



# Community Engagement:

## A Key to Mega Projects Success

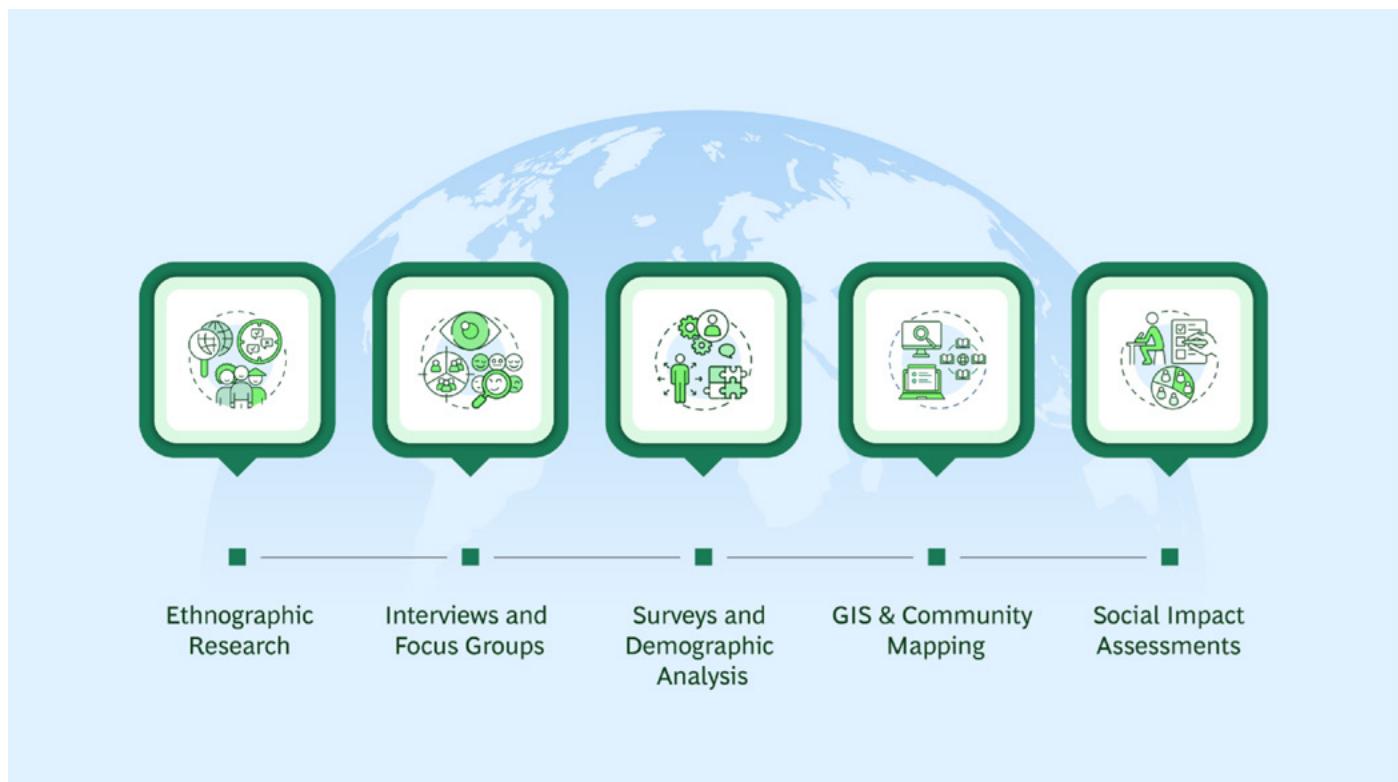
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# 01

## **Executive Summary**

## Exhibit 1



The Middle East is witnessing a surge in bold mega projects that are reshaping the region. Many of these developments have begun emphasizing key environmental sustainability initiatives through ambitious decarbonization roadmaps and green building certification goals. For example, a major project now underway in the region has set the goal of net-zero carbon over the lifetime of the project, and a comprehensive set of initiatives aiming to reduce embodied and operational carbon, increase biodiversity, and achieve several LEED and Mostadam accreditations.

Increasingly, projects are adopting a broader sustainability perspective through the ESG framework, integrating social and governance considerations alongside environmental objectives. In particular, the social dimension of ESG has become increasingly prioritized for mega projects, especially in managing relationships with local and regional communities. Understanding and respecting local contexts through effective community engagement is key to the success of large-scale developments due to Middle Eastern

countries being home to deeply rooted cultures and communities, many with histories spanning thousands of years.

Early and sustained engagement with these communities helps align project objectives with local values and priorities, builds trust among key stakeholders, and facilitates smoother implementation. This, in turn, supports timely delivery and long-term viability, while enabling local communities to serve as ambassadors of the project's overall success.

