

CENTRE FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

CRB CENTRE for
RESPONSIBLE
BUSINESS
Enabling Change for Impact

ANNUAL REPORT



2019 -
20

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This Annual Report of the Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) is coming out at a time when the world is combating the biggest existential threat it has ever faced. As Yuval Noah Harari said in his recent FT article[1], “Yes, the storm will pass, humankind will survive, most of us will still be alive — but we will inhabit a different world”.

The COVID19 pandemic has highlighted the need for us all to learn from our earlier mistakes and tie these lessons into the process of rebuilding and recovery. As an organisation, we firmly believe this is an opportunity of our lifetime to insert sustainability into the heart of the rebuilding agenda and actions. The views from the ground is, and especially from across the Indian heartland, that social sustainability – in terms of the way businesses/ government/ society has protected and supported the plight of workers (especially the informal contract and migrant workers) will remain a focus as the wheels of the industries slowly start turning forward. It is also becoming clear that while consideration towards a healthier environment might take a backseat in the interim, it will certainly come back strongly into the agenda of rebuilding (green recovery).

Reflecting at this juncture on the year that has passed, I feel it has been an eventful and fruitful year for CRB. We have strengthened our team; initiated a few projects that expand our scope and challenges us to move beyond our comfort zones; cemented new partnerships nationally and globally; and opened new horizons of our thinking towards greater and more equal North-South collaboration and understanding on sustainable business/SDGs. CRB is getting its due recognition from whatever little we have been able to contribute on the agenda – this is an extremely important motivating factor for my colleagues and the organisation, given our smallish size. It motivates and pushes us to pursue the high aspirations and ambitions we have and our Governing Board has set for ourselves.

Let me enumerate here some of the interesting developments that happened in 2019 and are likely to dominate the work agenda of the organisations for some time to come.

- **Circular Apparel:** We are beginning to understand the pathways to promote circularity in the apparel and textiles sector, especially keeping in view the interest of the Indian suppliers, manufacturers and even workers. This would guide us and some of the discourses we would be engaging in, going forward post COVID19.
- **Sustainably Sourced Palm Oil (Deforestation Free Supply Chains):** The importance of deforestation free supply chains cannot be emphasised enough. This is especially critical given the scientific evidence that has highlighted our ignorance as a race about the linkage between the environmental degradation and human/community health (planetary health). Together with like-minded organisations, CRB has tried to leverage the consumer/market influence to promote sustainable palm oil value chain/supply chain – given India is one of the biggest consumers of palm oil globally. FMCG and Indian consumers can play a key role in promoting palm oil production free of deforestation and exploitation. The lessons from this work would also help us in combating climate change as well.
- **Responsible Global Value Chains:** The role that private sector can play in promoting responsible value chains needs to be better understood, especially post COVID19. The role of government and enabling policy framework is a key – and there is a need to move from knee-jerk reactions to long-term thinking on the policy front (building political capital). Specifically, for Indian industry/businesses, there is a need to move from intent to action – in terms of integration of Indian SMEs into the global value chain. Post COVID19, pundits have predicted changes in nature/ structure/ governance of global value chains across sectors, and India businesses/government/society needs to work together to explore how we can reap the benefits for the State and the people. Further, there is a need for greater bottom-up engagement between stakeholders from the South with the North to better convey critical sustainability outcomes down the value chain and vulnerabilities.

I am cautiously optimistic that 2020 will not only bring challenges – but also opportunities – that will force us to go back to our drawing boards and perhaps unlearn, reflect and construct our understanding of sustainability/ sustainable business. We firmly believe this would contribute towards **resilient, inclusive, equitable and environment-friendly business and society**.

India will play a leading role on this domestically and globally.

We at CRB are ready to do our bit in contributing to this process now and in the future.



