

MAKING SUSTAINABILITY A TOP PRIORITY

Qatar Foundation Winning Global Recognition for Sustainable Development Efforts within the Local Community

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Doha, Qatar - The earth abounds with natural resources that ensure the sustainability of humanity and its environment. Unfortunately, due to rapid population growth, economic expansion and the over consumption of our planet's natural resources, the perpetuation of these resources remain a growing concern. However, it is clear that the survival and well-being of each nation depends, directly or indirectly, on its individual natural environment, making sustainable living a crucial aspect of the protection of our collective global society.

One of the most urgent issues currently at the forefront of the international agenda – amid rapid global population growth, social development and economic expansion – remains climate change. This is not an abstract issue, it is apparent and has real consequences on our lives; some more than others. It is also, in some cases, disrupting national economies. However, there is increasing recognition that affordable, viable solutions exist to enable the global community to develop sustainable economies.

Since the social, economic and environmental realms are interlinked on the issue of global sustainability, Qatar has made this issue a top priority on its national agenda. Environmental Development is one of the four main pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV2030), which itself aims to manage rapid domestic expansion to ensure harmony between economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development plays an instrumental role in Qatar's sustainability efforts as it helps transform the country into a knowledge-based economy. It also endeavours to realise this vision by making sustainability an integral part of the day-to-day lives of local residents, and, by doing so, it is working towards achieving its own strategic mission of releasing human potential and promoting creativity and innovation.

Accordingly, Qatar Foundation has adopted a number of programmes designed to encourage the public to integrate sustainability into their daily lives.

“Qatar Foundation’s main objective is to educate the community about the importance of sustainability while creating a green urban environment,” says Engineer Jassim Telefat, Goup Executive Director of Qatar Foundation Capital Projects and Facilities Management.

“For this reason, Education City’s highly functional buildings, with their low consumption of environmental resources such as water and energy, have been created to help reduce the environmental impact of construction. Therefore, the campus’ unique design provides the highest possible living standards for students and employees, while conserving the environment.”

Eng. Telefat adds: “Qatar Foundation has always given priority to human development by introducing young people to sustainable development practices, engaging the student community in environmental care standards, and encouraging individuals to adopt sustainable lifestyles.”

One way in which Qatar Foundation weaves sustainable awareness into the lives of the younger generation is by making it part of their living environment through various means - from healthy living awareness activities and providing basic recycling facilities around the Education City campus in Doha - to its grander plans of making the 14km² area, a car-free zone.

Qatar’s social, economic and environmental sustainability efforts are also exemplified in the Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC). As a Qatar Foundation member, QGBC is a non-profit, membership-driven organisation that provides leadership to encourage collaboration in sustainable best practice, for green building design and development across Qatar.

“We support Qatar Foundation’s sustainability efforts by communicating and collaborating with experts at other Qatar Foundation member organisations,” said Engineer Meshal Al Shamari, Director of QGBC. “Currently, we have on-going research projects underway with Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Texas A&M University at Qatar, all based at Education City. We also provide technical support to Health, Safety, Security and Environment (HSSE) Directorate at Qatar Foundation.”

QGBC also supports the government and private sectors in Qatar, by studying the market’s sustainability needs and providing training to relevant parties, as it works to raise the levels of environmental awareness in both the corporate realm and the wider community.

A variety of initiatives and public campaigns are what QGBC utilises to achieve its goal, with the most recent being the launch of an e-survey that encourages residents to share basic, but valuable, information about their household energy and water consumption. This recent drive is a data collection exercise that will help QGBC gauge current national levels of environmental awareness in order to develop best practice guidelines for both the professional and residential sectors.

In addition to these, QGBC has developed a virtual reality education program for high school students that feature interesting facts and information about environment and the underlying sustainability woes in Qatar. QGBC will soon launch Qatar Green Directory that

aims to serve as a platform for all the green products and services available in Qatar and the region.

“Generally, sustainability is a relatively new concept for everybody worldwide, which makes incorporating environmental awareness into the mind-sets and the lifestyles of the new generation crucial to any effort, especially in a place with abundant energy like Qatar,” said Eng. Al Shamari.

Qatar Foundation is also dedicated to upholding the rights of migrant workers in Qatar. The Karama initiative, launched in 2013, was specifically created to prevent unjust employment practices. This unique initiative is set to significantly raise the standards of living for migrant workers contracted on the Foundation’s projects.