**Community engagement is a strategic necessity and a key source of competitive advantage. By following a comprehensive approach to engaging local communities, mega projects can create enduring positive impacts while ensuring smoother project delivery and long-term sustainability. Based on our extensive experience, we have identified six major considerations to foster effective community engagement.**



## **Six Key Considerations For Developing a Community Engagement Roadmap**

## **1 Prioritize community needs through a comprehensive assessment**

The first step in building an effective community engagement roadmap is conducting a thorough assessment to identify and map out key communities and their most pressing needs. This ensures that engagement efforts are focused on areas where the project can have the greatest impact, allowing for more effective and meaningful outcomes. For instance, a global corporation carried out an in-depth analysis, including ethnographic research, interviews and focus groups, surveys and demographic analysis, GIS (Geographic Information System) & community mapping, and social impact assessments. This effort revealed that the most pressing needs centered around access to affordable healthcare, economic and education opportunities, infrastructure and transportation, entertainment and recreation, among others which allowed the organization to strategically allocate its resources and seek relevant partnerships to meet the community's needs. They then designed targeted initiatives to address these needs. This deepened the organization's ties with the community, as local people had been involved in the design.

## **2 Align engagement with corporate DNA and mega project strategy**

Successful community engagement is most effective when it leverages an organization's core strategy and corporate DNA. By anchoring engagement initiatives in their distinctive capabilities, values, and long-term strategic priorities, organizations can deliver programs that are both authentic and high-impact. This approach ensures that community engagement is not treated as a standalone activity, but as a strategic extension of the mega project's broader objectives. A leading multinational technology company exemplified this by incorporating digital literacy programs into its community outreach, a move that reinforced its strategic focus on innovation and technology while also delivering tangible benefits to the communities it served.

## **3 Ensure consistent and ongoing engagement**

Consistency is crucial for building trust and fostering strong relationships with local communities. Rather than viewing engagement as a one-off exercise, companies should establish regular outreach efforts to maintain continuous dialogue. A major development company demonstrated this approach during its large-scale projects by organizing regular community events, such as educational workshops and local markets. These initiatives not only helped to build relationships but also kept the lines of communication open, ensuring ongoing feedback and collaboration between the project and the local community. It is important to note that engagement goes both ways; the organization needs to share updates and information, and deliver programs, as well as seek community input and feedback. The most successful programs support communities to be actively involved in the solution design process.

## **4 Engage communities in familiar and accessible venues**

By choosing familiar and easily accessible locations, companies can ensure that their engagement efforts are culturally sensitive and inclusive, breaking down barriers to participation. The intent is to maximize reach by ensuring convenience and ease of access for all segments – for example, scheduling engagement events and opportunities on different options of days of the week, at convenient hours, at multiple locations, or in main gathering points for the community that already attract traffic. This also includes leveraging technology and embedding engagement in selected online or hybrid communication channels. A leading development company employed this approach by hosting events in venues that residents already knew and visited, such as community centers and public spaces. This strategy fostered higher participation rates and more meaningful interactions, strengthening the relationship between the company and the community while creating a shared sense of direction.

## **5 Promote bold leadership in engagement efforts**

Bold and visionary leadership is key to driving sustained community engagement, especially when immediate operational pressures might otherwise divert attention. Ultimately, community engagement needs to have a “sponsor” – who believes in it and drives it – at the very top of the company. Leaders who are committed to long-term community goals can make a profound difference. For example, the CEO of a prominent technology company made community engagement a strategic priority by spearheading initiatives that utilized the company’s technological expertise to enhance public education. By embedding community involvement into the company’s strategy, leadership not only advanced social change but also reinforced the organization’s values and strengths.

## **6 Embed community engagement across the organization**

Finally, for community engagement to be truly impactful, it must be embedded across the entire organization, rather than being the sole responsibility of a single team. Cross-functional integration ensures that all departments contribute to and benefit from the engagement efforts. It also leverages each team’s unique skills – for example, marketing capabilities for promoting events, or HR experience in fast-track hiring. A global property and infrastructure company has successfully implemented this model, where a central team sets the strategy and regional task forces execute locally tailored initiatives. This decentralized approach has allowed the company to address specific regional needs effectively while maximizing both internal collaboration and community impact.





**A Rigorous Approach  
to Community  
Engagement**

Effectively engaging with communities is a challenging but essential endeavor, requiring detailed planning, clear objectives, and a deep understanding of community dynamics. BCG's approach, applied in our recent work with mega projects across the GCC, emphasizes multi-stakeholder collaboration from the outset. By aligning community engagement objectives with broader project goals, we set the foundation for success.

We started by identifying priority communities based on shared goals, addressing concerns like mitigating construction impacts and enhancing quality of life. Detailed community research followed, allowing us to

craft targeted programs with real, tangible benefits. An outreach calendar ensured continuous, multi-channel engagement, and a governance model outlined clear responsibilities, KPIs, and a phased approach for building organizational capacity.

Mega projects, by their nature, are large, complex, and long-term undertakings. Consequently, community engagement becomes an ongoing initiative in itself. By taking a structured, consistent, and genuine approach, mega projects can foster lasting, positive impacts on the surrounding communities, ultimately driving mutual benefits and ensuring sustainable success.



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