



connect
with
nature



IS NATURE A PRIORITY FOR UAE YOUTH IN THE COVID-19 RECOVERY?

Findings from the
Reimagine Youth
Circle Series

November 2020

FOUNDING PARTNERS



STRATEGIC PARTNER



الصندوق الدولي للحفاظ على الحباري
International Fund For Houbara Conservation

ABOUT EMIRATES NATURE-WWF

Emirates Nature-WWF is a non-profit organisation established to drive positive change in the United Arab Emirates to conserve the nation's natural heritage. Founded in 2001 under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in the Al Dhafra Region and Chairman of the Governing Board of the Environment Agency–Abu Dhabi, Emirates Nature works in association with WWF, one of the world's largest and most respected independent conservation organisations.

For almost two decades, Emirates Nature-WWF has been a prominent and active partner in environmental conservation, working to alleviate the most pressing threats to nature and wildlife throughout our nation and the region by partnering with government, businesses and civil society on multiple conservation initiatives to protect the UAE's natural heritage – our seas, lands, climate and the biodiversity they support.

ABOUT ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – ABU DHABI (EAD)

Established in 1996, the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) is committed to protecting and enhancing air quality, groundwater as well as the biodiversity of our desert and marine ecosystem. By partnering with other government entities, the private sector, NGOs and global environmental agencies, EAD embraces international best practice, innovation and hard work to institute effective policy measures. EAD seeks to raise environmental awareness, facilitate sustainable development and ensure environmental issues remain one of the top priorities of our national agenda.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR HOUBARA CONSERVATION (IFHC)

Continuing an initiative by the late Sheikh Zayed, Abu Dhabi has undertaken the task to rescue the threatened houbara bustard. A global conservation strategy was developed and implemented over the past forty years with the objective of ensuring the species has a sustainable future in the wild through effective and appropriate conservation programmes and management plans. Since 1995, the conservation strategy adopted consists of an integrated approach combining sound ecology, protection measures in the wild, conservation breeding, and effective reinforcement programmes. The IFHC was created in 2006 to further the original programme by managing international assets and securing partnerships across the range of the houbara, which encourage sustainable practices to ensure the species' conservation.

For more information please visit: www.connectwithnature.ae

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TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

This white paper focuses on insights shared by UAE youth on driving change and a green recovery for the UAE. A special thanks to the leaders and experts who participated in, and supported, these critical conversations with youth:

H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq, Minister of Economy

H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Belhaif Al Nuaimi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment

H.E. Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises

H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, Minister of State for Food Security

H.E. Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for Digital Economy, Artificial Intelligence and Applications for Remote Work

H.E. Shamma bint Suhail Faris Al Mazrui, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and the Federal Youth Authority team

H.E. Razan Khalifa Al Mubarak, Managing Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund

H.E. Huda AlHashimi, Chief of Strategy and Government Innovation, UAE Government

H.E. Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheiri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi

H.E. Mohammed Saleh Hasan Baidani & H.E. Noor Al Marzouqi, Director General & Deputy Director General of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation

H.E. Marwan Bin Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman of Sharjah Investment & Development Authority (Shurooq)

H.E. Dr. Tariq Bin Hendi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Investment Office

Ali Khalil Husain, Founder of Husaak Adventures

Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Director General of ICBA

Dr. Frederic Launay, CEO of Panthera

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Yousif Baniyas, Higher Education Advisor & Director, Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education

Dr. Asma M. Fikri, Research & Development Consultant, Ministry of Health & Prevention

Professor Tadhg S. O'Donovan, Associate Head for the School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, Herriot Watt University, Dubai

Dr. Rashed Karkain, Founder of Sustainable Development Research and Training Institute

TO THE CHANGEMAKERS OF THE UAE

With almost half of the UAE's population under the age of 30, today's young people will shape the world of tomorrow. Connect with Nature, a movement **by youth, for youth**, was founded two years ago by Emirates Nature-WWF and the Environmental Agency-Abu Dhabi, with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation as a strategic partner, to help drive positive change for people and planet.

We believe that young people have a huge role to play in creating a more sustainable world. Youth have to be part of the solution. After all, they are the environmental leaders of tomorrow. More than ever, we need young people to actively create positive change in their communities so that we can tackle the world's most pressing environmental challenges.

In May 2020, Connect with Nature created a series of tailored youth circles in partnership with the Federal Youth Authority, under the theme 'UAE Youth Reimagine life post-COVID-19.' These youth circles were aimed at offering UAE youth a platform to share their ideas and ensure that they have a voice – one that is genuinely heard by decision makers who have been a part of the journey.

A heartfelt thank you to all the youth and our esteemed guest speakers who made the time, during this unprecedented period, to have deep and meaningful conversations with us.

UAE youth have spoken, and the insights from these sessions have been captured in this flagship white paper which has been written **by youth, for youth**. Our hope is that this white paper will fuel momentum towards 'Designing the Next 50' together, and shaping a sustainable future for the nation.

Together for Change,

H.E. Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri,
Secretary General of the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi



WE WANT TO CONTRIBUTE



We represent a group of 1,595 UAE youth who have taken part in a series of 9 tailored youth circles with key decision makers and experts, under the theme 'UAE Youth Reimagine life post-COVID-19', and these are our priorities for the COVID-19 recovery.

We want to be part of a community that contributes to conservation action and supports environmental initiatives. It is our joint responsibility to collaborate, inspire others and volunteer for the common good.

The pandemic has shown us how connected our health is to the health of the planet. Spending so much time indoors has amplified our concern for our collective wellbeing. **ONLY 2 OUT OF 10 OF US WANT LIFE TO GO BACK TO "NORMAL" POST COVID-19.**



PRESERVE NATURE & WILDLIFE

94% of us prioritize the healing of our relationship with nature.



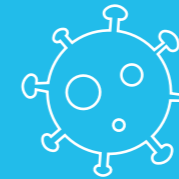
We are **MOST WORRIED** about the lack of widespread understanding of the risks associated with the exploitation of nature and its resources.

81% think that eco-tourism has a net positive impact on nature, but 44% have never had an **ecotourism** experience (like kayaking through the mangroves or hiking in the mountains).



STIMULATE A GREEN RECOVERY AND ACHIEVE NO PLASTIC IN NATURE

THE PANDEMIC has heightened our concern about the quantity of **waste** we are producing, and how it is managed.



96% of us will favour brands that support the green recovery. **The majority** of us have **avoided brands** that are not sustainable.



73% think reducing **single-use plastic** should be a priority.

