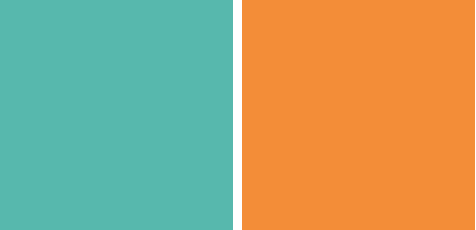# Unraveling the Potential of Social Innovation in Abu Dhabi

White Paper submitted by
Department of Community Development

Contents

Executive Summary

Abstract:

The term "social innovation" has recently grown to be synonymous with solving world problems. However, as pervasive as the term may be in 2021, it has often been misinterpreted, especially in areas where it is a nascent concept. Though innovation and entrepreneurship are terms often used in commerce or business, they can be applied in the context of social and community development. The Department of Community Development in Abu Dhabi was set up to take care of the human economy; it is one of the UAE's many organizations to take up the role of social responsibility. Social innovation is the cornerstone of not only understanding unique and complex social challenges, but also delving deeper into a field that aims to humanize the individuals' and organization's social responsibility in ensuring that all members of a community are valued. Though dynamic in nature, social innovators globally observe systematic ways (via tools and methodologies) to identify innovative solutions through the coupling of science (namely the social sciences), technology, and even policy to achieve impactful, sustainable objectives of solving real-world challenges. This white paper aims to clarify what social innovation entails as a globally rising tool to combat social challenges. Additionally, it seeks to explore the rationale behind the establishment of the social innovation division in Abu Dhabi's Department of Community Development. By expounding on the main building blocks of social innovation, providing case studies, and elaborating on essential tools used, the reader can then use the learning outcomes to maximize their projects' societal impact.

Foreword

We need to find new answers to the economic, social, and ecological questions of the present. The great challenges and disparities in the development processes at global, national, and regional levels require new strategies and instruments. It is not technological nor business innovations that will decide our future. Everything we need to prevent global climate change, to successfully fight poverty, and to bring about social justice has already been invented and is known. From an economic, social, and environmental perspective, social innovations are new products, services, processes, and collaborations that help solve social and environmental problems. They are social in their means and ends.

Social innovations aim to change the social context, empower civil society actors, and strengthen their capacity to act. The concept of social innovation enables the development of new relationships and forms of cooperation between public authorities, universities, private and third sector organizations. Social innovation is the mechanism that can change the world.

NorbertKunz,

CEO of the Social Impact GmbH
Berlin, Germany

Introduction

The United Arab Emirates witnessed incredible development since the discovery of oil in the 1960s. Though the country unionized relatively recently in 1971, it has witnessed an exponential rate of growth since transforming it from a penurious desert region to a modern state. The UAE is considered one of the fastest developing countries, witnessing tremendous development culturally, environmentally, and economically. With that infrastructural and industrialization growth came novel social strains and gaps that local communities grappled with. Cognizant of these changes, the UAE's leadership has tailored efforts to focus on innovation within the public, private, and third sectors to address these gaps and meet social needs in more effective ways.

The Government of Abu Dhabi has prioritized the social welfare of its citizens and residents. In 2018, the Department of Community Development (DCD) was established to develop and regulate Abu Dhabi's social sector. With a vision to achieve a dignified life for all residents of the capital, the entity seeks to promote a society and economy that responds to the city's diverse local community's requirements through the involvement of agencies both local and international. The DCD focused on pioneering in social policy and services to address institutional gaps that render specific segments of the UAE disadvantaged. All-embracing, the DCD aims to create sustainable systemic change to achieve social inclusion and equity especially for vulnerable groups and has worked closely with relevant stakeholders to develop overarching strategies such as the People of Determination (PoD), Substance Abuse (SUD), and Victims of Abuse (VoA) strategies. Abu Dhabi government established entities, such as the Zayed Higher Organization (ZHO) to focus on the needs of PoDs and the Family Development Foundation (FDF), with specific focus family cohesion and addressing familial needs, play pivotal roles in delivering and enacting these policies and services. This allows DCD's linchpin to remain as a regulator, ensuring a dignified life for all by using evidence-based approaches to increase levels of well-being and happiness of Abu Dhabi residents.

As the UAE continues to evolve, the ubiquity of globalization and changes to the social, cultural, and economic foundation will yield increasingly complex and interrelated social issues. Social innovation, which refers to new solutions that meet social needs in ways more effective than existing solutions, addresses such challenges. Combining existing innovation strategies, such as business innovation and technological innovation, with social innovation will ensure that social impact is put at the forefront and that citizens and residents have access to an enhanced quality of life. It is expected that social innovation will continue to gain prominence in the UAE, in line with benchmark countries, to advance social welfare and strengthen civil society.

Section 1

What is social innovation?
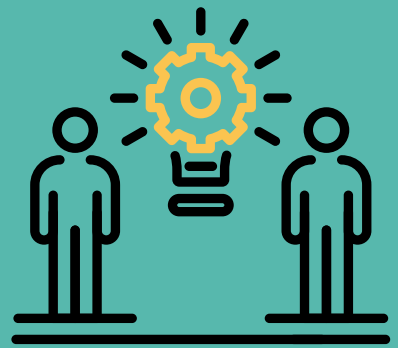
Main Concepts and Understandings of Social Innovation

What is Social Innovation?

Social innovation is a novel social practice to address social needs using improved methods that differ from pre-existing ones. These methods include creative ways of solving problems, thus improving the lives of people. It is used to better various areas of civil life including education systems, working conditions, community infrastructures, and health systems. The goal of social innovation is to strengthen and empower civil society.

Urbanization, globalization, digital revolution, and population growth have led to a series of changes to the social and economic fabric of society which tremendously impacted the modern way of life. These global trends have also led to several negative consequences such as widening inequities and social exclusion. This phenomenon has prompted individuals, organizations, and governments to focus on and address gaps where the needs of certain segments of the population are not being met. Typically, business innovation is considered the main vehicle to fill these institutional voids. However, it is limited in managing highly complex and interrelated social problems and is primarily focused on profit maximization.

On the other hand, social innovation is gaining recognition globally as a more effective tool to identify, understand, and address complex social challenges to improve the social welfare and the quality of life of different segments of society. Unlike other fields, social innovation as a concept and practice is relatively understudied, which poses a challenge to its adoption in practice and ensuring buy-in. Definitions of social innovation are various, but they all allude to one overlying condition, which is that social innovation is primarily driven by improving the quality and quantity of life (Pol & Ville, 2009).