RIJIT SENGUPTA

CEO, Centre for Responsible Business

[1]Financial Times, 'The World After Coronavirus', March 2020
(<https://www.ft.com/content/19d90308-6858-11ea-a3c9-1fe6fedcca75>)

02 CRB Thematic Areas

Circular Economy



Business & Human Rights



Private Sector & SDGs

Voluntary Sustainability Standards



SMEs & Sustainability



2.1

Circular Economy



Source: textileinfomedia.com

'Circular economy' defined by the Ellen Macarthur Foundation as an economy which is regenerative by design and where materials and energy flow in closed loops within the value chain – can offer solutions to numerous sustainability issues faced by the world. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Redesign, Refurbish and Remanufacture - also known as the 7Rs embodying circular economy are its basic tenets. In other words, circular economy is a way of conducting business which is less impactful towards the environment, uses resources efficiently and provides value to all stakeholders. It also boosts business competitiveness – especially in sectors dominated by large brands and buyers who have made commitments globally towards promoting circular business. Ideally, a circular economy is driven wholly by renewable energy, and the concept of 'waste' is eliminated by design. If adopted in a holistic manner, employing systems perspective, circular economy can help transform lives and livelihoods around the globe. It can help create robust, vibrant societies while reversing some of the harm done to the world's ecosystems. CRB has been intrigued with the subject – and therefore explored its potential in the apparel and textiles sector partnering with some leading national and international businesses and organisations, as well as government bodies.

2.1.1 Circular Apparel Policy Innovation Lab

CRB is leading an initiative titled the Circular Apparel Policy Innovation Lab (CAPIL) that is funded by the Laudes Foundation. CRB is implementing this project in partnership with Circular Apparel Innovations Factory (CAIF), an initiative of Intellectap and Fashion for Good (FFG). CAPIL has been set up with the objective to explore and suggest policy interventions required for enabling a circular economy transition in the textile and apparel sector in India that serves the interest of the domestic manufacturers/ suppliers. The goal is to create an engagement process that bridges the gap between national and state level policy makers and industry actors (brands, suppliers, input providers, innovators, associations, academia/experts) for highlighting transformational pathways towards circular apparel and textiles.

The initiative has leveraged design thinking methods to develop ideas and concepts for policy interventions, focusing on the following areas based on industry experience and practice:

- Design (design interventions to reduce waste)
- Raw materials (fabric innovations and alternatives)
- Dyeing and finishing (wastewater and chemicals management, new techniques reducing chemical and water inputs), alternative dyes and chemicals
- Manufacturing (clean tech, energy, waste management, process innovations)
- Retail (innovative business models), reverse logistics, drop-off/pick-up points
- End-of-Use (waste reduction, upcycling), awareness, regulations
- Transparency & Traceability
- Circular business models

Laudes
Foundation

intellectap

FASHION
FOR
GOOD



Dialogue on Circular Economy with Karnataka's Textile & Apparel Stakeholders



CRB organised a half-day workshop on circular economy in engaging Karnataka's textile and apparel sector stakeholders on 19th February 2020 in Bengaluru as part of the CAPIL project. The workshop saw participation from spinning, brands/buyers, start-ups, apparel manufacturers and the state government engaging to reflect on key policy areas to envisage operationalisation of circular apparel and textiles in the state. Based on further engagement with key stakeholders, CRB developed a policy brief that was submitted to the State Government.

Stakeholder Consultation on Circular Apparel Policy in Gujarat

A stakeholder consultation was organised in IIM Ahmedabad (Gujarat) on 22 October 2019 to gather input on circular apparel policy priorities among the Gujarat stakeholders – inviting participants from Ahmedabad, Surat and Vadodara clusters. The workshop saw participation from design institutes, brands, suppliers, innovators and state policy actors. The discussions were focused on the role of innovation, and integrating sustainability and circular economy practices in the way of doing business. A policy brief was prepared and submitted to the Commissioner of Industries and can be seen [here](#).



2.1.2 Status Paper on Circular Apparel

CRB is developing a status paper on circular economy in the textile and apparel sector in India (circular apparel), based on discussions and encouragement received from some relevant, senior level government officials.

