

# CONTRIBUTION OF PRIVATE COMPANIES IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CASE STUDIES FROM THE UAE

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) is referred to as the initiatives to maintain the eco-friendly structure as well as the balance in the socio-economic structure across the globe. The SDGs are complex, ambitious, and comprehensive. Achieving full completion towards every goal will be difficult, and in conflict-affected environments, and challenging. Sustainable development has become a priority for many nations. The United Nations identified the problem by the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Implementation and achievement of these goals is the responsibility of the Government in every country. The SDGs address all big societal challenges, and they require effective public administration and governance for their implementation. On the other hand, the Increases in laws and regulations increase the costs of resources and limit the uses of resources that managers are responsible for acquiring and using effectively and efficiently. Many countries and companies identified the strategic importance of sustainability in their strategic goals. In the UAE, the government understands that sustainability efforts are most effective if supported by the private sector. Secondary data was collected from literature review to have theoretical background and the contribution of some UAE private companies in achieving SDGs. The aim of this research is to investigate how the government implemented sustainability strategies in collaboration with the private sector companies in the UAE. Main findings about the selected private sector organizations revealed that they recognized, managed, and successfully implement many SDG's. The government and the private sector should share the SDGs projects' responsibility, planning, organizing, collaboration in the development of strategies, infrastructure, processes, policies, promote awareness and motivation, ICT, rewarding, incentives, implementation, evaluation and feedback, and Knowledge and best practice sharing. Sustainable development is firmly located on national and global agendas.

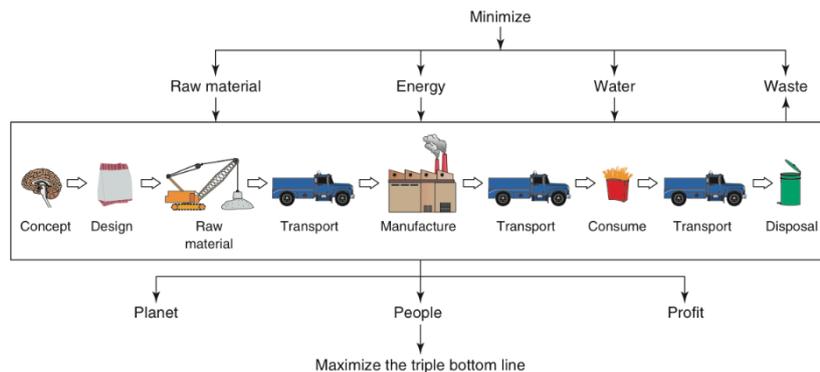
**Key words:** Sustainable Development Goals, Private companies, Change management, Strategy

## 1- INTRODUCTION

Sustainability means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is more than "going green". It includes employees, customers, community, and company reputation. Looking at a product's life from design to disposal, including all the resources required. The product or service itself is a small part of

much larger social, economic, and environmental systems. Understanding systems allows more informed judgments regarding sustainability (Heizer, & Render,2020).

### Triple Bottom Line



**People:** Decisions affect people, Globalization and outsourcing complicate the task, Supplier selection and performance criteria are important, and Materials must be safe and environmentally responsible.

**Planet:** The planet’s environment, look for ways to reduce the environmental impact of operations, overarching objective is to conserve scarce resources, and Carbon footprint and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

**Profit:** Social and environmental sustainability do not exist without economic sustainability. Staying in business requires making a profit, Alternate measures of success include risk profile, intellectual property, employee morale, and company valuation, *social accounting* can supplement financial accounting to support economic sustainability.

### Design and Production for Sustainability:

- ▶ **Life cycle assessment** evaluates the environmental impact of a product, from raw material and energy inputs all the way to the disposal of the product at its end of life
- ▶ The goal is to make decisions that help reduce the environmental impact of a product throughout its entire life.

**Circular economy** – resources are kept and used for as long as possible, recovering and regenerating the maximum possible value at end of life (Heizer, & Render,2020).