Why is Social Innovation Unique to Other Types of Innovation?

Innovation, simply put, is a new idea. It comes in many forms including but not limited to technological, artistic, social, and organizational. While some means of innovation cater to providing products and services unavailable in existing markets with profit-making intentions, social innovation focuses on products that prioritize improving human conditions.

It can be said that all innovation is social because it arises from unmet social needs or demands, however, what makes social innovation particularly distinct, and more so, necessary, is that it utilizes innovation tools, such as design thinking and bricolage, to address "wicked problems." Wicked problems are socioeconomic and cultural issues that are complex due to interrelated factors that cannot be addressed in isolation. Some of the reasons why wicked problems are so challenging to solve include the number and variety of people and opinions affected, incomplete or contradictory information, lack of resources available, and interconnectedness with other related problems (Kolko, 2012). Given this, there is a growing consensus among practitioners, policymakers, and the research community that traditional methods of innovations are not sufficient to solve such challenges. Sustainable innovation requires thinking beyond conventional methods (Hautamäki, 2016). Recently, there has been a movement away from traditional means of charity that require monetary donations towards setting up empowering infrastructures (Snell, 2014). This transitions from managing problems to solving them. For example,

instead of merely donating money to organizations for beneficiaries to afford certain necessities, the organization would hold workshops on employability and money management skills. This way they are self-sufficient actors of the economy and are equipped to sustain themselves. Social innovation stems from improving the quality of life of individuals in a way that is highly human-centered; it places the individual at the center of the solution while leveraging their experiences and direct and hidden resources. Therefore, it is essential for social organizations and enterprises to connect, empower, and involve target beneficiaries from the community directly in the delivery of innovative solutions. By doing so, social innovation plays an important role in enabling individuals and groups to develop their skills, knowledge, and ability to tackle challenges collectively.

Unlike business innovation that focuses on introducing new products and services to exploit gaps in the market to maximize profit, social innovation prioritizes alleviating wicked social, economic, political, and environmental challenges, for their own sake, even if there were no profit-making opportunities. However, it is important to note that there can be a productive synergy between social innovation and business innovation. Social enterprises, which are for-profit businesses with social objectives that serve their primary purpose and core business, are

more likely to be sustainable in the long run due to their business models and have more impact on social development in the medium and long run. Accordingly, the way social innovation is financed matters greatly in ensuring long-term sustainability and impact. It is preferable for an individual or organization to have a hybrid business model that balances out the dependency on public, private (e.g. CSR), and third sector funding (e.g. NGOs) with profit-making opportunities to sustain operational expenses.

Abu Dhabi's social sector is developing and growing through the activation of social enterprises, social innovation hubs, organizations, and accelerators. Ma'an (a social incubator, and accelerator in Abu Dhabi) was formed by DCD in 2019 to strengthen ties between the public and private sectors. It aims to deliver solutions for social challenges, and particularly wicked challenges through several pillars: a social investment fund, social incubator program, social volunteering scheme, and social impact bonds. Alongside the creation of Ma'an, DCD has set up its own social innovation sector to further strengthen Abu Dhabi's social infrastructure by steering the social innovation agenda.
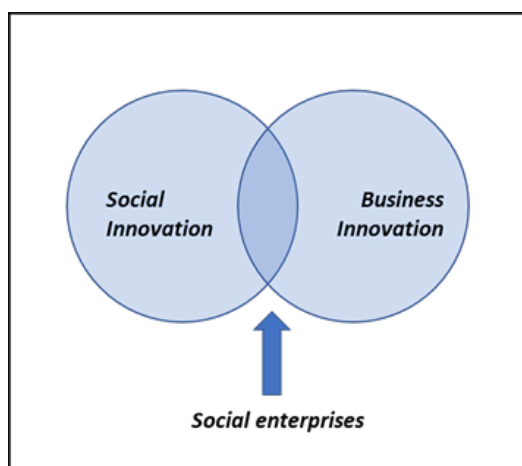

Figure 1. Intersection between social innovation and business innovation

Research and Social Innovation Trends

The question then is, if social innovation claims to achieve such feats, why is its traction in the public, private, and third sector delayed? Two of the main possible reasons include that firstly, there is not enough promotion to raise awareness and combine an understanding of social innovation. Secondly, the field of social innovation is still quite nascent, especially so in the MENA region.

Recent international trends indicate that the pace of social innovation is accelerating, with more resources flowing into social organizations (Mulgan, 2006). This is paired with increasing awareness and promotion of social innovation through efforts by organizations such as the EU, OECD, and the World Bank that are driving social innovation efforts worldwide. The EU's project, SI-DRIVE "Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change," for example, which has 25 international partners across all five continents, has played a significant role in grounding a clearer understanding of social innovation efforts by analyzing more than 1,000 social innovation initiatives. The resulting analysis provides invaluable insights into the impact of social innovation, its variability, as well as its relevance to policies and decision-making.
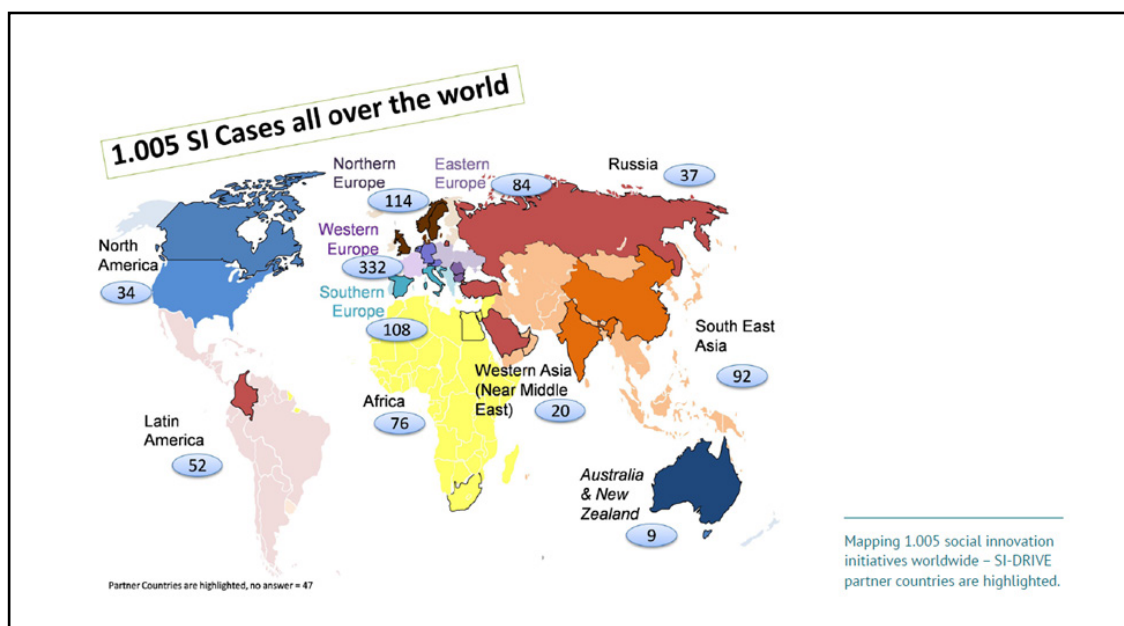