The paper will focus on the current state of the industry in relation to the principles of circular economy; structural challenges facing the sector; priority circular economy areas (energy, water, chemicals, technical textiles, etc.); examples of circular apparel 'good practices'/ interventions in the sector; and policy recommendation/ ideas based on stakeholder inputs.



Representations

The First South Asian Conference on Sustainability in Textile & Apparel Industry 2020

Devyani Hari, Director (Programmes) of CRB underlined the key issues and opportunities on circular apparel in our country. This conference was held on 3rd March, 2020 in New Delhi.

Green Economy Coalition's Global Annual Meeting 2020

CRB and the Global Green Growth Institute facilitated a session on 'Financing Local Green Enterprises -Building a Stake of Micro Enterprises in India's Transition to an Inclusive Green Economy' at the Green Economy Coalition's Global Annual Meeting held in New Delhi. Devyani Hari participated in this session as a panelist and highlighted the criticality of consolidating policy to ease financing for local green enterprises.

SUSSout Events

CRB participated in the SUSSout6 2020 & SussOut5 2019 events. The events saw speakers from different backgrounds gave lightning talks & the discussions covered a broad spectrum highlighting local,

sustainable business models that can generate employment along with looking at as to how consumerism affects our mental health and how we can slow down.

Sankalp Global 2019

Devyani Hari was invited to speak in the panel discussion on 'Closing the Gaps: An interactive session on Circular opportunities across the Textile & Apparel Value Chain' at Sankalp Global Forum 2019 organised by Intellectap as a part of initiative on Circular Apparel Innovation Factory (CAIF).

3rd Circular Economy Symposium of FICCI 2019

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) and Intellectap organised a session on 'Circular Apparel Policy Innovation' at this symposium. Rijit Sengupta, CEO represented CRB as a panelist in this session. There was consensus of the need for policy actions to promote circularity in the sector.



2.2

Business & Human Rights



Image Source: <https://situational.com/industries/manufacturing/>

*At CRB, we understand Business and Human Rights as integral to the realisation of India's Constitutional vision of equitable and sustainable growth for all. For any economy to be resilient, it should be founded on just and fair principles. In India, the centrality of this philosophy is embodied in the Constitution as part of the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. In the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, we find business and human rights issues at the heart not only of the ensuing humanitarian crises but also central to building societal resilience. Globally, the pandemic has exposed and accentuated the fault lines that exist in our current growth/ development models and priorities. There is a crying need to redefine growth and bring human rights to the centre of all endeavours to restore normalcy. There is today, both among businesses and its stakeholders a growing acknowledgement of building business with purpose that goes beyond conventional norms of shareholder capitalism. Rising to the need of the hour, CRB has engaged to raise awareness among key stakeholders on the subject and engage in convening policy and practice stakeholders on various issues pertaining to business and human rights, viz. **UN Guiding Principles, Supply Chains Transparency, Human Rights Due Diligence** and the **National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights**. On the policy front CRB is supporting the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India in the process of developing India's first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.*

2.2.1 National Action Plan (NAP) on Business & Human Rights

The National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights is an evolving policy strategy developed by a state to protect against adverse human rights impacts by business enterprises in conformity with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). As a signatory to the UNGPs, India is obligated to develop a NAP incorporating the three pillars of the UNGPs (*State duty to Protect – Corporate Duty to Respect – Access to Effective Remedy*) and premised on the local business contexts and needs. At present, there are 23 UN member countries that have developed the NAP and 22 countries that are in the process of doing so - India included.

In India, the process of formulating the National Action Plan is being anchored by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MoCA), which had started with the development of the Zero Draft of the NAP in December 2018[1]. Towards end 2019, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs initiated the process of collating and culminating the processes into India's National Action Plan.

