

Zayed Sustainability Prize Announces 2026 Finalists Driving Global Impact

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- 33 finalists selected from 7,761 submissions across 173 countries
- This year's finalists are pioneering inclusive, tech-enabled, and locally adapted solutions that tackle urgent global challenges—delivering clean energy, safe water, nutritious food, quality healthcare, and climate resilience to millions worldwide
- The Prize's global impact has reached over 400 million lives, demonstrating the power of innovation to transform communities and shape a sustainable future

The Zayed Sustainability Prize, the UAE's pioneering award for innovative solutions to global challenges, has announced this year's finalists following a rigorous evaluation by its esteemed Jury.

The winners will be revealed at the Zayed Sustainability Prize Awards Ceremony on 13 January 2026, held during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week.

The Zayed Sustainability Prize's Jury selected the 33 finalists from 7,761 entries received across six categories: Health, Food, Energy, Water, Climate Action and Global High Schools – a 30% increase in submissions over last year.

H.E. Dr. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and Director General of the Zayed Sustainability Prize, emphasised the transformative potential of this year's finalists:

“This year's finalists show that sustainability and prosperity are no longer separate goals, but two sides of the same path forward. From AI-enabled health diagnostics and circular food systems to disaster preparedness and climate resilience, they are harnessing technology, finance, and community leadership to deliver solutions that are affordable, reliable, scalable and generate socioeconomic value for the communities they serve.

In doing so, they reflect the enduring legacy of Sheikh Zayed, whose vision of sustainable development and humanitarianism continues to inspire the UAE's commitment to progress.

Together, they reaffirm that when we empower youth, entrepreneurs, and communities, ambition can be turned into action that is inclusive, practical, and global.”

Through the Prize’s 128 winners to date, 11.4 million people have gained access to safe drinking water, 54.1 million homes have gained access to reliable energy, 17 million people have gained access to more nutritious food, and over 1.2 million people have gained access to affordable healthcare.

H.E. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson, Chair of the Prize Jury, said: “This year’s finalists reveal a powerful truth: sustainability is no longer a distant ambition, it is a lived reality shaped by communities, young people, and innovators across the globe. Their solutions reflect a world awakening to the urgency of rapidly changing environmental and socioeconomic realities, and the Prize continues to be a beacon of hope, showing how bold ideas can transform lives and restore our planet.”

This year’s Health finalists are delivering transformative healthcare that expand access to essential services in some of the world’s most underserved communities. Their innovations span AI diagnostics, solar powered vaccine refrigeration, and gamified cognitive tools.

The Health finalists are:

- Drop Access, an SME from Kenya, provides solar powered medical refrigeration via Vaccibox, enabling safe transport and storage of over 2.5 million vaccines, medicines, and blood bags, benefiting over one million people.
- Healthy Learners, an NPO from Zambia, transforms schools into frontline health hubs by training teachers as health workers, enabling real-time disease detection and treatment for over 1 million children.
- Jade Autism, an SME from the United Arab Emirates, develops AI and gamified cognitive tools to screen and support neurodiverse children, with adoption in over 450 institutions across 179 countries.

This year’s Food finalists are pioneering innovations in sustainable agriculture, nutrition, and circular food systems. Their solutions span AgriTech, crop resilience, and climate-smart production models.

The Food finalists are:

- E Green Global, an SME from South Korea, produces disease-free seed potatoes using microtuber technology in indoor plant factories, benefiting 15 million people and supplying over 10 million seed potatoes annually.
- INMED South Africa, an NPO from South Africa, implements aquaponics systems that integrate fish farming with hydroponic vegetable production for schools and households, benefiting over 158,000 people.
- N&E Innovations, an SME from Singapore, creates upcycled, biodegradable antimicrobial sprays

and packaging that extend food shelf life and reduce waste, upcycling over 2 tonnes of food waste into 400,000 plus units and reaching 80,000 people across seven countries.

This year's Energy finalists are advancing inclusive and scalable approaches to sustainable energy, tackling challenges in access and efficiency. Their solutions span provision of energy to remote communities, clean cooling and water-based battery recycling.