Figure 2. From "Social Innovation on the Rise: Results of the First Global Mapping," by J. Howaldt, C. Kaletka, and A. Schröder, 2018, in Atlas of Social Innovation: New Practices for a Better Future. Copyright 2018 by SI-Drive. Reprinted with permission.

Social Innovation in the UAE and MENA Region Compared to Global Benchmarks

Current changes in the political, social, and economic stability of the MENA region have led to a push towards innovation, and in particular social innovation, to alleviate socio-economic challenges such as unemployment, immigration, and poverty, in addition to improving the quality of life of those who are disadvantaged. However, social innovation is still a nascent field in the MENA region, as evidenced by the SI-DRIVEs map of social innovation initiatives, where the MENA region has far fewer SI-DRIVE social innovation initiatives compared to other regions (see Figure 3).
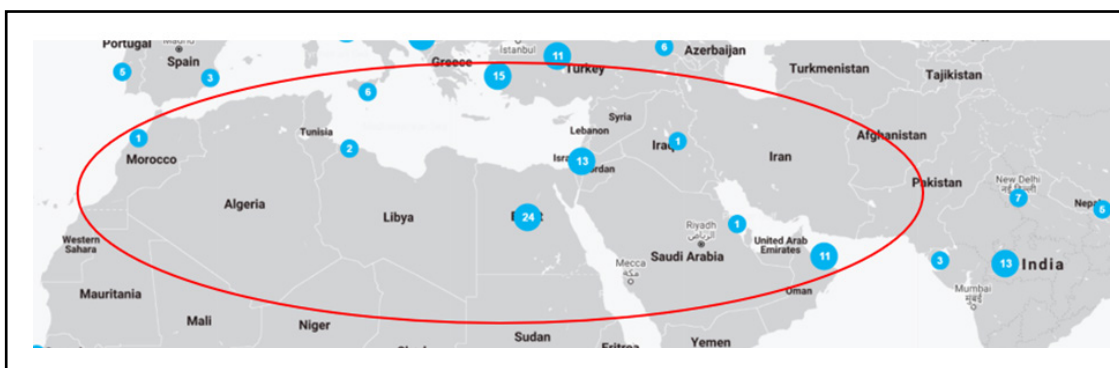

Figure 3. From "Atlas of Social Innovation: World Map," by Atlas of Social Innovation, 2020 (https://www.socialinnovationatlas.net/map/). Copyright 2020 by Atlas of Social Innovation. Reprinted with permission.

Arab states are primarily focused on achieving sustainable development goals to develop greater resilience. The combination of such efforts and social innovation practices can help expedite this process and ensure national prosperity. Furthermore, people's experiences, whether positive or negative, are invaluable to the social innovation process. They are essential hidden resources that can be used to address the most prevalent wicked problems, such as unemployment, gender inequality, and lack of education. According to an EU analysis of social innovation in the MENA region, "empowerment" and "knowledge development" are two of the most common themes for sustainable development and social innovation. The analysis highlights that social innovation can be an effective tool that may solve social challenges and achieve greater socio-economic development, but is hindered by several common barriers (Wageih, Attia, & Zoheiry, 2017).

Several of the main impediments to driving social innovation efforts in the MENA region include lack of funding, resistance, political opposition or corruption, rigid regulatory frameworks, and lack of skilled human capital. Furthermore, there is a lack of governmental support to drive social innovation efforts, limiting the impact of social innovation activities. Moving forward requires extensive effort in establishing a robust ecosystem of local and international stakeholders that may support the access to knowledge and resources (Schreiner & Junge, 2018).

Governments are vital stakeholders in the progression of social innovation in the MENA region, by facilitating access to resources, networks, and human capital. Leadership in the United Arab Emirates and Abu Dhabi have a strong and focused vision and mission and are very proactive in adopting new technologies and innovations to accelerate the nation's growth. While social innovation in the United Arab Emirates is a niche field, the government's efforts portray that they are steered towards tapping into its potential to address prevalent social issues. Unlike the impediments mentioned earlier, the sentiments of both the government and the community are aligned, and there are adequate resources to help drive the growth of the social innovation agenda. With that in mind, there should be a robust push towards incorporating social innovation as a core element in the culture and mindsets within the public, private, third sector, and civil society. Crystalizing the operational framework will significantly assist the UAE in keeping pace with benchmark countries and global best practices.

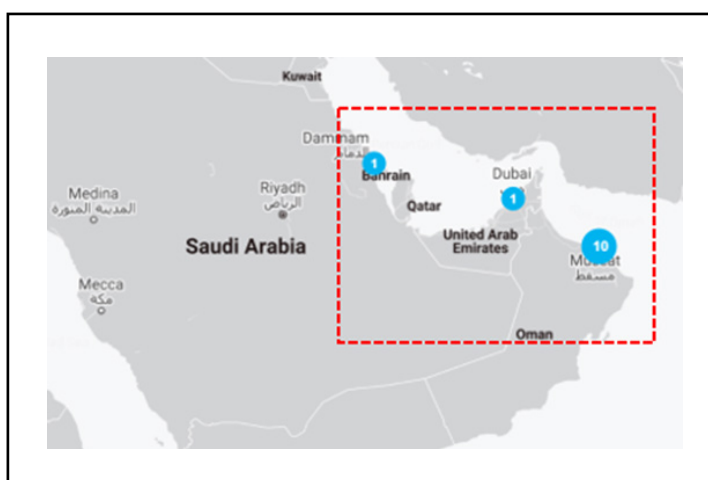Figure 4. From "Atlas of Social Innovation: World Map," by Atlas of Social Innovation, 2020 (https://www.socialinnovationatlas.net/map/). Copyright 2020 by Atlas of Social Innovation. Reprinted with permission.

