



THE MARKETING SOCIETY GCC AWARDS SUBMISSION 2025 MASHREQ BRAND EVOLUTION

This entry was submitted by Mashreq on behalf of Mashreq dated on 30th April 2025



Executive Summary

As a leading financial institution and fastest growing banking brand in the MENA region, we have a responsibility to steer capital flows and provide clients with solutions that transcend conventional financing. We acknowledged the challenge of embedding

sustainability at the heart of our operations, aspiring to set a precedent through exemplary leadership.

However, with more financial institutions starting to recognise the need to implement robust Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives, Mashreq sought to innovate its approach to solidify the bank's leadership in sustainable banking in the MENA region and globally.

Mashreq has demonstrated innovation through a range of initiatives aligned with our 'Rise Responsibly' ethos including the facilitation of sustainable financing and the continuous improvement of our operations across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) metrics.

In November 2023, we launched Climb2Change, a strategic initiative consolidating the bank's strong performance in sustainable linked financing, responsible banking products & services, social impact initiatives, and net-zero commitment into a unique global initiative.

The launch featured a symbolic climb of the Burj Khalifa by professional urban climbers Alain Robert and Alexis Landot as a representation of the bank's global sustainability pledge. The Burj Khalifa also lit up with messages about Climb2Change and top influencers from the region were invited to a meet and greet event along with Mashreq's key clients and senior leadership.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVwJNRPCbPI>

As a part of Climb2Change, we launched the first-of-its-kind mountain clean-up operation covering 14 mountains (7 peaks and 7 base camps) to build awareness and promote recycling practices, waste reduction, and environmental preservation on a global scale, covering regions including Nepal, Pakistan, Egypt and China. The clean-ups and expeditions engaged influencers, local authorities and communities, organizations, NGOs and volunteers.

Watch: [Climb2Change Egypt Wrap](#)

Climb2Change goes beyond a single initiative - Mashreq has demonstrated its commitment to inspire climate action through a range of initiatives aligned with our 'Rise Responsibly' ethos.

COP: Only regional bank to sponsor both COP 27 in Egypt and partner with COP 28 in the UAE; hosted a program of 45 sessions on-site to raise global climate awareness and educate clients on the issue.

Net Zero Alignment: Climb2Change initiative aligns with the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative, the World Green Building Council's Advancing Net Zero Readiness

Framework, as well as the Net Zero alignment with international banking sector science-based methods by driving carbon reduction and sustainable practices.

Notice Nature: Partnered with Emirates Nature-WWF to support wildlife mapping in the UAE.

Climate Banking: Partnered with Ecolytic and Visa to provide carbon impact transparency on customer spending.

- **Transitioned to 100% recycled plastic for all credit and debit cards.**
- **Nature Saver Accounts introduced to promote sustainable savings.**
- **Large-scale Nile cleaning initiative in partnership with Very Nile in Egypt.**

Corporate Carbon Offsetting: Partnered with Fils to integrate carbon offsetting into Mashreq corporate accounts

Global partnerships and social impact:

- Joined the United Nations Global Compact to uphold responsible business practices
- Introduced facial recognition banking in partnership with the Ministry of Interior (UAE)
- Spearheaded inclusive education initiatives in India, supporting schools and learning facilities



What were your objectives and why was this important to the business?

The Climb2Change mountain cleanup initiative aims to address the alarming issue of waste left on mountains, where climbers and trekkers often leave behind significant amounts of waste, including plastic bottles, food wrappers, and discarded gear.

Studies have shown that popular peaks can accumulate thousands of tons of waste, contributing to soil and water pollution, harming local ecosystems. This litter not only disrupts wildlife but also impacts climate change by releasing greenhouse gases as it decomposes.

