneurship and teaching others about the endless opportunity that P2P finance has to offer, Tugba has spearheaded Paxful's Peer / Affiliate Program in 2019. The global entrepreneurship initiative aims to boost cryptocurrency education and build a pipeline of new crypto businesses, particularly across the African continent. Since January this year, the Peer Program expanded its roots to include many other markets such as Latin America, Russia and India

Tugba Abadan, Head of Africa, Paxful, share her journey with us this Women's Month.

■ Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I was born and raised in Turkey. I was always interested in different countries and cultures but never had the opportunity to travel, until I went on a high-school exchange in the US that changed my life. I came to America when the 9-11 tragedy struck, which made it quite a chaotic experience to be there as a foreigner. The experience was life-changing because it was the first time I left Turkey and ended up in a melting pot of different cultures and customs.

“ It was then I realised how differently people live around the world and how many people lack the same kind of opportunities and financial inclusion as the Western world enjoys ”

. As a foreigner, I experienced it first-hand as I struggled to access the financial services; I couldn't open a local bank account and the fees for AMEX, Western Union and other money transfer services were enormous, so my parents even used to mail me cash in envelopes at some point - not a safe option at all. My friends from developing countries had similar issues so then and there I really started thinking about the importance of financial inclusion and the ability to transfer funds easily.

■ You're the Head of Africa at Paxful. Tell us more about your role here.

It is no secret that Africa is the next frontier for cryptocurrency. Africa's high crypto adoption rate has attracted many crypto companies to its shores. However, this is only the tip of the iceberg and there is still a lot of work to do in terms of education. My role is in line with Paxful's mission of bringing financial freedom to everyone.

I work towards that goal by focusing on education, developing communities, teaching about entrepreneurial opportunities and partnering up with trusted companies in Africa.

“ I want to bring financial inclusion to Africa so that individuals have access to financial products and services in a responsible and sustainable way. ”

Hence, we try to educate the masses about blockchain and use of cryptocurrencies and how Africans can make a living through bitcoin.

We partner up with leading educational institutions and associations in our main countries (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya) and make their courses free for everyone, so that quality education is available to everyone. This month alone we sponsored courses from Blockchain Academy, CoinEd, Startup Grind and they are free to use.

In addition to education I believe in building strong local communities. We launched our entrepreneurship program, the Paxful Peer Program, in South Africa in November 2019 to help African crypto enthusiasts to become their own bosses while they are leading and educating their local communities about peer-to-peer bitcoin finance.

■ **What is the core function of Paxful?**

Paxful is a peer-to-peer finance platform for trading bitcoin and soon other crypto currencies. It is a listing service, an escrow and wallet in one that allows you to buy, sell and store BTC in a secure and efficient way. Using our platform, you can send money abroad, invest, trade BTC and so much more.

With over 300 payment methods and over 150 currencies available on Paxful marketplace, we make sure anyone can find a suitable payment solution thus promoting financial inclusion. Our mission is to empower the forgotten four billion unbanked and underbanked, so they have control of their money in a way they've never had before.

■ **Do you have any role models? If so, who?**

I don't really have any specific role models, but I get inspired by people who accomplished great things under difficult circumstances.

“ One of Paxful's values is “Be a Hero” and I get inspired by everyday “heroes” I come across in my role. ”

I've met very strong women in Africa who started their own businesses, who lead life-changing projects despite the unstable economy, and I can say with confidence these women are my heroes and inspiration.

■ ***We don't hear of many successful females in the cryptocurrency space. Tell us about your journey of getting into this space.***

After my exchange year in the US, I went back to Turkey to study Business Administration. I believe my exchange year in America shaped my career as I ended up working mainly for the financial institutions and banks, hoping to give people better financial opportunities.

I worked on many projects before I ended up in crypto, from creating a cashless society by a payments system company to improving internet- and mobile banking access, I always had this vision of improving access to financial services.

“ In 2017 I was introduced to blockchain technology, which led me to work on a project with Ripple, a US-based currency and remittance network. From that moment onwards I saw the true potential of blockchain technology and how it can be used to improve everyday lives. ”

Bitcoin seemed to be one of those cryptocurrencies really making a difference so that's how I ended up joining Paxful in 2019. Paxful's mission of financial inclusion particularly attracted me, so now, I am bringing 10 years of experience in the finance industry to Africa, because everyone deserves to have a safe and easy access to financial services.

■ ***What advice can you share for females wanting to get into cryptocurrency?***

My advice would be; Don't wait to enter the crypto world. There are a lot of opportunities waiting for women in the crypto industry. The crypto economy needs all the skills that the traditional global economy requires (and more) e.g. Product Development, Marketing, Legal Services, Data Analytics, Human Resources, Education, etc. or even day crypto trading, which is also a great option, where women actually prove to be very successful traders and often earn more than men, studies show. The opportunities are endless.

“ I encourage everyone to start learning more about cryptocurrencies and find their path to follow. ”

Paxful is here to help, we have weekly Africa webinars on Wednesdays where we discuss different industry related topics. I highly recommend all females join these webinars. They can see how Paxful's team in Africa is 75% female and why these ladies are my heroes.

■ ***What are the trends you are seeing on the continent regarding cryptocurrency?***

Crypto adoption is on the rise in Africa and it seems like the continent will define the future of crypto and Bitcoin especially. It could be because despite its diversity, the countries in Africa often share an incredible ability to innovate in order to overcome issues like poor infrastructure and limited access to financial services so they use Bitcoin differently to how the Western world does.

Adopting it to everyday life uses, starting businesses, sending and receiving money and so on. That makes Africa a perfect ground for crypto growth.

The top 10 countries ranking on the topic of cryptocurrency include Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Ghana, which shows the growing interest in this space. The future of crypto is bright, and it seems that Africa will be the one deciding it.

■ ***As the Head of Africa at Paxful, how do you manage to keep a work-life balance?***

"Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life" - the saying used to sound such a cliché until I started working at Paxful, because this is how I feel now.

“ I do work longer hours, but I have so much fun doing that, plus I see the difference we are making and it's so rewarding that the time really flies. ”

Paxful also takes care of its employees and, in addition to a bunch of perks, I can work from home or flexible hours when I feel like it.

▣ **What do you think governments can do to encourage businesswomen?**

I think governments need to provide women with educational courses and materials. In addition to education, they need to tackle workplace discrimination and encourage women to become entrepreneurs. It's very important that women can have some sort of work experience before they start their own business and perhaps the government could also help with that, via organised internships, for example.

Another possibility is that governments could start financially supporting female entrepreneurship, providing grants or interest free loans, this could definitely help encourage them to build their own business.

▣ **As we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa. Do you have any words of encouragement for all the women out there?**

I met so many amazing women when I was in South Africa. Most of our business partners in South Africa are women and I love working with them because they are the real hustlers. They are creative, strong, inspiring, honest and hard-working.

“ Just keep doing what you're doing and keep empowering and educating other strong females. I encourage everyone to explore the crypto world and grab onto the opportunities it provides. It is time for women to shine bright and succeed in the industry! ”

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