



AGENDA DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL

RED THEATRE BLUE HALL BLACK BOX

10:30 - 10:45

Opening Remarks

Honored Guest Speaker:

- H.E. Minister Shamma Al Mazrui
Minister | Ministry of Community Empowerment

Speakers:

- David Halpern
President Emeritus | BIT
Fabio Piano
Vice Chancellor | NYU Abu Dhabi

10:45 - 11:05

Nudges: Past, Present, Future

Speaker:

- Cass Sunstein
Robert Walmsley University Professor | Harvard Law School

Summary:

Professor Cass Sunstein will introduce the conference theme 'New Frontiers in Behavioral Science' by discussing the evolution of the field in the last 15 years - and the immense possibility for impact it has in new contexts and geographies.

11:05 - 11:50

Adoption vs Adaptation: What Kind of Evidence about Behavior do Policy Makers Need?

Chair:

- Elisabeth Costa
Chief of Innovation and Partnerships | BIT

Speakers:

- Cass Sunstein
Robert Walmsley University Professor | Harvard Law School
Chiara Varazzani
Lead Behavioral Scientist | OECD
Dilip Soman
Canada Research Chair | Rotman School, University of Toronto
David Halpern
President Emeritus | BIT

Summary:

Behavioral science and the 'what works' agenda have gone hand-in-hand, but there are inherent tensions. For example, evidence shows that people can react differently to the same interventions in different contexts - and that different groups vary in their responses to the same intervention. With that in mind, is the goal of working out 'what works' viable? How much can we rely on a result in one place to also hold true elsewhere? After all, 'behavioral insights' rose to prominence by offering general principles about 'how people behave'. One of the possible answers to this tension is to get better data and keep testing. But is that feasible for policy makers? Can we really expect them to run more trials, when they have got a seemingly clear result from running just one trial?

12:00 - 12:40

Changing Social Norms to Unlock the UAE's Economic Potential



Presentation

- Nikos Nikiforakis
Co-Director of the Center for Behavioral Institutional Design (C-BID) | NYU Abu Dhabi

Discussion:

- H.E. Minister Abdullah Bin Touq Al Marri
Minister | Ministry of Economy
Nikos Nikiforakis
Co-Director of the Center for Behavioral Institutional Design (C-BID) | NYU Abu Dhabi

Summary:

How do norms spread? How do you bring an end to existing negative norms? How do you encourage new positive norms? Speakers in this panel will discuss their expertise using social norms interventions to bring about social change. In the UAE, behavioral science has been used to tackle overconsumption norms in energy, food choices, use of water, and the purchasing of luxury goods. This is within the context of wider (and remarkable) normative change in the UAE in recent decades. The question of this panel will be: how can the UAE use social norms to unleash its potential in the 21st century?

12:50 - 13:10

Success Starts at Home: Applying Behavioral Insights to Education

Discussion:

- H.E. Hajer Al Thehli
Secretary General | Education, Human Development and Community Development Council
Serene Koh
Director, Singapore | BIT

Summary:

This conversation will share EHCD's experience with the "Parental Engagement Project" highlighting the role of behavioral insights and how it can strengthen education policies aimed at improving parental engagement. In the UAE public school system, the understanding of parental behaviors through behavior science research uncovered root causes for the observed limited parental involvement, and its critical impact on students' learning.

As the project is still in progress, the research outcomes that emerged so far highlighted significant potential for behavioral interventions. These interventions will contribute to familiarizing parents on getting increasingly involved in their children's learning. Building on those behavioral insights, the education system can then design well aligned policies that can improve the core role of parents in driving success for their children from home. The aim for us, as policy makers, is to develop a UAE-homegrown policy framework for parental engagement across UAE schools, that is rooted in the Emirati parents' value system to drive social change.

14:00 - 14:45

Tools of Tomorrow: How Can Behavioral Science Help the Next Generation Navigate a World of Tech and AI?