The Energy finalists are:

- BASE Foundation, an NPO from Switzerland, promotes a cooling-as-a-service model that makes clean cooling technologies more accessible through a pay-per-use approach, benefiting 160,000 people, creating 2,500 jobs, and abating over 81,000 tonnes of CO₂ across 68 countries.
- GRST, an SME from China (Hong Kong), develops PFAS-free lithium battery binders that enable water-based recycling, producing over 2 million battery cells, creating more than 200 jobs, and reducing battery manufacturing emissions by up to 40%.
- Poder y Luz Maya, an NPO from Guatemala, provides solar power systems and digital learning tools for indigenous schools, benefiting over 49,000 people, reducing energy use by more than 4,700 MWh, and abating over 1,200 tonnes of CO₂.

This year's Water finalists are delivering breakthrough solutions that expand access to clean drinking water, strengthen water infrastructure, and advance intelligent water management. Their innovations span solar powered purification systems, plastic pollution prevention, and AI-enabled leak detection.

The Water finalists are:

- IRIBA Water Group, an SME from Rwanda, provides solar powered smart water ATMs with UV and RO purification, mobile payments, and digital monitoring to expand access to safe drinking water, benefiting over 517,000 people through 203 water ATMs and creating 194 jobs.
- Status4, an SME from Brazil, develops AI-powered IoT solutions that detect leaks in water distribution networks, saving 540 million litres of water daily across 250 municipalities, improving water availability for nearly 4 million people.
- The Great Bubble Barrier, an SME from the Netherlands, prevents plastic pollution in rivers using a curtain of air bubbles that guides waste to catchment systems without harming aquatic life, benefiting 2 million people and removing 180 tonnes of pollutants from waterways.

This year's Climate Action finalists are leading transformative efforts in climate resilience, disaster preparedness and circular innovation. Their solutions span eco-bricks, biogas systems and waste-to-value technologies.

The Climate Action finalists are:

- Build Up Nepal, an NPO from Nepal, develops earthquake-resilient eco-bricks that support

sustainable construction, benefiting more than 58,000 people, empowering 200 entrepreneurs, and abating over 110,000 tonnes of CO₂.

- CLIC RECYCLE, an SME from Spain, converts human hair waste into biodegradable mulch and marine filters, engaging over 7,000 users, removing 180 tonnes of pollutants, and improving soil water retention by up to 40%.
- GREE Energy, an SME from China (Hong Kong), creates modular biogas systems for rural food processors, benefiting 4,000 farmers, generating 9.3 GWh of clean energy, and abating 140,000 tonnes of CO₂.

The Global High Schools' finalists presented project-based, student-led sustainability solutions, with finalists divided into six regions.

The regional finalists include:

- The Americas: Centro de Ensino Médio 111 - Recanto das Emas (Brazil); Escuela Secundaria Técnica 117 Guillermo González Camarena (Mexico); and Mamawi Atosketan Native School (Canada).

- Sub-Saharan Africa: Likuni Boys Secondary School (Malawi); Kallamino Special High School (Ethiopia); and Kyanja High School, Mpigi (Uganda).

Middle East & North Africa: Fawakhir School for Applied Technology (Egypt); Al-Raja School for the Hearing Impaired (Jordan); and Rashaya High School (Lebanon).

- Europe & Central Asia: Bodrum Anadolu High School (Türkiye); Specialized School in Angor (Uzbekistan); and Istedad Lyceum (Azerbaijan).

- South Asia: Qadir Nagar High School (Pakistan); Faafu Atoll Education Center (Maldives); and Kikani Vidhya Mandir (India).

- East Asia & Pacific: Camarines Norte Senior High School (The Philippines); True North International School (Vietnam); and Ruamrudee International School (Thailand).

Each winner in the Health, Food, Energy, Water, and Climate Action categories will receive US \$1 million, while each of the six winning Global High Schools will receive up to US \$150,000.

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About the Zayed Sustainability Prize

The Zayed Sustainability Prize, an affiliate of Erth Zayed Philanthropies, is the UAE's pioneering award for innovative solutions to global challenges.

A tribute to the legacy and vision of the UAE's founding father, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the Prize aims to drive sustainable development worldwide.

Each year, across the Health, Food, Energy, Water, Climate Action and Global High Schools categories, the Prize rewards organisations and high schools for their groundbreaking solutions

to our planet's most pressing needs.

Through its 128 winners, in 17 years, the Prize has positively impacted over 400 million lives across the globe, inspiring innovators to amplify their impact, and chart a sustainable future for all.

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