Our objective is to clean up 14 of the Earth's mightiest mountains while raising global awareness about the importance of recycling, waste reduction, and environmental preservation. By collaborating with local authorities, communities, organizations, and volunteers who have a deeper connection to these mountains, we aim to create a cleaner, healthier environment. Through Climb2Change, we reaffirm our commitment to sustainability and strive to inspire positive change, ensuring that these natural wonders can be cherished for generations to come. As a leading financial institution and fastest growing banking brand in the MENA region, we have a responsibility to steer capital flows and provide clients with solutions that transcend conventional financing.

What were the insights and data that led you to the strategy?

Mashreq launched the Climb2Change mountain cleanup initiative in response to the escalating environmental crisis tied to climbing activities. Studies revealed that the most popular mountain trails were increasingly polluted by waste left behind by climbers such as plastic bottles, wrappers, climbing equipment like ropes, plastic bags and more, endangering the fragile ecosystems and threatening local wildlife.

Data indicated that climbers, while passionate about their pursuits, often overlooked the impact of their litter, leading to significant ecological degradation.

Through our interactions with government officials in regions like Nepal and Pakistan, local communities voiced concerns about the economic repercussions of the waste left on mountains, as tourism—vital to their livelihoods—suffered from the negative impact on natural landscapes. Environmental research by our ESG team underscored the long-term consequences of waste, with plastics persisting for generations and toxins leaching into the soil and water.

Recognizing this urgent call to action, Mashreq aimed to harness the spirit of the climbing community to inspire environmental stewardship. The Climb2Change initiative seeks not only to clean these majestic mountains but also to ignite a cultural shift

towards sustainable practices. By uniting individuals and organisations globally in this mission, Mashreq aspires to cultivate a deeper connection between adventure and responsibility, ensuring that future generations can experience the beauty of nature unspoiled.



What new strategies and creative and innovative approaches did you take?

The Climb2Change initiative represents a bold commitment to preserving the planet's most majestic mountains, addressing the urgent issue of waste left behind by climbers. Through a phased approach throughout 2024, we cleaned up these iconic peaks while raising awareness about environmental conservation and engaging local communities. Our mission is built on our ability to collaborate with passionate ambassadors, local authorities, and our dedicated Mashreq employees, all working together to create a cleaner, healthier environment.

In Phase 1, we kicked off our journey in Nepal, focusing on cleaning three major peaks: Mera Peak, Lobuche, and Ama Dablam. These expeditions were led by our Climb2Change ambassador Nelly Attar, an accomplished mountaineer known for her passion for environmental conservation and her commitment to inspiring others through her climbs.

Watch the Phase 1 recap: [Climb2Change Journey](#)

In Phase 2, we extended our mission in Nepal to include Annapurna, the 10th highest peak in the world, Lhotse and Everest Base Camp, further solidifying our dedication to preserving these iconic landscapes.

Watch the Phase 2 Recap: [Climb2Change Phase 2 Highlights](#)

As we moved into Phase 3, we ventured into Pakistan, organizing expeditions to K2 and Broad Peak (K3), including cleanup efforts at the base camps of Goro 2 and Concordia. These expeditions were led by our ambassadors Naila Kiani, a renowned Pakistani climber and advocate for women's empowerment in adventure sports, and Maria Conceicao, who is celebrated for her philanthropic work and efforts to promote environmental sustainability.

Watch: [#Climb2Change Phase 3](#)

Additionally, we launched a individual cleanup operation in Egypt at the **Wadi Degla protectorate**, led by our ambassador Omar Samra, an acclaimed adventurer and the first Egyptian to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Throughout these efforts, we actively **involved our employees** in on-ground cleanup initiatives in both Pakistan and Egypt. They received training sessions from our ambassadors and engaged with local communities, fostering a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility for preserving our environment.

Egypt Employees: [Climb2Change Egypt Employees Special](#)

Pakistan Employees: [Employee Expedition](#)

Looking ahead, we are excited to expand our cleanup efforts to India, continuing our mission to make a meaningful impact on the world's most magnificent mountains.



What were the risks, how were you brave?

Launching and executing the Climb2Change mountain cleanup initiative presented several risks and challenges.