Investing in **sustainable infrastructure** should be a **PRIORITY** to ensure we evolve our lifestyles and consumption patterns towards a **circular economy**.



INCREASE CLIMATE ACTION



Over-consumption is the behaviour we **MOST WANT** to see changed for good.

We would welcome **heightened regulation, reporting and sustainability labelling** and see these as solutions to enhance awareness and critical thinking.



92% of us want to minimise pressure on the environment by emphasizing the traditional values and practices that connect us with nature.



ENSURE FOOD & WATER SECURITY



Almost all of us are concerned about food security. **89%** of us are willing to include **alternative protein** (like insects or algae) in our diets.

We want to change our behaviour and we are **willing to take responsibility** for our actions and habits.

WE AGREE that **sustainable diets** and **nature friendly food production** should be a priority.



INNOVATIVE IDEAS FROM YOUTH

During the Reimagine Youth Circle discussions, creative, engaging and innovative ideas were shared by youth, a selection of these are included below.



1. INSTIL PURPOSE & FULFIL OUR POTENTIAL

- Analyse our behaviour by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to log and identify every bit of trash or litter, similar to the technology used by the app Litterati.
- Integrate nature and culture into our education system, by bringing children and elders together in nature and engage in discussion around the importance of nature. This way the youth can see first-hand how nature affects us and how it has affected our ancestors and our people.



2. PRESERVE NATURE AND WILDLIFE

- As individuals, we can help combat unsustainable wildlife trade if we become conscious consumers and stop buying authentic animal skin clothing, bags and shoes from the market.
- Students should not only be made aware, but also take part in research, because awareness is not only spread by sharing information, but also through hands-on experience.
- Organize an Eco Amazing Race to enhance the accessibility and information around eco-tourism sites, with the goal of cultivating a new 'greeneration' within the UAE.



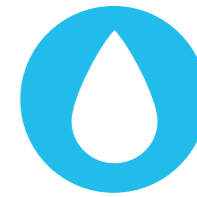
3. INCREASE CLIMATE ACTION

- Change the way we talk about Climate Change – this is the reason for inaction. We are conditioned to not see it as a priority because it is not seen as something that directly affects the day to day life of an individual.
- Making the emirates more walkable is something we'd like to see taken into consideration in future mega infrastructure projects.
- Nature based solutions are cheap and easy to use.



4. STIMULATE A GREEN RECOVERY AND ACHIEVE NO PLASTIC IN NATURE

- Establishments have a GREEN RATING certification that relates to their contribution to the UAE's sustainable goals. The government could reward well performing establishments with reduced fees.
- Mimic the circularity of ecosystems and adopt their best practices.
- Have a rating system for end products based on their sustainability, similar to the Energy Star rating for electrical appliances.

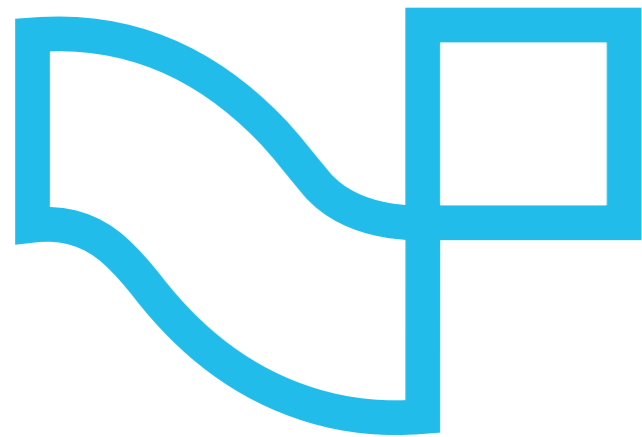


5. ENSURE FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

- Open small food banks in every community, so that people who have food which is going to waste can share it with others.
- Have a system that collects flood water to be used for agriculture and simultaneously protect against flood damage.
- Provide tools for people to farm at home, this will encourage more respect for agriculture and supplement income.
- Embrace machinery and technologies that improve and optimise zero-waste food storage and distribution.



THIS IS A STORY OF CHANGE

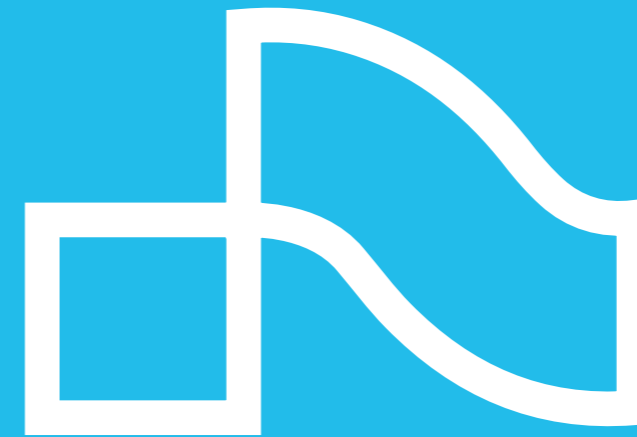


1. THE PANDEMIC HAS GIVEN US A WAKE-UP CALL



2. WE URGENTLY NEED TO REINVENT OUR SYSTEMS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Over the course of our Reimagine Youth Circle conversations, 10 key findings and trends emerged. These can be classified into the following themes.



3. IT'S TIME TO DRIVE CHANGE TOGETHER



4. HERE ARE OUR REIMAGINED SOLUTIONS



1. THE PANDEMIC HAS GIVEN US A WAKE-UP CALL

The current crisis has awakened us to the risk of new diseases. We now know that this pandemic, and the havoc it has caused to our communities and economy, is alarming evidence of the undeniable link between nature and our own health. It is only now that we are experiencing the magnitude of this connection.

TREND #1: NATURE IS NOW AT THE HEART OF OUR DECISIONS

WE WANT CHANGE
POST COVID-19

94%
OF YOUTH WANT TO
PRIORITISE HEALING
OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH NATURE.

The uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that we are not taking good enough care of the natural habitats and resources we depend on. The past few months represent a pivotal moment during which we have reflected and reassessed our priorities. UAE youth now recognise that we depend on nature far more than nature depends on us. 97% of us think that species conservation should be a priority for UAE policymakers to prevent future pandemics.