Section 2

Galvanizing social innovation in Abu Dhabi

OUR POSITIONING STRATEGY

"Necessity is the mother of invention [innovation]." Nothing rings truer than this English proverb, especially in today's unprecedented times. As individuals and organizations alike seek to uncover various talents that would allow them to remain viable, "innovation" became the buzzword to adaptability. Like these individuals and organizations, government entities understood the need to be just as agile as the people they serve. As Abu Dhabi continues to climb country rankings in international competitiveness reports as the best city to live and work in, it is evident that this feat is not achieved by idle means, but rather by the emirate's strong leadership and government entities ensuring that quality of service offerings aligned with the ever-changing needs of its people.

How does DCD Social Innovation fit into the big picture?
DCD's role as a Regulator – Who We Are as a Whole
Traditional ways of solving wicked problems involved implementing strict policies and restrictions, which may not have been as effective at changing behavior as utilizing positive reinforcement of prosocial behaviors. This led to the need for a government regulatory agency that would oversee that services provided were accessible and catered to the needs of the population that are as diverse as the people themselves. The DCD, established in 2018, became the driving force in regulating social services and support to ensure "a dignified life for all." Under the DCD's mandate came several umbrellas of focus to guarantee that the people of the emirate had the necessary means to live such a life while in the emirate. Utilizing future foresight, DCD's mission was not only to solve the problems, but also to detect, prevent, forecast, and mitigate them. DCD exercised due diligence in analyzing international indices and indicators including (but not limited to), the Sustainable Development Index, Social Progress Index, Human Development Index, Legatum Prosperity Index, that offered acute insight into the navigating the social challenges in Abu Dhabi. DCD analyzed the index and indicator of each of these sources, specifically for the UAE, that are relevant to the social sector, and derived the areas of improvements for Abu Dhabi and UAE. With the understanding that human needs are as dynamic as they are, the DCD ensured that part of its model included a sector of impact-driven individuals, focused on the science of human behavior through research, monitoring, and innovation.

SID – Who We Are as a Unit

The Social Innovation Division (SID), under DCD's Social Monitoring and Innovation Sector, aims to support wider policy change, utilize and enhance social innovation capacities, and establish an integrated ecosystem, to meet DCD's strategic objectives for the community. We analyze the emirate's social trends that come from surveys and research in our sister division (Social Research) and benchmark these against local, regional, and international practices. After careful synthesis of these pieces of information, then the hard work begins – identifying which social challenges are of priority (using rigorous objective matrices) and developing innovative and suitable interventions or policies to address these challenges.

Our Market Positioning

Although the term social innovation is one that is quite nascent, the actions of social innovation have been around for years with hundreds of innovators globally whose mission was to make a difference in the lives of those to whom their mission was assigned to. As the Social Innovation Division, we understand that there is a myriad of philanthropic and humanitarian endeavors, organizations, and causes aiming to enhance their communities. So how do we differentiate ourselves? Foremost, our positioning within a government entity sets us apart from other social innovation teams as we have the unique ability to garner an ecosystem that will support in ensuring that innovations developed are not only carried out, but also monitored, regulated, and assessed for impact. At SID, we can have a "birds-eye" view of the social challenges impacting the community coupled with strong research to support the ideation of sustainable interventions. The SID leverages tools and practices currently in the field as well as develops in-house techniques that cater to the specific cadence of the Abu Dhabi community.

OUR PROCESS – ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

One of the key contributors to an organization's competitive advantage is not only positioning, but also key processes that ensure success in its field. SID prides itself in a unique Activation Plan, represented in six pillars (see Figure 3 below) that observes the various arenas of social innovation both current and future focus, with an agile methodology that is essential to innovation. As previously mentioned, innovation has recently been a nuanced and cliched term that many have failed to understand the agile component to truly innovating. SID's Activation Plan demonstrates a clear roadmap to success, while allowing for agility in our ability to solve

complex social challenges.

With the rise of technology and resources available to leverage social innovation activities, it is essential to remain aware of the main stimulus to social innovation – culture. Social Innovation in and of itself is not simply the solving of complex issues (i.e. wicked problems) through technology or other mechanisms, but it is in essence putting the beneficiaries at the core of the process. With that stated, culture becomes one of the most important elements that contribute to whether an innovation will be impactful. Hence, the core of our role involves dissecting the unique aspects of the Abu Dhabi society and using these as anchors to our innovative processes.

Figure 5. SID Six Operational Pillars

OUR SERVICE ARENAS

As emerging leaders in the region on social innovation, our role is mainly geared towards promoting social Innovation through our division's primary services. This includes, but is not limited to, solving social challenges, capacity building, speaker series, and stakeholder

engagement framework. SID's primary focus is solving social challenges as reflected through a thorough analysis of the Department of Community Development's annual Quality of Life (QoL) survey. We utilize innovative methodologies, tools, and techniques to tackle the various social challenges impacting the Abu Dhabi emirate. Furthermore, social innovation is not simply about what one team can do to impact the community, but reliance on all stakeholders and an established ecosystem of contributors to the task. Hence, SID aims to empower the next generation, entrepreneurs, private organizations, NGOs, and third sector entities through capacity building opportunities that include workshops, trainings, knowledge transfer sessions, and informative materials (i.e. white papers).

SIGNIFICANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATED ECOSYSTEM

As mentioned, the established ecosystem of contributors is used in the "social" aspect of social innovation. Members of the community (namely stakeholders) are involved to partake in the process. Hence, enlarging one's ecosystem of contributors to social innovation activities helps to ensure that the necessary innovations target and reach the right people for real impact. Such collaborations can take on many forms, such as strategic partnerships, service agreements, memorandums of understanding (MoUs), or commissioning of work. SID ensures that throughout the social innovation journey, our stakeholders are at the core of any intervention that is developed. Our stakeholder engagement mechanism is dependent upon direct and indirect individuals and/or organizations that play a role (whether positive or negative) in the social innovation process. The benefits of engaging with stakeholders include building trust, improved productivity, brand enhancement, risk management, strategic opportunities, and partnerships (Al Shaikh, 2020). Al Shaikh (2020) posited that engaging with internal and external stakeholders is vital to implementing the pillars of SID. This should be done through developing and confirming the stakeholder engagement process across an entire value chain with internal stakeholders (DCD sectors, operators, etc.), then building the engagement with external stakeholders as we identify key performance indicators that support the outcomes of targeted engagement.
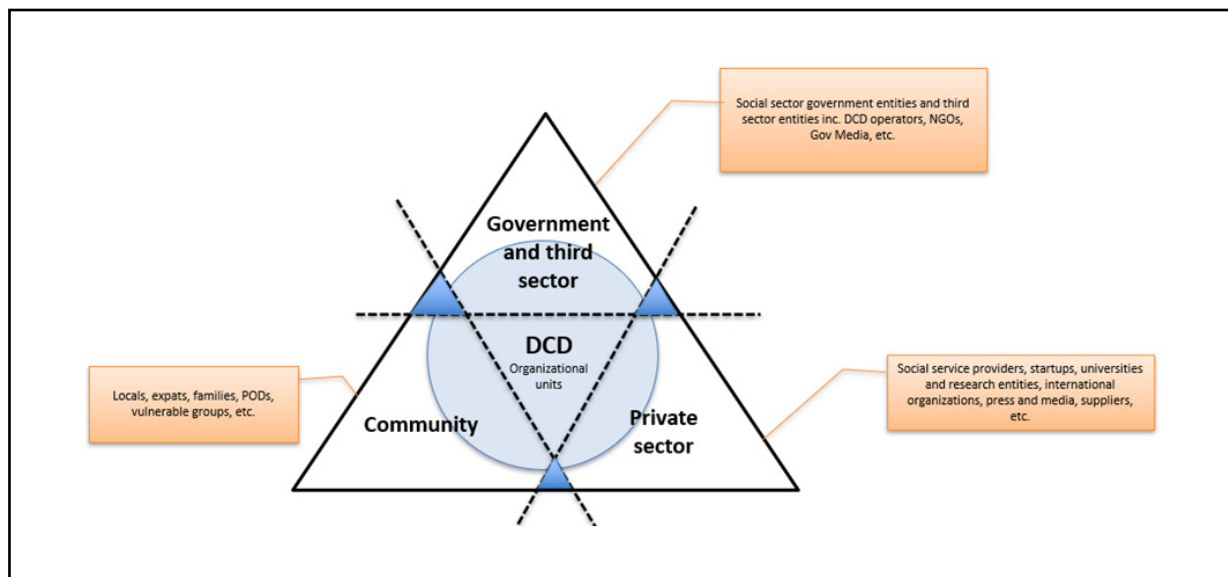
Figure 6. The above framework was adapted from "Transformative Social Innovation and its Multi-Actor Nature," by F. Avelino and J. Wittmayer, 2018, in Atlas of Social Innovation: New Practices for a Better Future. Copyright 2018 by SI-Drive. Reprinted with permission.

TRIPLE P (PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP) FRAMEWORK OF INNOVATION

Inputs from the social monitoring and research teams as well as other relevant stakeholders are vital to reach a holistic understanding of the social challenge being tackled. It is necessary to collaborate across sectors, especially among beneficiary organizations. Public, operator, private, and university collaborations (local, regional, and international) allow SID to incorporate subject matter experts (SMEs) in the stakeholder engagement process. While SID is keen on many of the social challenges impacting the Abu Dhabi community, we cannot be experts in every aspect of the challenges we aim to address. Hence, we rely on our ecosystem of experts via the Triple P Framework; this framework observes the symbiotic relationship among the public, private, and third sectors partnership. PPPs not only support with their expertise; they also serve to foster community engagement and contribution to building communities from within while collaborating to alleviate the dependence on the government. One may think of the ecosystem as a web of interconnected individuals or entities contributing to a whole – this is the exact concept the Triple P Framework hinges upon.

• **Social Sector Operators**

Part of SID's competitive advantage is our vast and unique structure, including various operators (public entities) that report to the DCD. Of these, Ma'an, the Authority for Social Contribution, plays a critical role in the social innovation process that SID undertakes. In 2019, the DCD established Ma'an to bridge gaps among the government, private sector, and society in its effort to solve social challenges through four main pillars – Social Investment Fund, Social Incubator Program, Social Volunteering Program, and Social Impact Bonds (new to the region). Furthermore, Ma'an supports Third Sector enablement to support in the aforementioned endeavors.SID's relationship with Ma'an is centered on a cohesive collaboration, with the understanding that each entity's role is vital in the development and implementation of social innovation.

For example, interventions developed by SID are dependent upon platforms for their implementation, including NGOs and volunteers, especially if part of the goal of social innovation is to reduce the dependency on government funds and resources. Therefore, Ma'an's role in invigorating other players of the community that could contribute to the process remains integral to the success of SID.

• **Non-Social Sector ADG Entities**

SID relies on non-social sector government entities to contribute to the success of innovative strategies, especially they relate to the larger community. For example, SID continuously collaborates with local public entities, such as the Department of Health (DoH), Human Resources Authority (HRA), Department of Energy (among others) to stimulate social innovation in their respective industries. As a leader in local and global health issues, Abu Dhabi's Department of Health along with the Abu Dhabi Public Health Center (ADPHC), support SID in addressing health-related social challenges. SID reckons on the expertise of such entities to provide the in-depth elements to uncovering root causes that drive these social challenges in the field, strategic insight and feedback the intervention process, in addition to yielding a forum where these interventions can be tested (short-term) and implemented (long-term). An important point to note is that these relationships are founded on the idea of a symbiosis, where all entities involved benefit from the partnership. To illustrate this, we may discuss opportunities where the public entities themselves experience certain challenges directly related to the community, and thus collaborate with SID to identify innovative solutions to addressing the same. For example,

in identifying innovative solutions to empower, protect, and ensure inclusivity for PoDs, SID collaborates with entities such as DoH, HRA, and Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK), to name a few.

The private sector plays one of the biggest roles in a country's economy. This sector is comprised of individuals and organizations that operate on a for-profit basis and are independent of government control (aside from operating under the legal frameworks of the country in which they operate).

While the private sector may be profit-driven, it plays an integral role in the economic development that in turn leads to vital implications in the community. Key roles of private sector organizations include their being stakeholders in the economy, generate employment, assist in community development, provides necessary goods and services, and promote the diversification of business (Indeed.com, 2020).

Despite the private sector's revenue-led operations, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is at the core of their business practice. Through CSR initiatives, private sector organizations ensure to foster community engagement by "giving back" to the community in philanthropic and/or charitable ways.

Private sector organizations understand that they play just as much of a role in society and the environment as other community actors; hence, CSR serves as an opportunity for the private sector to contribute to societal goals. It is through such initiatives that SID can leverage the resources (both tangible and non-tangible) of the private sector in social innovation.

• **Start-ups**

Although existing organizations could provide or support solutions using existing means, one must innovate to be representative of social innovation.

This means innovation in the solution, but also in business models and partnerships that lead to the success of proposed solutions. Start-ups offer unique opportunities to develop such.

