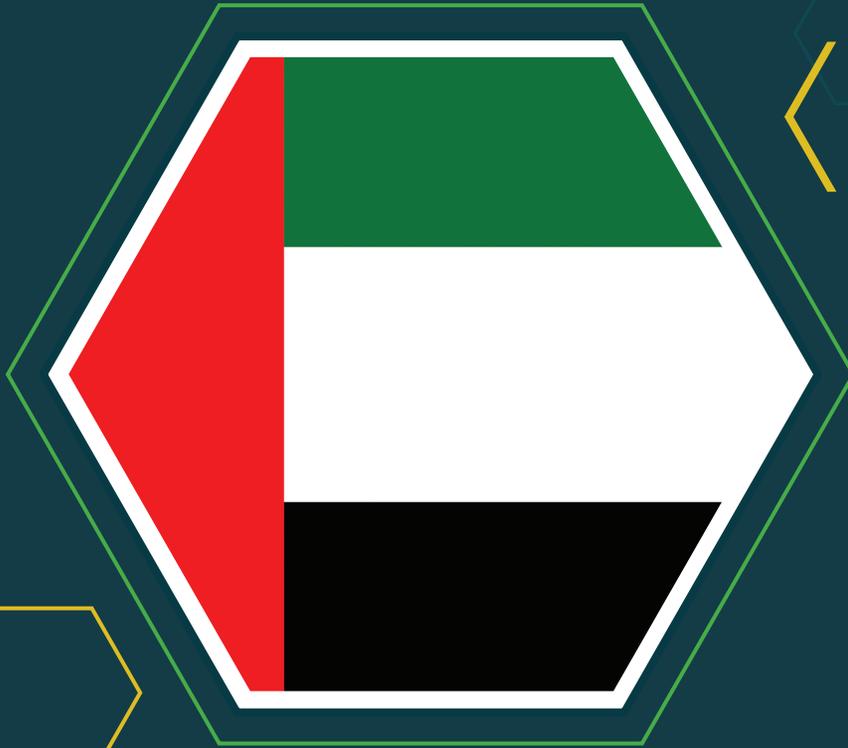


Country Youth Profile



UAE



Women and Youth Empowerment Division
Resilience and Social Development Department
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1. Socio-Economic Profile

1.1 The United Arab Emirates (called either Emirates or UAE) is an Arab country in the southeast region of the Arabian peninsula¹. The UAE is a federation of seven states established in 1971 and has an estimated population of 9,651,658 in 2019². Before the discovery of oil in the 1950s, the UAE's economy was dependent on fishing and a declining pearl industry³. The country's economy and society transformed after the start of the exportation of oil in 1962⁴. The UAE is currently one of the Middle East's most important economic hubs and one of the wealthiest countries globally on a per capita basis with a gross domestic product (GDP) of approximately \$375 billion and a real GDP growth rate of about 2.3%⁵. Real GDP is projected to rise to 2% in 2018 after a slowdown from 3% in 2016 to 0.8% in 2017 due to a revised OPEC+ deal resulting in increased production and by a boost in the non-oil sector⁶. Economic growth is forecasted to increase to 3.2% by 2020 through the unwinding of the OPEC+ agreement and the government's economic stimulus plans as well as the impetus from hosting Expo 2020⁷. The Emirates is a high-income economy⁸ and falls within the high human development category on the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) human development classification⁹. The UAE stood at 34th out of 189 countries on the UNDP 2017 Human Development Index (HDI). Its new position is eight steps higher than the 2016 standing of 42nd¹⁰. While its HDI of 0.863 is below that of countries in the very high human development category, it is above the average of 0.699 for counties in the Arab region¹¹.