Chair:

- Dr. Jana Flemming
Director, Early Childhood Development | Salama bint Hamdan Al Nahyan Foundation

Speakers:

- Hamda Mohammad Al Suwaidi
Head of Research and Continuous Development, Knowledge & Impact Sector | Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority
Dana Suskind
Co-Director | TMW Center for Early Learning & Public Health - University of Chicago
Andreas Schleicher
Director of Education and Skills | OECD
Laura Litvine
Director, France | BIT

Summary:

As technology becomes increasingly embedded in children's lives, educators, policymakers, and parents face a complex challenge: how can we use technology to enhance learning without compromising children's well-being? This session will explore evidence-based strategies, drawn from behavioral science, that help balance the benefits and risks of technology use for children. We will consider how personalizable and interactive digital resources can spark imagination, broaden global awareness, and support children's educational development—particularly in regions like the GCC, where younger generations are often introduced to screens at an early age. At the same time, we will examine the potential pitfalls of unregulated or excessive screen time, including impacts on mental health, social skills, concentration, and physical health. Ultimately, this session will highlight how we can leverage behavioral science to guide the thoughtful integration of digital tools into children's education—enriching learning experiences while safeguarding their developmental well-being.

14:45 - 16:15

Human Behavior Meets Artificial Intelligence: Building Effective Public Policy in the Age of AI

Introduction:

- Dr. Najwa Aaraj
CEO | Technology Innovation Institute

Speakers:

- John List
Distinguished Service Professor in Economics | University of Chicago
Iyad Rahwan
Director | Max Planck Institute for Human Development
Sanjog Misra
Charles H. Kellstadt Professor of Marketing | University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Summary:

This session will introduce some emerging uses of AI to accelerate social science research in public policy, such as rapidly generating new policy proposals or testing policy proposals using synthetic audiences. The session should demonstrate that more (and more ambitious) behavioral research projects are increasingly possible, while at the same time stressing that AI can pose new challenges to effective policy-making. Other questions touched on in the session will focus on the relative roles for humans and AI in 'doing' behavioral science (i.e. will AIs actually be behavioral science innovators, or repositories of knowledge?), whether AIs will change the kind of questions behavioral scientists ask, and the danger of bias in AI systems.

16:30 - 17:15

Reducing Sludge: Behavioral Solutions to Streamline Government Services

Chair:

- Chiara Varazzani
Lead Behavioral Science | OECD

Speakers:

- H.E. Saeed AlMulla
Executive Director of Customer Experience | Department of Government Enablement - Abu Dhabi
Dilip Soman
Canada Research Chair | Rotman School, University of Toronto
Cass Sunstein
Robert Walmsley University Professor | Harvard Law School
Victor Dominello
CEO | Future Government Institute
Elizabeth Costa
Chief of Innovation and Partnerships | BIT

Summary:

Government processes are often burdened by sludge –unnecessary complexity that frustrates citizens and reduces access to effective public services. Whether it's convoluted forms, overly-bureaucratic procedures, or digital interfaces that are difficult to navigate, sludge is a major barrier to streamlined governance. This session will draw on the work of our speakers in assessing and reducing sludge in government processes - always with the aim of creating simpler and more accessible public services.



AGENDA DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL

RED THEATRE BLUE HALL BLACK BOX

13:00 - 13:30

Behavioral Trends Across 70 Countries



Speakers:

- **Nikos Nikiforakis**
Co-Director of the Center for Behavioral Institutional Design (C-BID) | NYU Abu Dhabi
- **Ernesto Reuben**
Global Network Professor of Economics | New York University

Summary:

Polymakers and organizations often assume that individuals worldwide respond similarly to nudges and incentives, yet growing evidence challenges this notion. At the same time, behavioral research remains scarce in many regions of the world such as in MENA. Using the newly collected World Behaviors & Stereotypes Dataset, this session explores behavioral diversity across 70 countries, focusing on key behavioral traits, examining the origins of the diversity and variation across demographic groups. We highlight key factors that affect human behavior across cultures, offering insights into how behavioral policies may need to adapt to different contexts.

