

# CSR TIMES

INDIA'S NO. 1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MAGAZINE

[www.csrtimes.org](http://www.csrtimes.org)

## SUSTAINABILITY IS THE CORE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE CSR PROJECTS  
SUPPORT GOA AND  
ITS PEOPLE

GOA CSR AUTHORITY

THE GOA GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN A REVOLUTIONARY STEP BY CREATING A GOA CSR AUTHORITY WITH ALL THE RELEVANT REGISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS TO ENABLE CORPORATES TO DONATE THEIR CSR FUNDS THROUGH THE AUTHORITY. SPEAKING TO CSR TIMES, HONOURABLE CHIEF MINISTER OF GOA, **SHRI PRAMOD SAWANT**, EXPLAINS THE GOVERNMENT'S THINKING BEHIND THIS MOVE.





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Dear Readers,

As you hold this issue of CSR Times, I wish to thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Our team strongly believes sustainability must be a way of life and not a forced discipline.

The stories we bring to you in this issue are based on this principle. Over the years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become synonymous with sustainability. The impact that sustainability has on people's lives when it comes to CSR activities is tremendous.

As part of this series, our team has attempted to delve into the ways and approaches that all stakeholders in the society are adopting to strengthen sustainable development. In this country and globally, the youth are also more sensitive and active in this and related aspects. We have tried to capture it for readers, policymakers, and corporate as a food for thought.

The state government of Goa has set a new benchmark in CSR by establishing a CSR Authority. It is the beginning of a new era in the state in terms of reinforcing sustainability amongst the corporate houses and the beneficiaries. Reading the interview with the Goa Chief Minister will give you insight into the thinking that went into setting up the CSR Authority. And there is more when you read our other stories.

As we celebrated International Women's Day this month, the team has tried to capture the rationale of reminding ourselves about the importance of this day and for whom it is celebrated. The interview on this subject is insightful. No doubt, the challenges they faced and are experiencing continue to be an emotional and critical burden.

The team has tried to identify a few women who have demonstrated their ability to give a new meaning to leadership. We feel, however small that we must recognise the numerous women in India and globally who have brought different experiences, perspectives, and skills to the table. Because of such efforts by society today, we witness women leaders' efforts to ensure more acceptance of their irreplaceable contributions to decisions, policies, and laws that work better for all.

We endeavour to capture the contribution made by India as a country in promoting sustainability and taking it to the international platforms, helping developing and even developed countries adopt them. I and my team enjoyed preparing this issue, and I am confident that you will enjoy reading it as a reader.

Happy Reading

Harish Chandra



HARISH CHANDRA

AS WE CELEBRATED INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY THIS MONTH, THE TEAM HAS TRIED TO CAPTURE THE RATIONALE OF REMINDING OURSELVES ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DAY AND FOR WHOM IT IS CELEBRATED. THE INTERVIEW ON THIS SUBJECT IS INSIGHTFUL. NO DOUBT, THE CHALLENGES THEY FACED AND ARE EXPERIENCING CONTINUE TO BE AN EMOTIONAL AND CRITICAL BURDEN.

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## EDITOR'S CHOICE

# UPSKILLING CSR FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is perhaps metamorphosing. Those helping it in this process should aim to ensure that it becomes a more potent instrument of change.

Sustainable business models are a few, but the success stories should not remain as islands of success. Hence, the government's policy support must be reciprocated by all the stakeholders with the same passion and drive to achieve it.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) align with CSR activities. Public sector and corporate entities currently undertake all the SDGs as part of their CSR activities. However, they work in silos and do not talk to each other. As a result, the aspect of sustainability is not addressed.

However, a new trend has emerged in the last few years, where a holistic approach is taken at all levels, both in the corporate world and PSUs. This is a positive sign for the push towards a sustainable approach to development and doing business.

The challenges of managing sustainability in a system should be smooth and not ad-hoc. This would require sensitising stakeholders at many levels. Such an effort would also require orientation and relearning at different stages and phases. It is also important that efforts to achieve sustainability should be time-bound. Such a deadline approach will help achieve the desired results within a fixed period. It is a long road ahead, full of challenges, hurdles, twists and turns, but a determined mind and team can reach the destination.

The current issue of CSR Times has attempted to explore each of the aspects. We have done our best to present a subject that many others would not dive into to get the desired pearl. It was not an easy task for the government when they conceptualised CSR. Still, over the years it has emerged as a critical bridge to the development of society and nation.

M. RAJENDRAN

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# THE CSR PROJECTS SUPPORT GOA AND ITS PEOPLE



CSR Times

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is not a charity but a duty & responsibility towards society inspired by the highest values of seeking to return to society a part of what we have received in whatever capacity & to whatever extent we can. Over the years, CSR has gathered critical mass and is now poised to consolidate and grow further.

CSR awareness and CSR consciousness are visible among large and medium-sized companies, which now look at CSR to build a strategic fit with the community and environment in which they operate.

A Report of the High-Level Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) 2018 highlighted,

“Broadly, the CSR mandate has been aligned with national priorities such as public health, education, livelihood, water conservation, natural resource management, etc. More importantly, it has generated national interest and debate on its potential role and the responsibility of the corporate sector in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

The Goa CSR Authority was formed and set up by the Government of Goa with the noble ideal of filling in the gaps in the existing system of governance.

In this journey, it wanted the corporate and public sector units and society to work together to achieve the desired objectives.

The Goa CSR Authority was formed as a Society to undertake and

facilitate CSR activities of Companies under Rule 4(2) (b) of Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021. The society’s area of operations is restricted to the State of Goa.

The primary objective of CSR was not to mobilise resources for government to bridge the resource gap in meeting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The primary aim is to promote responsible and sustainable business philosophy at a broad level, and 22 encourages companies to develop innovative ideas and robust management systems to address social and environmental concerns of the local area and other needy areas in the country.

The law intends to mainstream the practice of business involvement

in CSR and make it socially, economically and environmentally responsible. In the last few years, a strong movement has been witnessed towards sustainable projects, creating a long-term impact for the beneficiaries.

## Goa Shipyard Ltd.



Goa Shipyard Ltd. has been a vital part of Goa's industrial landscape,

integrating seamlessly into the community and generating employment and business opportunities for the local populace. The Company's operations have played a significant role in impeding Goa's industrial growth. It has encouraged the development of ancillary units and vendor networks, establishing and enhancing proficiency, excellence, and entrepreneurship.

Corporate social responsibility at Goa Shipyard Ltd. involves various voluntary efforts, which the Company engages in to contribute towards social development.

The five focus areas of our CSR and Sustainability strategy are as follows:

- Health & Hygiene
- Civic Amenities
- Education
- Social Empowerment
- Health Care / Medical Facility

## CSR & Sustainability Policy of GSL

Goa Shipyard Limited, a Schedule B Mini Ratna Central Public Sector Enterprise under administrative control of the Ministry of Defence, is located in the South Goa region under Mormugao Taluka. GSL believes that with its core business interests in Shipbuilding, Ship repairs and General Engineering services, the Company plays an important role in strengthening the fabric of society. GSL is committed to continuously improving its social responsibilities as a corporate citizen to positively impact society and the environment.

GSL has supported villages and communities near Vasco Da Gama for several years. The nature of support and engagement with the society was largely based on the immediate need felt across sections of the society.

A baseline and need assessment



## PROJECTS

survey was conducted in the state of Goa to strengthen the CSR initiative based on a systematic and scientific approach. Baseline survey analysis formed the criteria for the identification and selection of projects with a duration of medium to long term through the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)

These projects are executed through specialised agencies / NGOs, facilitated by the National CSR Hub (NCSRH). Each project is monitored by a dedicated GSL project team headed by an executive.

GSL has supported communities near its location at Vasco-Da-Gama under Mormugao Taluka for several years. The nature of support and engagement with the society was largely based on the immediate need felt across sections of the society. The initiatives included looking after Community Health & Hygiene, the needs of Educational Institutions, Orphanage and Old Age Homes, Provision of Civic Amenities, Medical Care, etc.

The activities undertaken pertain to the installation of Aqua Guards and water coolers, the installation of fans

and lights in the classrooms, the provision of desks and benches, laboratory equipment in schools, equipping the playgrounds, providing bore wells, construction of modern bus Shelter, Children's Park and Garden Fountain for the community, provision of ambulances, assistance to NGOs working for the rehabilitation of the destitute, underprivileged and the needy by providing nutritional support, conducting dental and eye camps and provision of medicines and bearing the cost of surgical operations as a follow-up expenses thereof in Government Hospitals for the general public. The Company's initiatives have enabled GSL to become an integral part of Goan society.

Source: <https://goashipyard.in/csr/corporate-social-responsibility>

### V.M. Salgaocar & Brother Pvt Ltd



V. M. Salgaocar and Brother Pvt. Ltd.

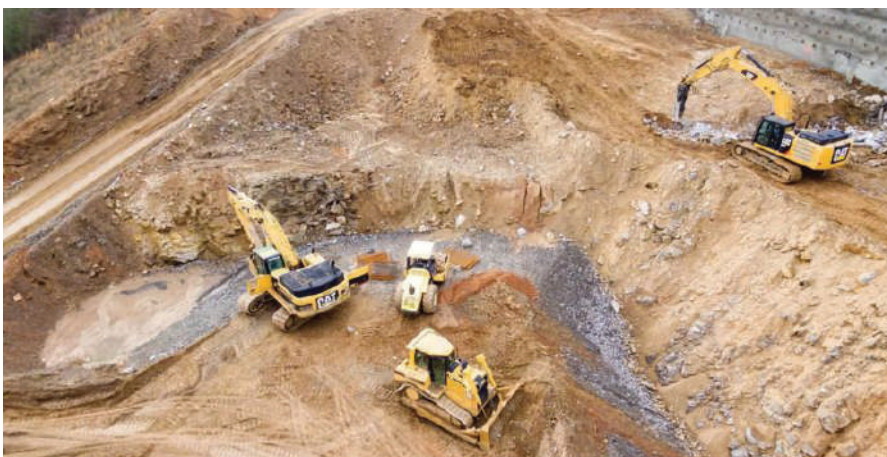
V.M. Salgaocar & Brother Private Limited and its people are committed to society, ecology and the

environment. The Company realises that one of the most important parameters for a socially responsible corporate citizen is to carry out business following sustainability, balance, and equity principles. The Company also realises that caring for society, country, and the planet is not philanthropy or generosity – it is a way of doing sustainable business.

The CSR Committee's vision is to co-create sustainable value by improving lives in pursuit of collective development and environmental sustainability. This vision should encompass all CSR activities of the Company. Its mission is to positively impact the communities where the Company does business and our internal and external stakeholders by enhancing the quality of life, committing to environmental enrichment and fostering innovation. Within the above mission, the CSR Committee will choose Priority Projects from time to time.

The Company believes that CSR Policy is the Company's faith in socially inclusive and sustainable business as the way of doing business. The Company shall integrate and follow responsible practices into its business strategies and operations to manage the three challenges – social development, economic prosperity and environmental integrity.

The Company recognises that good CSR embraces all aspects of sustainable development and the way the Company affects people through its business operations. The Company acknowledges that CSR is not all about spending – it is the orientation of the







Company and its people to larger social causes. The Company encourages its people to contribute to its CSR efforts in every possible way.

The Company's CSR is focused on socio-economic development and environmental sustainability.

## KEY COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

### Krishi Adhar

17 Ha. of fallow land brought under cultivation benefitting 80 families. 11 ha. of paddy brought under System of Rice Cultivation (SRI). Regular seeds, manure distribution to over four hundred farmers.

### Elixir of life

Setting up of an independent rural drinking water scheme for several households in the village of Taldem that is operated exclusively by women, a first for the State and another one benefiting several families in the village of Khazan, Surla which is handed over to the PWD for further operation.

### Education

V.M. Salgaocar Dnyan Jyoti Education Scheme has helped several students

pursue their dream of higher education. Over three thousand needy students avail the benefit of assistance in kind through distribution of uniforms, educational aids and transport facility.

### Stree Shakti

The Community Training Centre conducts awareness workshops and provides trainings to women from SHG's on a regular basis

### Social Infrastructure

Major financial investments have been made towards various social infrastructural projects including the flagship four-lane Usgao bridge that connected the North and South Goa and took care of the perpetual traffic congestion issue that plagued the locality.

### Arogya Rakshak

Two Community Medical Centres provide unhindered service to more than 4,000 people living in the neighbouring villages. Specialized camps such as gynecology, dental etc. have provided support to over two thousand beneficiaries till date.

### Environment Awareness

Regular celebration of Wildlife Week, lectures by resource persons and environment themes competitions are regularly organized to spread the message of environment conservation.

Source: <https://vmsbgoa.com/corporate-social-responsibility/>

## OLDGOA

(a D2C Company)



OLDGOA pursues its business strategy of introducing products that give consumers health & wellness, OLDGOA operates in a manner that not just continues to generate an attractive return for the company, but also minimizes our impact on the environment and helps in replenishing the planet; while lending a helping hand to the community. Our mission is to find the best quality organic food



and beauty products and take it to the end-user.

Stay innovative, dynamic, and socially responsible at every step in the journey.

Through sustainable measures, actively contribute to the Social, Economic and Environmental Development of the coconut farming community in which we operate ensuring participation from the community and thereby create value for the nation.

**MISSION OLDGOA**

1. Ensuring socio-economic development of the farmers through different participatory and need-based initiatives in the best interest of the poor and deprived sections of the society so as to help them to become SELF-RELIANT and build a better tomorrow for themselves.
2. Ensuring environmental sustainability through waste management, ecological conservation and regeneration, protection & re growth of local coconut species.

**EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP**

OLDGOA provides scholarship for 2 deserving village children in Goa and

pays for their schooling expenses for the year.

**TRIBAL FARMS & FARMERS**

The CSR activities we pursue will be in line with our stated Vision and Mission, focused not just around our plants and offices, but also in other geographies based on the needs of the communities.

The two main focus areas where special Community Development programmes would be run are:

1. Providing clean and safe drinking water to the farmers and their families.
2. Providing education and training to the needy farmers to help them prosper in their trade and help their business grow.

**WORKSHOP & TRAINING STUDENT**

OLDGOA offers apprenticeship courses for students wanting to learn Coconut farming and also for working in a VCO manufacturing plant.

**Empowering Villages**

- There are 209 villages in North Goa and 138 in south Goa.
- All coconut across all villages is processed in Old Goa oils, thereby changing the lives of villages and villagers.
- Old Goa is Asia’s first pharma hygiene VCO unit in a cosmetic unit.

- It encourages women and farmers to cultivate crops and contribute to the Old Goa oils and cosmetic units.
- Old Goa products are available in more than 400 stores and sold across Goa serving more than 3 million population in Goa within a short period of time and 3000 farmers.
- Old Goa has created a new way of circular economy growth
- It helps people to connect from local customers to the tourism buyers by giving good return to their crop.
- Gives 24hrs helpline support to farmers Al Chabot
  1. Plucking
  2. Manicure
  3. Caretaking
- It only ensures the traceability of raw material to the extraction of the geographical location of the coconut tree. It also assures climate control of coconut oil as in the shell of the coconut.
- Gives support to a self-help group.
- Bottling with the name of the farmer unit.

**Hair oil** – the concept of hair oil encourages more entrepreneurs and farmers to manufacture cold-pressed virgin coconut oil, which gives good returns to self-help groups.

Source: <https://www.oldgoa.in/csr/>

# UN GCNI ORGANIZED THE 18TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

## “Advancing Sustainable India: Driving Change with Forward Faster 2030”; “Bringing up and highlighting the most prudent issues of our times and developing a roadmap for approaching the midpoint of the SDGs target in the Decade of Action”



UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI), a local arm of the United Nations Global Compact based in New York, convened its 18th National Convention in, New Delhi. It was Themed “Advancing Sustainable India: Driving Change with Forward Faster 2030,” the convention aimed to address pressing issues and chart a course towards achieving the mid-point targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Decade of Action. With only 15% of SDGs currently on track for 2030, the event focused on key themes from the

United Nations Global Compact’s Forward Faster 2030 initiative, urging businesses to take proactive steps towards effecting change and aspiring to higher ambitions.

The convention’s plenary sessions highlighted corporate efforts in driving climate action and sustainable practices. Discussions on water management underscored its role in achieving all SDGs, especially in water-scarce areas. The session on sustainable finance addressed India’s financial gaps and potential solutions for a green transition. The importance of

ensuring a living wage was emphasized as a moral imperative.