"This COVID-19 pandemic is a great reminder of our dysfunctional relationship with nature as it's deforestation and loss of wildlife that cause an increase in infectious diseases. As studies show, for every dollar spent on nature restoration, at least \$9 of economic benefits can be expected. I think it is very doable if everyone sets out to steer our earth in a better way." - Sewit Eyob Kahsai, Participant



"I am not convinced that more awareness will necessarily lead to more action...we keep looking at some of those environmental issues as just that; but they're not necessarily just environmental issues. They're economic issues, they're social issues, and when we reframe the narrative about the environment and nature destruction as value destruction, be it a social value, an economic value and also a natural value, we can drive more action." - H.E. Razan Al Mubarak, Managing Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund

97%
THINK THAT SPECIES CONSERVATION SHOULD BE
A PRIORITY FOR UAE POLICYMAKERS TO PREVENT
FUTURE PANDEMICS

TREND #2: A MASS MINDSET CHANGE

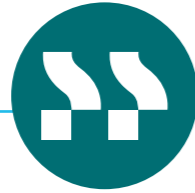
The global Living Planet Index shows an average 68% decrease in population sizes of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish between 1970 and 2016.¹ The World Health Organization estimates that climate change is already causing over 140,000 human deaths each year while millions more were made ill (e.g., asthma linked to air pollution or heatstroke).² A key trend from our research is that young people in the UAE are particularly concerned about the level to which this is understood.

ONLY 42% OF YOUTH FEEL PREPARED FOR ANOTHER PANDEMIC.

Only 42% of us feel that we are prepared for another pandemic. The challenges identified most often are environmental awareness and widespread understanding of the risks associated with the exploitation of nature and its resources. Not only are we worried about the lack of knowledge, but also that there is an apparent skills gap when it comes to building a carbon-neutral and nature-positive economy and society.



“If this pandemic has taught us anything, it’s how important and luxurious being outside really is!” - Francesca Fadel, Participant



“The pandemic has shown us that we have the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if we put our minds to it. Now I know what to tackle, and where we went wrong in for example, food security, safety, plantation and so forth. The interlude of COVID-19 has provided us with the urgency to reflect and realize that we need to act differently.” - H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Belhaif Al Nuaimi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment

¹ WWF (2020) Living Planet Report 2020 - Bending the curve of biodiversity loss. Almond, R.E.A., Grooten M. and Petersen, T. (Eds). WWF, Gland, Switzerland

² World Health Organization (2009) Global health risks: mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks. Geneva





2. WE URGENTLY NEED TO REINVENT OUR SYSTEMS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

We can no longer exploit resources beyond planetary boundaries. We need to find better systems. Loss of biodiversity is so severe that it poses grave risks to our health, economy and livelihoods. The pandemic has been a stark indicator of the broken relationship between people and nature.

TREND #3: CONCERN ABOUT WASTE & POLLUTION

73% OF YOUTH THINK THAT REDUCING SINGLE-USE PLASTIC SHOULD BE A PRIORITY.

The pandemic has heightened our concern about waste and pollution. 73% of us think that reducing single-use plastic should be a priority. It is estimated that one third of plastic waste ultimately ends up in nature³ threatening both our ecosystems and our personal health. The resurgence of single-use plastic during the pandemic has increased our unease about the quantity of waste we are producing, and how it is managed. The majority of us have avoided brands that are not sustainable.

Abu Dhabi reported a 62% reduction in nitrogen dioxide levels when movement was restricted. The pandemic has demonstrated our ability to make significant rapid changes and the resilience of our planet, but we are worried that these gains will be short-lived unless we permanently reconsider our needs.



“The use of single-use disposable plastics on account of public health has surged (and is justified to an extent), but this does have an impact on the oceans. Therefore, safeguarding of species requires an element of balanced decision-making when committing to any action. Every decision has its opportunity cost, we have to weigh the damages with the needs of the people.” - Yash Dave, Participant



“It is imperative that we consider the impact we are having while both developing and experiencing eco-tourism activities, from the way the project is built and managed, to the footprint we leave behind as visitors. Youth must lead as an example in protecting nature, for example, by keeping the environment around them clean, and encouraging others to do the same. This will help drive change and transformation, and enable the UAE to be more eco-friendly”. H.E. Dr. Tariq Bin Hendi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Investment Office

³ Marine pollution. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean. Jambeck JR, Geyer R, Wilcox C, et al. Science. 2015;347(6223):768-771. doi:10.1126/science.1260352



TREND #4: FOOD & WATER SECURITY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Globally, one-third of the food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted. Almost all of us (99%) are concerned about food security and are in complete agreement that sustainable diets and nature-friendly food production should be a priority. Reliance on imports in the UAE is in part due to the challenge of producing food locally, where fresh water is scarce and only five percent of land is arable. 89% of us are willing to include alternative protein in our diets.

**89% OF YOUTH
ARE WILLING TO
INCLUDE ALTERNATIVE
PROTEIN IN THEIR DIETS**



“Policies such as improving accessibility to nutritious food will give the vulnerable groups an opportunity to have a healthier and sustainable lifestyle.” – Denice Henson, Participant



*“We are always talking about change in our food system. We need to disrupt 2 systems here; the way we produce food and the way we consume it. We need to look at new ways of production, and this is where technology and R&D play a huge role, to ensure we are increasing domestic food supply through technology.”
- H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Altheiri, Minister of State for Food Security*

3. IT'S TIME TO DRIVE CHANGE TOGETHER

Society must change the 'business as usual' status quo and take bold, effective action to transform how we live and work. This is an opportunity for us youth to work together with decision makers in business and government, to drive change and a green recovery for the UAE.



“Change is not as challenging as most think, it is possible and we must embrace it, not to mention that we are the only country with a Ministry of Possibilities. So this transition to a more sustainable lifestyle should be on top of our priority list, and making way for sustainable solutions and a circular green economy is what every Emirati citizen and resident expect next.”
- Aliya Al Marzooqi, Participant

73% OF YOUTH SAID THAT OVERCONSUMPTION IS THE BEHAVIOUR THEY MOST WANT TO SEE CHANGED FOR GOOD.

TREND #5: CONSCIOUS CHANGE IN BEHAVIOURS

We want to change our behaviour, and we are willing to take responsibility for our actions and habits. Over-consumption is the behaviour we most want to see changed for good. We are ready to reconsider our needs and kick-start a cultural shift towards more conscious and informed consumerism.

We would like behavioural science to be applied through technology and innovation to make systemic changes. The introduction of flexible remote working during the pandemic has exposed opportunities to optimise efficiency and move to a more local and self-sufficient way of life.