14:45 - 15:30

Keeping Antibiotics Working with Behavioral Insights

Chair:

- **Michael Hallsworth**
Chief Behavioral Scientist | BIT

Speakers:

- **Dr. Najiba Abdulrazzaq**
Co-Chair | UAE National AMR Committee
- **Francis Meyo**
CEO | Busara
- **Farrah Alshash**
Director CSR | PureHealth
- **Rasha Attar**
Director | Behavioral Science Group

Summary:

Antimicrobial resistance is one of the greatest health challenges of our time. Ineffective antimicrobials are projected to claim 40 million lives in the next fifteen years and cost \$159 billion if radical action isn't taken. At its core, the problem of antimicrobial resistance is driven by human behaviors, such as antibiotic overprescribing, inappropriate prescribing, and the indiscriminate use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.

While R&D into finding new antibiotics is one way of tackling this issue, the behavioral drivers of AMR need to be addressed. If not, any new generation of antimicrobials will also become ineffective over time. This session will place the spotlight on behavioral interventions to keep antibiotics working across the world, including projects being launched by the BSG and partners in the UAE and abroad.

16:45 - 17:15

Strengthening Bonds across Communities: Building a Flourishing Future for the UAE

Chair:

- **Wardah Malik**
CEO | BEworks

Speakers:

- **Michael Muthukrishna**
Professor of Economic Psychology | London School of Economics
- **Michael Bailey**
Founder of Social Capital Lab | Meta

Summary:

The UAE is home to more than 200 different nationalities living side-by-side as neighbors, and the peaceful cohabitation of these groups has been a bedrock of the UAE's success to date. To guarantee the flourishing of all residents now and in the future and to ensure that this diversity continues to contribute to the UAE's success, this panel will ask how the UAE and other diverse societies can build even closer relations across communities using a deep understanding of human behavior and behavioral insights.



AGENDA DAY 1 WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL

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14:45 - 15:15

A Theory of Everyone: Navigating our Biggest Challenges

Speaker:

- **Michael Muthukrishna**
Professor of Economic Psychology | London School of Economics

Summary:

Michael Muthukrishna will delve into the key insights from his book, *A Theory of Everyone*, exploring how these concepts can be applied to address significant challenges both in the UAE and globally. He will discuss the role of cultural evolution in shaping human behavior and society, emphasizing the importance of understanding our shared cultural heritage to foster cooperation and innovation. The session will also cover practical applications of these theories in building social bonds, economic development, and environmental sustainability.

15:45 - 16:15

Building Adult Skills: Increasing Productivity in a Changing World

Speakers:

- **Andreas Schleicher**
Director for Education and Skills | OECD
- **David Halpern**
President Emeritus | BIT

Summary:

As the world continues to evolve through technological advancements, economic shifts, and demographic changes, the ability of adults to acquire and apply new skills is more important than ever. The OECD's latest findings highlight the growing gap in essential skills, particularly in digital literacy, problem-solving, and workplace adaptability. This session will delve into the current landscape of adult skills development, explore the policies and programs that can drive meaningful change, and discuss how individuals, businesses, and governments can work together to enhance productivity in a rapidly changing world.

16:30 - 18:00

Workshop: Measuring and Transforming Social Norms for Policy Impact

Facilitated by World Bank

Summary:

How do we measure the societal rules that shape behavior? And how can policymakers and practitioners leverage these insights to drive social change? Social norms are powerful forces shaping human behavior, from labor market participation to public health practices to environmental action. Yet, while norms are widely acknowledged as barriers or enablers of change, they remain challenging to measure and even harder to shift. This session will explore strategies for both rigorously measuring and transforming social norms, moving beyond traditional proxies to capture social expectations and consequences of norm deviation and using direct and indirect policy tools to address them. Drawing on World Bank research, this session will share insights from surveys and policy interventions to shift norms in key areas.