### Key Takeaways from the Convention:

1. Understanding the correlation between bold action on the faster forward themes and corporate value creation.
2. Exchange of best practices and innovations championed by stakeholders for fast-forwarding actions on global goals.
3. Enhancing the Target 2030 lens to craft effective solutions for the benefit of all stakeholders.
4. Launch of White Paper by

Accenture focusing on barriers the private sector faces to extend access to sustainable finance and approaches to overcome these barriers.

- Promoting Collective learning & fostering collaborations for Inclusive & Sustainable Development for a more sustainable future for all.

#### Leaders' Voices:

In his address, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Hon'ble Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs lauded the flourishing India network of UNGC for mobilizing private sector resources, notably advancing human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption agendas, while aligning with broader MDGs and SDGs within the Indian framework. Acknowledging India's pivotal global role as the most populous nation with the fifth-largest economy and fastest growth rate, he emphasized that India's trajectory profoundly influences global outcomes. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India's commitment to 'no one left behind' ethos through 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas' is evident, shaping crucial decisions for generations. Aligning with international agreements like the Paris Agreement and domestic initiatives such as the Panchamrit Plan and women-led development, India underscores collaboration, cooperation, and collective action as paramount. Despite global challenges, India's sustainable development

approach shines with significant strides in water, sanitation, and resource mobilization, coupled with unwavering dedication to gender equality and social inclusion, surpassing the global average in advancing UN Sustainability Development Goals through grassroots-driven efforts.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Arun Kumar Singh, President of UN GCNI & Chairman & CEO of ONGC Group, emphasized ONGC's firm commitment to promoting a low-carbon future and sustainability, collaborating with energy session partners under the UN GCNI umbrella. He spotlighted ONGC's ambitious goal of achieving near-zero upstream methane emissions by 2030 as a tangible demonstration of this dedication. Furthermore, he lauded India's noteworthy commitment to sustainability and its transformative journey. Singh also elaborated on ONGC's emphasis on developing sustainable products and initiatives.

Ms. Isabelle Tschan, Resident Representative of UNDP India, passionately asserted the significance of SDGs, emphasizing recent collaborations and the role of targeted investments in achieving sustainability goals. Tschan underscored the pivotal role of targeted investments and active private sector engagement in India's unwavering commitment to ensure no one is left behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. She asserted, "The SDGs aren't just a list of codes; they carry the hopes and dreams of all."

Mr. Sundeep Singh, Managing

Director of Accenture Strategy and Consulting, Sustainability, stressed the urgent need for action on sustainability, aligning with discussions at the G20 summit. In his discussion on change, he emphasized the critical importance of both the rate and source, particularly in light of the urgent need for rapid change, making the convention's theme, "Forward Faster 2030," profoundly resonant. Using a sports analogy, likening matches often decided in the second half, he pointed out that we are now entering the latter half of the 2015-2030 transformation journey. The responsibility lies with us, as a global community, to decide whether we succeed or falter in this pivotal period.

Highlighting the critical importance of accurate sustainability data, Susanna Hasenoehrl, Head of Sustainability SAP Asia Pacific & Japan highlighted that it becomes evident that without it, our environmental progress remains precarious. To achieve genuine breakthroughs, investment in real-world technologies like renewable energy is essential, accompanied by rigorous tracking of sustainability and financial outcomes through verifiable data, not mere estimates. Businesses, both in India and globally, must quantify the carbon footprints of their products or processes precisely and share this data throughout their value chains using technology.

Ratnesh Jha, Executive Director UN-GCNI emphasized the network's exponential growth and commitment to sustainable development.

# ESG ADVANCEMENT - INNOVATIONS DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY

*UN Global Compact and PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry set the Stage For Sustainable Innovation*

CSR Times

**G**lobal Summit “ESG Advancement - Innovations Driving Sustainability” brought together the stakeholders to deliberate on this crucial subject.

UN Global Compact Network India (UN GCNI), and the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), hosted a Global Summit at PHD House, New Delhi.

“The world is changing, and ESG is becoming an integral part of the businesses,” said Dr Jatinder Singh, Assistant Secretary General, PHDCCI.

Mr. Ratnesh, Executive Director, UNGCNI, said adopting Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 is a monumental step towards a unified and sustainable future.

Ms. Cristina Ritter, Head of Anti-Corruption and Governance, UN Global Compact, New York, highlighted the importance of SDG 16 and the importance of collective action to mitigate corruption challenges across the sectors.

Dr. Uddesh Kohli, Former Senior Advisor of the UN Global Compact, said, corporate sector should be present somewhere on the social side, looking after the societies’ problems and issues.

Mr. Rishi Chawla, Vice President, Carlsberg stated its focus on



sustainability and responsible business practices, emphasizing collaboration and innovation.

Dr. Bhaskar Chatterjee, CEO of Vedanta Group elucidated the significance of integrating various sustainability frameworks such as ESG, CSR, and SDGs.

Dr. K. Madan Gopal, Advisor, Public Health Administration, NHSRC (MoHFW), Govt of India says Universal Health Coverage delivery and health services are paramount for India to achieve SDG 3.

Mr Mukesh Kumar Sharma, Executive Director, PSI (India) correlated the theme “Fit Fast and Forward” with ESG principles, stressing their vital role in organizational impact at scale.

Dr. Karan Thakur, Vice President, Sustainability, ESG & Public Affairs, Apollo Hospitals Enterprises Limited, says sustainability & ESG practices have

become a central focus for companies, investors, governments, and regulators.

Mr. Dinesh Kumar Agrawal, Compliance and BRSR expert, Consocia Advisory, says that ethical considerations are central to BRSR compliance, as it involves transparently reporting on the impacts of business activities on various stakeholders, including communities, employees, and the environment.

Dr. Somnath Singh, Deputy Director, UN GCNI said ESG—Environmental, Social, and Governance—criteria have emerged as a powerful framework for businesses to integrate sustainability into their operations, decision-making processes, and long-term strategies.

Dr. Harivansh, Chief Educational Advisor, BIMTECH, addressed corruption in India, which is affecting the education and business sectors. Despite legal reforms, corruption persists, making life difficult for the commoner.

# GOA CSR AUTHORITY

A bridge connecting Corporate, Institutions and Society.



CSR Times

The Goa CSR Authority was formed and set up by the Government of Goa with the noble ideal of filling in the gaps in the existing system of governance.

In this journey, it wanted the corporate and public sector units and society to work together to achieve the desired objectives.

The Goa CSR Authority was formed as a Society to undertake and facilitate CSR activities of Companies under Rule 4(2) (b) of Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021. The area of operations of the society is restricted to the State of Goa.

The aims and objectives of the

society includes:

- 1) Bringing in adequate clarity on the new CSR regime and rules
- 2) Creation of a CSR Fund with the contribution of various companies
- 3) Ensuring the contribution of various companies as per the provisions of the Companies Act 2013
- 4) Channelizing CSR contributions from various Government PSUs as well as Private sector companies for the development of a CSR fund and optimum utilization of this CSR fund through a sustainable mechanism.
- 5) Channelizing the CSR fund in line with the sectoral priorities of the Government.
- 6) Channelizing CSR funds for the development of backward talukas

and vulnerable groups in Goa 7) Ensuring full CSR compliance as per Section 135, Companies Act 2013 for all Companies contributing to the CSR fund

The Goa State government has inked many agreements with corporate entities and institutions to actively support and engage in initiatives across various sectors in Goa, such as education, skill development, social welfare, environment, and health.

Recently, discussions have begun for a possible tie-up with CSR Times to highlight the achievements of the Goa CSR Authority.

The Goa CSR Authority formalized Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with prominent organizations, including the National Institute of



Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Aether Energy, Central Institute for Indian Languages (CIIL), and Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII).

Chief Minister of Goa Shri Pramod Sawant emphasized the establishment

of the CSR Authority to streamline and oversee Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects, ensuring their effective and timely execution with the collaboration of corporate entities and institutions both within and outside Goa. He commended Goa

for emerging as a frontrunner in CSR activities, positioning the state as a potential flag bearer for such initiatives across the country.

Underlining the significance of these partnerships, Sawant announced that NIMHANS would extend support in stress management, teacher education, and life skills in alignment with the new education policy (NEP) of 2020.

Expressing enthusiasm for collaboration, Chief Minister Sawant expressed a desire to collaborate with CSR TIMES to showcase and highlight CSR activities in Goa, as well as the achievements of the Goa CSR Authority. Prashant Das, the Consulting Editor of CSR TIMES, affirmed a commitment to providing comprehensive coverage of the CSR initiatives led by the Goa CSR Authority.





THE GOA GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN A REVOLUTIONARY STEP BY CREATING A GOA CSR AUTHORITY WITH ALL THE RELEVANT REGISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS TO ENABLE CORPORATES TO DONATE THEIR CSR FUNDS THROUGH THE AUTHORITY. SPEAKING TO CSR TIMES, HONOURABLE CHIEF MINISTER OF GOA, SHRI PRAMOD SAWANT, EXPLAINS THE GOVERNMENT'S THINKING BEHIND THIS MOVE.

Prashant Das, Consulting Editor

#### **Why was Goa CSR Authority formed?**

Over the years, numerous companies based in Goa and outside Goa have been consistently working shoulder to shoulder along with various Departments in Goa Administration and in collaboration with local NGOs and various clubs. They have been mainly working in the field of health especially during Covid outbreak, Education, Women Empowerment and Skill Development.

All these works worth crores of rupees were being done in a piece meal manner and no account of such assets was kept at one place.

Also maintenance was always our concern.

I therefore felt that a proper institutional arrangement should be made under the government so that assets created under the CSR initiative are taken care off at both the stages of



implementation and maintenance.

My government has created the Goa CSR authority with all the relevant registration and Government statutory requirements to enable corporates to donate their CSR funds through the Authority and I am happy to inform that the Goa CSR Authority has been receiving quality response from reputed Central Government institutions, Banks, Industry and other Corporates.

### **Major achievements of Goa CSR Authority?**

Goa CSR Authority has been created to ensure that CSR projects are routed through it so that timely implementation and maintenance of projects is undertaken with the help of corporate and institutions within the state and outside Goa. CSR activities in Goa through, the Goa CSR Authority is a grand success contributing to the overall development of the State covering various sectors like Health, Environment, Women Empowerment, Energy, Education etc. Noteworthy contributions to the Goa CSR Authority initially came from

Colorcon Asia Pvt. Limited, towards "Vision for All" initiative - This initiative has already provided eye checkups to approximately 230,000 school children, across the State. Ophthalmic surgeries, if required besides distribution of spectacles to the needy students will be done free of cost.

Advani Hotels and Resorts, (India) Ltd. have contributed towards CSR fund.

Power Grid Corporation of India

Ltd, under its CSR initiative have agreed to contribute Rs.2.64 crore as financial assistance for supply of Medical Equipment/Instrument for Automation in Blood Bank, two Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances and six Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances Hospitals in Goa State.

The State Bank of India sponsored tailoring machines for the SHGs in the areas of Entrepreneurship.

STEM LAB has been recently set up at Government Primary School through support by Entecres Labs Pvt. Ltd. we plan to set up STEM labs in majority of the schools through CSR initiative.

Also, Water ATM, a CSR initiative by Y4D Foundation, shall be installed at Secretariat Complex, Porvorim Goa for the benefit of staff and general public visiting the complex, wherein the usage of plastic water bottles in the vicinity shall be reduced considerably.

### **Please share your vision and steps planned for Goa CSR Authority?**

The Companies Act, 2013, mandates that eligible corporations allocate 2% of their profits towards CSR initiatives. The CSR Authority is exclusively working on in the area of Socio – Economic Development through best practices. The Goa CSR Authority serve as the channel through which these funds will be channelised to execute projects across various government departments with an emphasis that the projects benefit the Goan community and build a better tomorrow for themselves.

### **Based on Goa CSR Authority success, do you think other States in India could also benefit, has any Central & State Government approached (Goa CSR Authority) for guidance?**

Goa CSR Authority has been a huge success in its first two years of inception. It has been observed that small and far-flung states get a measly amount of corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds spent by companies, while large state economies benefit most from it. These States can certainly follow Goa model of CSR Authority in various sectors of development.

### **Big take away from Goa CSR Conclave in 2023? Are you planning similar Conclave in 2024?**

On 14th December, 2023, the Goa CSRA organised a unique CSR initiative i.e. Goa CSR Conclave, under my Chairmanship, which was witnessed and participated by more than 100 Corporate Houses, PSUs, Government Institutions and Private Sectors. The Conclave started producing acceptance and contribution from the Corporates and Government Institutions for the Noble Cause in the areas of Education, Skill, Entrepreneurship, Environment, Health, and Energy within a month from the date the conclave being held. Buoyed by the success of Goa CSR Conclave 2023, the government may consider organising a similar event during 2024 for further enhancement of CSR activities in the State.

### **How much funds have been used for development of backward talukas of Goa?**



The State of Goa has one of the highest GDP per capita in the country. Also Goa boasts of well-developed infrastructure in the fields of Health, Transport, Education, health, transport and communication etc. Also Goa is highest ranked State in the National Social Progress Index (SPI) released by Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM ) and has been classified as a 'very high progress' State.

**Do you think, Goa CSR Initiative can be a game changer for the ranking done by NITI Aayog?**

Goa CSR Initiative can play a big role in improving the NITI Aayog across various sectors. Healthy CSR Initiatives can be modelled to develop key sectors of the economy such as Education, Health, Energy, Entrepreneurship etc which can have positive influence on the State, thereby improving its performance at national level.

**How many Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been**

**signed by Goa CSR Authority? Which sectors majorly benefitted in the State?**

Nine Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed by the State Government with the corporate houses and institutions to participate in education, skill development, social, environmental and health sectors, among others. These MoUs shall have positive impact across diverse fields, with visible results expected in the coming years.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed with Colorcon Asia Pvt. Ltd., The Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), AlphaMERS Ltd, EduHub Sports Private Limited, The National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Ather Energy, Central Institute for Indian Languages (CIIL), and Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII).

Besides these MoUs bodies of repute such as World Bank, UNICEF,

ISRO, EDII, Central Power Research Institute are in active consultation with us.

**In 2022, Goa CSR Authority urged Corporates operating in the State to give 1% of proceeds to the State Government under Goa CSR Authority? What has been the response now?**

Corporates having operations in the State have been requested to give 1 per cent of their proceeds to the Goa government under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to the Goa CSR Authority. The government is ready to give freedom/choice to the companies to lend CSR for the sector of their choice like health, education and others

**How can CSR Authorities help India meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030?**

Goa has become Achiever in 2 goals, Frontrunner in 8 goals, Performer in 3 goals and Aspirant in 2 goals as per the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 3.0. Further, Goa has computed its own Goa SDG Index 2023, wherein the State has become Achiever in 4 goals, Frontrunner in 10 goals and Performer in 2 goals.

This CSR Initiative will push the nation towards achievement of sustainable development goals and public-private partnership in transforming India. Increased contributions from private partners are needed to supplement public spending. Private philanthropy can be a catalyst to increase government spending and cover the funding

shortfall. Also, private philanthropy can ensure timely and effective fund deployment, with greater accountability and monitoring.

### **How do you view, importance of CSR Initiatives for Goa's overall development?**

CSR Initiatives are very important for Goa's overall development of the State. The CSR funding can be utilised to undertake various development activities in the field of education, health, skill development etc. Goa CSR Authority being manned by persons in professional expertise, proper and detailed study shall be taken up to identify projects which will have positive impact on society, community and environment. Through study of the proposal shall invite interested corporates to invest in such proposals through its CSR policy also building brand image for them.

### **What steps have been taken to attract investment that align with social and environmental objectives?**

The Goa CSR Authority have been closely coordinating with corporates, institutions involved in Environmental and Social sectors of development and have been successful in getting corporates, institutions on board to invest in Environmental and Social issues. Like I said earlier, The State Bank of India has done a lot during previous years, last month SBI sponsored tailoring machines for the SHGs in the areas of Women empowerment. Also, discussions with Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) with respect to river cleansing process is

underway. I thank and congratulate all the eminent institutions and Goa CSR Authority for these initiatives. I am sure they will collectively contribute to the socio-economic development of Goa.