1.2 The UAE categorizes youth as young people aged 15-30 years¹². The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) classifies young persons aged 15-35 years as youth. The IsDB's Youth Development Strategy has used a broad age bracket to facilitate inclusion and participation and to allow for service delivery to the maximum number of young people. To the United Nations, and the World Bank, youths are individuals aged between 15-24 years. The Commonwealth Secretariat identifies young people aged 15-29 years as youth. The Emirates is positioned 107th among 183 countries on the 2016 Global Youth Development Index (YDI)¹³. The Emirates is one of the three countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region whose YDI score improved by at least 10% since 2010¹⁴. As per the 2016 YDI, the UAE's improved scores in the Civic Participation, Education and Employment and Opportunity domains, with the proportion of youth who assisted a stranger at 68% and literacy rates above 99% in 2014¹⁵.

Table 1. Youth at Glance in the United Arab Emirates

Categories	Females%	Males %
Age of marriage	18	18
Labour force participation (ILO 2017)	33.4%	63.3%
Unemployment (ILO 2017)	13.5%	6.0%
NEET (ILO, 2017)	20.9%	6.1%
Net enrolment (UNESCO, 2017)	85.56%	89.42%
Literacy Rate (UNESCO, 2005)	97%	93.67%

1 World Population Review (2018) United Arab Emirates Country Profile, <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-arab-emirates-population/>

2 Ibid

3 BBC (2018), United Arab Emirates Country Profile, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703998>

4 Ibid

5 GEM (2018), Global Entrepreneurship Monitor: United Arab Emirates 2016/17 Annual Report, <https://www.gemconsortium.org/country-profile/130>, P.36

6 World Bank (2018), United Arab Emirates: Economic Outlook -October 2018, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/publication/uae-economic-outlook-october-2018>

7 Ibid

8 World Economic Forum (2018), WEF-GGGR 2018, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf, P.38

9 UNDP (2018), UAE Country Notes, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/ARE.pdf, P.2

10 Relief Web (2016), UNDP Human Development Report, 2016, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2016_human_development_report.pdf, P.198

11 UNDP 2018, op.cit:2

12 Al Saleh, A. (2018), Leisure Activities Among Emirati Youth, https://www.zu.ac.ae/main/en/research/publications/_documents/ZU_WP%202018_02%20AmnaAlSaleh-August-f2018.pdf, P.1

13 Commonwealth Secretariat (2018), Global Youth Development Index and Report, <http://cmydiprod.uksouth.cloudapp.azure.com/sites/default/files/2016-10/2016%20Global%20Youth%20Development%20Index%20and%20Report.pdf>

14 Ibid:50

15 Ibid:51

2. Youth in National Development: Institutional and Policy Framework

2.1. The youth sector was integrated into the UAE's development agenda at the country's founding in 1971 with the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports¹⁶. The current national mechanisms for youth development are the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MYA) and the Federal Youth Authority (FYA). The MYA is in charge of the Emirates Youth Council established in 2016 as the umbrella organization for Emirati youths. The Council has 13 young women and men members who serve as Government Advisors on Youth issues¹⁷. Its mandate includes, among others, developing a youth strategy aligned to future trends in the UAE and preparing studies on the role of youth in community development and promoting sustainable communication on them¹⁸. To ensure inclusivity of all UAE youth, Local Youth Councils were created in the seven emirates, Ministerial Councils established across all federal entities in the country, Corporate Youth Council covering both private and public sectors were formed, and the Global Youth Council of Emirati students studying abroad was also created¹⁹.

2.2 The FYA, established in April 2018, coordinates with the local youth councils to ensure that their objectives, plans, and activities are consistent with the UAE's national youth agenda²⁰. The FYA's functions are to handle the establishment and management of youth centers in the UAE, organize events and workshops, establish a database of youth councils to document their achievements and propose programs²¹. In broad terms, the national youth agenda adopted in 2016, is developed from suggestions made by youth who participated in the national youth retreat²². In summary, the Agenda seeks to empower young Emiratis to participate in the country's economic development²³.