AGENDA DAY 2 THURSDAY 01 MAY

RED THEATRE BLUE HALL BLACK BOX

9:30 - 11:00

NEP Pitch Lab: Shaping Behaviors, Shaping Policy



Honored Guest Speaker:

- **H.E. Ahmed Al Shamsi**
CEO | Emirates Foundation

Presentations:

- **Khulood Alawadi** | Education
- **Maryam AlFalasi** | Food and Water Security
- **Dr. Mohamed AlAmeri** | Health and Well-Being
- **Mohamed Alwahedi** | Community Development and Social Services
- **Mohammed Janahi** | Financial Services
- **Rawdha AlQubaisi** | Culture and Identity
- **Sumaya Al Hajeri** | Policymaking
- **Faisal Al Hawi** | Technology and Innovation

Judges:

- **H.E. Homaid Al Shimmari**
Deputy Group CEO, Chief Corporate & Human Capital Officer | Mubadala
- **H.E. Ahmed Al Shamsi**
CEO | Emirates Foundation
- **Rasha Attar**
Director | Behavioral Science Group
- **David Halpern**
President Emeritus | BIT
- **Lucia Reisch**
El-Erian Professor for Behavioral Economics and Policy | University of Cambridge

Summary:

Developed under the direction of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and with the custodianship of His Highness Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed Al Nahyan, Chairman of the Office of Development and Martyrs Families Affairs at the Presidential Court, the National Experts Program (NEP) is a launchpad for Emirati experts to drive transformation across key future-focused sectors aligned with the UAE's national priorities. NEP 4.0 brings together 25 outstanding Emirati professionals from government, business, and academia—united in their dedication to advancing the nation's centennial strategy. Over the past year, eight participants received specialized training and mentorship from the Behavioral Science Group (BSG). In this special session, these NEP candidates will present their proposed behavioral interventions—each designed to tackle pressing national challenges—to a panel of internationally recognized experts. The expert panel will provide feedback and pose critical questions to guide the refinement of each proposal. Select interventions will be chosen for real-world implementation by the BSG, ensuring the program's innovations contribute meaningfully to the UAE's continued progress and prosperity.

11:30 - 12:20

How Can Behavioral Science Turbocharge International Development Interventions to Achieve Global Impact?

Honored Guest Speaker:

- **H.E. Badr Jafar**
Special Envoy to the Foreign Minister for Business and Philanthropy | Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Chair:

- **Mustafa Alrawi**
Group Director Editorial Partnerships | IMI Media

Speakers:

- **Francis Meyo**
CEO | Busara
- **Neela Saldanha**
Executive Director at Y-RISE | Yale University
- **Shekhar Menon**
Behavioral Insights Lead | Gates Foundation, India
- **Mónica Wills Silva**
Director, International Programs | BIT

Summary:

Behavioral science is increasingly reshaping how we approach international development challenges. Once viewed with skepticism, we now know that behavioral science has successfully improved outcomes in areas such as immunization, school performance, court attendance, and medical adherence. It has been rigorously tested and applied to address challenges as complex as gender-based violence, anti-corruption and peacebuilding. Yet delivering and testing context-specific interventions at scale remains a challenge. Panelists will be invited to share their experiences of using behavioral science to deliver impact at scale in international development programs - and consider what else behavioral science can achieve for international development in the future.

12:30 - 13:15

What are the Opportunities for the Region to Develop its Own Approaches to Applying Behavioral Science?

Chair:

- **Dr. Mohammed Almazrouei**
AD Gov BeSci Network Member | Abu Dhabi Police

Speakers:

- **H.E. Khulood Al Nuwais**
Chief Strategy & Sustainability Officer | Emirates Foundation
- **Dr. Munther Hilal Bader**
Deputy Head | Oman Vision 2040
- **May Bin Baz**
Director | Decision Support Center (DSC) Saudi Arabia
- **Zeina Afif**
Senior Social Scientist | World Bank

Summary:

What are the specific policy challenges in the region which lend themselves to a behavioral science lens? How do these differ from policy challenges in contexts where behavioral science has a more mature basis? And how should interventions and broader approaches be tailored to the region? These will be the central questions of this panel. Speakers will be invited to share their experiences of applying behavioral science in the region, including what has surprised them. The panel will conclude by touching on future avenues of collaboration between behavioral science units based in the region.

14:30 - 15:20

Achieving Large Scale Transformation for the Climate: How Can Individual Actions Drive Meaningful Change at Scale?