Global supply chains are networks that can span across multiple continents and countries for the purpose of sourcing and supplying goods and services. Global supply chains involve the flow of information, processes and resources across the globe (cips.org, 2021)

Global supply chains and logistics are playing an important role in international business and contributing to the economy of many countries. On the other hands, they are

causing many sustainability issues globally. The United Nations identified the problem by the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many countries and companies identified the risk and the strategic importance of sustainability in their strategic goals. The aim of this research project is to investigate the contribution of private companies in achieving SDGs. Hoping that this research will help to improve awareness about the challenges and sharing best practices with stakeholders. The SDGS are complex, ambitious, and comprehensive; even in the most stable environments, achieving full completion towards every goal will be difficult, and in conflict-affected environments, this challenge is much greater (Asi, Y. M., & Williams, C. ,2018).

### **The role of Government and leadership in implementing and achieving SDGs**

Motivation is one of the main traits of leadership to inspire others to achieve goals. For example, in the UAE a very successful example of End hunger as one of SDGs. Sheikh Mohammed backs One Billion Meals campaign with 400 million meals. Dh600 million raised by companies, organizations, businessmen and individuals (Gulfnews.com,2022). The SDGs address all big societal challenges, and they require effective public administration and governance for their implementation.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**Sustainable Development Goal** is referred to as the initiatives to maintain the eco-friendly structure as well as the balance in the socio-economic structure across the globe.

Global supply chains and logistics are playing a key role in international business and contributing to the economy of many countries. On the other hands, they are causing many sustainability issues globally. The United Nations identified the problem by the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Thorlakson, et.al,2018). Many countries and companies identified the risk and the strategic importance of sustainability in their strategic goals.

### **Sustainable Development Goals:**

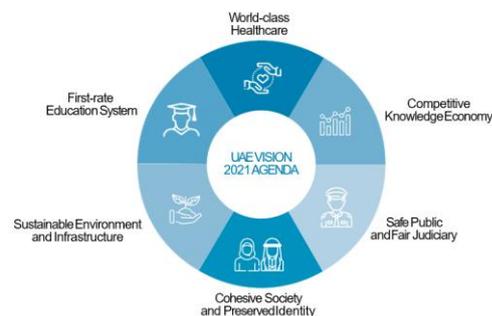
1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts\*
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2021).

The UAE's development priorities are aligned with the concept of global sustainable development.

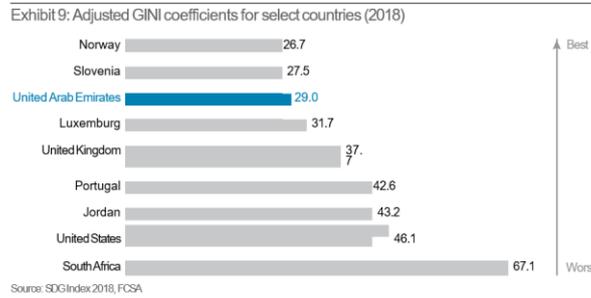
UAE Sustainable goals (2021) vision

Exhibit 2: UAE Vision 2021



Source: <https://www.vision2021.ae/en>

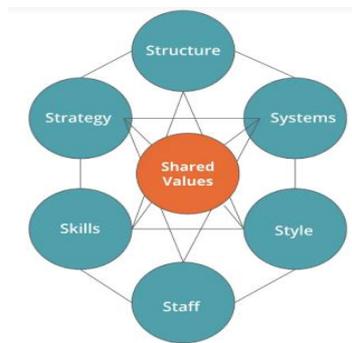
## UAE Sustainability Ranking



Examples of contribution of private sector organizations in the UAE in achieving sustainable development goals.

### Change management:

Implementing SDGs requires change management. Change management is the concept through which various methods and procedures are adopted to respond to a combination of external and internal pressures which can disrupt an organization's functioning, but which can also provide opportunities for organizational growth and development (Bashori et al., 2020). (Stobierski, 2020) defines organizational change as an alteration of any aspect of an institution's business culture, such as its operational procedures, internal processes and utilization of technology. Change management, therefore, refers to any systematic attempt to monitor and control organizational changes so that the institution will achieve higher levels of productivity during and after the implementation of the proposed changes. Both (Galli, 2013) and (Shiri, 2014) advocate the application of the McKinsey 7-S model when planning and executing the introduction of radical change, particularly in the case of institutions with complex organizational structures. The McKinsey model identifies seven core elements within any institution, these core elements being strategy, structure, systems, shared values, style, staff and skills, and proposes assessment procedures to determine if these elements are effectively aligned to facilitate the achievement of organizational objectives.