### **Are there specific sector of projects where Goa CSR Authority increase CSR involvement for development and investment opportunities?**

The Goa CSR Authority is mandated for optimum utilisation of the CSR contributions from government PSUs and private sector companies for the development of the State and benefit the people at large.

Various corporates/institutions have contributed CSR funds in the field of education, skill development, social, environmental and health sectors, among others. As mentioned earlier, Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd, has agreed to provide financial assistance for the procurement of two Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances and six Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances for Directorate of Health Services, Government of Goa. Alphamers Ltd will provide crucial support for the cleanup of solid waste and plastic waste in our rivers. Also, the CSR Authority is committed to Child Development via education, Skill Development, making Goa a research hub with cooperation with domestic and global ventures. In collaboration with ISRO, with a purpose to provide (Education through Satellite Edusat) in addition to the regular classes, shall deliver activity-based learning across Goa. Shortly 2-way transmission in Higher Education with the support of ISRO

is being planned apart from Teachers Training in Digital Content Creation and delivery.

The Government of Goa in line with National agenda keeping fitness as a Prime Mover of State and National Development initiated "Student Fitness Program Certificate" implemented by Greenlight Fitness to promote Fit Goa, Skill Goa and Inclusive Goa. The project will create awareness on fitness and various Physical activities that promote fitness, encourage indigenous sports and make fitness reach every school, college, Panchayat/village, etc.

As an aid in modern language teaching government in association of Thaliyola Infotech Pvt from Delhi has setup Language Labs at Government College, Sanquelim and Government College, Margao.

Foundation for Science Innovation and Development, (FSID), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru as partnered with Government of Goa to take up various activities to enable the industry to develop its capability in entrepreneurial (through startups and incubate companies), translational and transformational research, technology and product development utilizing the specialized skills, expertise, intellectual and infrastructural assets of IISc.

### **What's your message to other States to follow the success of Goa CSR Authority?**

I would like to say that States especially smaller States can certainly follow Goa model of CSR Authority in various sectors of the development.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

# SUSTAINABILITY IS THE CORE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

***Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their business operations and stakeholder interactions.***

M.Rajendran

As a child, all of us have been taught by our parents or grandparents at home that sustainability is based on a simple principle that everything we need for our survival and well-being depends, directly or indirectly, on our natural environment.

Once we grow as adults and begin to look for earning our livelihoods, we

tend to dilute those basic principles, learnt as children, forgetting that sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations.

That is at the individual level. The same example can be applied to companies that grow for big corporate

houses.

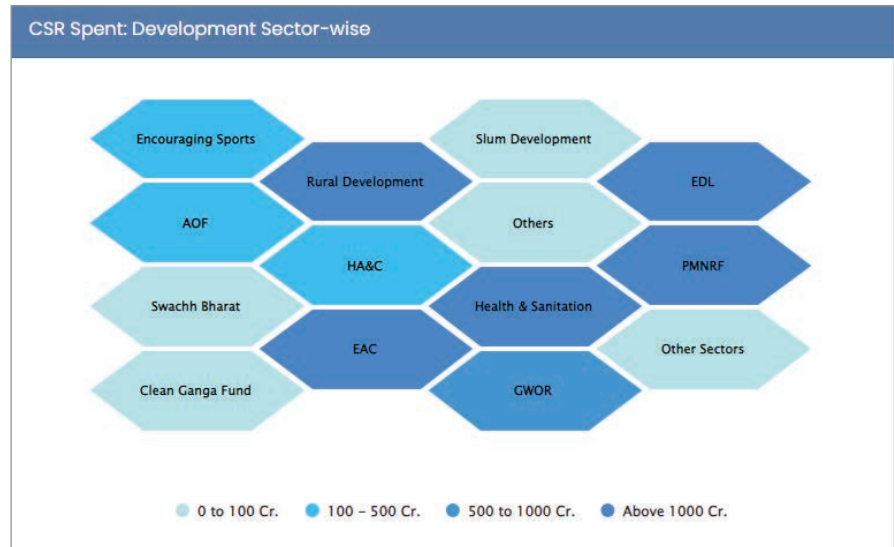
By aligning CSR initiatives with global sustainability goals, businesses can contribute meaningfully to the well-being of all stakeholders and the world we inhabit. CSR acts as a guiding force, urging companies to generate value for society and the planet, not just profits.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is generally understood as the way through which a company

achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives, which the United Nations Industrial Development Organization describes as a “Triple-Bottom-Line- Approach” while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders.

Corporate sustainability essentially refers to companies’ role in meeting the agenda of sustainable development and entails a balanced approach to economic progress, social progress and environmental conservation. The concept of CSR in India is not new. The idea was supported by several religions, where it has been intertwined with religious laws. Hindus follow the principle of “Dhramada” or “Zakaat”, followed by Muslims, similarly and Sikhs, the “Daashaant”.

While sustainability is about factoring the social and environmental impacts of conducting business, that is, how sustainably profits are made, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) focuses on what is done with the



profits made and whether they are utilized for the greater good of the society. Hence, the practice of CSR is an important component of sustainability or responsible business.

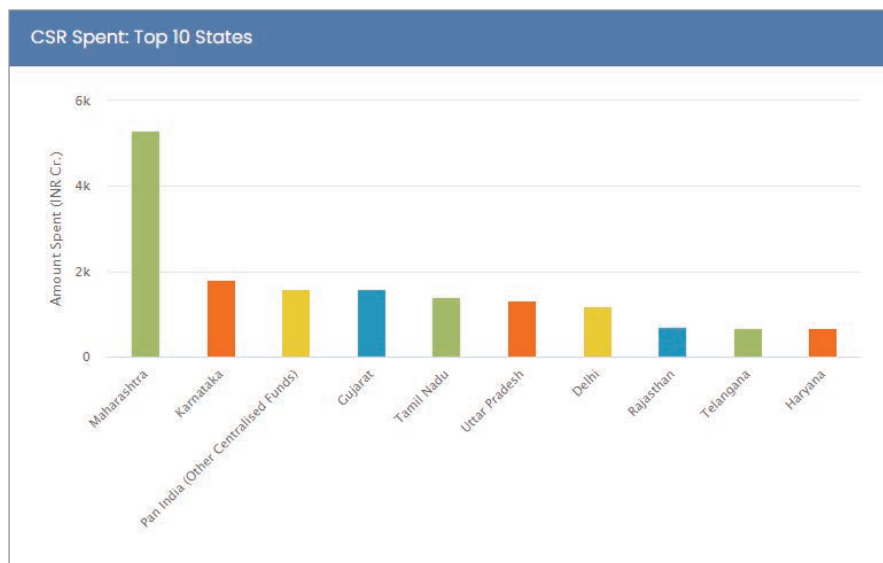
In this sense, it is important to distinguish CSR, a strategic business management concept, from charity, sponsorships, or philanthropy. Even though the latter can contribute to poverty reduction, directly enhancing a company’s reputation and strengthening its brand, the concept of CSR goes beyond that.

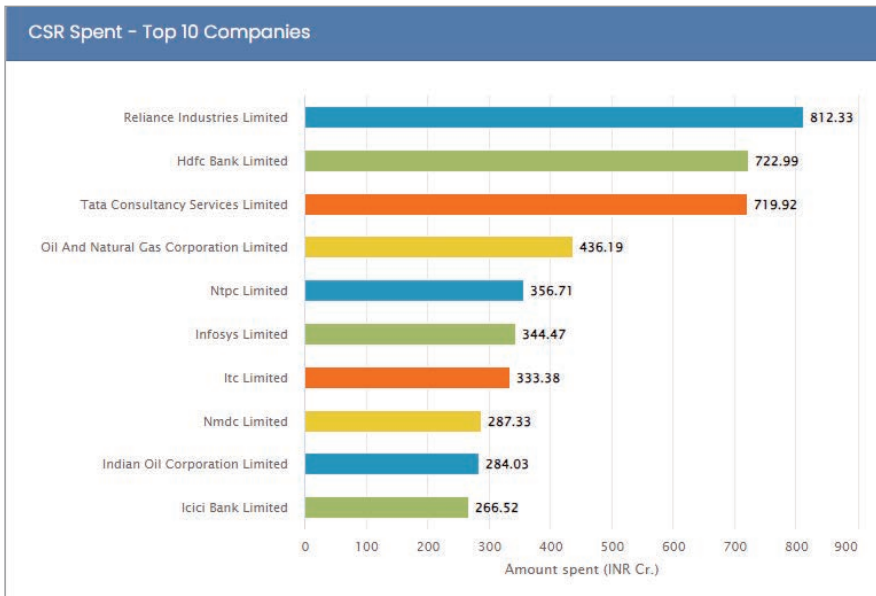
According to a study by KPMG on this subject, the rates of sustainability reporting among the world’s leading 250 companies are at an impressive 96 per cent. Reporting rates are expected to grow as awareness increases and regulations become stringent.

The term sustainability has been used in conjunction with CSR in the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) Guidelines title because CSR activities envisaged in the Act and the CSR Rules can be supplemented with sustainability initiatives as both aim to achieve sustainable development goals. In the Guidelines, the need to take sustainability initiatives is emphasized in addition to the requirement of mandatory compliance with the CSR Rules.

The Guidelines aim to provide an overarching framework of sustainability within which CSR is firmly embedded. Therefore, CPSEs are advised to read the CSR Rules and the Guidelines to understand what stakeholders expect clearly.

Since CSR and Sustainability





issues are complementary, and both are to be mentioned in the policy document, it was suggested that it may be referred to as the 'CSR and Sustainability' policy.

The change in terminology of the policy document and its information expense would not detract from the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE's) commitment to CSR or dilute its content. Rather, it would only indicate the willingness of the CPSE to voluntarily take a few extra steps to address social, economic and environmental concerns, which may be beyond the realm of CSR as envisaged in the Act and the CSR Rules but are nevertheless worthy of attention for the promotion of sustainable development in its diverse dimensions.

Enactment of Companies Act, 2013 by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India was one of the world's largest experiments in introducing CSR as a mandatory provision by imposing a statutory obligation on Companies to take up CSR projects towards social welfare

activities. This has made India the only country which has regulated and mandated CSR for some select categories of companies registered under the Act. This CSR Initiative will push the nation towards achieving sustainable development goals and public-private partnerships in transforming India.

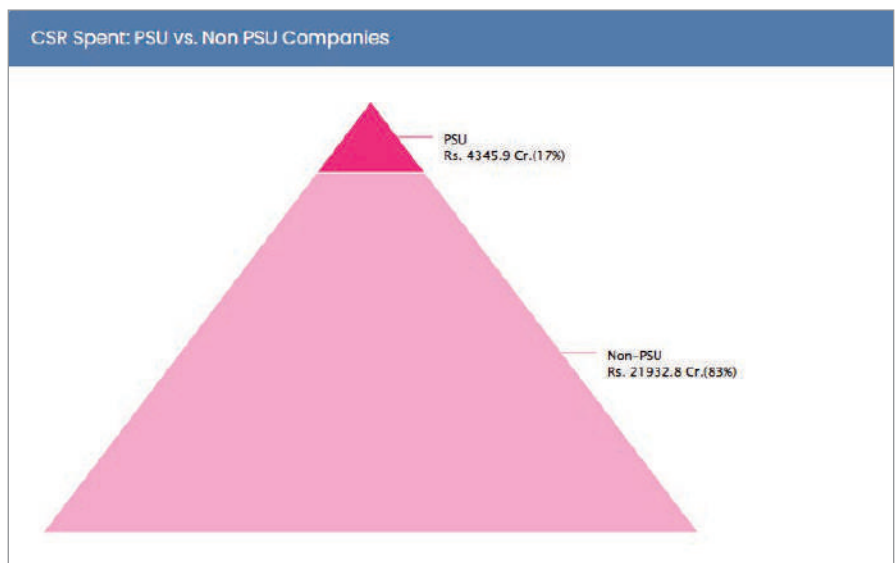
CSR provisions aim to involve the corporates as partners in the social development process. The use of corporate innovations and management

skills in the delivery of 'public goods' is at the core of companies' CSR implementation. Therefore, CSR should not be interpreted as a source of financing the resource gaps in Government Schemes.

However, the Board of the eligible company may undertake similar activities independently subject to the fulfilment of Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014.

Every institution, Indian and global, is committed to managing Sustainability through CSR activities. Environmental Sustainability and philanthropic initiatives are at the core of the International Monetary Fund's corporate social responsibility program. For more than a decade, the IMF has taken steps to reduce its impact on the environment while ensuring that it can effectively serve its global membership.

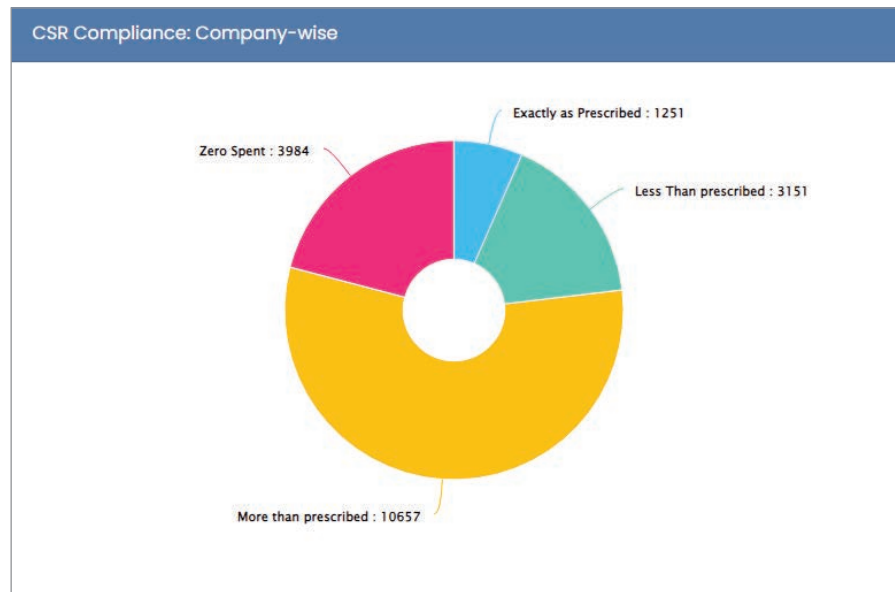
To further advance this work, it established the Environmental Sustainability Council in 2021 to advise and provide directional guidance to IMF management on the orga-



nization's operational environmental issues. The institution has also continued to invest in and manage new building technologies to reduce energy consumption and introduce new policies for greening the IMF's global vehicle fleet.

Mandating CSR helped the corporate sector transition from a voluntary and unsystematic approach to a structured way of contributing to social welfare. Although the law has infused capital into the social sector, the program's impact and effectiveness must be measured to help identify gaps and solutions.

Promoting the uptake of CSR amongst SMEs requires approaches that fit the respective needs and capacities of these businesses and do not adversely affect their economic viability. As discussed earlier in this article, UNIDO based its CSR programme on the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Approach, which has proven a successful tool for SMEs in developing countries.



It has helped them meet social and environmental standards without compromising their competitiveness. The TBL approach is used to measure and report corporate performance against economic, social and environmental performance. It attempts to align private enterprises to the goal of sustainable global development by providing them with a more comprehensive set of working objectives than profit alone. The

perspective taken is that for an organization to be sustainable, it must be financially secure, minimize (or ideally eliminate) its negative environmental impacts and act in conformity with societal expectations.

Key CSR issues like environmental management, eco-efficiency, responsible sourcing, stakeholder engagement, labour standards and working conditions, employee and community relations, social equity, gender balance, human rights, good governance, and anti-corruption measures are critical to ensure sustainability.

It has been proven that a properly implemented CSR concept can bring along a variety of competitive advantages, such as enhanced access to capital and markets, increased sales and profits, operational cost savings, improved productivity and quality, efficient human resource base, improved brand image and reputation, enhanced customer loyalty, better decision making and risk management processes.





Pix Courtesy: Deloitte India

# ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE BIG CATALYSTS FOR CSR

*A strong Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) strategy is a force multiplier. Organisations must integrate their sustainability efforts into a core CSR and transformation agenda strategy.*

M.Rajendran

Like other countries globally, India is experiencing the challenge of large development, and the discourse around environment, social impact, and governance issues is increasing.