2.3. The Youth Empowerment Strategy (YES) was developed in 2015 to enable the GoAE to work with young people to deliver Vision 2021²⁴. The YES aims to:

- Strengthen cooperation, collaboration, and communication among all youth development stakeholders;
- Monitor youth empowerment progress using key performance indicators and accountability measures; and
- Provide an integrated and common vision and framework for young Emiratis based on opportunities needs and priorities²⁵

A national Youth Development and Wellbeing Index survey²⁶, designed to provide baseline data on the state of youth wellbeing (15-35) and factors impacting and affecting youth development, was launched in 2017²⁷. The Emirates Foundation leads the initiative in collaboration with the Emirates Youth Council, Dubai Economy, and the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority²⁸. Based on a composite index of 14 social, economic and political indicators benchmarked globally, the index measures youth needs in the key areas of education, health, safety and security, values and traditions, consumption habits, employment, leisure, decision-making, and community engagement²⁹. Furthermore, the youth sector is a member of the UAE's national SDG Committee to ensure policy coherence for youth affairs³⁰.

2.4. The marriage age for both girls and boys is 18 years, and the adoption of this policy has drastically reduced child marriages in the UAE. The percentage of girls married before 18 years in the UAE between 1975 and 1995 decreased from 57% to 8%³¹.

16 Revolvly (ND), General Authority of Youth and Sports Welfare, <https://www.revolvly.com/page/General-Authority-of-Youth-and-Sports-Welfare>

17 GoAE (2018a), Youth Portal, <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/government-of-future/youth>

18 Ibid

19 Ibid

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

22 Arabian Business (2016), UAE Launches New Agenda to Empower Youth in Business and Society, <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/uae-launches-new-agenda-empower-youth-in-business-society-647887.html>

23 Ibid

24 GoAE 2018a, op.cit

25 op.cit

26 The Survey sample will include 6, 600 individuals aged 15-35 year. Gulf News (2018b), Major Youth Development Survey Launched Across the UAE <https://gulfnews.com/going-out/society/major-youth-development-survey-launched-across-the-uae-1.2000792>

27 Gulf News (2018b), UAE Government Survey Launched to Help UAE Chart Better Policies for Youth, <https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/survey-launched-to-help-uae-chart-better-policies-for-youth-1.2000683>

28 Ibid

29 Ibid

30 GoAE (2018b), United Arab Emirates and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Executive Summary P.7

31 Gulf News (2013), A Nine-Year-Old is a Child, Not a Bride and Needs to Be in School, <https://gulfnews.com/opinion/op-eds/a-nine-year-old-is-a-child-not-a-bride-and-needs-to-be-in-school-1.1030345>

3. Education

3.1. Article 17 of the Constitution and Article 1 of Federal Law No.11 of 1972 stipulate that education is compulsory and free of charge at all stages for Emiratis from age 6 to completion of grade 12 (or age 18) in the public-school system³². Furthermore, the education of its citizenry is included as a top priority in the UAE's Vision 2021, and the Ministry of Education has adopted strategies for qualitative improvement in the sector in the Strategic Plan 2017-2021³³. These include raising the upper-secondary school graduation rate from 96.7% in 2016 to 98% by 2021 and improving the UAE's ranking on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) study to score among the top 20 countries³⁴. The National Higher Education Strategy 2030 seeks to strengthen accreditation standards, increase research output, establish a qualifications framework, and develop curricula more geared to employment in consultation with the business sector³⁵.

3.2. Female education is part and parcel of the UAE's beliefs, as the founding father advocated for it as part of the country's development ideology³⁶. The country's primary school net enrollment in 2016 was 93.6% and 95.56% for girls and boys respectively³⁷. At the secondary school level, the net enrollment rate for the same period was 85.56% for girls and 89.4% for boys³⁸. Overall, there were more female tertiary level graduates in 2018 than male at 15.8% and 8.9% respectively³⁹. In terms of their course of study, there were more female graduates in the arts and humanities, education, health and welfare, natural sciences, services, and social science and journalism⁴⁰. Male graduates studied agriculture, business administration and law, engineering and information and communication technologies⁴¹.