**Figure (2): The McKinsey 7S Change management Model**

Private sector organization	SDGs Addressed & Evidence
<p><b>Dubai Holding Company</b></p>	<p>Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) Jumeirah Restaurant Group went plastic-straw free since March 2018. The company stopped using plastic straws, sticks, stirrers, and toothpicks in all its food and beverage outlets and Oasis Village, the Group’s staff accommodation community, has installed a Bokashi bin system that utilizes food waste Dubai Properties installed energy-saving systems in its communities to offset an estimated 1,450 tons of CO2 emissions annually Climate Action (SDG 13) As well as the company has installed photovoltaic solar panel modules across the company headquarters’ parking which save up to 200 tons of CO2</p>
<p><b>Careem</b></p>	<p>Quality of Education (SDG 4) Careem organizes courses on personal and business finance Planning, as well as health and wellbeing. Moreover, in partnership with NYU Abu Dhabi Gender Equality (SDG 5) HR team’s strategies promote diversity, flexible working hours, and extended parental leaves Decent Work (SDG 8) The company provides new job opportunities for captains in the monitoring and maintenance of driverless cars, and in related fields Climate Action (SDG 13) The company is shifting its focus to promoting electric and self-driven vehicles</p>
<p><b>DP World</b></p>	<p>Quality of Education(SDG4) DP World launched an educational program for 8- to 14-year-old pupils in the UAE as well as a Program for 16 to 18 year old run at Expo 2020 with the objective to engage and inspire more young people in the trade industry Gender Equality (SDG 5) In 2019, the company partnered with Airbus and the Middlesex University Dubai to hold a training session based on the UN Women Empowerment Principles and DP world rolled out global initiatives such as female mentoring programs &amp; female career development Clean Energy (SDG 7) 157,000 rooftop solar modules project was launched in two phases to deliver 63 GWh of clean power annually Climate Action (SDG 13) The company has commissioned 157,000 rooftop solar modules in the Middle East savings of more than 48,800 tons of carbon</p>

<p><b>EMAAR Group</b></p>	<p>Clean Water (SDG 6) Emaar’s water management program was launched in 2016 to promote responsible usage of water resources. Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) Group Operations also supports the Dubai Municipality in landfill waste management, aiming at diverting 75 percent of waste from landfill by 2021 and the company has launched a process to create high quality segregated waste that can be effectively recycled Climate Action (SDG 13) In 2018, Group Operations has achieved 27 million kWh of savings in electricity consumption and 12 million TWh of savings in district cooling –which helped to reduce the carbon footprint by over 12 million kilos.</p>
<p><b>Al Serkal Group</b></p>	<p>Clean Water (SDG 6) Alserkal Group setup the first grease trap in the UAE to enable collection of fats, oils, and grease (FOG) from kitchen wastewaters Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) Alserkal Group’s company Coregreen collects used cooking oil (UCO) before it has been disposed into the water and in 2018, the Group signed a contract with Tadweer, the Center of Waste Management of Abu Dhabi, to commission the biggest facility for converting UCO into bio-diesel</p>
<p><b>First Abu Dhabi Bank</b></p>	<p>Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) FAB Raises community awareness and educating its employees on the importance of responsible consumption and facilitates the collection of used plastic and partners with the sustainable apparel company Degrade to recycle it into eco-clothing. Climate Action (SDG 13) FAB issued the MENA region’s first and only Green Bond in 2017, worth \$587 million. Proceeds from the bond will be used to finance projects involving renewables, energy efficiency, and water management, they have financed two solar plants from the green bond’s proceeds, offsetting over 7 million tons of carbon per year</p>
<p><b>Multinational Companies Business Group</b></p>	<p>Good Health (SDG 3) Nestlé, Mars, and Unilever, as members of the International Food &amp; Beverage Alliance, committed in 2016 to remove trans-fatty acids (TFAs) and reduce the salt and sugar content in their products Clean Water (SDG 6) Unilever has built an on-site Effluent Treatment Plant in its Dubai Personal Care manufacturing facility (DPC), to enable 80 percent of wastewater to be reused on site for cooling and irrigation Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) The company deployed a school nutrition education program Ajyal Salima for 90,000 children in six countries, including the UAE as well as Mars and Unilever have deployed a “Zero Waste to Landfill” also Unilever has utilized its organic waste and transformed it into soil conditioner which is distributed to farms in Al-Ain Climate Action (SDG 13) Unilever has achieved an 18 percent reduction in carbon emissions in 2017-2018 through increased energy efficiency and Mars has installed energy efficient lighting and solar pipes within its office and has also installed ammonia chillers and a solar farm at its factory site.</p>