Since 2013, the narrative in India has shifted to the crucial role corporations can play in bringing about positive change in human development and social inclusion. CSR is no longer seen as corporate social assistance or philanthropy but as essential to a good business strategy, helping reduce investment risks and enhancing

business profits by improving transparency and accountability. It is about working together - with government, with civil society, and with the community - to improve the lives of millions of people by making growth more inclusive.

With the ever-changing business environment, investors and stakeholders seek businesses to be responsible and sustainable towards the environment and society. In recent years, adapting to and mitigating climate change impact and transitioning to sustainable development have emerged as major issues globally.

Further, Global sustainability challenges such as demographic shifts, flood risk and rising sea levels, privacy and data security, and regulatory pressures are introducing new risk factors for investors that may not have been seen previously. As companies face rising complexity globally, investors may reevaluate traditional investment approaches.

Therefore, ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) comprises the holistic approach for companies to remain responsible to their investors and stakeholders while complying with various environmental, social and governance regulatory risks.

The five elements enunciated by India at COP26 in Glasgow have been appropriately incorporated in enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and Long-term Low Carbon Development Strategies towards net zero emissions by 2070, following the principles of equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) in light of National Circumstances.

As per the updated NDC submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in August 2022, India stands committed to reducing the Emissions Intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level, achieving about 50 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030, with the help of the transfer of technology and low-cost international finance



including from Green Climate Fund; and put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation, including through a mass movement for 'LIFE' – 'Lifestyle for Environment' as a key to combating climate change.

The NDC update is also a step towards achieving India's long-term goal of reaching net zero by 2070, for which India has prepared and submitted a separate framework document titled 'India's Long-term Low Carbon Development Strategy' to the secretariat of the UNFCCC in November 2022.

According to Deloitte India-ESG-Preparedness-Survey-Report 2023, an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) framework is both an enabler and an amplifier for organisations to start translating their intent into action. The survey covered 150 organisations and brought together the responses of leaders and CXOs on their preparedness to engage with ESG both from a compliance and disclosure perspective and as new-generation value drivers.

It points out increasing pressure from investors, boards, governments, and consumers to adhere to new ESG disclosure and compliance requirements per the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) guidelines. Additionally, organisations must account for emerging global regulations on sustainable finance, climate disclosures, biodiversity, and social and governance dimensions, including gender diversity and living wages, within a couple of years.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

ESG is becoming a key licence to operate and conduct business. ESG may appear to be a complicated maze of disclosures and documents to navigate and comply with; however, there is a well-thought-out art and science behind ESG.

The report suggests that ESG is an opportunity for organisations to create long-term and sustainable value by introducing new product and service lines with a lower carbon footprint and net positive planetary impact. Over time, a robust ESG culture will translate into better top-line growth, cost reductions, reduced compliance burden, increased productivity, and better investment quality and asset optimisation. ESG is a significant value driver, and embedding it into an enterprise's operations is a differentiator.

Deloitte India's ESG preparedness survey report shows that Indian businesses see value in sustainability and building ESG capabilities.

About 88% of organisations believed sustainability regulations would directly impact their businesses. More than 75% of organisations agreed that ESG is a boardroom discussion. Nearly 90% of organisations believed ESG reporting would improve brand reputation. Almost 75% of organisations stated that their investors rate their ESG performance. About 71% of businesses agreed that their organisation voluntarily participates in ESG ratings. Nearly 60% of organisations emphasised establishing ambitious ESG goals for the future.

A comprehensive ESG programme is founded on four pillars: Governance, strategy, management, and performance and reporting, complemented by a plan to execute these core tenets in a defined time. Corporates should comply to save the world and avoid hiding behind CSR as a philanthropic activity.

# WOMEN KEY TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY THE WAY IS THROUGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

*Dear Readers,*

In the modern gender equality inclined and driven world the 8<sup>th</sup> of March still remains firmly etched as International Women's Day. This occasion prompts me to dwell on the role of women in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that is being increasingly recognized and valued in today's business world. Women play a vital role in shaping CSR strategies, driving positive change, and promoting sustainability within organizations. Their unique perspectives, empathy, and ability to connect with various stakeholders infuse a fresh approach into the CSR initiatives.

Women in leadership positions often champion crucial issues like diversity, inclusion, and ethical business practices, which are essential components of a successful CSR program.

Additionally, women's involvement in CSR helps companies achieve a broader perspective in their CSR goals. As per reliable sources and data available, women have been acknowledged by organizations as valuable assets in advancing CSR goals.

The active participation of women in CSR is crucial for creating a more sustainable, responsible, and equitable business

environment. By leveraging their skills, influence, and dedication, women can along with their male counterparts drive meaningful impact and contribute to building a better future for all.

CSR initiatives that focus on supporting women's rights, education, health, and economic empowerment can have a significant impact on improving the lives of women around the world.

By investing in programs that provide access to education and training, healthcare services, and economic opportunities for

women, companies can help break down barriers and create a more inclusive society. CSR efforts that promote gender diversity in the workplace, equal pay, and leadership opportunities for women not only benefit individuals but also contribute to building more sustainable and socially responsible businesses.

On Women's Day, it's essential to recognize the importance of CSR in advancing women's rights and opportunities globally.

Here's wishing our women readers, a very **Happy International Women's Day** and our good wishes to the men connected with us here as they celebrate their wonderful association with the women in their lives on this special day!



**Dr Shabnam Asthana**  
Managing Editor

# INVEST IN WOMEN: ACCELERATE PROGRESS

*United Nations theme for Women's International Day 2024  
A wake-up call to help Social and economic growth*



M.Rajendran

**W**omen have fought with men as equals in health, communication, education, and administration, as caregivers, innovators, community organisers, and some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating calamities and catastrophes.

March 08, each year, is celebrated as International Women's Day. All of us would agree that the efforts of women should be celebrated every day, but we fail to do that, even at home. Hence, this day is special for women and everyone to recognise

their efforts and appreciate it.

International days and weeks are occasions to educate the public on issues of concern, mobilise political will and resources to address global problems and celebrate and reinforce humanity's achievements. The existence of international days predates the establishment of the United Nations, but the UN has embraced them as a powerful advocacy tool.

The challenges they faced by women across the world were harsh, fatal, emotional and critical. We have tried to identify a few women who have demonstrated their ability to give a new meaning to leadership. It is a

small tribute to the numerous women who have brought different experiences, perspectives and skills. We admit and acknowledge that many will remain unknown faces.

Efforts of Women in every field have ensured more acceptance than ever before of their irreplaceable contributions to decisions that work better for all.

Amidst the multiple crises that put immense pressure on communities, achieving gender equality is more vital than ever. We must ensure women's and girls' rights across all aspects of life; this is the only way to secure prosperous and just economies and a healthy planet for future genera-

tions. According to the United Nations, Achieving gender equality and women's well-being in all aspects of life is more crucial than ever if we want to create prosperous economies and a healthy planet. However, we face a key challenge: the alarming \$360 billion annual deficit in gender equality measures by 2030, according to the UN.

This year, on March 8, 2024, International Women's Day is celebrated under the theme 'Invest in women: Accelerate progress.' Take a stand with us using the hashtag #InvestInWomen.

We feature five Women from different fields who represent their existence in power, struggle, challenge, existence and justice.

### **Nirmala Sitharaman Union Finance Minister**

***"The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Bill) is a pivotal instrument for achieving political empowerment. When it comes to matters concerning women, our government refrains from doing politics."***

Nirmala Sitharaman was born in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, on August 18, 1959. She graduated from Seethalakshmi Ramasamy College, Tiruchirappalli and obtained her MA (Economics) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Indo-European Textile Trade was the focus of her draft Ph.D thesis.

Sitharaman has served as the



Union Defence Minister since 2017. She is a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP) from Karnataka. In 2014, she was elected as Rajya Sabha MP from Andhra Pradesh. She has also served as the Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs and later the Minister for Commerce and Industry with Independent Charge.

As the Defence Minister, Sitharaman is credited with expediting the decision-making process relating to procurement in the defence sector. She constituted a Defence Planning Committee to formulate an "action plan" to overcome the nation's various security challenges effectively.

Sitharaman joined the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) in 2008 and has served as a national spokesperson for the party since 2010.

She was an assistant to the Economist in the Agricultural Engineers Association, UK in London. She subsequently worked as Senior Manager (Research and Analysis) with

Price Waterhouse, London. During this time she also briefly worked with BBC World Service. On her return to India, she served as Dy. Director of the Centre for Public Policy Studies at Hyderabad. Her interest in education led her to lay the Foundation of 'Pranava' a reputed school in Hyderabad. She was a member of the National Commission for Women from 2003-2005 and was instrumental in voicing various issues of women's empowerment.

Sitharaman is married to Dr. Parakala Prabhakar, an alumnus of Jawaharlal Nehru University and London School of Economics, and they have one daughter. She is an avid reader.

She is currently steering India's economy out of one of the toughest economic crises in history. In the second term of the BJP government in 2019, Nirmala Sitharaman was given two key portfolios: the finance and corporate affairs ministries. Nirmala Sitharaman remained one of PM Modi's most trusted confidants and was charged with the defence ministry during the first stint of the Modi government. Initially, she had been made a Minister of State in 2014 and given the portfolio of commerce & industry with independent charge. She was the first woman appointed full-time Defence Minister of India in September 2017.

While presenting the Interim Budget 2024-25 in Parliament today said, "The empowerment of women through entrepreneurship, ease of living, and dignity for them has gained momentum in these ten years."

## Deepika Kumari Indian Archer



Deepika Kumari's life has been full of ups and downs. Deepika's father drives an auto rickshaw, and her mother is a nurse. Deepika is a female archer from India.

Born amid poverty and limited women's rights in the village of Ratu, India, Deepika Kumari rose to become the No.1 female archer in the world at 18, states Netflix, which produced a 39-minute documentary on her – Ladies First.

With her father working as an auto-rickshaw driver, Deepika Kumari grew up watching her parents struggle to make ends meet. However, the wheels of fortune began to turn after she managed to join a state-run archery academy that provided free training facilities and equipment for underprivileged athletes, writes Olympics.com on its website.

In an interview on Parentcircle.com, an online portal, Deepika spoke about the importance of more women

competition to do well at the international level. "The main reason why India is lagging behind in this regard is that we don't have enough competitions or tournaments for women to compete in. Participating in tournaments is crucial to improving your game. When you play in a tournament, you learn what your weaknesses are and what areas you need to improve. You get a sense of where your game is, at which level, and you know what you have to achieve."

She further explains in the same interview, "You will see many young players doing well in national events but failing at the international level. This is because they tend to overthink or become nervous, this makes them forget what they have to do during the match. That's why it's important to participate in many tournaments. If you play more, obviously, you learn to hold your nerve and control your fear. You won't believe it, but abroad, they have 23 tournaments every month. We need to have more competitions; maybe having national tournaments once a month would help our players."

## Linisha C Farmer Entrepreneur

Linisha is a progressive farmer in District- Calicut, Kerala, who has carved her name in the agriculture field. She was initially not interested in agriculture. She was interested in fashion designing and later shifted to farming through the support, confidence, and encouragement she received from a Facebook Agriculture group in which she was an active



member. She initially started growing bag cultivation of vegetables with about 50 bags, presently cultivating more than 300 bags with vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, carrot, beetroot, annual moringa, capsicum, brinjal, amaranth, chilli, tomato, okra, kasturi turmeric, etc. She also cultivates tubers like tapioca, elephant footyam, fruits like banana dragon fruit as intercrop under coconut, rabbit rearing, poultry, etc. in her farm.

The turning point was when she attended a week-long training program on 'Nursery Management' under Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY) in December 2020. The program was organised for rural youth by Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Indian Institute of Spices Research (ICAR), Kozhikode, through ATMA, Kozhikode with the support of MANAGE, Hyderabad.

She successfully utilised the knowledge and skills acquired during the training to increase her farm income and become a model farmer and entrepreneur for others to emulate.

She is practising coconut-based



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

mixed cropping with vegetables, fruits, livestock, poultry, rabbit rearing and ornamental fish culture as subsidiary enterprises. She also grows and multiplies various indoor and ornamental plants. As a subsidiary enterprise, she maintains about 100 layer chicks, rabbits, and ornamental fishes at her home.

She supplies vegetable seeds and organically produced vegetables from her garden to neighbouring farmers. She is also delivering quality desi chicks

to those in need. Many school students and enthusiastic farmers visit her farm, and she is very interested in educating and motivating them in various farming practices. In addition to farming activities, she runs a cake-making unit with FSSAI license and supplies value-added cakes using eggs from her farm, thus ensuring healthy and cost-effective cakes to people in need.

She has received the best Kitchen garden (grow bag cultivation) award through the Facebook group from

Principal Krishi Officer (2019). Received an award for best coconut-based intercropping through the Facebook group from the State Agriculture Minister (2019). Felicitated by local schools for various agricultural activities (2020).

**Sudha Murthy**  
Educator, Author, Philanthropist



Sudha Murthy, travelling 20 days a month, believes in measuring the happiness of all her beneficiaries to see if a true impact has been achieved.

As Chairman of the Infosys Foundation, she has supported several initiatives that help the underprivileged members of society working in remote areas across India. With a focus on education, healthcare, rural development, destitute care, art & culture, mid-day meal schemes and water projects, the Infosys Foundation has made unparalleled contributions that have positively impacted millions of lives over the years.

An electrical engineer from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

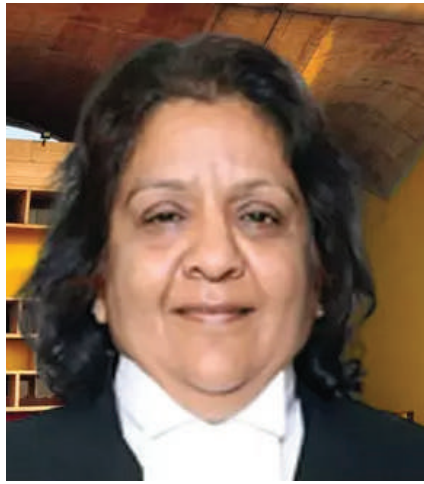
She began her profession as a development engineer with Tata Motors. She has also taught software engineering at Bangalore University.

She is an English and Kannada writer with 24 books and 156 titles – including books, non-fiction, travelogues, specialised books, and journals. Her books have been converted into all significant Indian dialects. She has received awards for her charitable and abstract endeavours.

A Padma Shri Awardee from the Government of India, she has seven doctorates from various colleges in India. She is a woman of great Caliber, a good mind and one of the best authors. Most of her books are must-read type books.

When she relinquished her position as Chairperson of Infosys Foundation, she made some critical points on CSR. “I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to walk the path of philanthropy at Infosys Foundation for the last 25 years. The Foundation opened my eyes to the true state of my country and the needs of the common man. The rewarding journey of Infosys Foundation had many supporters – my family, my team at work, the senior management, the various employees, and the beneficiaries themselves. I cherish the memories we have made, and I will continue on my own on my journey of helping the underprivileged. I wish the Infosys Foundation all the best. When the Foundation started, I was the mother and the Foundation was my child. Today, as I leave, I am satisfied to see that Foundation has become a mother and I the child,” she stated.

## Ritu Bahri Chief Justice of Uttarakhand High Court.



Ritu Bahri belongs to a family of illustrious Lawyers. Her great-grandfather, Late Karam Chand Bahri, was a well-known Lawyer who had earned respect for the civil cases he took up.

She is well known for her competency, integrity, conduct, and character among her peers and the legal academic community. Students of Law look up to her judgements as critical to their growth and development as lawyers.

It is noteworthy that the Supreme Court Collegium while recommending her name as the new Chief Justice of Uttaranchal High Court, mentioned her extensive experience in dispensing justice in one of the largest High Courts in the country. Importantly, the Collegium noted that her elevation would enhance women's representation among the High Court's chief justices.

Her grandfather, the Late Som Dutt Bahri, also practised civil law and was a member of the Legislative

Assembly, Punjab, from 1952 to 1957. Her father, Justice Amrit Lal Bahri, retired as a Punjab & Haryana High Court Judge in 1994.

She studied at Carmel Convent School, Chandigarh, and graduated in Economics (Hons.) from Government College for Women, Chandigarh, in 1982 in 1st Division. After that, she did her law from Punjab University, Chandigarh, in 1985 in 1st Division. She was enrolled as an Advocate in 1986 with the Bar Council of Punjab & Haryana and started practising in the Punjab & Haryana High Court. She was appointed as Assistant Advocate General, Haryana, in March 1992. After that, she was appointed Deputy Advocate General Haryana in August 1999 and Senior Advocate General Haryana in December 2009. While representing the State of Haryana, she handled several cases relating to service matters, land acquisition, taxation, revenue, labour, and MACT cases. She was elevated as Judge of the Punjab & Haryana High Court on August 16, 2010.