3.2. Skills-Based Training

3.2.1. The technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sub-sector has gained traction in the UAE's national education discourse as part of the GoAE's effort to develop a sustainable and diversified knowledge-based economy. As a result, several institutions have been established to achieve this goal. The federal Vocational and Training Awards Council (VETAC) was created as part of the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) in 2010⁴². The NQA is responsible for building a comprehensive industry focused TVET system and providing quality control to TVET providers⁴³. VETAC's task is to vet and approve vocational qualifications based on occupational skills standards benchmarking framework⁴⁴. In 2014, VETAC's authorized the Abu Dhabi Center for TVET (ACTVET) to develop and award credentials in Abu Dhabi and the northern emirates, and approved Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) to do the same in Dubai⁴⁵.

3.2.2 Despite the flurry of activities in the sub-sector, gender-equality issues have been ignored. There is a difference in the options available to men and women in TVET colleges. For instance, the Dubai Men's College (DWC) health service degree includes emergency service, while offerings in the Dubai Women's College (DWC) program was limited to medical imaging and pharmacy⁴⁶. Also, DMC offers a range of engineering courses in airframe, aero engines and avionics, and civil, electrical and mechanical degrees to the DWC's range of courses in education preparing students to work in kindergartens and primary schools⁴⁷. In 2011/12 school year, 90% of the 1,655 male graduates were employed compared to 51% of the 2,801 females⁴⁸. Also, out of the 5,370 TVET graduates across the UAE in the 2012/13 academic year, of which 3,314 and 2,056 were women and men respectively, it was reported that more men got job placement than women⁴⁹.

32 GoAE (2018c), Women, <https://www.government.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/women>

33 WENR (2018), Education in the United Arab Emirates, <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/08/education-in-the-united-arab-emirates>

34 Ibid

35 Ibid

36 GoAE (NDa), Sheikh Zayed Bin-Sultan Al Nahyan, Founder of the UAE, <https://www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/history/sheikh-zayed-bin-sultan-al-nahyan-founder-uae>

37 WEF-GGGR (2018), UAE Country Data, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=ARE>

38 Ibid

39 Ibid

40 Ibid

41 Ibid

42 WENR 2018, op.cit

43 Ibid

44 Ibid

45 Ibid

46 Oxford Business Group (2015), Dubai Encouraging Vocational Training and Practical Skills Education, <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/analysis/practical-skills-ongoing-push-encourage-vocational-training>

47 Ibid

48 Ibid

49 Ibid

3.3 Inclusive Education

3.3.1 The UAE signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol in 2006⁵⁰, and Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 was adopted⁵¹. Article 12 of the Law states that people with special needs or people of determination as they are called in the UAE are guaranteed equal opportunities across all levels of the education system in regular classes or special classes with the availability of curriculum in sign language, Braille or any other methods as appropriate⁵². The Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education (MoE) is the implementing agency for the GoAE programs. It was established in 2008 to promote the rights of people of determination to ensure that they have access to the same opportunities as students in the regular system⁵³.

3.3.2. Furthermore, the Ministry of Community Development launched an initiative to integrate people of determination in the government's education system. The MoE adopted the initiative launched under the slogan "School for All"⁵⁴. The initiative was a major development in the social integration of the disabled and their involvement in the development process⁵⁵. The National Project for the Inclusion of People with Special Needs was launched in 2008 under the slogan "Our Life is in Our Integration"⁵⁶. The project's focus is on providing the necessary environment and facilities for people of determination to facilitate their practical access to the educational system⁵⁷.

3.3.3. The MoE offers several training programs and facilities for children of determination, their parents and teachers. The program includes guidance for managing people with visual and hearing impairments, talent identification, familiarization with sign language for the deaf and handling speech disorders for kindergarten children⁵⁸. Additionally, the MoE has support centers that follow up and evaluate the progress of people of determination before and after school integration⁵⁹. They provide several services including individual diagnosis of students, recommendations, assisting and supporting parents in managing their children's situation and directing them to sources with appropriate services⁶⁰.