India is perhaps the only country that has continued forth its efforts to develop the NAP despite the COVID19 situation and the ensuing lockdown. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs consulted a Steering Committee (comprising various arms of the Government) and an expert Advisory Committee (comprising academics, practitioners and senior business representatives) to support the process of developing the NAP. The Ministry has also sought public comments and inputs from all relevant stakeholders/ experts through written submissions[2] and extensive consultations organised by the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs with other business chambers/institutions across parts of the country.

[1] http://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/ZeroDraft_11032020.pdf

[1] http://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/CircularExtensionofTime_09032020.pdf



2.2.2 Capacity Building Event

Business and Human Rights Seminar in Pune, India

CRB in partnership with Friedrich Nauman Foundation and Indo-German Chambers of Commerce (IGCC) conducted a training workshop on Business and Human Rights in Pune on 25th November 2019. Rijit Sengupta represented CRB and together with Markus Loening, former Human Rights Commissioner of Germany interacted with a group of over 25 participants drawn from various German companies in this session.

The discussion was an endeavour to raise awareness among businesses about the purpose and importance of the National Action Plan (NAP) on BHR for businesses. Integration of human rights at the national policy level and current thinking and intent within Government of India on this issue was also shared.



2.3

Private Sector & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Image Source: Nitin Kanotra/ Hindustan Times Via Getty Images

Integrating sustainability into global and local value chains is becoming increasingly common, not only for creating equitable and inclusive growth, but also for pursuing the ambitious global goals (Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs). Since its adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations, there has been consensus about the key role of private sector (businesses) in meeting the SDGs. Many segments of the private sector, supported by various national and international organisations provide frameworks and guidance on how to integrate sustainable policies and business practices in order to achieve long-term prosperity for businesses and societies, while carefully managing or restoring environmental resources – embedded in 17 targets and 169 measurable indicators of the SDGs. CRB has been experimenting across sectors with various approaches/methods/tools, which private sector (businesses) can adopt to pursue specific SDG targets and indicators, and measure them. In addition to supply chain sustainability, buyer-supplier/producer partnership, public-private collaboration and voluntary sustainability standards offer some such possibilities. Further, CRB has also been engaging with NITI Aayog at the macro-level with evidence gathered from these interventions to build the case and general awareness about private sector contribution to SDGs in India.

2.3.1 Partnership for Nutrition

Nutrition is central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 development agenda – incorporated specifically in SDG2. Despite strong constitutional provisions, legislative policy, plan and programme commitments, India suffers from a high burden of under nutrition & micronutrient deficiency. The statistics on nutritional status indicate that India has been a laggard on the issue, among fast-growing economies and also in the region.

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) along with the United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP) and Cargill India have teamed up to address the issue of malnutrition and SDG2. The project looks at aspects of nutritional security in India by aligning with the priorities of the POSHAN Abhiyan.

CRB's contribution has been to explore and demonstrate approaches that public and the private sector can deploy to co-create solutions and address the problem collectively. The core project components include building collaborative platforms, private sector participation in ensuring supplementary nutrition, improved care and nutrition practices, and creation of an effective nutrition value chain for women and the local environment through a pilot in the State of Rajasthan – particularly in the district of Jaipur working in partnership with the state government of Rajasthan.



2.3.2 Promoting Responsible Value Chains in India for an Effective Contribution of the Private Sector to the SDGs (PROGRESS)

CRB has partnered with Aston India Centre for Applied Research (AICAR), Aston University, UK to explore and investigate how private sector companies - as part of GVCs, production networks and FDIs in India have/could better contribute towards the achievement of specific SDGs, particularly inclusive education and life-long learning (SDG4), employment and decent work for the youth (SGD 8), women's social and economic empowerment (SDG 5), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13). This project referred to as the PROGRESS project is being supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada. The project was officially launched in October 2018 and is being undertaken in four sectors viz. 1) Apparels & Textiles, 2) Agro-Processing, 3) Pharmaceuticals, and 4) Gems & Jewellery.