Her colleagues in the legal fraternity applaud her contribution to the judiciary as an important step in ensuring that cases are disposed of without undue delay. During her tenure of 13 years as a Judge of the High Court, she authored 843 reported judgments, of which 247 were delivered during the last five years. She specialised in service and tax matters.

During her 24 years of practice, she also served as Assistant Advocate General, Deputy Advocate General, and Senior Deputy Advocate General for the State of Haryana.



## ALL INDIA BUSINESS & COMMUNITY FOUNDATION APPLAUDS NOTEWORTHY CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD “IMPACTFUL SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES” AT NATIONAL CONCLAVE

The All India Business & Community Foundation (AIBCF), stands as a distinguished platform dedicated to fostering the growth and recognition of small and medium-sized businesses, startups, individuals, and corporations across India, successfully concluded its National Conclave 2024 under the



### THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME OF THE TESTIMONIALS ...



**Ms. Rekha Sharma,**  
Chairperson of the National Commission for Women

*"Women in time will do great things, and equal rights should be granted for national growth. We also need to speak up about our problems. Women need to support each other and make our voices heard."*

**Shri Sunil Shastri Ji**  
President of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Foundation & Patron of the Indian Achievers' Forum (IAF)

*"Such events give motivation to all of us to become better human beings. I would like add to my late father's saying, Jai Jawan, Jai Kisaan aur Jai Insaan."*





theme “Impactful Sustainable Business Practices.” This annual event provided a diverse platform to celebrate individuals and organizations committed to such practices.

The National Conclave 2024 unfolded on February 15 at India Habitat Centre, bringing together a distinguished gathering of dignitaries, award recipients, and over 250 delegates. Notably, the event bestowed the prestigious Business & Community Awards and CSR & Sustainability Awards upon Government, PSUs, Corporates, Corporate Foundations, NGOs, MSMEs, Start-ups, and individuals for their noteworthy contributions to nation-building.

The summit commenced with an inaugural address Mr Prashant Das,

Secretary, All India Business & Community Foundation (AIBCF), followed by enlightening speeches from eminent personalities. Chief Guest, Ms. Rekha Sharma, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, extended her congratulations to all participants and winners, emphasizing the pivotal role of women in collective growth. She remarked, “Women in time will do great things, and equal rights should be granted for national growth.”

The event featured distinguished Guests of Honor, including Shri Sunil Shastri Ji, President of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Foundation & Patron of the Indian Achievers’ Forum (IAF); Dr. Vijay Jolly, Senior Leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); Mr. Surendra Nath Tripathi, Retired IAS,

Director General of the Indian Institute of Public Administration; Dr. Manoj Kumar – IAS (Retd.), Hon. President, All India Business & Community Foundation and H.E. Ms. Jacqueline Mukangira, High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda to India.

Shri Sunil Shastri Ji said, “Such events give motivation to all of us to become better human beings. I would like add to my late father’s saying, Jai Jawan , Jai Kisaan aur Jai Insaan.” Dr Vijay Jolly expressed, “I would like to congratulate all the award winners. We need more thoughtful individuals and organisations like you for the country’s development.” Mr. Surendra Nath Tripathi emphasized collective efforts toward sustainable business practices for the betterment of future generations.



### **Dr. Vijay Jolly**

Senior Leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

*“I would like to congratulate all the award winners. We need more thoughtful individuals and organisations like you for the country’s development.”*

### **Mr. Surendra Nath Tripathi**

Retired IAS, Director General of the Indian Institute of Public Administration

*“Collective efforts toward sustainable business practices for the betterment of future generations is the need of the hour.”*



### **Dr. Manoj Kumar**

IAS (Retd.), Hon. President, All India Business & Community Foundation

*Government and the citizen must collectively work to progress on the path of nation’s development. This award will definitely motivate everyone to strive towards a better future.*





# REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IS CRUCIAL

***In times to come, the representation of women in our political decision-making bodies shall play a crucial role in fostering and strengthening the democratic fabric of our nation. It shall ensure that women's voices are duly heard and their issues are addressed".***

Excerpts from an exclusive interaction with CSR Times Team

**Q1. What are the major achievements of NCW Under your leadership?**

Throughout my tenure at the National Commission for Women (NCW), I have had the privilege of spearheading numerous initiatives, each aimed at transforming the landscape of support for women across the nation. Among these endeavours, one particular initiative stands out for its profound impact: the establishment of a 24x7 helpline for women. This pivotal service has not only provided essential assistance to expectant mothers, especially during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has also become a lifeline for women in need, ensuring that their grievances are heard and addressed around the clock.

In our fight against human trafficking, we've confronted harrowing tales of women deceived into perilous situations under the guise of employment opportunities. To combat this scourge, we've embarked on a mission to educate and engage the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) as allies in the fight against trafficking, leveraging their expertise to safeguard women from exploitation across borders.

Believing fervently in the principle that assistance should even the last woman in need, we've dedicated substantial efforts to uplift denotified tribes, often among the most marginalised communities. Additionally, our collaboration with the Bureau of Police Research and Development has led to

groundbreaking initiatives in gender sensitisation and forensic science training for law enforcement personnel, ensuring a more informed and empathetic response to women's issues.

Recognising the pivotal role of financial independence in women's empowerment, especially in rural areas, we've undertaken extensive educational campaigns targeting farmers, daily wage labourers, and grassroots representatives. Through these efforts, we aim to equip women with the knowledge and tools necessary to secure their financial futures.

Moreover, our commitment to holistic empowerment extends to various marginalised groups, including elderly women, homemakers, and sex workers. Through tailored capacity-building programs, we strive to enhance their quality of life and expand their opportunities for self-determination.

In embracing technology as a tool for empowerment, we recently launched the "Her Legal Guide" mobile app, designed to educate women about their legal rights and facilitate access to justice. We have also started a program by the name of "Digital Shakti", wherein we are planning to make women aware of cyber crimes and how to protect themselves against cyberstalking and Cyberbullying.

One of our most significant achievements lies in fostering violence-free homes in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370. By creating a safe environment conducive to reporting

abuse, we've empowered women to seek recourse through law enforcement channels with confidence and ease.

Furthermore, our collaboration with Kendriya Vidyalayas has opened avenues for the holistic development of young women, nurturing their talents and aspirations for a brighter future.

As we continue our journey toward gender equity and empowerment, these initiatives stand as testaments to our unwavering commitment to the welfare and dignity of every woman in our nation. Together, we strive to build a society where every woman can thrive, unencumbered by fear or inequality.

**Q2. Any specific recommendation you have made to the Government that will further strengthen the status of women in India?**

The National Commission for Women is mandated to review legal and constitutional safeguards for women under section 10(1)(d) of the NCW Act, 1990. Towards this end, the Commission annually decides on the topics to be undertaken for review to formulate recommendations for amendments to the Government of India to consider the proposition.

Lately, the Commission has reviewed "Rights of Muslim Women under Muslim Personal Law". The Commission conducted various regional consultations and National level consultations to review and analyse the legal reforms to advance the status of Muslim women and to protect the interest of Muslim women

considering gender inequality and violation of their constitutional rights. The Commission recommended, amongst others, that Muslim personal law should be codified, subsuming the already existing Acts of Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939 and Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 to bring it adequately under the ambit of Article 13 of the Constitution in order to end any unambiguity in the interpretation of rights of women.

Another recommendation of the Commission has been in the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956, to amend Section 6, suggesting that the mothers be at par with fathers as 'Natural Guardians'. As per the current law, the father is the Natural Guardian of the child and, after him, the mother. The Commission has proposed joint rights for both mother and father. The objective is to ensure that gender equality is one of the basic principles of our Constitution, and, therefore, the father, because of a dominant personality, cannot be ascribed to have a preferential right over the mother in the matter of guardianship since both fall within the same category.

It is pertinent to mention that in view of the decision of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Independent Thought v. Union of India regarding increasing the age of consent for married women to 18 years from 15 years, the National Commission for Women suggested that the decision should be codified in Indian Penal Code. The recommendation has been

incorporated in Exception II to Section 63 of the new criminal law, i.e. Bhartiya NyaySanhita, 2023.

The Commission has proactively worked to create awareness around Cyber Crimes against women. In this regard, the Commission proposed changes in the Information Technology Act 2000 and Indian criminal law to make the law robust and dynamic with the advancement in the types and means of cybercrimes perpetrated against women. bosh act

The Commission also reviewed the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005. As you may be aware, the Act was legislated to minimise the cumbersome position of law, be it procedural or substantive and facilitate easy and fastrack redressal to women. However, the Commission felt that the Act did not justify the objective with which it was legislated and lagged in implementation. In this regard, the Commission recommended various reforms in the commissioning and functioning Protection Officers, Counsellors and Service Providers.

### **Q.3. How critical will women's representation be in the parliament?**

Women's representation in the parliament denotes the crucial struggle for women's empowerment, especially in the context of political representation. It addresses the gender disparity that has historically existed not just in the Indian Parliament but also in what has been a global issue.

Representation of women in politics is crucial because it ensures

that the needs and voices of women are adequately represented in decision-making. Women political leaders have been instrumental in bringing the issues women face to the forefront of parliamentary politics, advocating for reforms, and ensuring that the interests of women are protected.

Constitutional protections, the Right to Equality under Article 14, align with our assurance of equality before the law and equal protection of the law. Further, Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. Through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, the provision for reservation of one-third of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipal bodies was provided.

However, women's representation in parliament had been historically low, with the number of women MPs being only 5% in the first Lok Sabha. Still, there has been significant progress through the years, as the 17th Lok Sabha saw 15% of women MPs. Realising the need to take targeted measures to enable greater representation of women in parliamentary politics, the Government passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, by which one-third of all seats are reserved for women in Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs.

In times to come, the representation of women in our political deci-

sion-making bodies shall play a crucial role in fostering and strengthening the democratic fabric of our nation. It shall ensure that women's voices are heard and their issues are addressed.

### **Q.4. During your leadership, the NCW has introduced initiatives to ensure justice for women. What more remains?**

The Commission has been working tirelessly to ensure justice for women victims of crimes. In this regard, the Commission has rescued victims of trafficking, acid attacks and other grave crimes and worked to provide legal, medical and institutional support to women in need. Apart from that, the Commission, through its Legal Cell, has approached the Supreme Court and challenged certain decisions passed by the High Courts which were unconstitutional, whereby the rights of women are blatantly ignored. One such case was when the National Commission for Women (NCW) had filed a Special Leave Petition (SLP) before the Hon'ble Supreme Court against the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court verdict, which ruled 'skin-to-skin' contact is necessary for the offence of 'sexual assault' under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The Commission, while filing the SLP, had raised concern that the impugned Order had far-reaching ramifications for women and children, exposing them to a desensitised society. On 18 November 2021, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India set aside the Judgment passed by the High Court

of Bombay. It held that the ingredient of the offence of “sexual assault” under the POCSO Act “, sexual intent” and skin-to-skin contact in such cases, is irrelevant. The same would amount to a narrow and absurd interpretation of the statute.

The Commission has also challenged arbitrary decisions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court and Delhi High Court about the arbitrary application of the POCSO Act in cases of minor girls married as per Muslim Personal Law. The Commission has prayed for the enforcement of the fundamental rights of Muslim women who are below the age of 18 years, guaranteed under Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of India by seeking application of the provisions of the secular laws like Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (hereinafter “POCSO Act”), the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (hereinafter “IPC”) and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (hereinafter “PCM Act”) to Muslim women, who have contracted marriage before attaining the age of majority i.e., 18 years.

To ensure women’s access to justice, the Commission has collaborated with NALSA and DLSA to establish the Legal Aid Centre in the National Commission for Women. The Commission also liaised with State Commissions for Women to replicate and establish such centres in the state commissions.

It is pertinent to mention that the Commission has even worked to strengthen and train the personnel



operating in the justice delivery system. In collaboration with BPR&D, the Commission has been conducting gender sensitisation programs for police personnel to ensure empathy and a rational, unbiased approach towards women who report crimes. In addition, the Commission, in collaboration with Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), has developed a standardised “Training Module on Addressing Domestic Violence”. The Commission has been proactively training Protection Officers nationwide to ensure the facilitation of easy and fast-track redressal for victims of Domestic Violence.

Moreover, the Commission believes that rehabilitation of victims of crime is of utmost importance since justice should not only be done but also seem to be done. In this regard, in collaboration with NLU Delhi, the Commission has prepared a Scheme

for the Rehabilitation of Domestic Violence Survivors to incorporate a wholesome rehabilitative approach for skill development and rehabilitation of Survivors.

#### **Q5. Is India better positioned to take a leadership position on women’s safety?**

As the National Commission for Women, we acknowledge that while India has made strides in addressing women’s safety, much work still needs to be done. While significant efforts have been made to enact legislation, raise awareness, and improve law enforcement responses to violence against women, challenges persist. Factors such as cultural attitudes, social norms, and systemic barriers continue to pose obstacles to women’s safety.

However, despite these challenges, India is positioned to take a leadership role in women’s safety. The Government has demonstrated a commitment to addressing these issues, both domestically and on the international stage. Initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and the Nirbhaya Fund highlight the Government’s dedication to improving women’s safety and empowerment.

Moreover, India’s growing economy and increasing global influence provide a platform to advocate for women’s rights and safety internationally. By sharing best practices, collaborating with other nations, and championing gender equality initiatives, India can play a pivotal role in advancing the cause of women’s safety globally.



# ILLUMINATING PATHS OF COMPASSION AND EMPOWERMENT ACROSS INDIA

**M**anav Mandir Mission Trust stands as a beacon of hope, founded on the principles of compassion and service. Established on November 3rd, 1989, by the revered H.H. Acharya Shri Roop Chandra Ji M, this non-profitable public charitable trust operates under the Indian Trust Act, Section 42, with a steadfast commitment to various noble causes. At its core, the Trust is dedicated to promoting education, women's welfare, global peace, non-violence, health, spiritualism, yoga-sadhna, environmental protection, and other vital social activities.

The genesis of this organization traces back to the spiritual journey of

Pujya Gurudev Ji, where during his Jaipur pilgrimage in 1981, the vision for its establishment began to take shape. By 1985, lectures, workshops, religious, and social programs commenced at the designated location in New Delhi. Formal registration under the name "Manav Mandir Mission Trust" followed in 1989, marking the official commencement of its multifaceted endeavors.

Guided by the visionary leadership of Pujya Gurudev Ji, the Trust's operations are overseen by a dedicated team of trustees and patron trustees, with three individuals nominated as directors to carry forward the noble mission.

Central to the Trust's initiatives is the Manav Mandir Gurukul, an orphanage inaugurated on Mahaveer Jayanti in 1993. Nestled in a serene enclave away from the bustle of Delhi, this sanctuary provides holistic care to orphaned and underprivileged children. From education and sports to yoga and vocational training, every aspect of their development is nurtured with love and attention. Through comprehensive support systems, including tutoring and mentorship, the Gurukul empowers its wards to excel academically and professionally, ensuring a bright future for each child.

Moreover, the Trust extends its compassionate outreach to



marginalized segments of society through projects like Matri Seva Prakalp. This pioneering initiative delivers essential services directly to vulnerable women, addressing their physical, emotional, and mental well-being within the comfort of their homes. Similarly, efforts are directed towards uplifting Pakistani Hindu refugees residing in dire conditions, providing them with livelihood opportunities and essential relief aid to restore their dignity and hope.

Furthering its commitment to environmental stewardship, the Trust

spearheads conservation efforts along the banks of the Yamuna River. This includes picking up waste from the banks of the Holy River. Mr Ashok Upadhyay played an integral role in this process. Through tree planting drives, animal welfare programs, and initiatives like the Yamuna Aarti, reverence and cleanliness are instilled, fostering a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

In tandem with its philanthropic endeavors, the Trust operates the Seva Dham Plus Hospital, offering holistic Ayurvedic and naturopathic

treatments. With a focus on holistic healing, the hospital serves as a sanctuary for those seeking relief from various ailments, embodying the ethos of compassionate care. Amidst the bustling streets of Delhi lie the 'Majnu Ka Tila' and 'Signature Bridge' camps, home to Pakistani refugees grappling with dire circumstances and profound uncertainty. These settlements, teeming with families who fled Pakistan in search of safety and refuge in India, bear witness to the resilience and fortitude of those forced to leave behind their homeland.