<p><b>Emirates Airlines</b></p>	<p>Gender Equality(SDG5) More than 40 percent of emirates’ airlines employees are women Clean Water (SDG 6) Emirates has adopted dry washing for its aircraft, which has significantly reduced water consumption which has resulted in annual savings of 11 million liters of water Decent Work (SDG 8) Employment opportunities for over 60,000 people Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) In 2016-2017, 3,208 tons of materials were recycled, emirates’ initiatives include refurbishing and repurposing equipment, reducing single-use plastic items and other waste from inflight service Climate Action (SDG 13) The company implements fuel saving operational techniques, and optimizes planning of ground transportation at its Dubai hub and invests in renewable energy solutions to reduce its carbon footprint such as solar array and retrofitting facilities with energy efficient fittings</p>
<p><b>Dubai Free Zone Council</b></p>	<p>Decent Work (SDG 8) DMCC’s employees include people of 43 nationalities, 17 percent of whom are under 30 years of age and 37 percent are women Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) DMCC has launched the ambitious Smart and Sustainable District Strategy 2018-2019, to reduce energy consumption across the free zone and in 2018, retro-fitting interventions were undertaken on OneJLT, a LEED Gold (BD+C) certified building. DMCC’s new flagship district, Uptown Dubai, is also being constructed Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) DMCC has launched the ambitious Smart and Sustainable District Strategy 2018-2019, to reduce energy consumption across the free zone Climate Action (SDG 13) Dubai South has signed a solar project agreement in March 2019 to build a 2 MWp photovoltaic system that will generate more than 3,000,000 kWh of renewable energy annually for five of Dubai South’s facilities in addition to that DWTC completed installation of 3,000 photovoltaic solar panels on the roof of Sheikh Rashid Hall with a combined capacity of 1 MW peak, which will save 2,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually</p>
<p><b>Masdar</b></p>	<p>Clean Energy (SDG 7) Masdar has invested over \$4 billion in renewable energy projects will displace an estimated 5.4 million tons of carbon dioxide per year, while their combined electricity output will exceed 10,680 GWh annually such as Shams Project in Abu Dhabi, it is also developing the 800 MW third phase of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai that set a record-low price for generating solar power further more Zayed Sustainability Prize, managed by Masdar, where the winners have contributed to offsetting 1.3 billion tons of carbon emissions, saving 6.2 billion liters of water, and extending clean water access to 8.5 million people Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) It hosts one of the largest clusters of low-carbon buildings in the world, developed in accordance with Estidama, Abu Dhabi’s urban sustainability framework as well as Masdar City buildings are designed to reduce energy and water consumption by at least 40 percent. Climate Action (SDG 13) Masdar’s renewable energy project portfolio comprises nearly 4 GW of gross generating capacity with zero carbon emissions</p>

<p><b>Shurooq (The Sharjah Investment and Development Authority)</b></p>	<p>Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) The company launched a 2 billion AED Sharjah Sustainable City project in March 2019, the first urban mixed-use project in Sharjah, which meets the high standards of environmental sustainability, and which serves the needs of the green economy as well as the Smart homes designed will be powered by renewable energy and offer up to 100 percent savings on electricity and 50 percent cuts on water. All water will be reused for irrigation purposes</p> <p>Life on Land (SDG 15) Shurooq has launched Kalba Eco Tourism project 2012 in collaboration with the Environment and Protected Areas Authority in Sharjah by engineering ways to preserve the natural environment and running environmental awareness programs and education centers and invested approximately AED250 million to develop the Mleiha archaeological site, the region's 130,000-year-old natural history site from the Paleolithic period, nominated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site</p>
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### LESSONS LEARNT FOR THE UAE AND ITS PRIVATE SECTOR

The engagement and involvement of the private sector is critical to ensure that progress is being driven and implemented. The SDGs represent an opportunity for the private sector to innovate, improve risk management, and build stronger relationships with key stakeholders (Rung, Greg, et., al, 2021). They summarized the following success factors would help maximize the private sector's involvement and contribution to the implementation of the SDGs:

#### 1. Shared responsibility

The government and the private sector can share responsibility on specific initiatives. The governments need to provide clear regulation and guidance, and private sector companies should communicate their related ideas and capabilities.

