



How Can Social Innovation Improve Waste Management?

Plastic pollution has been a serious problem for countries all over the world for many years now. A difficult situation has only become worse in recent months, with [the pandemic affecting waste generation in 2020](#) through the proliferation – and improper disposal – of the single-use face masks, gloves and gowns designed to curb its spread.

This is very much a global issue – but addressing it may require local solutions. The UAE is certainly not exempt from the plague of plastic waste, with 9.8 million tonnes of the stuff found in the emirate of Abu Dhabi alone last year. As such, any incentives which are aimed at clearing up the unsightly issue are to be welcomed with open arms.

Spreading awareness

The first stage of overcoming any problem is understanding it. For that reason, the UAE have been hosting a series of 'Join the Conversation' talks through its Ma'an programme, which not only seeks to educate the general populace on the most pressing issues facing the country, but also to hear their opinions on how best they can be overcome.

Last month, the Authority of Social Contribution teamed up with Ma'an and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (EAD) to hold one such discussion, which focused on how Emirati citizens can protect the environment. Among other topics up for debate were ways of minimising consumption of single-use plastics and the waste generated from PPE.

Aside from addressing pollution generated by the pandemic response, the panel also looked at how best they might encourage sustainable ecotourism in the future. Abu Dhabi has become a hub for tourists from all over the world, so positioning it as a green leader and boosting its environmental credentials can only support both the economy and public health in the long run.

Enabling entrepreneurs and visionaries

Ma'an is a particularly powerful tool in the fight against waste management, since it not only listens to the local community, but also empowers them to bring solutions to



the table. The Ma'an Social Incubator and Accelerator (MSIA) is crucial in this respect, since it can support start-ups and entrepreneurs with the financial and logistical backing they need to take their ideas forward.

“Events like the ‘Join the Conversation’ are incredibly important as it brings key stakeholders together, providing an opportunity to listen to their expert opinions and views while also exploring ways of how social innovation can be the solution to addressing the challenges that are being faced today,” [explained Salama Al Ameemi](#), director general of Ma'an.

“We see a big opportunity for budding and aspiring social entrepreneurs to step forward and be part of the Ma'an Social Incubator so they can create innovative products or services that will help protect our beautiful nature and shape the future of Abu Dhabi. This is why I encourage social entrepreneurs who have a sustainable idea that can be turned into a product or service to register for the Social Incubator and be part of a unique experience that can make a difference.”