SID aims to leverage Start-up partnerships to a) diversify resources in attaining social innovation impact, b) build capacity for future industry leaders to encourage social entrepreneurship, c) develop start-ups as part of the social innovation process, promoting innovative business models that are at the core of the innovation process, and d) offer a platform for start-ups to publicize their product or services to the greater community.

One such example of one such partnership for SID is Lamsa. Lamsa is a start-up in Abu Dhabi focused on delivering quality edutainment content for children ages 2 – 8 years old with a specific focus on maintaining national identity through its Arabic-centric emphasis on said content. SID has partnered with Lamsa to leverage these such skills and services in addressing social challenges, where Lamsa's platform would contribute to undergirding the challenges.

Through this partnership, SID has demonstrated the government's ability to ally with diverse community enablers to achieve a common goal.

• **Third Sector**

The key part of social innovation is "innovation." With the shared understanding that social innovation cannot, and should not, solely depend on currently available resources to support its various initiatives, this is where the third sector comes into use.

Consisting of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other non-profits, the third sector has values at the core of its business model. Their focus is on providing tangible, value-driven solutions rather than profit-generation.

Third sector business models take on various forms, including (but not limited to) charities, foundations, associations, voluntary and community organizations, social enterprises, corporations, and philanthropy, with one unifying modus operandi - using private funds for public good. The third sector is an integral player to SID's social innovation value chain as they propound unequivocal alignment to addressing the needs of the people impacted by the social challenges that social innovation aims to resolve as these entities understand the needs of the beneficiaries, have the necessary liaisons to grassroots of the community, usually have a proven track record of delivering outcomes, are innovation-driven, and are keen to performance indicators that underpin the core of their existence (National Audit Office, 2020).

While this is still nascent in development in the region, SID (along with other divisions of the DCD) understands the significance of expanding discussions and opportunities for third sector enablers to support the social innovation efforts in the emirate and in turn, the region.

• University Collaborations

Another important stakeholder to SID is university collaborations. Universities are the main source of higher education and serve as research hubs in any major city; therefore, such institutions are positioned to offer services in the area of research that could further support and enhance the development of social innovation. The Social Monitoring and Innovation Sector has established partnerships with three universities that would contribute to additional research or resources needed (i.e. available services, facilities, human capital) to carry out interventions. Aside from the aforementioned partnership opportunities, SID engages with universities for more strategic efforts – one of these is with New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD).

NYUAD is a branch of New York University in New York, which is a liberal arts university with a ponderous emphasis on social research. NYUAD was SID's first official partnership in the development of social innovation; this partnership involved NYUAD collaborating with SID to tackle a major social challenge (the elderly and physical inactivity) in Abu Dhabi. The defined social challenge was identified through a rigorous, objective model that allowed both parties to narrow down on which social challenge would be most conducive for the partnership. SID's main objective for the establishment of this distinctive partnership was to leverage the expertise of NYUAD's personnel to address social issues in a different light - the use of nudges.

The social innovation ecosystem relies on one that extends beyond local or regional borders. As SID collaborates with local entities under the Triple P framework, we also recognize the importance of international collaborations. International organizations provide opportunities to leverage their expertise and niche in specific areas that enhance interventions developed, in addition to sharing lessons learned in the process. Most International organizations also have innovation sections and have built accumulated experience in their social innovation work for their target population. These efforts allow SID and the organizations to hone in on respective skills to do good for the community, which becomes a win for all parties involved.

Section 3

Tools of the trade
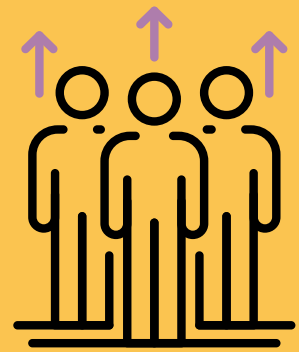
Throughout this white paper, we have established a definition of social innovation and contextualized its function in Abu Dhabi. This section is a discussion of its operation. We will discuss the tools needed to activate social innovation.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Quality of Life Survey

As part of its mission to resolve a range of social dilemmas, DCD must first gauge baseline levels of well-being and happiness to understand which areas of life need improving. One of the diagnostic tools DCD uses to do this is the Quality of Life Survey (QoL), an annual review designed by the DCD's Social Monitoring division and dissipated to different segments of Abu Dhabi's population. In order to design a comprehensive and reliable questionnaire, it was compared to other entities work and instruments such as OECD's Better Life Index and the UK Office for National Statistics. The first attempt at this was the Abu Dhabi Better Life Survey launched in 2018, which then evolved into 2019's Quality of Life Survey. The instrument was enhanced by reaching additional segments of the population that were under-represented previously. Another improvement was the inclusion of additional questions to reveal more indicators and statistical procedures that enhanced the quality of the data.

The QoL survey, which covered over 50,000 respondents, is largely based on the OECD Better Life Index. In order to measure well-being, which is used interchangeably with quality of life, the survey instrument covers 14 modules that form its framework. The modules are as follows: housing, household income and wealth, job and earnings, education and skills, health, work-life balance, personal safety and security, social connection, civic engagement and governance, environment quality, social and cultural values, access to information, social and community services and subjective wellbeing. Each module plays a significant role in explicating the community's needs and challenges. The survey has several objectives including measuring key performance indicators on the social sector level, understanding the community's desires for social services, measuring their awareness level towards certain issues, exploring differences in socioeconomic well-being between population segments, and exploring important social issues for policy intervention.

TOOLS THAT THE SOCIAL INNOVATION DIVISION USES

A multitude of tools are used to tackle social dilemmas from benchmarking to Asset-Based Community Development and design thinking models. This multi-disciplinary approach allows the social innovation division to understand the UAE's performance globally, understand dilemmas comprehensively, and then act to resolve the specific issue.

• **Desktop Research**

Unlike primary research that collects newfound data, secondary research consists of reviewing existing information to gain a broad understanding of the topic in question. It is important for several reasons including gaining a better understanding of existing social innovation efforts in the ecosystem, identifying collaborative opportunities, and avoiding any duplication of efforts. This research method is different from the Research and Monitoring division's methods, whose work complements the Social Innovation Division by providing primary data and comprehensive analyses to develop and deliver effective social solutions. Likely, an attempt has already been made to address relevant social issues, therefore doing this research is a time-efficient and economical way of understanding a subject. For instance, through reading through published studies and existing data it was discovered that an electronic, colorful and interactive medium would be most effective to educate kids on bullying and combat it. Desktop research helped the SID make the decision to approach a children's educational platform to design an interactive anti-bullying story and anthem.