#### 2. Establishing effective governance and processes

Stakeholders need to set sustainability targets, define internal processes on how to meet these targets, enable supporting systems (for example, the statistical system in Bahrain), and allocate stakeholders to supervise the processes and communicate the progress as to reassure private sector practices are aligned with the SDGs. Important supports come from tools and processes that identify gaps and opportunities to mobilize additional sources of finance and effectively use available resources to achieve the SDGs. Integrated policies provide an open network under which partners collaborate in a solid process of implementation

#### 3. Data collection and reporting

Standardized data across a range of SDG-specific dimensions allow for a comparative analysis of private companies, enabling timely exchange of knowledge and best practices. The flow of information should be consistent and to make sure progresses as well as critical issues are visible via SDG reports. Big data and platforms for data collection, analysis and visualization could be considered to generate a significance stream of data facilitating the decision making process at all levels

#### **4. Enabling infrastructure**

The governments' role is key in setting up the necessary infrastructure to enable green value chains across industries. Collaboration between Governments entities and the private sector is essential in the development of infrastructure also shifting towards green communities we encourage the use of materials and technologies that enhance durability as well as sustainability across the entire building industry

#### **5. Deploying cutting-edge technology**

Investing and promoting green technologies helps advance the critical environmental SDGs, allowing institutions to significantly reduce energy consumption, waste creation and improve the efficiency of their day to day procedure.

#### **6. Increasing awareness**

Private sector companies can leverage governmental programs to promote awareness to their employees and communities, as well as to other companies and markets in a country. Governments, therefore, need to ensure timely communication of their goals to market leaders, and offer incentives for driving these campaigns. Media and entertainment partnerships can amplify SDG related messages exponentially, furthermore as well as public figures and social media influencers should be explored to shed light on the most critical current issues such as climate change, green shift, access to health services and many others.

#### **7. International collaboration**

Continuous exchange of expertise and best practices across countries' governments and industries is vital to facilitating progress on the SDGs. Henceforth all stakeholders should consider capacities, resources and partnerships for effective development cooperation, synthesizing a framework for global agreements and processes. In addition to Partnerships with academics through education, research and SDG- case studies.

#### **8. SDGs alignment, follow up and feedback**

A multilayer review process should be adapted to track progress among the various programs of action on timely basis; such process also includes reviewing the strategic goals. Regular follow up is critical at this stage to make necessary adjustments as per future improvement. Special attention should be given to organizations that aren't aligned with SDGs yet, institution that have adapted sustainable development goals can play an important role by sharing their expertise and exchanging knowledge, for example the private sector organizations within the UAE which are aligned with the SDGs can extend their experience to the public sector and small organizations just starting to evolve (Rung, Greg, et., al, 2021).

#### **Conclusions**

Sustainable development is firmly located on national and global agendas. The SDGS are complex, ambitious, and comprehensive problem. The SDGs address all big societal challenges, and they require effective public administration and governance for their implementation. Main proposed change management strategies for successful SDGs projects implementation

are Effective International collaboration, the government and the private sector should share the SDGs projects' responsibility, planning, organizing, collaboration in the development of strategies, infrastructure, processes, policies, promote awareness, communication, motivation, using ICT and other related technologies, rewarding, incentives, implementation, evaluation and feedback, knowledge and best practice sharing. Sustainable development goals (SDG) should be corporate strategic goals. Its benefits are for all stakeholders. UN, UAE, and many public and private sectors are caring about sustainability. At corporate level, SDG should be implemented and aligned by all related strategies such as recruitment, operation and supply chain strategies, vendor selection, inputs/ raw materials, processes, business ethics, customer services, and products and or services provided. More research and development are required about sustainability, HRD, Business ethics, healthy working environment, change management, learning, improving positive attitude, human relationship, team working, about such a global issue.

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