“Harnessing the power of digital technology and AI is a great opportunity to create a sustainability revolution.” - Safa Al Hosani, Participant



‘In response to the pandemic, we have seen adaptability take place in companies and people in the UAE as they cater to the new norms. The most important skill for youth to develop is adaptability, whilst maintaining their values and vision. Youth must seek for opportunities on the technology side, by unlocking industries that have previously been seen [as] unattractive.’ - H.E. Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises

TREND #6: RISE OF RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

There are many threats facing our planet today, and no one person or group can tackle them alone. But if we work together, we can take on anything. Together, we can protect the very things that keep us alive: our oceans, our fresh water, our wildlife, our energy supply and our food supply.

We want to take part in conducting research and conservation through citizen science. We would like more integration and involvement of our communities with protected nature sites, and we're interested in boosting urban nature through regenerative community farming and gardening projects.



"The global pandemic was a sudden and tremendous shock to society as a whole, affecting all individuals. It taught the community the true meaning of cooperation where governments and citizens worked together hand in hand to tackle and overcome the epidemic. Nevertheless, it's very likely that climate change will cause society to undergo the same fundamental shifts created by the pandemic. Therefore, both will require the same type of strong action and collaboration from the community." - Muna Al Maazmi, Participant



'Youth must engage in relevant conversation, it is one of the most powerful tools we have, as it encompasses all the ingredients we need for innovation and creativity. They have an abundance of innovation & creativity at their disposal, and by following a technology agnostic approach, can use this to design a society and environment that support a sustainable future, taking into consideration the service level needs of the society' - Professor Tadhg S. O'Donovan, Associate Head for the School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, Herriot Watt University, Dubai

96% OF YOUTH WILL FAVOUR BRANDS THAT SUPPORT THE GREEN RECOVERY.

78% OF YOUTH WOULD LIKE TO SEE A CULTURE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION.

92% OF US WANT TO PUT MORE EMPHASIS ON THE TRADITIONAL VALUES AND PRACTICES THAT CONNECT US WITH NATURE AND MINIMISE PRESSURE ON THE ENVIRONMENT.

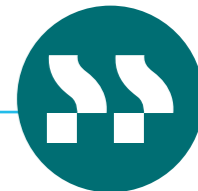


TREND #7: RECONNECT WITH OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES

The past few months have shown us the importance of balancing modern life while protecting the integrity of species and ecosystems. We want to protect our culture, heritage, and natural resources for future generations. 44% of us have never had an ecotourism experience, but we want to spend more time in nature and foster a deeper connection with our natural and cultural heritage. Our ancestors were deeply grateful for what nature provided and we would like to revive that attitude.



"The UAE's culture and traditions are filled with behaviours and examples that show different ways of minimizing the pressure on the environment. The legacy and values of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the UAE is such a great example of how our forefathers cared about the environment. We must observe and learn from our Grandfather's lifestyle and how they optimized the available resources with minimal carbon footprint and low environmental pressure." Omran Al Mazrouei, Participant



'The past is always a part of our identity and we must try to maintain it, it holds a lot of knowledge and wisdom that our ancestors obtained from their close relationship with nature. Without this experience from the past, we wouldn't be in a place of such celebration today. Using traditional knowledge has helped us at the Environment Agency, as a regulatory authority, to shape many of our laws, regulations and policies, it gives us insights, and we are confident that these laws are not only suitable for today but also for many years to come' - H.E. Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheeri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi



4. HERE ARE OUR REIMAGINED SOLUTIONS

We truly believe that there are solutions for managing, using and sharing natural resources within the planet's limits – to ensure food, water and energy security for all.

50% OF YOUTH HAVE BEEN READING MORE SCIENTIFIC PAPERS SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 .

TREND #8: HEIGHTENED ENFORCEMENT & REGULATION

We welcome heightened regulation, reporting and sustainability labelling. We see these as solutions to improve awareness of our impact on the planet and to enhance critical thinking and decision-making.

61% OF YOUTH WOULD WELCOME HEIGHTENED REGULATION AND ENFORCEMENT AS A SOLUTION.



“Climate change and COVID-19 are two very different challenges, but they do have some key things in common. Both are global - they do not respect national boundaries - and both require countries to work together to find solutions. The global community has shown that it can act to address a crisis, with governments, businesses and individuals taking measures and changing behaviours in response to the pandemic. When we work together, even small personal actions when put together, can make a big difference, helping us to overcome huge challenges.” - Yasmine Cibahy, Participant



‘In achieving a nature positive world, we must combine our passion for the environment with the right thinking, and right objectives – as the solution lies in the scientific data’ - Prof. Dr. Mohamed Yousif Baniyas, Higher Education Advisor & Director, Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education

5 ACTIONS WE WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE FROM GOVERNMENT

1

Stronger enforcement for crimes around the mistreatment of nature and the environment.

2

More protected areas as a proactive rather than reactive approach to global challenges and problems. By taking serious action and listening to scientific advice, we can plan and strategize the best way to address threats before it's too late.

3

The use of AI to analyse and influence consumer behaviour, consumption patterns and carbon emissions. We welcome a centralised tool or index that provides us with information about the environmental impact of companies, products and services.

4

Facilitation and incentivisation of non-motorised and shared transportation, in order to maintain the improvement in air quality.

5

The strengthening of partnerships and cooperation, including with other governments, companies, local communities, youth and civil society to adopt a “One Health” approach and commit to a New Deal for Nature & People.

TREND #9: PASSION FOR THE GREEN RECOVERY AND NO PLASTIC IN NATURE

Stimulating a green economy and investing in sustainable infrastructure should be a priority to ensure we evolve our lifestyles and consumption patterns.

96% OF YOUTH WILL FAVOUR BRANDS THAT SUPPORT THE GREEN RECOVERY.

81% OF YOUTH THINK THAT ECO-TOURISM HAS A NET POSITIVE IMPACT ON NATURE.



“Awareness is something that results in us choosing brands and companies that are sustainable and boost the circular economy - but how do you change the ways of corporations who see the transition to circular economy a threat to profit?”
- Fayaz Anwar, Participant



“Together, we need to think about how we make the UAE become more resilient and more agile for the future of the nation and its residents, by finding a balance post COVID-19. Businesses should start by changing their cultural approach and behaviour, by reducing costs originating from waste and inefficiencies. Empowering our youth to work with partners in government and business to jointly navigate an overwhelming situation will help us emerge into a more sustainable UAE, in addition to strengthening our preparedness for similar circumstances in the future.” - H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq, Minister of Economy

5 ACTIONS WE WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE FROM BUSINESSES:

1 Demonstration of leadership through nature-friendly business strategies, rooted in science, that decrease the negative impacts on society and the environment.

2 Redesign of products and services to eliminate waste. Investing in design-level changes to fit into a circular or shared economy.