A unique proposition of the project is the collaboration between academic research on one side (led by Aston University by involving a community of leading scholars and researchers) and policy and practice on the other (led by CRB across the sectors).

Events:

Inception Meeting, 9th April 2019

An inception meeting was organised on 9th April, 2019 in New Delhi with key stakeholders from Apparel & Textiles, Agro-processing and Pharmaceutical sector with an objective to introduce the project to key stakeholders and to share the overview of the project across the sectors and receive inputs into the proposed research and practice level interventions. Read the brief report of the discussion [here](#).



Canada



MNC Strategies & Behaviour in Global Value Chains to Promote SDGs: A North- South Dialogue

An International Interface Meeting was held under the auspices of the PROGRESS Project & was organised on 9 October 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC), Geneva. The aim was to engage with international actors/ organisations to highlight contributions through this GVC approach on SDGs, particularly in an emerging economy like India. The discussions highlighted that if we are to accelerate the action on sustainability, closer alignment between different interests is the first order of the day. Need for continuous dialogue between actors from the Global North and the Global South was emphasised. Read the brief report of the full discussion [here](#).



Workshop on Circular Economy in the Textile and Apparel Sector



The workshop held on 10 September 2019 at NID Ahmedabad, featured speakers from the government, academia (design, textiles, strategic business management), industry (brands, exporters) and entrepreneurs. The discussions emphasised on incorporating circular economy principles in production and consumption as it's no longer a choice but is a must do for the survival of businesses in the long run. Another important aspect that emerged from the discussion was the need to educate consumers & increase awareness about circular & sustainable apparel. Read the brief report of the full discussion [here](#).

Dialogue on Responsible Gems & Jewellery Sector

A workshop for stakeholders from the Gems & Jewellery sector was organised in Mumbai on May 28th, 2019 with the objective to engage and onboard key stakeholders from the Gems & Jewellery sector (brands, buyers, manufacturers, standards organisations, public agencies, etc.) and to further identify the key issues to promote responsible gems and jewellery supply/value chains. Read the brief report of the full discussion [here](#).