3.3.4 The Abdul Aziz Al Ghurair Refugee Educational Fund launched a Dh 100 million initiative in September 2018 to provide education support to 6,500 Palestinian and Syrian refugee children in Jordan, Lebanon, and the UAE⁶¹. The fund will be disbursed in three tranches, the first installment of Dh 65 million was disbursed in 2018. The program is designed to assist children in higher secondary, vocational training and university⁶². The Fund will work with the Emirates Red Crescent, UNICEF and UNHCR to support out of -school refugee children in the UAE⁶³.

4. Economic Empowerment

4.1 Employment and Unemployment

4.1. The UAE's youth unemployment rate of 7.7% in 2017, almost quadrupled the adult unemployment rate of 2.5%. The female youth unemployment stood at 13.5% against male 6.0%. These figures are higher than the 2016 rates of 9.5% and 5.1% for women and men respectively⁶⁴. The share of female youth that was not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2017 of 20.1% almost quadrupled that of men at 6.1%.

50 GoAE (2018d), Education for People of Determination, <https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/education/education-for-people-with-special-needs>

51 Ibid

52 Ibid

53 Ibid

54 Ibid

55 Ibid

56 Ibid

57 Ibid

58 Ibid

59 Ibid

60 Ibid

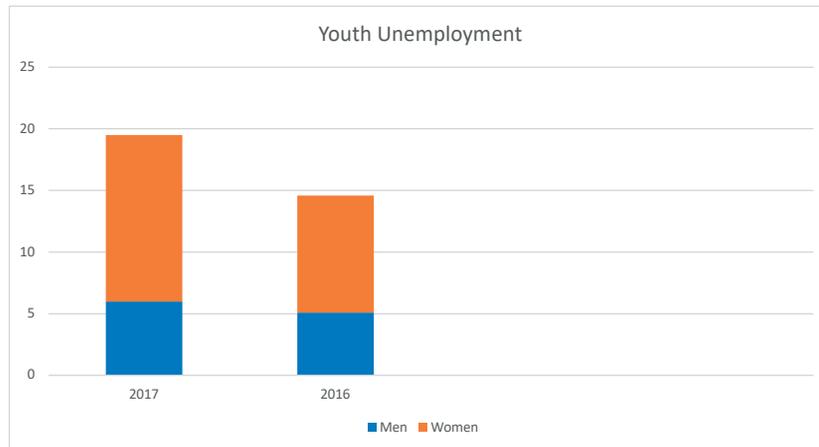
61 Gulf News (2008), Al Ghurair Refugee Education Fund to Spend DH 45 million in Phase One, <https://gulfnews.com/going-out/society/al-ghurair-refugee-education-fund-to-spend-dh45-million-in-phase-one-1.2279549>

62 Ibid

63 Ibid

64 ILO (2018), United Arab Emirates: Country Data, https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?_adf.ctrl-state=tpuynk3yo_4&_afLoop=1079053304321650&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=null#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3D-null%26_afLoop%3D1079053304321650%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D1dupcagg7i_4

Figure 1: Trends in Youth Unemployment 2016 and 2017 in the United Arab Emirates



Source: ILOSTAT, 2017

4.1.1 The GoAE supports youth entrepreneurship development through the Khalifa Fund, the Mohammed Bin Rashid Award for Young Business Leaders, Dubai Small and Medium Enterprises (SME), and Young Entrepreneurs Competition.

•Khalifa Fund for Entrepreneurship Development

The Khalifa Fund for Entrepreneurship Development (KFED) spreads freelance culture, encourages innovation and sets up SMEs across the UAE to contribute to the social and economic development of the country. To this end, the KFED launched a variety of initiatives and events including over 800 awareness campaigns that cater to university and school students and targeted segments of the society⁶⁵.