1. Operational Risks: Cleaning up the Earth's mightiest peaks involved significant logistical challenges, including navigating harsh weather conditions, remote locations, and difficult terrains. These factors posed safety risks to climbers and impact the effectiveness of our cleanup efforts. Ensuring the safety of our climbers, ambassadors, employees and volunteers is paramount, and addressing these risks required careful planning and resource allocation.

2. Engaging Communities: One of the key challenges was connecting with local communities and inspiring them to participate in sustainability initiatives such as Climb2Change. Building trust and encouraging collaboration have been essential for the initiative's success, especially in regions where residents may be skeptical of outside organizations.

3. Market Competition in Sustainability: As "sustainability" marketing has become increasingly common among financial institutions and other organizations, setting ourselves apart was a significant challenge. Many companies now talk about their commitment to sustainable practices, which made it crucial for Mashreq to differentiate itself. By launching the Climb2Change global initiative, Mashreq sought to innovate its approach to solidify the bank's leadership in sustainable banking in the MENA region and globally.

4. Leadership in Sustainable Finance: For Mashreq to position itself as a leader in sustainable finance, we not only launched initiatives like Climb2Change but also integrated sustainability into our core business strategies. This aligned with our long-term goals of Mashreq's ESG strategy, with transparent reporting on our initiative's impact.



What were the measurable results?

The Climb2Change initiative has yielded remarkable results, significantly enhancing our brand impact while inspiring individuals worldwide.

We received enthusiastic interest from international entities, including the Bhutan Government and Mobilink Bank in Pakistan, eager to explore partnership opportunities.

The initiative garnered extensive media coverage across multiple regions, including the UAE, Pakistan, and Egypt, reaching an impressive audience of 250 million through various prominent publications and platforms.

Environmentally, our expeditions successfully collected nine types of waste, such as plastic, glass, paper, ropes, and climbing equipment, with 100% of the waste recycled and repurposed, totalling 4,646 kg across three phases.

As a participant in the UN Global Compact, our efforts directly contributed to eight of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reinforcing our commitment to sustainability and community engagement.



How does your work advocate the reputation/importance of the Marketing industry?

The resounding success of the Climb2Change initiative is a testament to the intrinsic link between our Rise Responsibly ethos and our commitment to transparency in marketing, serving as a call for our customers and stakeholders to engage in transformative action against climate change.

As the UAE's oldest bank and the fastest-growing banking brand in the region, Mashreq acknowledges its pivotal role in guiding individuals toward informed decisions that reflect their environmental impact.

By inviting our customers to embark on their own Climb2Change journeys, we lead them on a path towards a brighter future, showcasing the tangible outcomes of their efforts. We strive to inspire a shift in individual perceptions of environmental preservation and sustainability.

Our exemplary record in achieving ESG milestones further highlights our dedication to innovative, customer-centric marketing strategies anchored in authentic storytelling.

Awards & Recognition

- **Best Commitment to ESG Principles UAE 2023** – International Banker Awards

- **Majra Impact Seal - Gold Tier** – World with Purpose Summit 2023
- **DACA Awards** – ‘Torchbearer of Sustainable & Climate-Friendly Investment’ & ‘Leader in ESG’ (2022)
- **Sustainability Star Award** – No More Bottles (2024)
- **MEA Finance Best ESG Strategy Award 2024** for *Climb2Change*
- **MENA Digital Awards** – Gold for Best Integrated Digital Campaign & Best Digital Cause Marketing
- **Fast Company Middle East** – *Most Innovative Company for CSR & Social Good* (2024, 2nd year in a row)
- **Forbes Middle East 2024** – *Most Sustainable Project in the Middle East* for *Climb2Change*
- **Mashreq Global HQ**: First financial headquarter, financial building, and high-rise in MENA to achieve **LEED Zero Carbon certification**
- **Mashreq Innovation Hub**: Awarded **LEED v4 Gold Certification**
- **LEED Gold & Platinum certifications** awarded across branches in **UAE, Mumbai, Oman, Doha, and Bangalore**