Future-Proofing Businesses through Sustainability

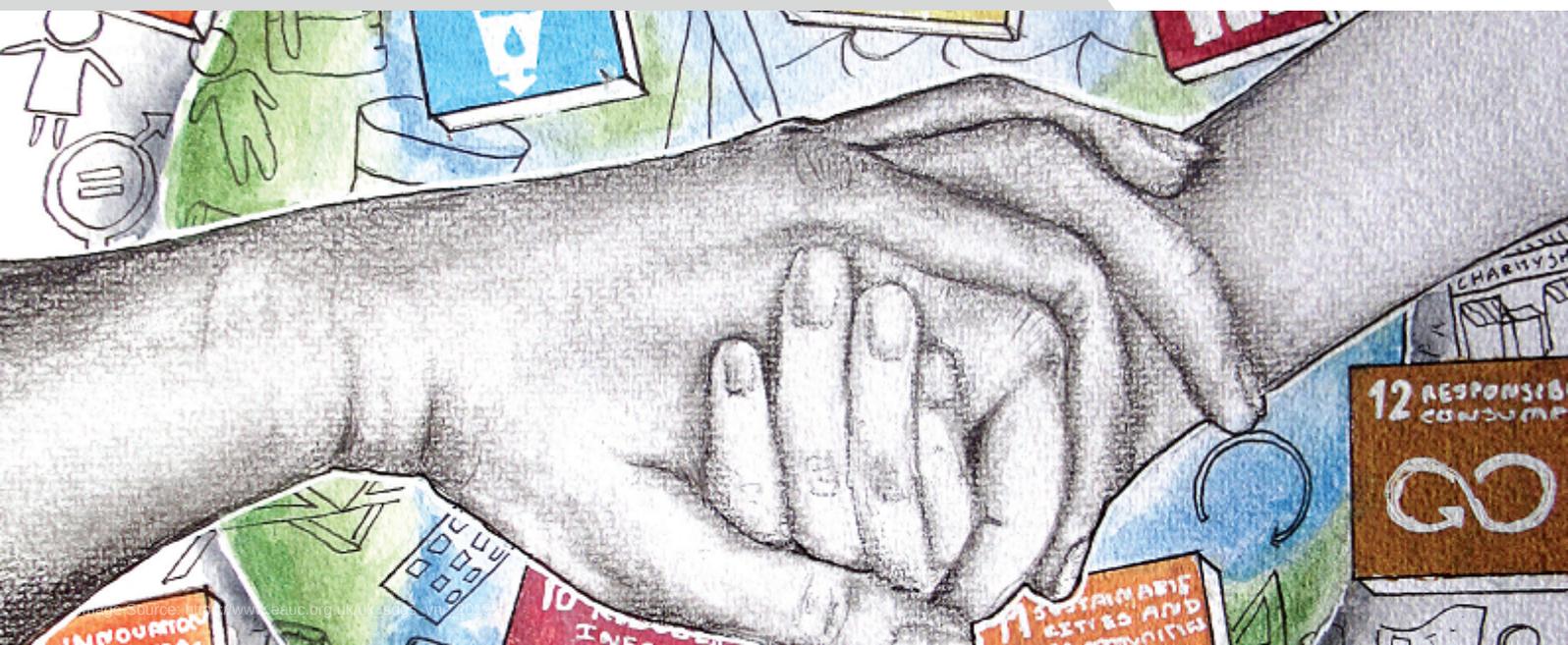


A workshop titled 'Future-proofing businesses through sustainability' was organised as a side event during the British Academy of Management Conference on September 4, 2019 in Aston Business School, Aston University, Birmingham. The workshop aimed to engage business school scholars and researchers to deliberate on the role of sustainability for safeguarding and strengthening businesses by addressing supply chain risks including those pertaining to working conditions, environmental degradation and transparency/ traceability.

2.3.3 Private Sector Engagement on SDGs in India's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2020

CRB contributed a report to NITI Aayog on Private Sector Contribution to SDGs in India – given India will be presenting its Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2020. This report drawn from CRB's engagement with private sector across the board and experiences in promoting SDGs, gives an overview of various models and approaches of private sector contribution to SDGs in India. It also highlights the existing policy and regulatory frameworks that supports private sector actions/ disclosure on sustainability and gaps therein.

Drawing from the CRB's work on Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS), the chapter also documents how VSS have contributed to SDGs in India – challenges and opportunities for the future. Using data from the field, CRB documented a few 'good practices' in different sectors (apparel & textiles, gems & jewellery, agro-processing) - categorising them into different approaches including - supply chain, community engagement and circular economy.



Events & Representations

Rabobank's Economic Times Food Strategy Summit 2020

Nitya Chhiber, Programme Office, CRB attended the summit, which provided a platform to bring together stakeholders in food and agri value chain to deliberate on the impact of climate change on farmers, businesses and how the industry will adapt to climate change through innovations and technological interventions. It was held at the Hyatt Regency, New Delhi on 13 February, 2020.

TARAGram Yatra 2019

CRB was represented by Nitya in TARAGram Yatra held between 23rd & 26th September, organised by the Development Alternatives Group in partnership with international thinking-learning organisations. It was designed to deliberate on issues of development with the mission of inspiring sustainability in policy and practice.

This year's theme was "Jobs We Want 2019" and all four yatra's demonstrated how livelihoods are being facilitated at the grassroots level and thus highlighted parallels with many thematic areas that CRB focuses on such as SMEs and sustainability.

Consultation in Garment Industry on Corporate TB Pledge

International Union Against TB and Lung Disease (The Union) and Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) in association with Okhla Garment and Textile Cluster (OGTC) co-organised a half day sensitization program and discussions on understanding and management of TB. Read the brief report [here](#).