Through unwavering dedication and visionary leadership, the Manav Mandir Mission Trust continues to be a beacon of hope, illuminating lives and fostering positive change in society. With each endeavor, it reaffirms its commitment to service, compassion, and upliftment, leaving an indelible mark on humanity's collective journey towards a better tomorrow.





# THE PROMISE OF AI FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN INDIA

Dr J P Dash and Anuraag Dash

India, a land of contrasts, grapples with immense potential and pressing challenges. Waste management becomes a critical concern as our cities swell and our population burgeons. The convergence of AI and the Circular Economy in India presents a unique opportunity to address pressing environmental challenges while fostering economic growth. Embracing this synergy can pave the way for a future where prosperity is not at odds with sustainability but rather intricately intertwined, leading to a more resilient and thriving society.

The traditional linear consumption model has led to resource depletion and environmental degradation. However, the Circular Economy paradigm offers a viable alternative, emphasising waste reduction, material reuse, and ecosystem regeneration. AI emerges as a silent force driving this

transition, with its capacity to optimise processes, predict outcomes, and foster innovation.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), the silent architect of change, is weaving a new narrative of circularity, sustainability, and hope. AI's ability to swiftly adapt and innovate has the potential to revolutionise various aspects of resource management and production processes. From optimising waste management systems to facilitating the design of eco-friendly products, AI holds the key to unlocking efficiency and sustainability.

## Harnessing The Power of AI For India's Circular Economy

Integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into India's Circular Economy marks a significant step towards addressing contemporary challenges and harnessing technological advancements for sustainable development. As a critical element of the Fourth Industrial

Revolution, AI revolutionises traditional systems by mimicking human intelligence, enhancing efficiency and productivity. By complementing human capabilities, AI facilitates faster learning, feedback processing, and data comprehension, optimising resource utilisation and enhancing sustainability efforts. This transformative technology offers innovative solutions and reshapes India's economic and environmental landscape.

The application of AI in the Circular Economy enables the development of data-driven strategies for sustainable growth, paving the way for more efficient resource management and creating novel business models. Moreover, AI-driven initiatives have the potential to address global challenges such as waste management and environmental degradation, thereby contributing to India's progress towards a more resilient and prosperous future.

## Designing Tomorrow: AI and the Circular Product Revolution

The fusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Circular Economy is revolutionising product design and waste management practices, ushering in a new era of sustainability and innovation. AI-driven design processes optimise material usage, leading to products with minimal environmental footprint. For instance, AI algorithms tailor garment patterns to reduce fabric waste, as exemplified by companies like SXD Zero Waste. Moreover, "tough-tech" startups like GALY utilise AI-powered cellular agriculture to



produce cotton with significantly fewer resources, demonstrating the potential for sustainable innovation.

## AI Revolutionizing Circular Business Models in India

AI is reshaping India's economic landscape by ushering in a circular economy paradigm, revolutionising traditional business models and fostering sustainable practices. Here is a closer look at how AI is driving this transformation:

*Renting, not owning:* AI's predictive analytics optimise product demand and pricing, facilitating the transition to product-as-a-service models. By leasing items like clothing and tools, businesses maximise utilisation and minimise waste.

*Extending lifespans:* AI-driven updates ensure product relevance over time, akin to Tesla's continuous enhancements. This strategy boosts the residual value of products, keeping resources in circulation longer and reducing the need for new production.

*Sharing is caring:* AI-powered platforms facilitate item-sharing, rental, and repair services, promoting collaborative consumption. Examples include SwaddleMe for renting baby clothes and AI diagnostics-enabled community repair workshops, fostering resource optimisation and waste reduction.

*Tracking the cycle:* AI enables efficient tracking of product lifecycles, facilitating repair, refurbishment, and recycling processes. Companies like SuperCircle leverage AI to create closed-loop systems, ensuring seamless integration from customer

purchase to recycling.

## AI Revolutionizing Circular Economy Practices in India

Integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into India's circular economy framework promises a future where waste management is intelligent, efficient, and sustainable. Here is how AI is shaping this transformative journey:

*Super-recyclers:* Advanced robotic systems, exemplified by Apple's "Daisy," streamline the sorting and dismantling of products, swiftly extracting valuable materials for reuse.

*Material highways:* AI enhances supply chain transparency, enabling smoother resource recovery processes. Initiatives like Google's AI-powered textile tracking and P&G's digital watermarks ensure better traceability of components, fostering efficient recycling practices.

*Quality recycled materials:* AI-driven optimisation of recycling processes ensures the production of high-quality recycled materials, which is essential for closing the loop in industries such as steel and cement.

The vast potential of AI in the circular economy extends beyond current applications, offering opportunities for optimising logistics and predicting maintenance needs. India stands at the forefront of this technological revolution, poised to lead towards a more sustainable future.

## AI: Catalyzing Circular Innovation in India

In envisioning a future where waste is minimised and resources are maximally utilised, artificial intelligence (AI)

emerges as the catalyst for transformative change. Consider the possibilities: food waste disappearing through optimised agricultural practices, electronics enjoying extended lifespans via predictive maintenance, and materials seamlessly reintegrated into the production cycle through AI-guided disassembly and reuse processes.

AI's impact transcends individual sectors, extending its potential across industries like food and electronics. Picture AI-driven robots equipped with image recognition technology, efficiently harvesting ripe fruit, or chatbots providing real-time recycling guidance. These applications streamline processes and unlock substantial economic value, potentially amounting to billions annually.

With its dynamic tech ecosystem and burgeoning circular economy ambitions, India stands at the forefront of this transformative journey. By leveraging AI, India can reduce reliance on virgin materials and foster the development of more innovative infrastructure designed for sustainability and longevity.

AI serves as the "Circular Whisperer," orchestrating resource optimisation and waste reduction strategies across diverse sectors. With India's readiness to embrace technological innovation, AI is key to unlocking the full potential of circularity, propelling the nation towards a more sustainable and resource-efficient future.

(Dr J P Dash is CGM of National Academy of Defence Production and Anuraag Dash is a B Tech from NIT Trichy)



# TEACHING SUSTAINABILITY TO CORPORATES

***Understanding Sustainability is as simple as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. So, if a company implements sustainable practices by reducing its consumption of limited resources or finds alternative resources with, for example, fewer environmental consequences, it understands the importance of Sustainability.***

CSR Times

Since the inception of the CSR provision in 2014, the CSR ecosystem has improved by

improving the disclosures, simplifying the compliances, bringing in more objectivity and transparency, and entrusting more responsibility to the company's board. These amendments

inter-alia include mandatory registration of implementing agencies with the Ministry, treatment of unspent amount, impact assessment of CSR projects, modalities for creating and acquiring capital assets through CSR, etc.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, instituted the annual National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Awards to recognize companies that have positively impacted society through their innovative & sustainable CSR initiatives. These awards are the apex of national-level recognition by the government of India.

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) implements the MSME Champions scheme in that series. The objective is to modernize MSMEs' manufacturing processes, reduce wastage, encourage innovation, sharpen business competitiveness, and facilitate their national and global reach and excellence. Various financial incentives are being provided to MSMEs under the scheme. There are three components under the MSME Champions scheme, the details of which are as follows:

- MSME-Sustainable (ZED)
- MSME-Competitive (Lean)
- MSME-Innovative (Incubation, IPR, Design and Digital MSME)

The MSMEs registered under the MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme have benefitted by assessing different parameters in Bronze, Silver and Gold certification

levels. The MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme is based on an assessment model with various parameters that encourage MSMEs to improve their processes and systems to enhance quality and move towards Sustainability. Specific parameters to encourage MSMEs to adopt practices towards Sustainability are Energy Management, Environment Management, Natural Resource Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, etc. The scheme was launched on April 28, 2022, and more than 22,000 MSMEs have registered, out of which 734 Bronze, 32 Silver, and 25 Gold certifications have been awarded to the MSMEs. The remaining registered MSMEs are under process for accreditation, subject to fulfilment of assessment criteria.

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has launched a School of Sustainability. The School of Sustainability will teach new, interdisciplinary courses on Sustainability, synergize research to tackle grand challenges and provide a platform to host events and showcase technologies that can help drive practice and policy. Conceptualized as a Centre of Excellence, it will bring together faculty members from across the Institute's departments and research centres.

In addition, the National Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC) framework is a mandatory disclosure mechanism for the top 1000 listed companies or businesses to report their performance on environmental, social and governance (ESG) aspects and

demonstrate their commitment to responsible business practices.

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has also revised the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business, 2011 (NVGs) and formulated the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC). These guidelines urge businesses to actualize the principles in letter and spirit.

These principles are:

1. Businesses should conduct and govern themselves with integrity in an Ethical, Transparent, and Accountable manner.
2. Businesses should provide goods and services in a manner that is sustainable and safe
3. Businesses should respect and promote the well-being of all employees, including those in their value chains.
4. Businesses should respect the interests of and be responsive to all their stakeholders.
5. Businesses should respect and promote human rights.
6. Businesses should respect and try to protect and restore the environment.
7. Businesses, when engaging in influencing public and regulatory policy, should do so in a manner that is responsible and transparent.
8. Businesses should promote inclusive growth and equitable development.
9. Businesses should engage with and provide value to their consumers in a responsible manner.

As a first step towards mainstreaming the concept of business responsibility, the 'Voluntary Guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility' were issued in 2009. After extensive consultations with business, academia, civil society organizations and the government, these guidelines were revised as 'National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Business, 2011 (NVGS)'. The NVGs were developed based on India's socio-cultural context, priorities, and global best practices.

Various national and international developments in the past decade have nudged businesses to be sustainable and more responsible, prior most being the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights (UNGPs). These became the key drivers for further revision of the guidelines. Some of these include the Companies Act 2013 (Act), which forces businesses to be more mindful of their stakeholders. The Act casts fiduciary duties on the Directors of a Company, requiring them to promote the objects of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole and in the best interests of the company, its employees, the shareholders, the community and for the protection of environment. There was also a need to demonstrate more visibly India's implementation of the UNGPs based on UNHRC's 'Protect, Respect & Remedy' Framework and also make evident India's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



## INDIA'S LESSONS OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE WORLD

CSR Times

The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), at its Sixth Session held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 26 February - 1 March 2024, adopted on 1 March the resolution on sustainable lifestyles submitted by India. All participating Member States adopted the resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles.

The concept of LiFE, i.e. Lifestyle for Environment, was envisioned by India at the World Leaders' Summit in Glasgow at COP26 when he called to rekindle a global pursuit to adopt

environment-friendly lifestyles and practices. Mission LiFE was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 20 October 2022, in the presence of the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, at the Statue of Unity, Ekta Nagar, Gujarat.



Mission LiFE aims to follow a three-pronged strategy for changing our collective approach towards sustainability. First is by nudging individuals to practise simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives (demand); second is by enabling industries and markets to respond swiftly to the changing demand (supply); and third is to influence government and industrial policy to support both sustainable consumption and production (policy).

The UNEA reaffirmed the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, including the three dimensions of sustainable development, which are integrated, indivisible, interdependent and mutually reinforcing, to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and the commitment made in the 2030 Agenda to ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.

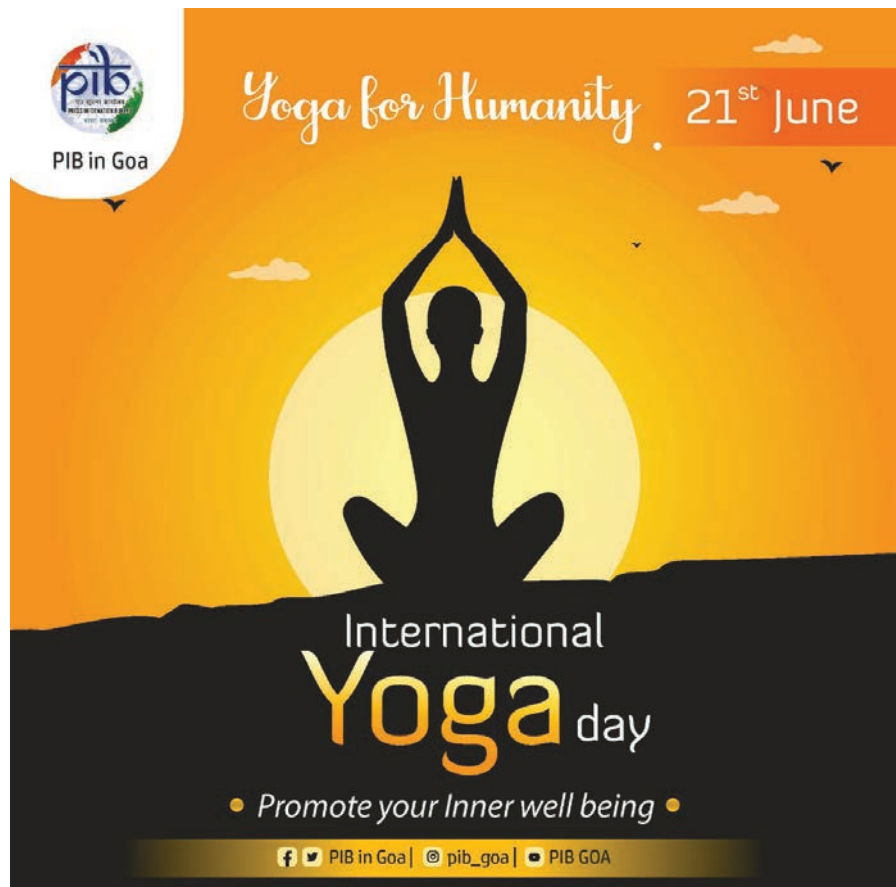
The resolution recognises the potential of behavioural changes toward sustainable lifestyles, contributing to achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development. It takes note of the work of the 10-Year Framework Programme, including the One Planet Network Programme on Sustainable Lifestyles and Education and other international, regional, and national initiatives, and **notes that successful national initiatives can serve as a model to be replicated.** It recognises further and underscores the role of the private sector and industry, local

authorities, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples in supporting more sustainable lifestyles and emphasises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, leaving no one behind.

The resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles recognises that adequate individual education and skills can further accelerate collective efforts for sustainable consumption and production and promote more sustainable lifestyles. The resolution recognises that each country is best positioned to understand its national circumstances and priorities to encourage more sustainable lifestyles.

The resolution encourages Member States and invites other stakeholders and international organisations to create the necessary evidence-based enabling conditions, foster public and private collaboration, pursue education at all levels and awareness-raising initiatives in support of empowering citizens to make informed choices about sustainable lifestyles as referenced in SDG 4.7 Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship.

The resolution invites Member States, intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and other stakeholders to promote and enhance cooperation by sharing information and best practices, research, and literature, as appropriate, that enable the adoption of more sustainable lifestyles, including sustainable living.