•Emirates Foundation

The Emirates Foundation is an independent national organization set up by the Abu Dhabi Government to facilitate public-private funded initiatives for the empowerment of youth across the UAE, putting them at the forefront of economic, social and human capital development. The Foundation’s priorities are to:

- a. Develop youth competencies through empowerment and raising awareness,
- b. Encourage social responsibility within the private and public sectors, and
- c. Provide all administrative services according to standards of quality, effectiveness, transparency, and innovation.

Its programs include Takalof, Sanid, Think Science, Esrefsah, Kafa’at, and Dawamee⁶⁶.

•Dubai SME

Established in 2002, Dubai SME was created as an integrated division of the Department of Economic Development. It provides resource for support, information, and outreach for the growing SME sector. Dubai SME aims to support entrepreneurs in all phases of their development. One of its major goals is to promote innovation and leadership across all segments of the SME⁶⁷.

•The Mohammad Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders

The Mohammad Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders (MBREYBL), established in 2002, provides the following services to both female and male Emirati entrepreneurs:

- Free trade license for three years;
- Business center with office space to 60 entrepreneurs together with secretarial and telecommunication service;
- Advisory services;

65 KFED (2018), Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development, <https://www.khalifafund.ae/EntrepreneurshipAwareness>
 66 Emirates Foundation (2018), Vision and Mission, <https://www.emiratesfoundation.ae/ef/about-ef/vision-mission/>
 67 Dubai SME (2018), History, <http://www.sme.ae/English/aboutus/Pages/default.aspx>

- Special mentoring arrangements;
- In-house training, workshops, and business forums, and;
- Access to resources, contacts, and networks.

It also facilitates access to capital on preferential terms, through a fund which is administered through local banks. Enterprises registered with the MBREYBL are eligible to participate in bidding under the compulsory purchase program for 5% of the budgets of all local government and semi-government bodies in Dubai. Moreover, 20 of its office spaces in the business center (33%) are earmarked for female-owned enterprises⁶⁸.

- Dubai Women's Establishment

The organization, founded in 2006, aims to help Emirati women balance their careers with a satisfying family life through the endorsement of appropriate gender equality policies and initiatives, providing long-life opportunities for training and work, and promoting greater participation of women in the economic and political spheres. The ultimate goal and responsibility of the establishment are to nurture a competent generation of future Emirati women leaders by establishing the right infrastructure and platform to ensure and sustain their success and potential⁶⁹.

4.2 Ecosystem and Entrepreneurship

4.2.1 The entrepreneurial and startup environment in the UAE is booming with different types of entrepreneurial startups, mainly concentrated in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

- The Catalyst Abu Dhabi- is the Gulf Cooperation Council's first sustainability-focused startup accelerator. It was launched in 2018 by Abu Dhabi's renewable energy company, Masdar, and the international oil and gas company, BP at Masdar City Free-zone in Abu Dhabi. It prioritizes businesses at the commercialization stage, offering expenditures, training, mentoring and office space. The initiative is also collaborating with the Masdar Institute, part of the Khalifa University of Science and Technology. Successful applicants will be those developing innovative products and solutions that are potentially patentable, with priority given to UAE-based startups. The catalyst runs in two cycles per year, split into two phases⁷⁰.

- Flat6Labs, Abu Dhabi- is a global hub for digital innovation that will support a generation of entrepreneurs from the UAE and abroad to launch digital businesses in Abu Dhabi and scale to regional and global markets. Supported by twofour54, Flat6Labs Abu Dhabi will support startups at the idea, early, and growth phases with a focus on media and digital content, including media and film production, e-commerce, social media, online education, gaming, mobile apps, and big data and analytics⁷¹.

- AstroLabs, Dubai- is the only Google-partnered Tech Hub in the MENA region, serving as a launch pad for the highest potential tech startups. The space features a Google-supported mobile device development lab, a training facility, meeting rooms, among others. Through a partnership with the Government of Dubai's Dubai Multi Commodity Center (DMCC), startups at AstroLabs Dubai will be able to obtain a free-zone company license with no upfront costs⁷².