Honored Guest Speaker:

- **H.H. Sheikha Shamma bint Sultan bin Khalifa Al Nahyan**
President & CEO | UICCA

Chair:

- **Evan Nesterak**
Editor-in-Chief | Behavioral Scientist

Speakers:

- **Elke Weber**
Gerhard R. Andlinger Professor in Energy and the Environment | Princeton University
- **Toby Park**
Director of Climate, Energy and Sustainability | BIT
- **Lucia Reisch**
El-Erian Professor for Behavioral Economics and Policy | University of Cambridge

Summary:

This session will focus on understanding how individual actions can drive meaningful change for the environment at scale. Speakers will explore their work using behavioral interventions to change individual behaviors, and explain how individual behavior change can lead to the transformation of markets and systems, such as markets. The session should also consider the limitations of programmes for individual behavior change, examine the barriers to scaling individual actions, and explore strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Particular focus will be placed on sustainability challenges in the region, and suggest ways behavioral science can help provide solutions to these challenges.

15:30 - 16:15

Shaping Sustainable Transport: How can Urban Spaces Shift Behaviors to Benefit Both Commuters and the Climate?

Moderator:

- **Evan Nesterak**
Editor-in-Chief | Behavioral Scientist

Speakers:

- **Sebastien Mangeant**
Chief Operating Officer | Abu Dhabi Transport
- **Michael Hallsworth**
Chief Behavioral Scientist | BIT
- **Lucia Reisch**
El-Erian Professor for Behavioral Economics and Policy | University of Cambridge

Summary:

Transportation sits at the heart of the climate challenge. Globally, the transport sector accounts for around a quarter of energy-related carbon emissions, the vast majority coming from road vehicles. Even modest changes, scaled across millions of trips, can yield big results for the climate. A big piece of the puzzle is how to shift transport choices in car-dominated cities – and building sustainable infrastructure alone isn't enough if commuters stick to ingrained habits. This session explores how behavioral and data-driven interventions can transform urban mobility – improving not just the environmental impact of transport but also the user experience of getting around. We'll discuss strategies to nudge individuals toward public transit, ridesharing, walking or cycling, and to encourage institutions to support these shifts. Using practical examples, we will explore the challenges of changing transport behaviors in different urban and cultural contexts and climates.

16:15 - 16:25

Closing Remarks

Speaker:

- **Serene Koh**
Director, Singapore | BIT



AGENDA DAY 2 THURSDAY 01 MAY

RED THEATRE

BLUE HALL

BLACK BOX

10:25 - 11:10

Social Capital and Economic Opportunity Around the World: Evidence from the Gulf Region

Chair:

- **Michael Bailey**
Founder of Social Capital Lab | Meta

Summary:

Michael Bailey will present new data on cross-class friendships around the world and how it relates to measures of social capital, economic opportunity, and migration for the UAE and the Gulf Region. Michael founded the Social Capital Lab at Meta, a research group studying social networks and social capital delivering policy insights and data for academics and practitioners across the world. His work contributes to a greater understanding of how social connections lead to happier and more prosperous societies for all inhabitants.

11:30 - 12:15

Are Machines the Research Participants of the Future? Insights from LSE Alumni



Introduction & Moderator:

- **Barbara Fasolo**
Director, Behavioral Lab for Teaching and Research | London School of Economics

Speakers:

- **Fatima Koaik**
Behavioral Science Lead | Ideation Center, Strategy & Middle East
- **Rasha Attar**
Director | Behavioral Science Group

Summary:

In this session, two LSE MSc Behavioral Science Alumni present cutting edge behavioral research using synthetic audiences. Their presentations will show that using AIs as well as human research participants can rapidly speed up research in public policy - while yielding equally useful insights. For example, they will demonstrate that synthetic audiences can be used to quickly narrow down a long-list of policy proposals before testing fewer proposals with human participants, thus accelerating the process of policy innovation and implementation.

12:45 - 13:30

Establishing a Behavioral Insights Unit: Strategies and Best Practices

Introduction & Chair:

- **Serene Koh**
Director, Singapore | BIT

Speakers:

- **Rasha Attar**
Director | Behavioral Science Group
- **Ivan Fernando Budassi**
Former Director of Behavioral Sciences & Public Policy | Ministry of Economy, Argentina
- **Faisal Naru**
Founder and Director | Think Test Do

Summary:

This breakout session offers an exploration of what it takes to set up a Behavioral Insights (BI) Unit within governments and other organizations across different continents. Drawing on global experiences, participants will explore effective strategies for building support, overcoming initial challenges, and ensuring the unit's long-term success. The session will also discuss future trends in BI and opportunities for regional collaboration between units.