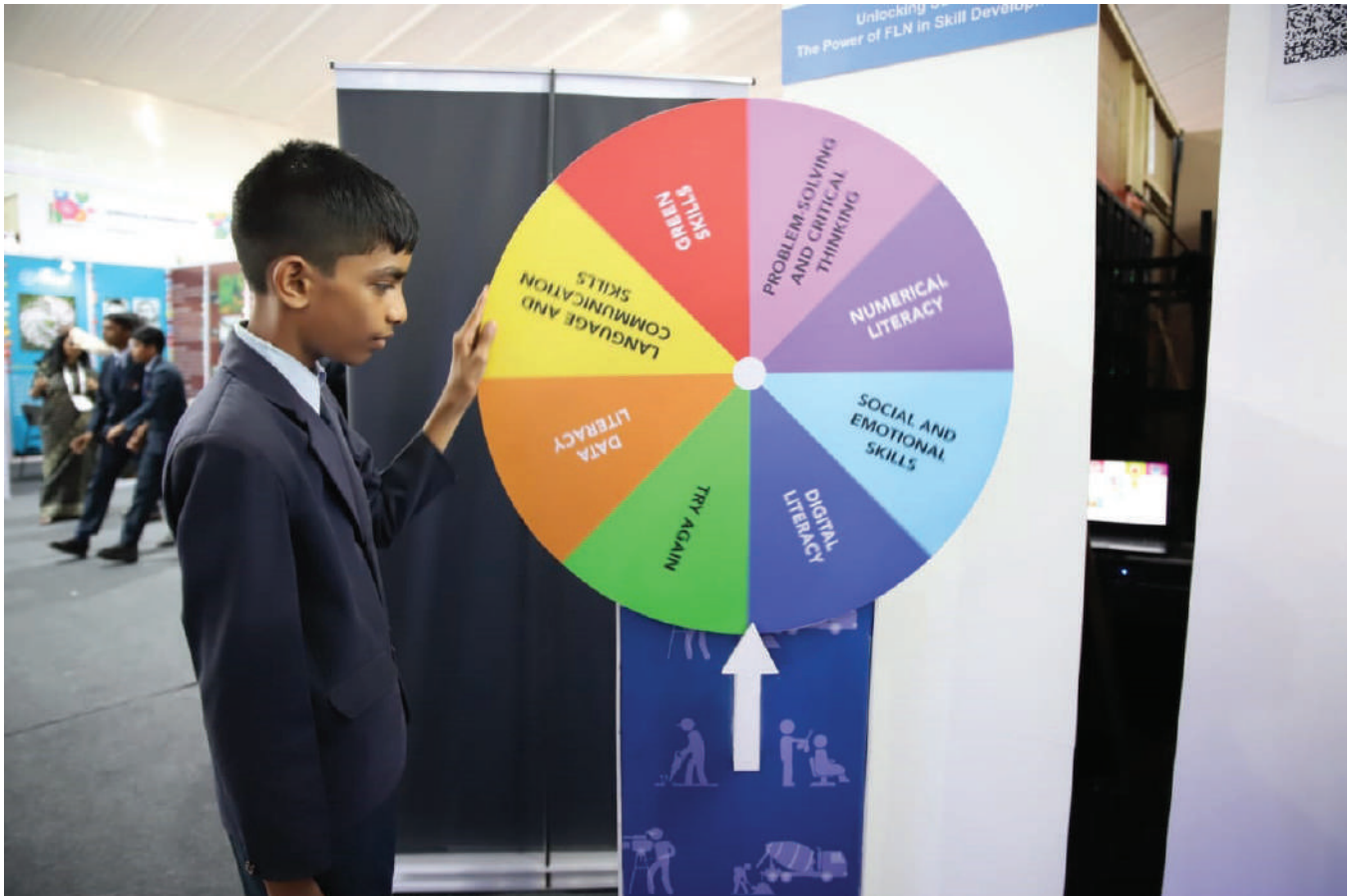


The resolution requests the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), including through the One Planet Network Programme on Sustainable Lifestyles and Education and the Green Jobs for Youth Pact, subject to available resources, to support Member States, at their request, in the development and implementation of national or regional action plans for promoting sustainable lifestyles, or the integration of sustainable lifestyles in existing actions plans; and facilitate, upon request, the sharing of information, best practice, and research on sustainable lifestyles, including sustainable living.

The resolution also requests the UNEP Executive Director, in partner-

ship with UN Regional Commissions, to undertake Regional Dialogues, to discuss sustainable lifestyles practices in the context of, inter alia, the diversity of nature's values and approaches, including, as appropriate, ecocentric approaches, of individuals and communities including that of Indigenous Peoples, and local communities, for living in harmony with Nature, or Mother Earth, as recognised by some countries and regions to enable sustainable lifestyles, and request to submit a report to inform UNEA seventh on these dialogues and on the progress of the present resolution.

The resolution on promoting sustainable lifestyles submitted by India was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and Bolivia.



# QUALITY OF EDUCATION FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

CSR Times

**B**y 2030, the United Nations hopes that all countries should ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of

cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Obtaining a quality education is the foundation for improving people's lives and sustainable development. Major progress has been made towards increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools, particularly for women and girls. Basic literacy skills have improved tremendously, yet bolder efforts are needed to make even greater strides in achieving uni-

versal education goals. For example, the world has achieved equality in primary education between girls and boys, but few countries have achieved that target at all levels of education.

Education liberates the intellect, unlocks the imagination and is fundamental for self-respect. It is the key to prosperity and opens opportunities, enabling us to contribute to a progressive, healthy society. Learning benefits every human being and should be available to all.

According to the Global



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Citizenship Foundation, Global Citizenship Education (GCED) can be defined as a transformative, lifelong pursuit that involves both curricular learning and practical experience to shape a mindset to care for humanity and the planet and to equip individuals with global competencies to undertake responsible actions aimed at forging more just, peaceful, secure, sustainable, tolerant and inclusive societies.

GCED is an educational approach that helps individuals develop the skills, knowledge, and values they need to become active, responsible, and responsive citizens who contribute to building more peaceful, just, and sustainable societies.

The Ban Ki-moon Centre In addition to advocating for the achievement of SDG 4.7 at global, national, and local levels, Mission 4.7 also aims to curate and create relevant educational resources and curricula, push

countries for greater investments in quality education, and identify ways to train and support educators around the world.

It is a key member of Mission 4.7, which is an initiative that seeks to mobilise global expertise to support governments and other major policy stakeholders in the implementation of the UNESCO ESD for 2030 Roadmap, the UNESCO Greening Education Partnership, as well as other UNESCO workstreams on SDG 4.7.

With the deadline for the Education 2030 Agenda approaching, it is crucial to accelerate the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development to deliver all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. To support Member States in implementing the UNESCO Framework for the implementation of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) beyond 2019

and its Roadmap and to follow up on the Berlin Declaration on Education to Sustainable Development (May 2021), UNESCO is establishing the new ESD for 2030 Global Network.

Ban Ki-moon is a South Korean diplomat who was the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations (UNSG) from January 2007 to December 2016.

Recently, the Global Engagement & Empowerment Forum on Sustainable Development (GEEF), co-hosted by the Institute for Global Engagement & Empowerment (IGEE) and the Ban Ki-moon Centre for Global Citizens, is an annual international event where various stakeholders, including global leaders, experts, and youth, convene to collaborate towards accomplishing the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Building upon UNESCO's worldwide community of practice on



ESD, which was forged out of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in 2005, the Network aims to create synergy among members and foster cross-sectoral collaboration to support the implementation of ESD nationally, regionally, and globally.

The platform provides opportunities for exchange and collaboration among education authorities and professionals, youth, researchers, etc., through activities structured around the following objectives:

- Promising practices, knowledge-sharing and mutual learning
- Global advocacy and policymaking
- Collaboration and partnerships
- Monitoring and evaluation

Goal 4 of Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong

learning opportunities for all. This goal supports the reduction of disparities and inequities in education, both in terms of access and quality. It recognises the need to provide quality education for all, and most especially vulnerable populations, including poor children, children living in rural areas, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and refugee children.

This goal is critically important because of its transformative effects on the other SDGs. Sustainable development hinges on every child receiving a quality education. When children are offered the tools to develop to their full potential, they become productive adults ready to give back to their communities and break the cycle of poverty. Education enables upward socioeconomic mobility.

Significant progress was achieved during the last decade in increasing

access to education and school enrolment rates at all levels, particularly for girls. Despite these gains, about 260 million children were out of school in 2018, nearly one-fifth of the global population in that age group. Furthermore, more than half of all children and adolescents worldwide fail to meet minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics.

UNICEF's contribution towards this goal centres on equity and inclusion to provide all children with quality learning opportunities and skills development programmes from early childhood through adolescence. UNICEF works with governments worldwide to raise the quality and inclusiveness of schools.

UNICEF is the custodian for global monitoring of Indicator 4.2.1 Percentage of children (aged 24–59 months) developmentally on track in at least 3 of the four following domains: literacy-numeracy, physical, socio-emotional and learning.

In India, NITI Aayog has continuously endeavoured to evolve national indices that chart the pathway to an inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous tomorrow. The NITI Aayog aims to drive tangible policy improvements towards achieving quality education coherently and collaboratively.

The School Education Quality Index (SEQI) has been developed to provide insights and data-based feedback on the success of school education across the States and Union Territories of India. The index offers a platform for promoting evidence-based policymaking and



highlights possible course corrections in the education sector.

While the Right to Education Act ensured access to education for all children, there is a need to improve education and service delivery. Data from assessments such as the National Achievement Survey and the Annual Status of Education Report reinforces the need for system-level interventions across the school education system to improve grade-level competency and ensure that India's schooling system delivers on learning outcomes.

The measurement of quality-related education outcomes is imperative for incentivising States and

Union Territories to improve the performance of their school systems. Initiatives of the NITI Aayog, such as the Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital – Education (SATH-E), further emphasise the need for innovative policy design customised to the unique needs of the States.

Project SATH-E, 'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital-Education', was launched in 2017 to identify and build three 'role model' States for the school education sector. After an elaborate selection process, Jharkhand, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh were chosen.

The first phase of SATH-E was completed in March 2020. Significant strides were made in learning enhancement programmes (remediation), governance reforms, teacher training, recruitment, assessment and accountability, school consolidation,



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

IT-enabled monitoring of schools, and coaching of academic coordinators (BRCs/CRCs), among others.

A few of the achievements are as follows:

- Learning enhancement programme/remedial teaching with workbook support for approximately 2.3 crore students implemented.
- Academic monitoring of schools and students streamlined, with nearly 1.5 lakh inspections carried out every month.
- Comprehensive rewards and recognition programmes, including external certifications, were initiated.
- Assessment reforms, including spot testing and learning tracking formats, were introduced.
- Multiple rounds of teacher training were undertaken.

In Madhya Pradesh, 30% of the students moved from lower-level

foundational literacy numeracy learning cohorts to the highest learning level for grades 3–8 in two years of the 'Dakshta Unnayan learning enhancement programme.

In Odisha, an average improvement of 10–15% was observed in learning outcomes due to the 'Ujjwal-Utthan' learning enhancement programme.

In Jharkhand, a 12% improvement across most competencies was recorded through the 'Gyan Setu' learning enhancement programme.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, SATH-E adapted itself as 'Digi-SATH' to provide undeterred support via digital mediums.

Under the Digi-SATH initiative, MP's 'Hamara Ghar Hamara Vidyalaya' and 'Digi-LEP' (or 'Digital Learning Enhancement Programme'), Odisha's 'Shiksha Sanjog' and 'Shiksha Sampark' and Jharkhand's 'Hamara Doordarshan Hamara Vidyalaya' have been providing online education and teacher training.



# CSR IS NOT A CHARITY BUT A DUTY & RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS SOCIETY

CSR Times

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) guidelines define its philosophy wherein organizations serve the interest of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the environment in all aspects of their operations. Under these guidelines, the long-term CSR Plan is to match with the long-term Business Plan of the Organization. The activities under CSR are to be selected in such

a manner that the benefits reach the smallest unit, i.e., village, panchayat, block or district, depending upon the operations and resource capability of the company.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is not a charity but a duty & responsibility towards society inspired by the highest values of seeking to return to society a part of what we have received in whatever capacity & to whatever extent we can.

Social responsibility has been part of our ancient Indian tradition. The spirit of contributing towards the

welfare of society is inherent to every Indian individual, but sometimes it needs inspiration, an outlet and leads to direction.

For example, Swami Vivekananda inspired Jamshedji Tata to spend on healthcare when he established pioneering institutions like the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), the National Center for Performing Art (NCPA) and the Tata Memorial Hospital.

Former Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, had once stated that the business too owes an



obligation to the society. No one appreciated this better than JRD who invested liberally in socially useful activities. He urged the industrialists to consider what their obligations were. It should be to discover the opportunities to invest in socially useful projects, in creating new opportunities for the under privileged, the less developed regions and the marginalized sections of our society. "Corporate social responsibility is not philanthropy. It is not charity. It is an investment in our collective future", he added.

Former President of India Pranab Mukherjee, once pointed that the notion of CSR is not new to India. Mahatma Gandhi had espoused the socio-economic philosophy of trusteeship. It provided a means for wealthy people to be trustees to look after the welfare of the common man. CSR gradually evolved into the corporate framework. CSR refers to a company's sense of responsibility

extending beyond its shareholders to all stakeholders, notably the people and ecology in its operation's domain. It indicates a sense of 'corporate citizenship'. Though a business entity incurs short-term costs without direct financial benefit, it gains in the long run through the promotion of social and environmental change.

He went on to say that the inclusive growth is an avowed objective of our public policy. It calls for intensive collaborative efforts of the Government and the corporate sector to provide the basics for improving the quality of life in our rural and urban areas. The corporate sector must provide renewed impetus to CSR initiatives towards cleanliness, health and education. The Government has launched several important schemes in this direction. To mention a few - Swachh Bharat Mission aims at a Clean India by 2nd October, 2019 to coincide with the 150th Birth Anniversary of Gandhiji; Saansad

Adarsh Gram Yojana envisages the integrated development of selected villages. The corporate sector can work at various models to develop a synergetic relationship in the implementation of these schemes.

Mukherjee commented that in the sphere of health and education, many companies have established reputed institutions. The private sector can extend the good work to rural areas by meeting the infrastructure requirements in government schools and investing in teacher up-skilling. Companies can adopt specific blocks or districts for such intervention. This can be synergized with efforts to tackle malaises like malnutrition and other health-related issues.

He urged, the corporate sector must also venture beyond the mandated CSR spend - to activities such as energy conservation; environment protection; and development of an innovative spirit among workers to foster productivity



and industrial growth. To my mind, more than money, important socio-economic objectives need innovative ideas, technology and management for their speedy realization. The Indian industry must leverage its strengths and competencies, and lend its expertise in a wide array of programmes.

He said, that Indian industry has displayed a keen interest in contributing to the betterment of the society. Shouldering the task of socio-economic development is increasingly considered a shared responsibility of the Government and the industry.

India having the most elaborated CSR mechanism and implementation strategy has started its journey to set a benchmark in attaining sustainability goals and stakeholder activism in nation building.

The CSR ambit is getting bigger and for upcoming years it would turn

as a unique knowledge base for analyzing and achieving sustainability goals as among various large economies. India is a country which has assured by mandating CSR through its legislative action.

The CSR ambit is getting bigger and for upcoming years it would turn as a unique knowledge base for analyzing and achieving sustainability goals as among various large economies. India is a country which has assured by mandating CSR through its legislative action.

The importance of inclusive growth is widely recognized as an essential part of India's quest for development. It reiterates our firm commitment to include those sections of the society in the growth process, which had hitherto remained excluded from the mainstream of development through its legislative action.

India's philanthropic landscape has undergone major changes over the past years. Mandating CSR helped the corporate sector transition from a voluntary and unsystematic approach to a structured way of contributing to social welfare.

Although the law has infused capital into the social sector, the programs' impact and effectiveness must be measured to help identify gaps and solutions. Lastly, instead of a narrow perception of CSR, one needs to understand the holistic view of it. The Government of India is willing to take measures to facilitate ease of doing business by creating an effective and receptive CSR legal framework. This will teach social consciousness in a company. This way, CSR expenditure can even more meaningfully contribute towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals.



# Global Recognition

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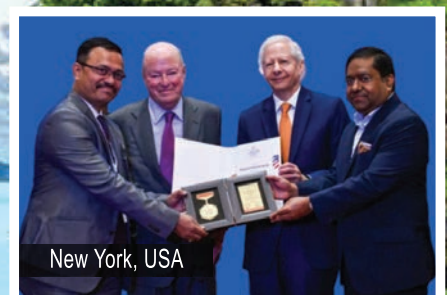
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# SUSTAINABLE ENTREPRENEURSHIP MAKING THE RIGHT NOISE



CSR Times

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an established part of the global landscape, with companies worldwide abiding by the United Nations Global Compact and many governments starting CSR initiatives. In this has emerged sustainable entrepreneurship. It sets up and manages businesses integrating economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. The whole ecosystem ensures long-term value that benefits

current and future generations.

Michel Doucin, a French economist and political analyst, has analyzed the concept of corporate social responsibility.

He says Corporate social responsibility has been met with widespread enthusiasm for some years. Companies worldwide abide by the United Nations Global Compact launched by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999, and today, nearly 6,000 groups of companies are engaged in CSR. In September 2010, the ISO 26000 standard on social responsibility

was adopted, with 93 per cent of the participating standardization organizations from 90 states voting in favour.

Doucin believes that such enthusiasm for social, environmental, and human rights (which emerging countries have shared) is reassuring in a world generally concerned mainly with profits.

