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Arabia CSR Network®

NEWSLETTER

August 2025 Volume 18 Issue 169



GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY & CSR FORUM 13TH CYCLE

Sustainable Growth Orchestrating a Global Change 8th - 9th October 2025



Upcoming Trainings & Workshops



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Sustainability Reporting Training

10th & 11th September




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Stakeholder Engagement Workshop

15th September 2025




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CSR STRATEGY AND LEADERSHIP

13th - 15th OCTOBER 2025



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Note from the Founder & CEO

Dear members, partners and valued supporters,

As we enter the final stretch of 2025, the conversation around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability in our region has never been more urgent, nor more inspiring. The challenges of climate change, social equity and sustainable growth are shaping the future of every nation and every organisation. Businesses are no longer measured solely by profit margins, but increasingly by their contributions to the environment, society and the governance policies & practices.

It is within this transformative context that the Arabia CSR Network (ACSRN) continues to lead as a platform of knowledge, advocacy and recognition, working tirelessly to embed CSR and sustainability at the very heart of organisational strategies and roadmaps.

CSR today is about far more than philanthropy; it is about creating long-term shared value. It is about building resilient entities that thrive because they align their growth with the wellbeing of people and the planet. It is about leadership that inspires change, innovation that reduces harm and creates solutions, and a vision that balances economic prosperity with environmental stewardship and social cohesion. For nearly two decades, ACSRN has championed this holistic approach — through continuous capacity building, effective and collaborative forums, and the Pan-Arab Famous Awards programme that honours organisations who raise the bar of excellence.

I am proud to share that we are now just weeks away from two of our most anticipated milestones of the year. On the evening of **7th October 2025**, the region will gather for the **18th cycle of the Arabia CSR & Sustainability Awards Ceremony** under the patronage of **His Highness Engineer, Sheikh Salem Bin Sultan Bin Saqr Al-Qasimi, Chairman of the Ras Al Khaimah Civil Aviation Department and member of the Government of Ras Al Khaimah's Executive Council**, where outstanding organisations will be celebrated for their achievements in integrating sustainability into their core business models. These awards are widely recognised as the benchmark of CSR excellence in the Arab world, a true measure of impact and accountability.

Immediately following this, on **8th – 9th October 2025**, we will host the **13th cycle of the Global Sustainability & CSR Forum**, under the esteemed patronage of the Ministry of Economy and Tourism and in strategic partnership with Dubai Chambers.

This global platform will convene business leaders, policymakers, academics and changemakers from across the world to share best practices, explore pressing global challenges, and co-create solutions that drive sustainability forward.

With topics ranging from circular economy to social innovation and sustainable finance, the forum promises to inspire bold action and reaffirm the Arab region's role in the global sustainability movement.

The month of August has been particularly rich with meaningful engagements, reflection and opportunities to advance the conversation around sustainability and corporate social responsibility across the region.

On **4th August**, I had the distinct privilege of delivering a keynote speech at the Golden Jubilee of Emirati Women's Day Special Synergy Lunch at Capital Club. On **18th August**, I joined MAJRA's Impact Stream Podcast, where I shared insights on how sustainability and CSR are increasingly transforming business leadership, organisational strategy and community impact.

The discussion underscored the importance of embedding sustainability across all dimensions of corporate decision-making and how organisations can leverage CSR to create long-term value for both society and business. Look out for the release in ACSRN's social media pages.

On **27th August**, ACSRN proudly served as the **CSR Partner** for a high-level Panel Discussion on Advancing Circular Economy in the UAE. This gathering brought together leading voices from government, industry and civil society to explore innovative strategies and actionable solutions for transitioning towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient economy. The session highlighted the critical role of collaboration, policy alignment and innovative thinking in achieving the UAE's sustainability targets, while also fostering knowledge exchange across sectors.

These engagements underscore the critical role of CSR as a driver of innovation, resilience and shared value creation. They serve as a reminder that responsible business is not a standalone activity, but an essential component of organisational strategy and a catalyst for national progress.