- In5, Dubai- They call themselves an enabling platform for entrepreneurs and start-ups. Its creative space, coupled with training programs and community-wide networking events, makes it the first choice of many entrepreneurs in Dubai⁷³.

- Other startups include Dubai Technology Entrepreneur Center (DTech), Dubai Future Accelerators, Impact Hub, Dubai SME, Turn 8, Seed Startup and Silicon Oasis Founders, among others.

68 Shahnawaz, M.R. (2016), Preliminary Investigation of Emirati Women Entrepreneurship in the UAE: Motivating Factors, Challenges, and Government Initiatives, <http://www.ijstr.org/final-print/aug2015/Preliminary-Investigation-Of-Emirati-Women-Entrepreneurship-In-The-Uae-Motivating-Factors-Challenges-And-Government-Initiatives.pdf>, P. 58

69 Ibid:58

70 The National (2018), The Regions First Sustainability-Focused Startup Accelerator in Abu Dhabi, <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/region-s-first-sustainability-focused-startup-accelerator-launched-in-abu-dhabi-1.69718>

71 Gulf Times (2018c), Entrepreneurship Guide to the Accelerators-Incubators Every Startup Should Know About, <http://gulfelitemag.com/uae-entrepreneurship-guide-the-accelerators-incubators-every-startup-should-know-about/>

72 Ibid

73 Dubai Chambers (2018), A Guide to Incubator, Accelerators and Co-Working Spaces in Dubai That Can Help You Grow Your Startups, <http://www.dubaichamber.com/dubaistartuphub/guide-incubators-accelerators-co-working-spaces-dubai-can-help-grow-startup/>

Women-Focused Initiatives

- e7 Daughters of the Emirates, a leadership program is making it easy for a growing community of aspiring women entrepreneurs and leaders aged 18 to 25 years in the UAE to solve social, environmental, cultural or economic problems. The program stems out of Promise of a Generation (POAG), a UAE-based community forum of over 1,000 women achievers, which established itself as an open-majlis (gathering or councils). Both e7 and POAG are volunteer-led and run organizations⁷⁴.

- Facebook-launched#SheMeansBusiness# to train and support women entrepreneurs in establishing their online footprints. With the support of the Emirates Foundation and Sheera Sharjah, Facebook is projected to train 10,000 women entrepreneurs in one year to leverage their knowledge and skills towards new business avenues⁷⁵.

- Khalifa Entrepreneurship Development Fund- as of April 2018, women entrepreneurs accounted for 35% projects funded by the KEDF. Through its various programs, women can apply for funding depending on their needs. The Fund is subdivided into three programs:

Khufawa Program- up to AED 250, 000

Bedaya Program-up to AED 3,000,000

Zeyada Program-up to AED 5,000, 000⁷⁶.

- Dubai SME and Womena jointly launched the 'Future Founders and Future Funders' program that aims to draw on venture capital as an enabler of entrepreneurship among Emirati women. Dubai SME's partnership with Womena enables women entrepreneurs, and investors deploy their resources on successful and sustainable initiatives. The program targets university level Emirati women who are at the start of their careers to develop a strong pipeline of investors and entrepreneurs⁷⁷.

5. Youth Civic Engagement and Participation

5.1 As mentioned in Section 2.1, the UAE's recorded significant improvement on the civic engagement domain. It was noted that 68% of Emirati youth assisted a stranger in the period leading to 2016 YDI. In contrast, the country's score on the political participation domain was a dismal 178th among 183 countries⁷⁸. It must be noted that the YDI was published before the GoAE's restructuring of the government and the youth sector in 2016. Since the restructuring, the state has established several initiatives to ensure the participation of young Emiratis in the civic and public policy arenas. For instance, the average age of members of the cabinet in 2016 was 38 years, with the youngest being 22 years⁷⁹. Also, the youngest member of the Federal National Council (FNC) (the FNC is the UAE's highest political authority) was 33 years old over the same period⁸⁰.