But are we misinterpreting this apparent unanimous adherence to the concept? Is the definition generally used in Europe—that of the European Commission, which considers CSR an

approach by which “companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with stakeholders voluntarily”—truly universal?

He goes on to analyze that CSR has now emerged as a strategic way of managing a company by anticipating the changes in consumer tastes and future social and environmental regulations, building workers’ creative motivation, and preventing the company’s reputation (and, by extension, shareholder value) from being damaged. It gives responsible companies a comparative advantage. In this utilitarian approach to CSR, ethics hardly have any importance.

This idea has been popular, including in certain emerging countries like India.

The Confederation of Indian

Industry(CII) encourages entrepreneurs and innovators to be part of the transformative initiative that focuses on sustainability.

In India’s rapidly evolving business landscape, entrepreneurs are shifting their focus towards environmental sustainability. Green entrepreneurship, a rising trend, goes beyond profit margins, aiming to integrate economic activities with ecological well-being.

At its core, green entrepreneurship seeks to promote innovative solutions for pressing environmental challenges. Entrepreneurs in this space aim to create ventures that operate harmoniously with the planet, emphasizing resource efficiency, conservation, and eco-friendly practices. This approach catalyzes positive change, recognizing the intrinsic link between business success and environmental

stewardship in pursuing a sustainable future.

## The Rise of Innovation in Low Carbon Tech in India

As of December 2023, over 6,600 startups in the cleantech sector (Green Technology, Renewable Energy and Waste Management) are spread across over 450 districts in 34 states and union territories.

Despite this momentum, turning innovative concepts into widespread realities demands a solid support system. Entrepreneurs in this field grapple with diverse challenges, including entering new sectors, clarifying the benefits of clean technology, and nurturing new ideas. Building customer confidence is pivotal, as potential clients often avoid untested technologies. This highlights





the importance of establishing a supportive environment for translating innovative ideas into practical solutions.

## CII's Green Entrepreneurship Council

As part of India's premier business association, CII GBC is at the epicentre of this narrative, supporting and amplifying the voices of green trailblazers and collectively scripting a story of sustainable prosperity for the nation.

Its Green Entrepreneurship Council (GEC) emerges as a crucial catalyst, addressing critical needs to bridge the gap between groundbreaking cleantech concepts and their widespread implementation by

emphasizing lowering the cost of customer acquisition and bolstering brand positioning.

The Council works toward accelerating the growth of startups by cultivating an interactive ecosystem that brings together innovators, implementors and mentors.

Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises and self-employed workers are the backbone of economies. Globally, they represent about 90 per cent of businesses and account for over two-thirds of employment. The share of self-employed workers, many of whom operate in the informal sector in developing countries, tends to decrease as economies' gross domestic product (GDP) per capita increases.

United Nations has recognized entrepreneurship's important contribu-

tion to sustainable development by creating jobs, driving inclusive economic growth and innovation, improving social conditions, and addressing economic, social, and environmental challenges in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development context.

Inequalities between and within countries, including the digital divide, have amplified and widened because of the pandemic, affecting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. At the firm level, these inequalities are strongly associated with gaps in productivity, scaling up, innovation and growth, all of which impact not only aggregate economic growth but also inclusion and societal well-being.

"We owe most of the social progress of the past to entrepreneurship and to the capacity to create wealth by





taking risks and pursuing innovative new business models,” World Economic Forum Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab wrote during the height of the pandemic. “But we must rethink what we mean by ‘capital’ in its many iterations, whether financial, environmental, social, or human.”

In its article, WEF points out that SDG 9 is critical since it elaborates on sustainability in Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Targets include promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raising the industry’s share of employment and GDP and doubling its share in LDCs. Others include increasing access to financial services for small enterprises, upgrading infrastructure and retrofitting industries to make them sustainable.

It further adds that SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Targets include achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, reducing waste generation, achieving environmentally sound management of chemicals, and reducing their release. The goal also encourages companies (especially large ones) to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability information into reporting cycles.

With the growing importance of sustainability in business, corporate executives are hard-pressed to embrace a paradigm shift away from the sole purpose of generating profits for shareholders toward advocating sustainable development and long-term value creation in their organizations.

In recent years, numerous studies have linked the implementation of corporate sustainability initiatives to improved business and financial performance. Similarly, from a valuation perspective, it is believed that sound corporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices would increase a company’s value. This can be attributed to the impact of ESG practices on three areas: cash flow accretion, lower cost and better access to capital, and market-specific factors.

Despite overwhelming evidence validating the case for corporate sustainability, many companies may struggle to develop a clear business plan that embeds a sustainability strategy. This underscores the importance of putting rhetoric into action.



# WORLD BANK REDEFINES CSR THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY & RESPONSIBILITY

CSR Times

The World Bank Group is committed to ending extreme poverty and sustainably boosting shared prosperity. The World Bank manages its internal business operations' environmental, social, and economic impacts by striving for net positive impacts on the ecosystems, communities, and economies where we have offices. The World Bank's annual Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Index and biennial Sustainability

Review present details on the sustainability considerations of our operations and corporate practices.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPACTS

The Corporate Responsibility Strategic Plan focuses on the World Bank's efforts to review mandates and progress on Corporate Responsibility at the World Bank, evaluate the current Corporate Responsibility landscape and trends, engage stakeholders for input on Corporate

Responsibility issues, identify implementation priorities; and establish a rolling three-year implementation plan for Corporate Responsibility.

The priority areas have been identified by surveying international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and sustainability news outlets. Internal stakeholders across the institution confirmed the analysis and identified paths forward.

The Managing Director & Chief

Administrative Officer has approved an action plan to set long-term targets within these impact areas.

## CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

The 10 Sustainability Principles are the bedrock for embedding sustainability in the Bank's decisions across its internal operations. Using these Principles systematically will positively impact how we operate our facilities worldwide and throughout our supply chain.

At present, the world over, there is an increasing awareness about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainable Development (SD) and Non-Financial Reporting (NFR).

Consequently, there is a concerted effort among all types of organizations, to ensure that sustainable development is not lost sight of, in the pursuit of their respective goals - profit making, social service, philanthropy, etc.

CSR entails the integration of social and environmental concerns by companies in their business operations as also in interactions with their stakeholders. SD essentially refers to the process of maintenance of the quality of environmental and social systems in the pursuit of economic development.

NFR is basically a system of reporting by organizations on their activities in this context, especially as regards the triple bottom line, that is, the environmental, social and economic accounting. The contribution of financial institutions including

banks to sustainable development is paramount, considering the crucial role they play in financing the economic and developmental activities of the world. In this context, the urgency for banks to act as responsible corporate citizens in the society, especially in a developing country like ours, need be hardly overemphasized. Their activities should reflect their concern for human rights and environment.

In view of the gathering, worldwide momentum regarding sustainable development and the initiative being taken on various fronts by different organisations, including all major banks worldwide, it has become incumbent to highlight the developments that are taking place and raise the level of awareness and focus the attention of banks in India on this issue.

The enclosures introduce the concepts of CSR, SD and NFR, the felt need therefor, financial sector initiatives worldwide in the wake thereof and other related issues and underscore the importance of the issues involved and the global initiatives being taken in this regard.

The principles of sustainable development are important in all industrial and commercial sectors, as all activities have the potential to influence social and environmental welfare quality. The financial sector is of particular importance, as this sector is able to affect many projects and the development trends that result from them.

There is much that the financial sector can do to assist efforts to

achieve sustainability. Internal efforts to make day-to-day operations cleaner, more efficient, and supportive of social structures can help.

Integrating E&S issues into strategic operations is also important. In this way, financial institutions ensure that internal activity is sustainable and can help financing itself become more sustainable.

Sustainable finance is financing that places importance on the environmental and social consequences of projects and financial products rather than just the economic impact. This can encompass incorporating E&S assessments into financial analysis or developing products with an explicit E&S focus, such as sustainable & responsible investment (SRI) funds.

SRI (sustainable and responsible investment/socially responsible investment) is an investment strategy that identifies targets with net E&S benefits or no net E&S detriment and provides financial growth.

As greed, short-term business models, and inequalities in the global economy strain societies and the environment, businesses require a profound, urgent, and radical change in different dimensions and levels: priorities, ethics, strategies, values, and culture. Philanthropy and corporate social responsibility projects are important tools but not enough to make the decisive shift.

Considerable evidence demonstrates that businesses can maintain or even enhance their commercial performance both while and by becoming more sustainable and responsible.

# SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Vatika Singh

*Beyond borders and differences: an education that connects all and expands horizons, bringing people and nations together through education, culture and science with an endeavour to build durable peace.*

Learning how to read, write and count matters – these tools open a window to the world. However, with pressing national and global issues transcending country borders, literacy and numeracy skills may not be enough to make sense of it, pursue one’s dreams and find purpose in life. What a young person will see through this window and how they choose to act on it largely depends on the values, content and context of education.

Global citizenship education (GCED) looks into these elements to support learners of all ages to become ethical, empathetic, and respectful human beings who can adapt to the rapidly moving world, even amidst its most complex challenges and threats. UNESCO is advancing GCED across subjects and in all spheres of life to provide them with knowledge, skills and attitudes that cultivate tolerance, respect, and a shared sense of belonging to one global community to ensure human rights and peace.

Education for sustainable development (ESD) gives learners of all ages the knowledge, skills, values and agency to address interconnected global challenges, including climate change, loss of biodiversity, unsustainable use of resources, and inequality. It empowers learners of all ages to make informed decisions and take individual and collective action to change society and care for the planet. ESD is a lifelong learning process and an integral part of quality education. It enhances the cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural dimensions of learning and

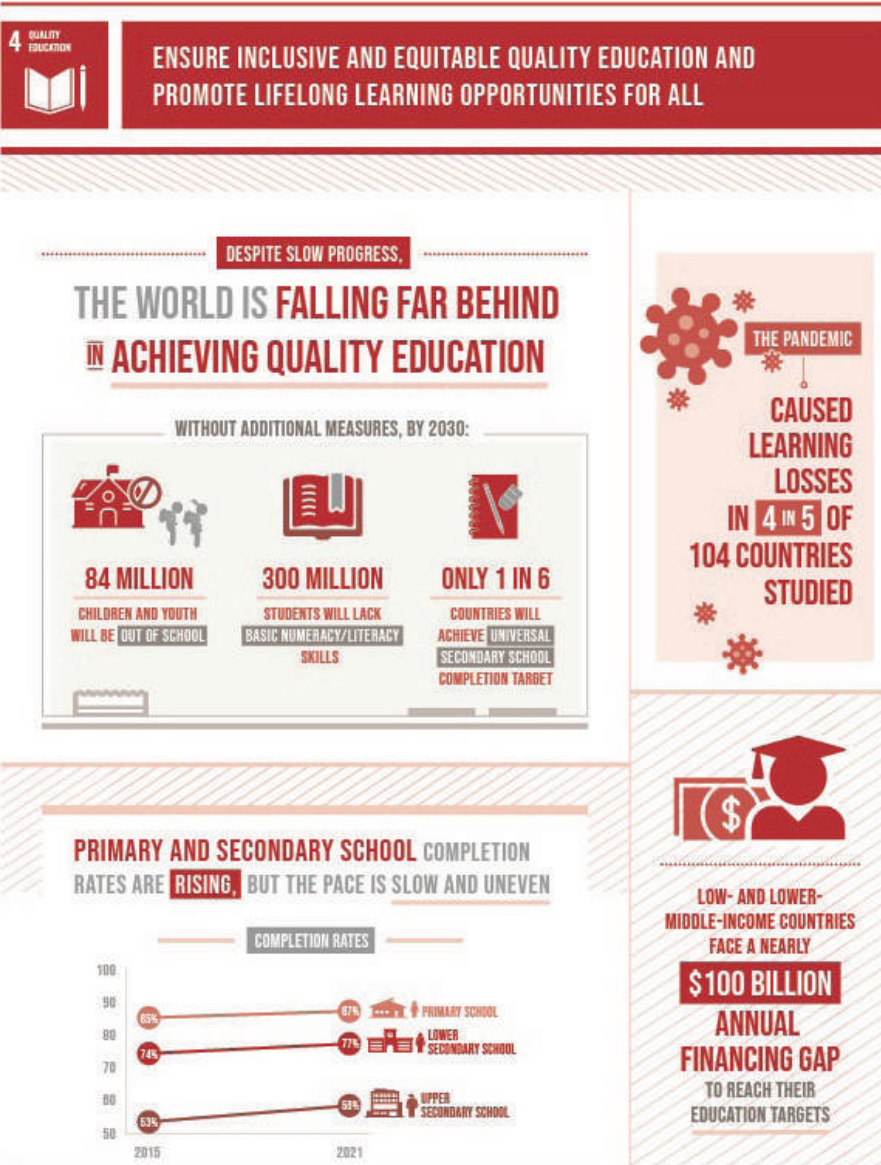




Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

encompasses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself.

UNESCO is the United Nations' leading agency for ESD. It is responsible for the implementation of ESD for 2030, the current global framework for ESD, which takes up and continues the work of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD (2015-2019).

UNESCO's work on ESD focuses on five main areas:

- Advancing policy
- Transforming learning environments
- Building capacities of educators
- Empowering and mobilising youth
- Accelerating local-level action

UNESCO supports countries in developing and expanding educational activities that focus on sustainability issues such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, water, the oceans, sustainable urbanisation, and sustainable lifestyles through ESD. UNESCO leads and advocates globally on ESD and provides guidance and standards. It also provides data on the status of ESD. It

monitors progress on SDG Indicator 4.7.1 on the extent to which global citizenship education and ESD are mainstreamed in national education policies, curricula, teacher education and student assessment.

"Digital technologies have brought immense changes to how we learn, access information, shape our understanding of ourselves and engage with others and the planet," says Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education UNESCO.

These changes have presented unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges, highlighting education's pivotal role in shaping learners to become agents of change propelling societies towards sustainability and peace. "As the development of digital technology continues to accelerate, the new worlds they create can feel unfamiliar and disorienting, even as we understand their potential to enrich our lives, improve our relationships, and open new horizons for education. The very technologies that have revolutionised our world have also amplified certain obstacles, such as the spread of misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories and hate speech," he added.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

# THE INTERACT CLUBS IN SCHOOLS REINFORCING THE TENETS OF SUSTAINABILITY



Vishak Rajendran

Interact stands for International Action. It is a kind of junior Rotary Club for young people between the ages of 12 and 18. All Interact Clubs are part of the Rotary International organization, and a Rotary Club sponsors every club. Most Interact Clubs are based in schools, but in some parts of the world, they are in villages and towns as part of the community.

Rotary club sponsors mentor and guide interaction club members as they carry out projects and develop leadership skills. Interact clubs organize at least two service projects a year: one that benefits their community and encourages international understanding. In addition to these, various novel and original ideas that are socially desirable are formulated, refined and implemented for the betterment of society.



With over 15,000 Interact clubs in 145 countries, Rotary inspires the next generation of socially responsible and globally conscious leaders, reiterating its mottoes "Service Above Self" and "One Profits Most Who Serves Best".

According to UNESCO, sustainable development meets current needs without compromising the future. It includes concerns such as Poverty, Gender equality, Human rights, Education for all, Health, Human Security and Intercultural dialogue.

Here comes the key role of Interact clubs in addressing the aforementioned issues and others by forming effective and reality-oriented techniques and strategies through meaningful discussions and deliberations while considering

criticisms that are raised and potential limitations that may be confronted. Some core values of Interact Club are that it is responsive and empowering. Keeping these in mind, Interact clubs work towards finding sustainable solutions to problems such as poverty, lack of education, illiteracy, and other issues.

The distribution of Interact clubs throughout the countries, states and localities helps cover wider areas while also representing and taking up issues with which one is familiar.

The Interact clubs belonging to a district work in conjunction with each other to combat the local issues at the local level through teamwork and collaboration.

The Interact Clubs in schools perform essential functions such as taking action to make a difference in schools and communities, discovering new cultures, and promoting mutual understanding. At my school, Bal Bharati Public School, GRH Marg, New Delhi the Interact Club works to develop a concern for society and the world amongst students.

Taking part in Interact Clubs' initiatives helps a student become a passionate person, a responsible and aware human being, and a leader who understands and communicates the importance of sustainability.

The nature and importance of interactive clubs, especially at the school level, are the foundation for sustainability.



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