2.4

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in India



Image Source: Elizabeth Fitt / Alamy Stock Photo

Over the course of the year, CRB engaged closely with a number of voluntary sustainability standards organisations to explore opportunities and challenges in promoting market-based approaches to strengthen sustainability performance of businesses.

CRB has been engaging with VSS in India broadly in three ways, which stem from CRB's understanding about the need for better integration of VSS to improve sustainable business performance in India:

- ***Interaction between VSS Standards Setters and Indian Stakeholders***
- ***Partnership with VSS Organisations in India***
- ***Collaboration among VSS in India***

2.4.1 Walking together with Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in India

VSS COLLABORATION INDIA

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) kicked-off an initiative in 2019 to start a process of dialogue involving Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) operating in India. From CRB's engagement and interactions with VSS organisations and various experts and actors, the need for collaboration among sustainability standards had been raised as an imperative. However, there has been little discussion and actual actions on this issue in India. Together with VSS organisations and initiatives, CRB contributes to this need through this initiative, which involves quarterly physical meetings between voluntary sustainability standards organisations working in India, and identifying actions/activities that can enable better understanding among VSS organisations of each other's activities/impacts in India and provide learning opportunities. This initiative also enables sharing lessons, good practices, policy pointers and identifying common issues of interest for joint interventions.

Below is the list of meetings held in this period:

Second Meeting of VSS Collaboration India, 27th May 2019

Third Meeting of VSS Collaboration India, 23rd August 2019

Fourth Meeting, VSS Contribution towards SDGs in India, 18th March 2020

Read more about this initiative [here](#).



2.4.2 Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India I-SPOC

India has the potential to play a significant role in driving sustainable practices in the palm oil sector; especially given India is the biggest importer (over 9MMT/year) and the second biggest consumer (approximately 10MMT/year) of palm oil globally.

I-SPOC is a business led multi-stakeholder initiative created with the goal of promoting consumption, import and trade of sustainable palm oil and its derivatives along the supply chain. The coalition through industry collaboration aims to create broader awareness on sustainability issues within industry and among consumers, facilitate multi sector industrial dialogue on sustainable palm oil uptake, build and grow sustainable trade partnerships through links with similar platforms and encourage engagement in policy dialogue for a supportive policy environment and regulation.

The Coalition (www.indiaspoc.org) was conceived by four organisations; Centre for Responsible Business (CRB), World Wide Fund for Nature India (WWF-India), Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and Rainforest Alliance (RA) and was formally launched in September 2018. Since its launch, 20 businesses, financial sector actors and organisations have joined the coalition – and its work is segregated into three working groups: (i) Government Policy, (ii) Supply Chain (importers, refiners, suppliers) and (iii) End Users (retailers and FMCG). More information available [here](#).



2.4.3 Sustainability Ambassadors on Palm Oil

Since June 2019, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) has been working in partnership with Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) on promoting awareness about the need and opportunities for greater uptake of sustainable palm oil along the supply chain. Over the course of the project, CRB has worked on the following aspects:

- *Fostering industry stewardship for supporting uptake of sustainable palm oil in India:* The objective has been to engage and collaborate with FMCG companies (non RSPO partners) and other ecosystem players (including NGOs, Associations and international organizations) with an aim to create framework for supporting the uptake of sustainable palm oil in India. As part of the project partnership, a mapping of FMCG companies (RSPO and non – RSPO members), was done together with other ecosystem players.

- *Public awareness and media engagement:* Creating opportunities for engaging media, media organisations and journalists over the period to improve their understanding on the issues and create broader awareness on the need and benefits towards sustainable palm.
- *Youth Engagement:* Engaging with youth on sustainable consumption practices to increase demand for FMCG products using sustainable sources of palm oil. A Youth Fellowship Programme has been designed to select and mentor 5 post-graduate students and young professionals in India on sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate change (SDG 13).