5.2 In addition to the various initiatives to involve youths in national development, discussed in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3, the GoAE introduced the Youth Circles, The UAE Government Leaders Program, Youth Hub, and the National Youth Service.

- The National Youth Service

In June 2014, Federal Law No.6 on National Military Service and Reserve Force was passed. The law stated that all male Emiratis aged 18 to 30 years are obliged to undergo national service, which is optional for female nationals. The service length was increased from a minimum of 9 months to a year on March 7th, 2016. A new initiative whereby Emiratis aged 30 to 40 years, including females, could apply to participate in 15 weeks of voluntary service was introduced on March 15th, 2016. Individuals who participated in voluntary or compulsory service are part of the reserved forces and could be called for further training. The official position for the national service is that conscription-based military force would bring positive geopolitical, economic, and social effects and could help in

74 Forbes Magazine (2017), This UAE Leadership Program is Helping Women Entrepreneurs to Kickstart their Business Idea, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suparnadutt/2017/03/02/this-uae-leadership-program-is-helping-women-entrepreneurs-to-kickstart-their-business-idea/#769009cb5721>

75 Ibg (2018), Growing Participation of Women Entrepreneurs in the UAE, <https://ibgme.ae/blog/women-entrepreneurs-in-the-uae/>

76 Ibid

77 Khaleej Times (2017), Dubai SME and Womena to Empower Emirati Women, <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/dubai-sme-womena-to-empower-emirati-women>

78 Commonwealth 2016, op.cit:45

79 GoAE 2018a,

80 Ibid

nation building by developing a sense of national identity and patriotism, particularly in times of regional conflict⁸¹.

•Youth Circles

Youth Circles launched across the country in 2016, is one of the initiatives of the H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. The aim is to inspire youth-centric dialogue across a variety of areas for sustainable engagement to shape innovative solutions global challenges. Youth Circles enables youth to express their opinions on societal values and policy matters and to analyze community impact and leadership. Each Youth Circle seeks to answer one central question through action-oriented discussion and youth inspired recommendations⁸².

•Youth Hub

The UAE government launched the Youth Hub in 2017 as a community space where youth could meet and connect with other budding minds. The Hub caters to young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years irrespective of their professional status. The Youth Hub provides workspaces to young entrepreneurs, researchers, programmers and media professionals. It also provides volunteering opportunities, innovation lab, brainstorming sessions and a coffee shop⁸³.

• The UAE Government Leaders Program

The UAE Government Leaders Program (UAEGLP) was established in 2008 with three components-the Strategic Leadership Program, the Executive Leadership program and the Future Leaders program⁸⁴. The Youth Program was launched in 2017 in collaboration with the Emirates Youth Council to empower and prepare competent young nationals to lead the country's future across all strategic sectors. The program is organized around six themes: values and ethics, happiness and positivity, creative leadership, science and technology, development projects, and the ideal leader of the 21st century. The Youth Program is the only initiative dedicated to training young UAE nationals in leadership⁸⁵.

6. Development Partners in the Youth Sector

6.1. Due to its prosperity, the UAE has a Net Contributing Country (NCC) status, meaning it receives no international donor funds⁸⁶. However, the government works closely with development partners to align its national development priorities with the international agenda.

7. Recommendations

- i. The IsDB should work with the MoE to extend male-dominated courses to female TVET schools, and encourage their participation;
- ii. The IsDB should work with the GoAE to develop programs that would include youth who did not complete their education;
- iii. The IsDB should provide technical support to assist the GoAE to implement SDG target 8b (develop and operationalize a national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy);
- iv. The IsDB should assist the GoAE in mainstreaming youth development across all sectors of the society; and
- v. The IsDB should work with the GoAE in creating a youth fund to support youth development.

81 Lim, H.L (2018), Perceptions of Emirati Youths on National Service at the Initial Implementation Stage, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244018774827>

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