3 Investment in disruptive technologies and climate-smart solutions, such as renewable energy and green technology.

4 Development of ecotourism to increase opportunities to access and appreciate nature, while boosting the number of green jobs.

5 Growth of local food production through agritech, such as urban vertical farming and aquaponics.



TREND #10: TIME TO PRESS THAT 'RESET' BUTTON

The pandemic has shown us how connected our health is to the health of the planet. Spending so much time indoors has amplified our concern for wellbeing.



ONLY 2 OUT OF 10 YOUTH WANT LIFE TO GO BACK TO "NORMAL" POST COVID-19.

5 ACTIONS WE WOULD MOST LIKE TO SEE FROM OUR COMMUNITY

1

Make an effort to connect with nature and practice more gratitude and appreciation for nature as a life-giver, rather than simply a resource to be exploited.

2

Reassess our true needs. Support lower-impact options including: locally produced food and goods, remote work, sharing, repairing and innovation for nature conservation.

3

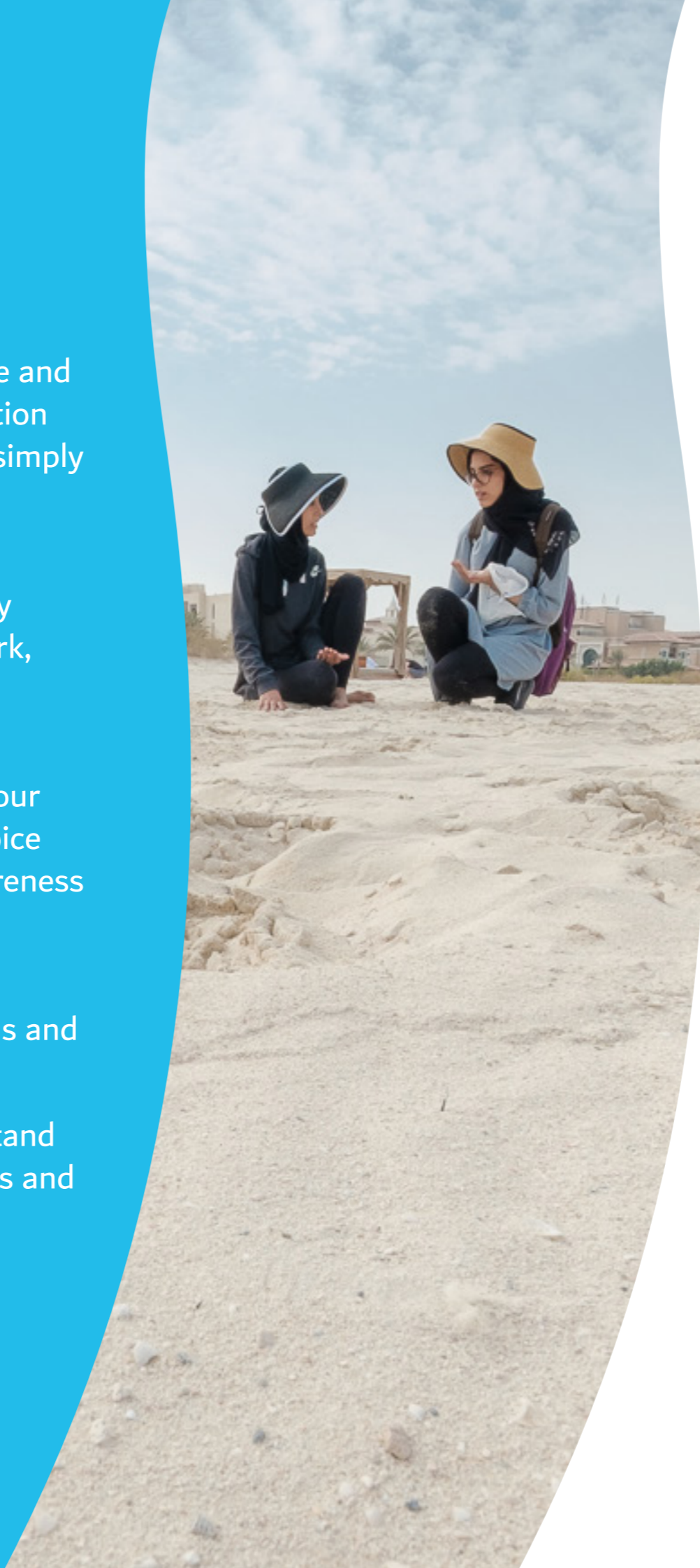
Continue to educate ourselves, grow our skills and fuel our passion. Use our voice (online and in-person) to spread awareness and advocate on behalf of nature.

4

Instil a culture of collaboration and dialogue between younger generations and decision makers.

5

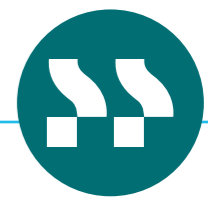
Improve critical thinking and take a stand against the distribution of “fake” news and pseudo-science.



“The road to sustainability does not entirely depend on new initiatives. Our current resources are more than enough.” - Reuben Philip Benjamin, Participant

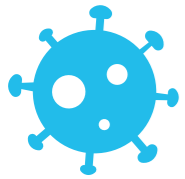


“As they say: necessity is the mother of all inventions, we have made things to boost our living standards. But when consumerism kicked in, the civic and environmental norms and morals were replaced with more-than-need goods and gadgets. Nurturing nature must become the motto ahead.” - Abdul Azeez, Participant



“Change can be made if we sustain action for a long enough period of time. Whenever we think of an idea, evaluate what will have the biggest impact, the lowest cost, and the lowest barrier of deployment. Technology is the tool, the solution is in your creativity. Technology has a lot of potential, and not many are currently mobilizing it to safeguard the future. Youth must spearhead the technology revolution. AI is going to be the key that changes the scale in the future, as it has the power to influence our decisions. It is increasingly employed in preserving wildlife and improving our ecosystems, and is becoming even more important than data, as it provides insights that even top scientists in the world cannot provide.” - H.E. Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for Digital Economy, Artificial Intelligence and Applications for Remote Work

SUMMARY OF TOP FINDINGS AND TRENDS THAT EMERGED FROM THE REIMAGINE YOUTH CIRCLE SERIES



THE PANDEMIC HAS GIVEN US A WAKEUP CALL.

1. NATURE IS NOW AT THE HEART OF OUR DECISIONS

We want life to change post-COVID-19. **94%** of youth prioritize the healing of our relationship with nature.

2. A MASS MINDSET CHANGE

We are most worried about the lack of widespread understanding of the risks associated with the exploitation of nature and its resources. Only **42%** of youth feel prepared for another pandemic



WE URGENTLY NEED TO REINVENT OUR SYSTEMS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION.