• **Benchmarking**

To benchmark is to evaluate something through comparison with something else. It reveals strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, it provides a lesson in what top organizations do, what leading practices are, and indicates methods of improvement.

Over time, leading practices emerge based on experience, through benchmarking one can learn what specific measures resulted in the most effective outcomes. This is an important practice in any new or growing field, as is the case in social innovation.

To show where the UAE performs on a global level, other countries can be used as a model. For example, in the development of an intervention to help PoDs exercise daily, an electronic

physical performance application designed for autistic individuals was studied. The process of reviewing similar interventions applied in other countries, in this case, the United States of America, aids us as a point of reference for better understanding and developing impactful interventions.

- **Stakeholder Interviews**

As previously mentioned, stakeholder interviews are an integral part of the social innovation process; successful social innovation cannot occur without a supportive ecosystem for the intervention to come to fruition. Therefore, actively engaging stakeholders throughout the process is crucial to the successful deployment of the intervention. Stakeholder interviews are opportunities for dialogue where the project manager seeks to better understand the stakeholder's interests, needs, and role in a project, or in this case innovation process.

There are many ways to conducts stakeholder interviews including but not limited to briefings, focus groups, panels, and workshops where all parties share valuable knowledge, skills, and expertise to facilitate the innovation process and to ensure that the targeted intervention reaches the right beneficiary with the maximum impact. In particular, during the development of the intervention design for increasing physical activity among the elderly, SID engaged in stakeholder interviews with social sector operators (namely ADSC, FDF, DoH, and ADPHC), universities (NYUAD), and start-ups in the region to gather key insights on the target segment (elderly in Abu Dhabi) that led to mutual discussions on common challenges, objectives, KPIs, roles, and shared lessons of previous projects.

While it is important to remain open to stakeholders' feedback on the collaboration process, the focus of these interviews should remain on:
- Identifying common or individual challenges (pain points)
- Success criteria (key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Risk management
- Action items and ownership for the various phases of the process
- Lessons learned

- **Bricolage**

Bricolage is the concept that one can be entrepreneurial in any circumstance with a focus on creating something from nothing by applying combinations of resources at hand to new problems and opportunities (Baker 2005). Akin to a do-it-yourself approach, this form of social entrepreneurship views environments as socially constructed. The rules, obstacles, and expensive resources that can only be acquired or resolved through professional suppliers are not viewed as limitations. It is a refusal to see constraints. This form of social entrepreneurship should be used selectively as not to suppress business growth.

- **Design Thinking**

Design thinking is a process that seeks to go beyond a simplistic level of understanding. It attempts to deeply understand its user, challenge assumptions, and redefine problems to identify alternative solutions and ideas. It is rooted in developing an empathetic view of end-users. To ensure the long-term sustainability of the solution, design thinking outcomes are usually predicated on 3 main domains: economic viability, technical feasibility, and social desirability.

There are several variations of the process but can be limited to five steps: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The first step is to research your users' needs, then to state their needs and problems. Followed by that, the third step is to challenge these assumptions and create ideas, then to start creating solutions.

Finally, it is time to test the solutions. The modes are not always sequential. They may occur in parallel and repeat iteratively. In addressing the social challenge of youth and debt, SID implemented design thinking strategies where we used focus group data to design an empathy map for the target beneficiary, developed a persona, created a user journey (based on data) to gain a better understanding of the user's pain points to ensure that interventions were targeted, and developed a prototype.

The finals phase would be to test the prototype with the user(s) to not only get their feedback on the intervention, but to also assess the impact that this may have on similar users.

- **Double Diamond**

The Double Diamond (see Figure 5) is a framework for various industries and contexts. Created by the British Design Council, it is another innovation tool for problem-solving. The diamond shape helps visualize four different stages divided into two different "diamond" phases.

The first is a research phase—to understand the root cause and consider everything about the consumer. The steps are broken down into step one: discover, which uses investigative methods such as desktop research, questionnaires, interviews, and user experience observations. Step two, define, involves interpreting the findings and identifying themes, insights, and meanings. This step is about translating initial observations into more concrete findings.

The second "diamond" focuses on solutions; it splits into step three - develop, and step four - deliver. This is the phase that focuses on refining the product or service. The developing stage involves lots of brainstorming, identifying the relevant stakeholders, and framing opportunities and ideas. The final step is to deliver once the product is completed. Several actions are taken to ensure it is its best version,
for example, using role-play and receiving feedback from consumers. The final stage is for prototyping. The innovator can return to previous steps to improve the product or service.

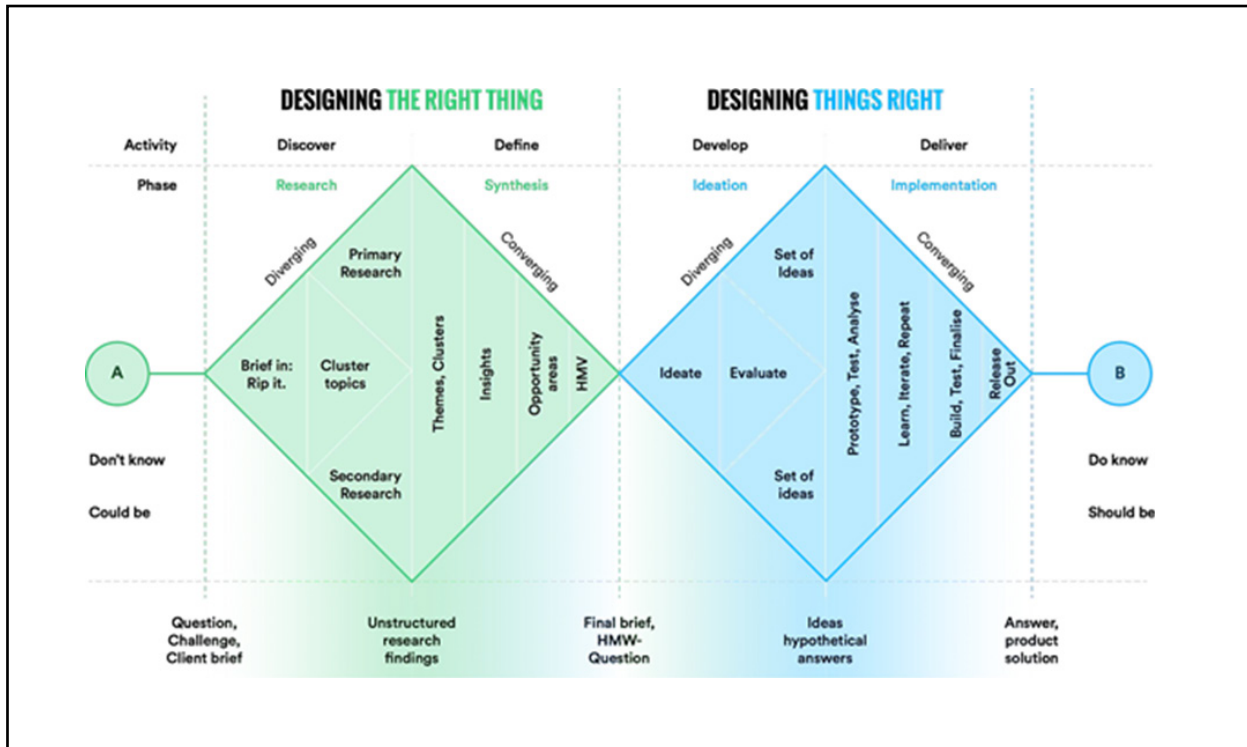**DESIGNING THE RIGHT THING**   **DESIGNING THINGS RIGHT**

