

Mashreq Sustainability Dialogues

Views You Can Use



Fernando Morillo

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Mashreq

Engaging and involving younger generations on climate action is crucial

We are all experiencing the effects of climate change and are increasingly aware of the fact that we need to take action to ensure that sustainability becomes an integral part of our lives. However, a significant portion of this task will not be in our hands. It will actually be in the hands of the next generations. To begin addressing climate change, it will be necessary to allocate between 30%-40% of the world's GDP. This represents an immense amount of capital, effort, and work that needs to be invested. Engaging and involving younger generations, making them more aware, and encouraging them to become active participants in sustainability and climate action is crucial.

A power that needs to be put into action

Youth are the consumers of the future, and all companies know that. As banks, we can provide them with the right information on what society consumes and what is at stake with regards to the extent of damage from our behavior. We can help them put their power into action and force the supply side to completely change the way we all are doing things.

Source: Mashreq Sustainability Dialogues -podcast series

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Haya Aseer

Youth Representative

Global Council on SDG13: Climate Change Action

Global Council on SDGs, UAE

It's critical to involve youth in climate action

Sustainability refers to the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. If this is the definition of sustainability we are considering, then it's crucial that we involve youth to ensure their representation. This is the second consecutive year that the MENA region is hosting a COP, and in this region, more than 60% of the population is comprised of people under the age of 35. If we do not involve them, we are neglecting over half of the population and missing out on numerous untapped opportunities.

The importance of access to capital for youth

One of the main challenges that youth face in their involvement in climate action is access to capital. For example, allocating a portion of R&D funds to young people conducting research and working on innovative solutions to combat the consequences of climate change would be a significant step. While focusing on upskilling youth and helping them acquire the skills for green jobs is crucial, we must not underestimate the importance of providing them with access to capital. To put this into perspective, only 0.06% of global environmental philanthropy is directed toward youth. In the Global South, that percentage is almost negligible. If we genuinely want to empower youth, then addressing the issue of funding is imperative.

Expectations for COP28

This is the first time that we will have a Youth Climate Champion in the COP Presidency. We are fortunate to begin this legacy with COP in the UAE. Additionally, I want young people to understand that COP28 is not the final destination but a launching pad. There are so many opportunities in the private sector, public sector, and NGOs. We should try as much as possible to capitalize on that beyond COP28.

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Julia Carlow
Acting Head of Sustainability
American University of Sharjah

Provide a space where young people can innovate

Sustainability has many components, but climate action is one of the most urgent. In the field of education, we have long been asking ourselves how to empower youth and teach not only knowledge but also values. It doesn't matter what you studied. Everyone has a role to play, and that's what we aim to instill in our students. We view the campus as a living lab where we can experiment, innovate, and try new things. This is where youth empowerment comes into play. You need to educate and provide information and knowledge. You also need to create a space for young people to have the freedom to experiment and try new things.

Aligning skillsets between industry and academia

We all need to keep learning, even as adults, because information is changing at a rapid pace. We need to continue learning about climate change and possible solutions. Academia has always been a catalyst for innovation. We must continue fostering that spirit and collaborating with other institutions to support one another. The UAE recently launched the Universities Climate Network earlier this year. We have been in close collaboration with other institutions in the UAE to address climate change specifically, not only for COP but also for the long term. This effort has been significant in ensuring that we create synergies and work together to have a lasting impact.

The legacy of COP28 will be education

This will be the first COP with a dedicated education hub in the Green Zone. This will represent the legacy the UAE will contribute to the COP process, emphasizing the crucial role of education in the climate movement.

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Gloria Tsang
Program Associate
Student Energy Summit

Embedding sustainability into education

We need to stop looking at climate change at school as a one-off opportunity like Earth Days, and then we are back to economics, back to literature, back to history. Are there ways to incorporate sustainability into the curricula for each of these topics? That's the first step in getting youth not just engaged but aware of what's at stake and what the issues are. We should start with the training and education of not just the youth themselves, but the instructors. We need to look at our instructors and see if they really value sustainability and if they're aware of how to fully incorporate it into education.

Communicating sustainability as a young person

To be taken seriously in intergenerational spaces, you need to align yourself with an organization or with your higher education institution. They can provide you with resources and a sense of legitimacy. As passionate as a person can be, it is very hard to get people to take you seriously just by going onto social media to express views, even if the message you're communicating is very important. The first step is to make sure you are confident in your skills and that you know what you are talking about. It is also crucial to make sure you are in a network that is aligned with your views and that can provide the support you need to have your voice heard.

Hopes for COP28

My biggest hope is for students to walk away feeling that they're not alone in this battle against climate change. There are organizations willing to connect them with the right people in corporations, with people already in the business field, and sources of capital to help them make a positive impact in their communities.

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