As we approach September, I warmly invite you to join us at the **13th cycle of the Global Sustainability & CSR Forum**. This event is far more than a gathering; it is a dynamic platform for collaboration, learning and meaningful action.

Together, we can reinforce our commitment to responsible business practices, accelerate measurable impact and contribute to building a sustainable, inclusive and resilient future.

For more information about the Forum, including the detailed programme and registration process, please refer to the relevant section inside this newsletter.

I also encourage you to follow us on our social media channels **@arabiaccsr** to stay updated on how you can participate, contribute and amplify this critical movement.

Together, let us champion the global change our world so urgently needs, transforming ambition into action and vision into lasting impact.

ACSRN News

Keynote Speaker at Emirati Women's Day Golden Jubilee Celebration

In a momentous celebration marking the Golden Jubilee of Emirati Women's Day, Mrs. Habiba Al Mar'ashi, Founder & CEO of Arabia CSR Network, delivered an inspiring keynote speech at the Special Synergy Lunch, organised by the Dubai Rotary Club and the Capital Club, under the 50-year theme "Hand in Hand, We Celebrate 50 Years."

Addressing a distinguished audience of leaders, professionals, and change-makers, Mrs. Al Mar'ashi reflected on the remarkable journey of Emirati women over the past five decades. She highlighted their profound impact in shaping environmental policies, leading innovative initiatives, and embedding sustainability principles into diverse sectors of the economy.

She spoke passionately about how women's leadership has driven tangible organisational transformation, but also strengthened communities, fostered resilience, and advanced the UAE's national sustainability agenda.

Drawing from her personal journey as a pioneer in corporate social responsibility and environmental advocacy, she shared stories of challenges overcome and milestones achieved, offering valuable insights into the power of determination, collaboration and purpose-driven leadership.

She urged young Emirati women to embrace their potential, step confidently into positions of influence, and design sustainable solutions that will shape the nation's future.

Her address was both a celebration of achievements and a call to action—emphasising that Emirati women, with their unique perspectives and unwavering commitment, are central to building an inclusive, innovative, and sustainable future.

Through her words, Mrs. Al Mar'ashi reinforced the vision that sustainability is not only an environmental responsibility but also a social mission that thrives when women are empowered to lead.



EEG's 4th Panel Discussion of 2025

As the CSR Partner for this important occasion, the Arabia CSR Network (ACSRN) is proud to highlight the success of

the recent high-level panel discussion convened by the Emirates Environmental Group (EEG), in co-organisation with the Dubai Supreme Council of Energy (DSCE) and in collaboration with the Advancing Net Zero Volunteering Team.

Held under the timely theme "Advancing Circular Economy in the UAE: Innovations, Strategies and Industry Collaboration" at Stella Di Mare – Dubai Marina Hotel, the forum brought together a distinguished cross-section of sustainability experts, policymakers, academics and private sector leaders.

The discussion served as a powerful platform to advance the urgent national dialogue on accelerating the UAE's transition to a circular economy.

The event opened with welcoming remarks by Mrs. Habiba Al Mar'ashi, in her capacity as the Co-Founder & Chairperson of EEG, she underscored the importance of circularity as a central pillar of Dubai's sustainability vision.

This was followed by an inspiring keynote address from Eng. Faisal Ali Al Rashid, Senior Director at DSCE and Chairman of the Advancing Net Zero Volunteering Team, highlighting Dubai's strategic commitment to circular economy frameworks that align with the UAE Net Zero by 2050 vision and the Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan.

The distinguished panel featured thought leaders including:

- Mr. Hassan Younes, Co-Founder & CEO, GRFN Consultants
- Ms. Rana Hajirasouli, Founder, The Surpluss (Certified B Corporation)
- Mr. Amr Seleem, Country Engagement & Climate Policy Lead, UNEP Cool Coalition
- Dr. Jacinta Dsilva, Director of Research, Living Lab & International Partnerships, SEE Institute
- Dr. P.R. Jagannathan, Senior GM of Sustainability & Climate Action, Sobha Realty

The dynamic discussion delved into innovation, policy frameworks, behavioural change, and systems thinking as key enablers of scaling circular models across industries such as construction, manufacturing, energy, and waste management.

