

British Council to enable younger generation to fight climate change

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Dubai: Young people in the UAE passionate about spreading the word on climate change will soon have an opportunity to take up the mission when the British Council comes looking for 25 people from the region - aged between 18 and 35 - to join a huge network of experts and environmentalists as part of its International Climate Champions campaign.

The initiative is coming to the UAE and the Middle East for the first time.

The names of winners from Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE and Libya will be announced by the time World Environment Day is commemorated on June 5.

The International Climate Champions will be imparted the skills to deliver projects and communicate climate change challenges to their peers, communities and leaders. They will join more than 1,300 other International Climate Champions in 60 countries worldwide working on and sharing ideas and experience about climate change.

Emiratis and long-term residents from the UAE are encouraged to apply for the first opportunity of its kind in the region.

Motivated young people will be selected in collaboration with British Council partners to take part in the programme's first year in the Middle East.

There are then plans to expand the number of International Climate Champions and extend the programme to other countries in the region. In 2008 there were over 800 champions selected from 29 countries. During 2009 over 1,300 new champions will be recruited from 60 countries.

Gopika Raina, project manager, social partnerships and science, British Council, UAE, urged anyone who can make an investment in climate change to apply.

"We will encourage them to carry out small projects throughout the year, turning the knowledge they gain into action. They will be mentored and be able to attend regional workshops. The plan is to make a network of young champions from the Middle East," she said. Initial workshops are planned for June and October.

Dr Sarah May, the British Council's regional international climate change manager said: "Climate change affects all generations but it is young people who will inherit the impacts for many decades to come. As a result, it is also young people who are rising enthusiastically to this challenge. But it is critical that they are given the means and opportunity to be agents of change from the local to the global level.

"That is why we are providing the means for these young people to become engaged in this critical global issue - providing opportunities for young people to make a positive difference," she said.

(Gulf News)