Figure 7. From "DCD Social Innovation Bootcamp 2020", by N. Al Zarooni, 2020. DCD Social Innovation Internal Document.

• **Asset-Based Community Development**

The Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach is one that is community-driven and values sustainable action. Originally designed for low-income, inner-city communities in the United States; it is an empowering means of innovating in resource-deficient contexts. ABCD is transferrable to any community or context. It centers on utilizing the local population's experiences and their dedication to tackling social issues within their own community without requiring large-scale resources. The key principles are as follows:

1. Individuals – Every individual has something to give

The individual residents of any community possess gifts, skills, and talents that should be identified and used. Community development first and foremost requires an understanding of individuals and what they can offer, before coming together for a cause.

2. Associations – Communities know themselves best

Small informal groups of people, such as associations, clubs, or any organizations, unified by a common interest are critical to community mobilization.

his comes before solving a problem or taking control of a situation. This stage is the formation around a common interest or goal, and the understanding of what the other person has to offer.

3. Institutions – People organized around assets

Professionals structurally organized in institutions include both government agencies as well as private enterprises. They can be valuable resources.

The assets of these organizations can help communities with access to a network; it establishes a civil society of support.

4. Place-based assets – People gather for a reason

Any space that people gather to occupy they do so for a reason. A place may be a center of resources, skills, connection, or a marketplace. Community assets include public spaces, historical landmarks, and buildings, for example, a school, hospital, church, library, recreation center, and social clubs.

5. Connections – Individuals connect to a community

The premise of ABCD's approach is to unify micro-assets to the macro-environment. It recognizes the importance of the connection between gifted, skilled individuals and exchanging those assets that are so vital to the community. People who are skilled to find and create these connections are called connectors; it takes time and effort to find out about individuals; this is done through networking. The relations, networks, and trust form the social capital of a community.

ABCD recognizes the value of these assets and practically uses them through building relations to increase social welfare and capital. Thereby responding to challenges and creating local social improvement and economic development.

MEASURING AND SHARING THE IMPACT

The process of recognizing how much social change occurred and how much can be accredited to an entity's actions is part of social impact measurement. It is important to know to what extent the intervention worked in improving a social dilemma for its beneficiaries to help focus the social work done, as well as the stakeholders involved to secure their continued support. Some of the tools used to measure the social impact include surveys, empirical data, and focus groups (which will be further elaborated upon in a future white paper). Such tools are used to assess the level of impact the social innovation delivered, in addition to its scalability and or need for improvement. It is important to note that tools and their assessment go hand in hand, especially if the goal is to make a tangible difference for beneficiaries. Therefore, tools such as surveys (self-reporting data), empirical data (observations), focus groups, and other methods of collecting feedback from targeted beneficiaries are integral to the intervention process.

The SID plans on documenting and publishing its findings, insights, and works at both the local and international level to increase awareness on social issues and methodologies used to solve them.This expands public knowledge on any given topic and equips the general public with information to empower potential governmental or private entities to collaborate and combat Abu Dhabi's social challenges. A couple of projects are currently in progress including a social innovation talk series to bring social impact leaders and thinkers to discuss social innovation topics and explore a scope of both local and global issues. Additionally, SID plans to contribute monthly thought leadership pieces (i.e. white papers) to expound on relevant and emerging social innovation content, highlight their importance and the tools, as well as establish the SID as the hub of all things social innovation locally, regionally, and internationally. Workshops are another instance of the SID's publicization - design thinking boot camps will be held within DCD to educate the social sector and greater community on effective, informative, and alternative perspectives on problem-solving together with encouraging innovative thinking. Overall, these methods of data measuring and sharing are part of easing the process of making positive social impact.

Conclusion

social innovation

The "what": Despite the coining of the term social innovation being relatively novel, the practice of social innovation has been around for decades. As societies developed, and each new era and generation came with its own set of social challenges, the process of solving these challenges became as intricate as the people themselves. Social innovation is a tool to enable necessary systemic and societal change in line with the changing needs of current and future generations. Hence, social innovation is not simply a process, but for many individuals and organizations, their "raison d'etre."

The "who": To understand social innovation is to first understand the core of human behavior and what drives them to act positively or negatively. As social innovation begins to gain momentum in the MENA region, Abu Dhabi continues to exemplify strong leadership in this (as in many) arenas. DCD's strategic positioning and role within the community afford it an inevitable competitive advantage to lead the charge of social innovation in the region, namely through the establishment of the Social Innovation Division (SID), making it the hub of social innovation. SID's positioning and success centers around the impact of interventions developed, with the support of strategic partners and subject matter experts.

The "how": As individuals and organizations alike attempt to navigate this new agent in addressing community issues, social innovation, continues to rise, we must not confound social innovation with a trend. Social innovation must continue to evolve as real people collaborate to solve real problems. Hence, tools of the trade are useful in providing guidance and practical methodologies that contribute to successful solutions, with the most renowned being design thinking. However, many of the tools discussed in this white paper lend themselves to supporting the process of social innovation. Furthermore, one would be remised if he/she did not consider measuring and sharing the impact of the intervention.

Social innovation is about empowering "ordinary people" to be the drivers of social innovation. Social innovation does not require extravagant measures to accomplish: the simple prerequisite is individuals and organizations with the capital to impact change in their community.

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Development - Abu Dhabi
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