Speakers shared strategies to accelerate the UAE's progress toward net-zero and regenerative economic systems.

The interactive audience Q&A session enriched the dialogue further, fostering valuable knowledge exchange across the sustainability spectrum.

A milestone moment was the signing of an MoU between EEG and the Advancing Net Zero Volunteering Team, formalising collaboration on future initiatives dedicated to embedding circularity and advancing the UAE's net-zero ambitions.

As the CSR Partner, the Arabia CSR Network is proud to be part of this collaborative effort that help strengthens the

UAE's sustainability movement and embodies the spirit of innovation, inclusivity and resilience.

Partnerships such as this are essential in driving transformative change and advancing the national vision for a sustainable and circular future.



Member News

Sweet Acts, Big Impact: McDonald's UAE Spreads Joy and Support

We are proud of McDonald's UAE, ACSRN's Platinum Member, for once again setting the bar high for meaningful corporate social responsibility through their recent McHappy Day campaign. This special day, held recently transformed a simple pleasure into a powerful force for good.

For one day, McDonald's UAE pledged to donate 100% of the proceeds from all Sundae sales, whether purchased in-store or through the McDonald's app, to the Red Crescent Medical Centre.

The funds raised directly support the centre's mission of providing free, high-quality medical treatment to individuals of all ages, nationalities and backgrounds. This commitment ensures that vital healthcare remains accessible to those who need it most—removing barriers and offering hope where it matters.

Beyond the fundraising, the McHappy Day campaign also reinforced an important message: that corporate influence can be a catalyst for lasting societal change. When brands leverage their reach to address critical social needs, they create a ripple effect—encouraging others in the business community to step up, contribute and innovate in their own ways.

We commend McDonald's UAE for their creativity, generosity and unwavering dedication to making a tangible difference in the UAE. May this be one of many initiatives that continue to bring smiles, not just to customers enjoying a sundae, but to countless individuals whose lives are made better through acts of kindness like this.



Upcoming

Upcoming Training Opportunities

1-Sustainability Reporting Masterclass

10th – 11th September

Join this comprehensive two-day masterclass designed to equip you with the tools and knowledge to produce impactful, globally aligned reports that build stakeholder confidence.

- Gain a solid grasp of key frameworks such as GRI, ISSB and other leading standards
- Integrate ESG performance into your broader business strategy
- Craft an authentic and persuasive sustainability narrative
- Engage in interactive sessions guided by industry experts

Ideal for sustainability practitioners, ESG specialists, and corporate communication teams aiming to stand out in the reporting landscape.

Walk away ready to produce robust, transparent and regulation-ready sustainability reports that enhance your organisation's credibility and reputation.



2 – Stakeholder Management

15th August

This intensive, results-driven workshop will help you master the art and science of engaging, managing and influencing stakeholders to achieve long-term sustainability goals.

- Identify, map and prioritise stakeholders effectively
- Develop engagement strategies that foster trust, collaboration and mutual benefit
- Manage competing interests and potential conflicts with confidence
- Learn best practices from real-world case studies across diverse industries

Perfect for sustainability leaders, CSR managers and project heads who need to strengthen relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

Leave with practical tools and strategies to create win-win partnerships that accelerate your organisation's sustainability impact.



Shaping Global Impact: The 13th cycle of the Global Sustainability & CSR Forum

The countdown has begun for one of the year's most influential gatherings in the sustainability and CSR arena – the 13th cycle of the Global Sustainability & CSR Forum, taking place 8–9 October 2025 at the iconic Dubai Chambers headquarters, our valued Strategic Partner for this milestone event. Proudly held under the patronage of the UAE Ministry of Economy and Tourism, the Forum will convene under the powerful theme:

“Sustainable Growth: Orchestrating a Global Change.”