AGENDA DAY 2 THURSDAY 01 MAY

RED THEATRE

BLUE HALL

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9:45 - 10:15

Behavior Change to Fight Obesity: A Recipe for Healthier Societies

Discussion:

- **H.E. Dr. Ahmed Abdulhadi AlKhazraji**
Executive Director, Healthy Living Unit | Abu Dhabi Department of Health
- **Hugo Harper**
Director, A Health Life Mission | Nesta

Summary:

GCC countries suffer from some of the world's highest obesity rates. This prevalence in obesity is driven by the region's rapid urbanization, economic prosperity, and lifestyle factors. This session will focus on what does and doesn't work for long-term weight loss, and what policymakers and industry can do to encourage healthier eating. Drawing on lessons from around the world, this session will highlight a range of policy options to incentivize healthier manufacturing practices, foster lifelong healthy behaviors, and promote better food choices. The session will discuss the interlinking roles of policy, industry and investment, and highlight how evidence-based interventions can lead to meaningful public health improvements.

10:30 - 11:00

How Can Behavioral Science Help Eradicate Malaria in Our Lifetime?

Introduction:

- **Tala Al-Ramahi**
On behalf of Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity

Discussion:

- **James Tibenderana**
CEO | Malaria Consortium
- **Rachel Coyle**
CEO | BIT

Summary:

The advent of malaria vaccines has given the global effort to eradicate malaria a new boost. While medical advancements in prevention and treatment have made significant strides, success ultimately depends on key behavioral challenges - the appropriate use of bed nets, the uptake of vaccines, timely diagnosis, and adherence to treatment protocols. This session will explore how behavioral science could be applied by governments, healthcare systems and communities to help design more effective public health campaigns and interventions. By understanding and influencing human behavior, we can accelerate the fight against vector-borne diseases and ensure these life-saving tools are delivering to their fullest potential.

11:30 - 12:00

The Future of Behavioral Science

Speaker:

- **Michael Hallsworth**
Chief Behavioral Scientist | BIT

Summary:

In this breakout session, Michael Hallsworth will present a practitioner's guide to how behavioral science can and should be done better, drawing on key principles from his Manifesto for Behavioral Science and Four Big Shifts for behavioral science. This session will explore how behavioral science can evolve to tackle more significant societal issues beyond just 'nudges' and surface-level interventions.

12:30 - 13:00

Shaping Choices: The Role of Choice Architecture in How We Make Decisions

Speaker:

- **Eric Johnson**
Director, Center of the Decisions Sciences | Columbia Business School

Summary:

Eric Johnson will share insights from his world-leading research exploring how choice architecture (the way choices are presented) influences decision-making. He will discuss the concept of choice architecture and its impact on our daily decisions, highlighting the subtle factors that can lead to better or worse outcomes. The session will also cover practical applications of these principles in various fields, including public policy, business, and personal decision-making.

14:30 - 16:00

Workshop: Strategic Decision Making for Leaders

Facilitators:

- **Barbara Fasolo**
Director, Behavioral Lab for Teaching and Research | London School of Economics
- **Umar Taj**
Associate Professor of Behavioural Science | London School of Economics / Warwick Business School

Summary:

Strategic decisions come with risk, conflicting objectives and no clear options. In this context, choice architecture and nudges cannot be applied, as what is best or nudged is not yet determined. From this specialist workshop you will learn how to improve the quality of strategic decisions. The workshop will be structured as an interactive dialogue, blending the latest insights from decision science with practical applications and your experience. The workshop will be co-led by two experts working at the intersection of decision science and behavioral science, and with experience of supporting 350+ strategic decisions across the public and private sector: Dr Barbara Fasolo, specializing in the theoretical underpinnings of cognitive bias and decision-making processes, and Dr Umar Taj, specializing in applying these concepts to real-world policy and corporate settings.