In 2013, the Karama initiative was recognised by Construction Week, a regional publication, when it granted Qatar Foundation with the ‘Initiative of the Year for Health and Safety’ award, which highlights major achievements in the global construction industry. The ceremony, which was held in Dubai, was attended by a large number of influential construction companies and authorities.

Furthermore, Qatar Foundation also promotes social sustainability through its Community Development Pillar, by encouraging healthy living among Qatar’s residents. Accordingly, the Qatar Foundation Support Services Directorate continues to organise programmes for its internal community throughout the year, including swimming, gymnastics, football and basketball classes, in addition to health circuit training and self-defence classes for ladies. For Qatar’s wider community, Qatar Foundation facilitates healthy living through various events, including its popular National Sport Day celebration.

“The Support Services Directorate contributes to Qatar Foundation’s social efforts, which fall under its sustainable development initiatives cutting across research, education and community development,” said Mohammad Al Naimi, Community Affairs Director at Qatar Foundation’s Support Services Directorate. “Therefore, throughout the year, we organise activities and programmes that benefit communal well-being. We understand how crucial sustainability is for the development of Qatar, which is why we encourage the community to take an active role in driving a healthy and harmonious social environment.”

Qatar Foundation is equally dedicated to sustainable infrastructural development. For instance, the male and female student housing complex at Education City is currently one of the only platinum LEED certified student housing complexes in the world. Having earned 12 Platinum LEED certifications in the category of ‘New Construction’ from the US Green Building Council, it is also the largest collection of platinum LEED certified buildings in one area in the world.

In addition, the complex comprises state-of-the-art sustainable technology and energy-efficient systems throughout its entirety. It also allows students to track their green footprint by monitoring their individual water and energy consumption, and is also equipped with a solar-panelled roof, and wind turbines that generate clean energy at gusts

of 10km or more. These turbines have become icons of the sustainability practices that define Qatar Foundation.

Another feature of the student complex is the special key card system that helps to save energy. When the card is removed, the lights turn off automatically and the air conditioning reverts to an average temperature in order to reduce energy consumption.

Meanwhile, just two years ago, Qatar hosted the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP18) at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), a member of Qatar Foundation. QNCC is designed to operate efficiently with innovations such as water conservation and energy-efficient fixtures. It is also approximately 32 per cent more efficient than similarly designed buildings.

QNCC's most prominent feature is the 3,500sqm of solar panels on its roof that provide 12.5 per cent of the Centre's energy needs. Additionally, the exhibition halls are equipped with energy-efficient LED lighting and various other integrative design elements currently being adapted to maintain the highest sustainable standards.

Additionally, in line with the QNV2030, Qatar Solar Technologies (QSTec), also a member of Qatar Foundation, is tasked with developing Qatar's solar industry, the development of which brings with it tremendous opportunities. As demand for solar applications and technologies continues to expand worldwide, employment, research, investment and entrepreneurship opportunities abound.

QSTec is tasked with the mission to manufacture and supply solar energy solutions in a safe and environmentally conscious manner for the interest of Qatar. It works to support initiatives that promote sustainable practices and the use of solar technologies worldwide.

In Qatar, QSTec continues to deliver education seminars and workshops in schools aimed at providing a hands-on learning experience about renewable energy and environmental sustainability practices. QSTec also provides a new industry for Qataris to participate through employment, research or entrepreneurship by providing a vigilant working environment where safety is a top priority.

Environmental protection, the conservation of natural resources, and the elimination of all adverse health and safety risks are at the core of QSTec's operations. Additionally, the plant's progressive equipment allows for the recycling and re-use of vent gases used in the production of polysilicon.

Therefore, QSTec's use of advanced technological systems enables it to achieve greater production, energy and workplace efficiency while protecting the environment, essentially continuing to contribute to the realisation of Qatar Foundation's overarching mission.

Image Caption

Image 1: Engineer Jassim Telefat, Group Executive Director of Qatar Foundation Capital Projects and Facilities Management.

Image 2: Engineer Meshal Al Shamari, Director of Qatar Green Building Council.

Image 3: Mohammad Al Naimi, Community Affairs Director at Qatar Foundation's Support Services Directorate.

Image 4: Qatar Foundation's Education City has been designed and built to uphold the highest standards of sustainability.

Image 5: Qatar National Convention Centre is Qatar's first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design)-certified building.

Image 6: Qatar Solar Technologies promotes sustainable practices and the use of solar technologies within Qatar and the world.

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Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organisation that is supporting Qatar on its journey from carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>