This is more than a conference – it is a call to action at a defining moment for our planet and our region. With expectations for climate resilience, transparency, inclusive growth, and responsible governance at an all-time high, the Forum will serve as a catalyst for turning commitments into measurable results.

Over two transformative days, attendees will gain:

- Inspiring Keynotes from global sustainability pioneers
- Engaging Panel Discussions tackling today's most urgent environmental and social challenges
- Compelling Case Presentations from leading organisations driving change on the ground

Beyond the sessions, the Forum is your gateway to powerful partnerships, cross-sector collaborations, and global visibility on one of the most respected sustainability platforms in the Arab region. Whether you represent the public or private sector, a start-up or a multinational, an NGO or an academic institution—this is where your voice can shape the sustainability agenda.

Be part of the movement. Join as a Partner, Sponsor, Speaker, or Delegate and help shape a future that is sustainable, inclusive and resilient.



[Register Now](#)

Feature Article

Sustainability ideals are often crushed by corporate demands.

Here's how businesses can let them flourish

Excerpt from Sanne F, Enrico F, and Mette M

A "calling" in the context of work might be characterised by a strong sense of purpose and a motivation beyond just being paid at the end of the month. It's mostly associated with occupations like healthcare workers, teachers or nonprofit staff, for example.

We might not immediately think of sustainability managers – employed by companies to reduce their environmental impact – as following a calling in the same sense. As researchers, however, we have found that sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) managers are also drawn to their work by a calling to serve as agents for social change – even though their roles are corporate ones.

The social aspirations of sustainability managers are key to the success of corporations' CSR and sustainability work. However, these aspirations often clash with the corporate reality within the organisation.

Our research is based on 57 sustainability managers in international companies in Sweden across various industries and career levels. We found that sustainability managers chose their careers in order to live out their strong socio-environmental ambitions. Yet keeping that motivation is far from easy. According to sustainability managers themselves, their employers fail to live up to their social aspirations.

They are pushed to prioritise corporate goals over social good and their visions are reduced to compliance only. Their innovative ideas can fade in the struggle to be heard and gain support within the organisation.

We found that as sustainability managers gain more seniority within the corporation, they lose their socio-environmental purpose and instead start to focus on the bottom-line results of sustainability initiatives. This means they become less ambitious with regard to sustainability initiatives – and more concerned with the profit-driven benefits of sustainability.

For example, a senior sustainability manager among our cohort who was employed at a company facing accusations of human rights violations focused more on improving the sustainability report and how she could communicate the idea that "CSR makes sense for business". Though sustainability managers in the early stages of their careers are committed to radical change, their voices are seldom heard by the management or their colleagues.

They struggle with feelings of social exclusion and meaninglessness, as their aspirations crumble. This can be emotionally draining and challenging to their identity, ultimately leading them to adopt more commercial aspirations instead. The sustainability managers find they can do little to mobilise the organisation to support their case for doing good.

Shifting to the corporate mindset

During their mid-careers, sustainability managers seemed more able to sell their social aspirations within the corporation. But their calling for social and environmental change becomes "corporatised" and a scaled-back version of their original vision. The shift to a business mindset seems important to get others in the organisation to take them seriously.

But the initial drive towards societal change begins to dissipate. One sustainability manager explained that they had been "moulded" to think with more of a business mindset.

As sustainability managers in the later stages of their careers gain more power within their organisation, they also express more pride when they talk about their achievements. These are often linked to increased ranking or branding value – for example featuring on sustainability indices or securing media coverage of the company's sustainability credentials.

Sustainability managers say their work is meaningful and in line with their purpose. But the purpose is now almost exclusively driven more by corporate benefits.

Are sustainability managers useless, then? Far from it. But our research shows how the very system that hires them to drive change often stifles their social and environmental aspirations.

As such, companies should value and respond to sustainability managers' social aspirations to ensure that they maintain the spirit, motivation, and passion for change. This, after all, is what lies at the heart of sustainability and CSR work.

If corporations want sustainability managers to drive meaningful and lasting change, they must support their calling for social impact. This includes giving them a voice and authority, for example, by including them in the executive team.