3. CONCERN ABOUT WASTE & POLLUTION

The pandemic has heightened our concern about the quantity of waste we are producing, and how it is managed. The majority of youth avoid brands that are not sustainable. **73%** of youth think reducing single-use plastic should be a priority.

4. FOOD & WATER SECURITY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Almost all of us are concerned about food security and in agreement that sustainable diets and nature-friendly food production should be a priority. **89%** of us are willing to include alternative protein in our diets like insects or algae.



IT'S TIME TO DRIVE CHANGE TOGETHER.

5. CONSCIOUS CHANGE IN BEHAVIOURS

We want to change our behaviour, and we are willing to take responsibility for our actions and habits. **73%** of us agree that overconsumption is the behaviour we most want to see changed for good.

6. RISE OF RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS

We want to be part of a community that contributes to conservation action and supports environmental initiatives, by collaborating, inspiring others and volunteering for the common good. **96%** of us will favour brands that support the green recovery.

7. RECONNECT WITH OUR TRADITIONAL VALUES

Balancing modern life while protecting the integrity of species and ecosystems is important to us. **92%** of us want to put more emphasis on the traditional values and practices that connect us with nature and minimise pressure on the environment. **44%** of us have never had an ecotourism experience (like kayaking through the mangroves or hiking in the mountains).



REIMAGINED SOLUTIONS BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOUTH.

8. HEIGHTENED ENFORCEMENT & REGULATION

61% of youth would welcome heightened regulation, reporting and sustainability labelling and see these as solutions to enhance awareness and critical thinking.

9. PASSION FOR THE GREEN RECOVERY AND NO PLASTIC IN NATURE

Stimulating a green economy and investing in sustainable infrastructure should be a priority to ensure we evolve our lifestyles and consumption patterns. **81%** of us think that eco-tourism has a net positive impact on nature.

10. TIME TO PRESS THAT 'RESET' BUTTON

The pandemic has shown us how connected our health is to the health of the planet. Spending so much time indoors has amplified our concern for wellbeing. Only **2 out of 10** youth want life to go back to "normal" post COVID-19.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGNING THE NEXT 50

By Laila Mostafa Abdullatif, Director General, Emirates Nature-WWF



The voices of UAE youth are crucial to ensure the environment is top of the nation's agenda as we set sail towards designing the next 50 years. UAE youth have told us, loud and clear, that nature matters to them. We know that the next few years are critical to put the planet on the path to a better future. We need governments, businesses, financial institutions, civil society and people to come together and commit to halting and reversing the loss of nature.

Together for Change

With urgent action it is still possible to halt loss and reverse the trend of nature's decline. A green recovery does **not** have to come at the cost of economic recovery. If we **work together for change**, we have an opportunity for 2020 to go down in history as the year in which COVID-19 served as the catalyst to completely alter our future relationship with nature – for the better.

Building on nearly twenty years of effective community engagement, Emirates Nature-WWF is now looking to make transformative impact at scale. We will bring society together to make a lasting impact in critical areas for people and nature in the UAE. We plan to do this in partnership with our esteemed partners, to convene and mobilize government, business, public, civil society and networks within the UAE community in support of the nation's sustainability agenda.

This community movement will enable us to capture the voices of civil society (including youth) and the public (in addition to government and business), to **ideate** and **co-create** the most vital sustainability solutions with them, and then implement the solutions at scale through our networks and communities of action.

By engaging great minds, communities, and diversity in thinking across all sectors of the UAE, we will find and amplify bright ideas to disrupt the status quo and accelerate solutions that drive us towards a sustainable UAE. We can achieve scalable transformative impact if we bring society together to own and action the change required. We are all responsible.

We propose focusing on **four key areas of conservation recovery** that scales, accelerates and amplifies our impact for the benefit of people and nature - like never before.



1. PRESERVE NATURE AND WILDLIFE

To halt biodiversity loss, we must protect our existing nature and wildlife which will provide society with many benefits, including economic gains and improved water and air quality, helping communities to thrive.

- Conduct field research to advance scientific knowledge around nature in the UAE, identifying critical habitats and key threats.
- Maintain and restore the UAE's highest biodiversity areas, with a goal of protecting at least 30% of land and sea.
- Invest in 'nature-based solutions' that can support biodiversity while slowing down climate change and protecting people and wildlife from its effects.
- Combat the illegal wildlife trade that transits through the UAE.



2. STIMULATE A GREEN RECOVERY AND ACHIEVE NO PLASTIC IN NATURE

A poor environment is bad for business. By investing in nature now, the UAE can benefit from a 'triple dividend' which avoids future losses, generates positive economic gains through innovation and delivers additional social and environmental benefits.

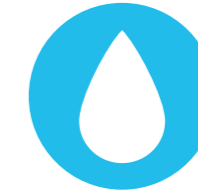
- Reduce plastic in nature by further developing a circular economy.
- Build a vibrant and growing ecotourism sector in the UAE with innovative practices to sustain natural capital.



3. INCREASE CLIMATE ACTION

The UAE can do its bit to combat climate change by shifting to a low carbon future and becoming a lead explorer of renewable energy. Climate change is already a massive threat to the UAE; to avoid further devastating impacts on the livelihoods, national security, economic development and public health of the nation we urgently need to increase action.

- Increase consumption efficiency by 40% and expand the share of renewable energy to 44% by 2050.
- Create tools and mechanisms that change consumer behaviour and advance sustainable lifestyles.
- Deploy a clean transport infrastructure and smart mobility options that address climate and air quality issues.



4. ENSURE FOOD AND WATER SECURITY

Transform food production and consumption so that we produce enough for everyone, in a sustainable way.

- Farm in a way that uses less space, less water, and fewer chemicals that harm the ecosystem.
- Half the amount of food wasted.
- Promote a more planet-based diet, choosing food that has not been produced in a way that causes deforestation, and buying food that is produced locally.
- Change fishing practices to ensure that the oceans can thrive and replace what we take out.

By Laila Mostafa Abdullatif,
Director General,
Emirates Nature-WWF

I encourage you to share this 'white paper' with your networks, understand what youth are asking for and why we need to work together for change. There has never been a more exciting and crucial time to build a future where people and nature live in harmony, and flourish together.

Show your support to build back a stronger, more resilient UAE, by making your 'Together for Change' pledge at www.emiratesnaturewwf.ae/together-for-change

A MESSAGE FOR YOUTH, FROM OUR LEADERS AND EXPERTS



H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq, Minister of Economy

"Whatever we do in the ministry is for youth. In saying this, I hope we can collaborate further in the future to create solutions, ideas and action plans."