A culture of openness that welcomes critical perspectives should embrace sustainability managers challenging the status quo. Without this, the drive for greener and more equitable corporate practices risks fading away.



[READ MORE](#)

Best Practice

Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) Energy Sector Category

Winner

Arabia CSR Awards 2023

A Brief about the Organisation

Established in 1993 as a wholly owned entity of the Government of Dubai, Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) demonstrates a pioneering role in the energy sector. With a diverse portfolio encompassing Supply, Trading and Processing, Terminals, Marketing, Retail and Exploration and Production, ENOC operates in over 60 markets, significantly contributing to Dubai's economic diversification and sustainable development.

ENOC's evolution is marked by the establishment of a substantial refinery in 1999, capable of producing 120,000 barrels per day, aligning with the UAE's broader economic aspirations.

The Group's commitment to innovation and customer service is evident in its workforce of over 9,000 employees and the launch of two digital ventures in 2019 - ENOC Link and Beema, under its accelerator programme. These initiatives demonstrate ENOC's dedication to deploying the latest technologies and best practices for social and economic progress.

Comprising over 30 related subsidiaries, ENOC leads in refining and lubricant blending and also excels in storage, aviation and retail sectors, reinforcing its status as a key player in the global oil and gas industry. This integrated approach underlines ENOC's strategic role in supporting the UAE's sustainable development goals.

Lessons Learnt and Conclusion

1. Efficiency in resource management: ENOC's implementation of its Energy & Resource Management programme showcases the significant potential of efficient resource management in reducing environmental impact while yielding economic benefits.
2. Employee-driven innovation for sustainability: The success of ENOC's Employee Suggestion Scheme illustrates the impact of leveraging employee insights for sustainability initiatives. This approach helps foster a culture of innovation and also translates employee ideas into tangible environmental and economic improvements, as evidenced by ENOC's dashboard showcasing the financial gains from these suggestions.
3. Renewable energy transition as a strategic focus: ENOC's strategic shift towards utilising renewable energy sources demonstrates the importance of transitioning from traditional energy models. This focus aligns with global sustainability trends and reduces reliance on fossil fuels, a crucial step for energy companies in the contemporary environmental context.
4. Innovative approaches to energy management: ENOC's application of innovative energy efficiency measures exemplifies the role of innovation in enhancing sustainability.

Their approach indicates the potential for innovative strategies to impact both the bottom line and environmental footprint.

5. Continuous monitoring: ENOC's practice of monitoring its CSR initiatives through relevant KPIs and SROI studies highlights the importance of regular assessment in CSR. ENOC could further enhance this aspect by openly sharing these evaluations, fostering greater transparency and stakeholder trust.

Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC) stands as a testament to the efficacy of integrating sustainability into the core of corporate strategy. The company's success in implementing its comprehensive Energy & Resource Management (E&RM) programme underscores the harmonious balance it has achieved between environmental stewardship and economic viability.

Over the years, ENOC's sustainability efforts have resulted in significant reductions in resource consumption and a notable decrease in environmental impact, aligning with global sustainability goals and the UAE's vision for sustainable development.

ENOC's dedication to renewable energy initiatives exemplifies a proactive approach to the energy transition, reducing reliance on traditional energy sources and championing cleaner, more sustainable alternatives.

The innovative Employee Suggestion Scheme at ENOC further reinforces the company's commitment to continuous improvement and employee engagement, resulting in operational enhancements that benefit both the company and the broader community.

These initiatives are not just operational strategies; they represent a cultural shift within ENOC towards greater responsibility, innovation and sustainability. This shift has positioned ENOC as a leader in sustainable practices within the energy sector in the UAE and the region, setting benchmarks for others to follow. ENOC's journey showcases that sustainability is a moral and environmental imperative as well as a viable and profitable business strategy.

The company's ability to intertwine economic goals with environmental and social objectives serve as a blueprint for other organisations aspiring to achieve sustainability in a holistic and integrated manner.