H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Belhaif Al Nuaimi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment

"Clearly, we have young people who are aware of the challenges ahead of them and who have actively involved themselves in projects - giving us solutions rather than contributing to the many problems that plague our environment. I am pleased to give any support to all youth looking to pursue new thoughts and ideas revolved around sustainability."



H.E. Dr. Ahmad Belhouli Al Falasi, Minister of State for

Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises

"Seeing such a large attendance in this session only further verifies my views on the new generation and their consciousness toward the environment. On that front, I'm very happy to see this as I believe it's an opportunity for youth to get involved in sectors that could be of value to the country - education primarily."



H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, Minister of State for

Food Security

"Health, education and food are the pillars of every modern society. By going through this crisis, this fact has only been emphasized, paving ways for future professions in these domains."



H.E. Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for

Artificial Intelligence and Applications for Remote Work

"It excites me to see the passion that each and everyone of you have. You have inspired me more than I could ever inspire you. I'm motivated by the diverse set of ideas that prove you don't only have the drive, but also the creativity to pursue new and innovative projects."



H.E. Razan Al Mubarak, Managing Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund

"I've learnt tremendously from the youth and their clear desire to engage with environmental issues and solutions. I think it's important that we continue communicating and exchanging insights with the youth."



H.E. Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General of the

Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi

"I have faith in youth. I know they are responsible enough to make sustainable decisions to supersede what we have already put in place. Collectively, all of your actions matter. Without you, we (as a governmental agency) cannot succeed. We need your help."



H.E. Mohammed Saleh Hasan Baidani, Director General of

the International Fund for Houbara Conservation

"Thank you for the great participation. I believe in you and am hopeful that you will contribute much more in the future. I have faith that with the advancement of technology, the youth will heavily contribute to the rapid development of our country and its nature."



H.E. Noor Al Marzouqi, Deputy Director General of

the International Fund for Houbara Conservation

"The youth have an extremely important role to play in the conservation of our planet. You are the next generation of environmental leaders. Keep up the good work!"



H.E. Marwan Bin Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman of

Sharjah Investment & Development Authority (Shurooq)

"Seeing is believing. By taking the time to research all that the UAE has to offer, I believe the youth can play an important role in making positive changes. The UAE is one of the most fascinating places to visit - whether it's the biodiversity, eco tourism, mountains, oceans - I would like to invite you to see these destinations."



H.E. Dr. Tariq Bin Hendi, Director General, Abu Dhabi

Investment Office

"It's incumbent upon all of us to insure we explore all of what the UAE has to offer. If we don't respect what the country has to offer in terms of nature, it won't be around much longer for us to enjoy it."



Ali Khalil Husain, Founder of Husaak Adventures

"There is a huge opportunity for change. Following the pandemic, we have seen a huge difference in consumption patterns and activities. Many people are walking more and eating healthier. This is your opportunity to contribute in changing our poor habits and behaviours!"



Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Director General of ICBA

"I really believe that revolution is here. And, I hope that all of you, by following your hearts and passions, excel in what you wish to accomplish. The future can be beautiful if we each contribute in our own ways."



Dr. Frederic Launay, CEO of Panthera

"There are many reasons to be optimistic. It's very easy to have a negative outlook and procrastinate, however, this often leads to people giving up. It's important to remember in these moments that as daunting as the challenges may seem, there are solutions."



Professor Dr. Mohamed Yousif Baniyas, Higher Education Advisor

& Director, Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education

"Seeing how much passion and love the youth have for our environment is really rewarding. Pursuing your passions further to save the earth will absolutely grant results!"



Dr. Asma M. Fikri, Research & Development Consultant, Ministry of Health & Prevention

"I think the key message to take away is that our government is doing their best to ensure we are developing progressively so that we can have a sustainable future. And yet, at the same time, we need to think about practical solutions to aid in ameliorating our own behaviours and practices."



Professor Tadhg S. O'Donovan, Associate Head for the School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, Herriot Watt University, Dubai

"To critically question everything, to collaboratively join ideas - these are all the ingredients we need for innovation and creativity. Seeing all this today from our youth gives me confidence that solutions are just around the corner. I encourage you to continue with your good practice and wish you the very best of luck with it."



Dr. Rashed Karkain, Founder of Sustainable Development Research and Training Institute

"Don't wait for prestige or reputation to facilitate your actions toward bettering the environment. Your contribution should begin with your own behaviour and motivation, not a job title. We will offer everything that we can to assist you from an academic perspective."



Laila Mostafa Abdullatif, Director General, Emirates Nature-WWF

"Through means such as "connect with nature", you have the ability to make your voices heard and to be part of the decision making process. Please be transparent with us, and we will try our best to ensure our insights and programs are shared with you."

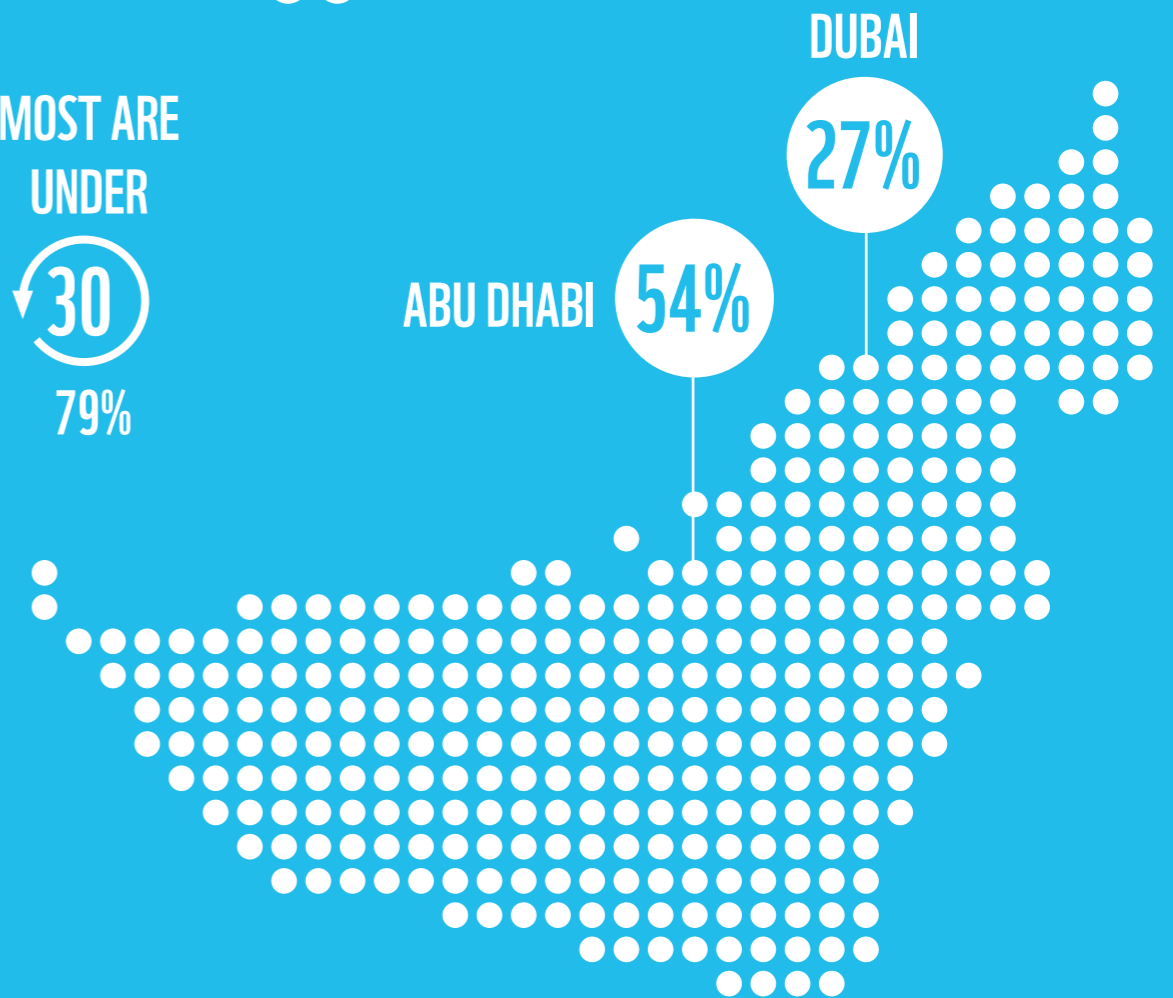
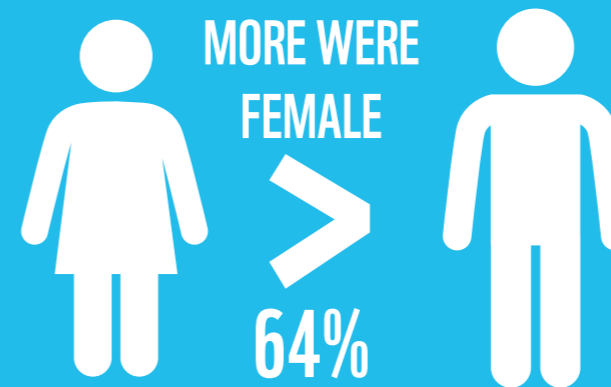
RESEARCH DEMOGRAPHICS

We had youth representation from every Emirate, but most were from Abu Dhabi (54%) and Dubai (27%).

We discussed how to shape an optimistic future for our planet and create a stronger UAE with key decision makers and experts from the UAE cabinet, businesses and academia.

Data and insights were captured through pre-event surveys, polls and Zoom discussions.

Each youth circle had an average of 200 participants.



THE CALENDAR OF YOUTH CIRCLES

Session #1: THE NEED FOR NATURE How can COVID-19 be the ultimate reset button?



Laila Mostafa Abdullatif, Director General of Emirates Nature-WWF



Ali Khalil Husain, Founder of Husaak Adventures

Session #2: THE FUTURE OF FOOD How can the UAE emerge from COVID-19 with better food security and increased sustainable agriculture in the UAE?



H.E. Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, Minister of State for Food Security



Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, Director General of ICBA

Session #3: POLITICS OF PROTECTING NATURE What action is needed at an international level and the UAE's role in encouraging governments to put nature at the top of the agenda.



H.E. Razan Al Mubarak, Managing Director of the Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund



Dr. Frederic Launay, CEO of Panthera

Session #4: LEARNING FROM THE PAST, SAVING FOR THE FUTURE How to protect our culture, heritage & natural resources?



H.E. Dr. Shaikha Salem Al Dhaheri, Secretary General of the Environment Agency-Abu Dhabi



H.E. Mohammed Saleh Hasan Baidani & H.E. Noor Al Marzouqi, Director General & Deputy Director General of the International Fund for Houbara Conservation

Session #5: FLATTENING THE CARBON-CURVE: LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC FOR THE OTHER EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

How can we move forward to a future where neither nature nor health is compromised?



Prof. Dr. Mohamed Yousif Baniyas, Higher Education Advisor & Director, Commission for Academic Accreditation, Ministry of Education



Dr. Asma M. Fikri, Research & Development Consultant, of Ministry of Health & Prevention

Session #6: JOB SECURITY & BUSINESS OPPs THAT ADDRESS THE NEW NORMAL How can we build an optimistic future in which the economy & environment both thrive?



H.E. Abdulla Bin Touq, Minister of Economy



H.E. Dr. Ahmad Belhoul Al Falasi, Minister of State for Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises

Session #7: THE ROLE OF ECO-TOURISM IN A GREEN RECOVERY FOR THE UAE How can we ensure that we don't damage delicate ecosystems in the process?



H.E. Marwan Bin Jassim Al Sarkal, Executive Chairman of Sharjah Investment & Development Authority (Shurooq)



H.E. Dr. Tariq Bin Hendi, Director General, Abu Dhabi Investment Office

Session #8: HOW CAN WE GREEN OUR ECONOMIC FUTURE What have we learned from moving less over the past few months?



H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Mohammed Belhaif Al Nuaimi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment



Professor Tadhg S. O'Donovan, Associate Head for the School of Engineering & Physical Sciences, Herriot Watt University, Dubai

Session #9: CAN INNOVATION HELP FIX OUR ECOSYSTEMS How can we harness the power of digital technology and AI to protect nature?



H.E. Omar Al Olama, Minister of State for Digital Economy, Artificial Intelligence and Applications for Remote Work



Dr. Rashed Karkain, Founder of Sustainable Development Research and Training Institute



Connect with Nature was developed through a founding partnership between Emirates Nature-WWF, The Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi (EAD) and a strategic partnership with the International Fund for Houbara Conservation (IFHC). The programme aims to reconnect youth with nature through experiences and activities, equip them with knowledge and skills to make informed decisions, and to become leaders of the community in creating a sustainable future.

For more information about Connect with Nature, please visit www.connectwithnature.ae