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Representations

RSPO RT17 Global Conference 2019

Rijit Sengupta participated as a speaker at the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) RT17 global event held in Bangkok, Thailand from 04-06 November 2019. He highlighted the urgent need for moving towards deforestation free supply chain in India and collaborating with businesses, government agencies, standard organisations and others to drive forward sustainability in the palm oil sector.

Asian Youth for Sustainable Palm Oil Summit (AYSPO) 2019

Bhavya Sharma, Programme Officer, CRB represented the organisation in the Asian Youth for Sustainable Palm Oil Summit (AYSPO) on 03 November 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. The summit comprised 50 young people from China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand who gathered to discuss methods on co-creating their commitments towards a shared responsibility for making sustainable palm oil the norm.



2.5

SMEs & Sustainability



Mehedi Hasan/NurPhoto via Getty Images

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are backbone of the Indian industry and indeed the economy. CRB recognises that integration of responsible businesses cannot happen in Indian industry without involving the Indian SMEs sector into the conversation especially highlighting the business case for sustainability. From CRB's experience across sectors, some of the critical elements in SME engagement on sustainability are: (i) engagement through the supply/value chain; (ii) leadership by SME Industry Association; (iii) enabling government support through schemes and (iv) integration into global value chains through voluntary standards, certification.

2.5.1 Interactions with SMEs across Sectors

CRB continues to engage with SMEs as part of its interventions across sectors. Here is a brief overview of some of these interventions:

- CRB has engaged with entrepreneurs in the mica sector in Jharkhand along with other actors helping them understand the 'business case' of promoting sustainable and inclusive mica sector in the state.
- Good practices from SMEs and start-ups in supporting circular transformation has been documented in the Indian apparel and textile sector.
- Engagements with SMEs across sectors during the pandemic also helped identify measures taken by them to build resilience and agility.



03 CRB 6th Annual Sustainability Conference 2019

INDIA AND SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS



CRB organised its 6th Annual Sustainability Conference ([India and Sustainability Standards](#)) on 20th to 22nd November 2019 in New Delhi. This year's conference theme was – 'Market Dynamics & Social Dilemmas of Promoting Sustainable Business'. The conference was successful in mobilizing over 650+ participants and partnered with 69+ organisations.

For more information on CRB's India and Sustainability Standards Annual Conference, visit [here](#). The ISS2019 Conference Report is available [here](#).

04 Other Initiatives



Image Source: <https://mycroft.ai/initiatives/>

From time to time, CRB also engages on issues/areas which are broadly included under the overall scope of sustainable business/sustainability – but are not directly related to any of the priority thematic areas/sectors of CRB. In 2019-2020 some such opportunities unfolded, mentioned below are the engagements:

- **Youth for Sustainability**
- **Impact Conclave**



Image Source: Jacob Ammentorp Lund via iStock

4.1 Youth for Sustainability

Business-Media-Youth Dialogue

CRB, I- SEAL Alliance, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and WWF-India together organized a Business–Media-Youth Dialogue on 27 August 2019 in Mumbai. The central message emerging from the discussion was that, competitive advantage aside businesses see sustainability as critical to their long-term survival and with a growing consciousness among the youth through an engaged media, the pursuit only gets stronger. Read the summary report of the discussion [here](#).

Young India Challenge

CRB was the 'Knowledge Partner' for the 10th Young India Challenge organised by Human Circle on 12-13 October 2019 at IIT Delhi. The theme of the challenge was 'Sustainable Living' & the challenge was focused on 'Responsible Consumption & Production' & 'Climate Action'. CRB supported Human Circle in setting up a mentorship panel which included experts from the industry who were invited to speak to the youth on their journey and guide them on their ideas related to the theme of the event.

Youth participation at ISS 2019

The ISS 2019 saw active participation from a number of youth enthusiasts on sustainability and climate change starting to realise their power/influence in driving change towards sustainable consumption and lifestyles. Young consumers are interested to know how they can contribute actively to towards the agenda of sustainability - they need direction and support. To tap into their energy, a special workshop with 'Youth as architects and advocates on sustainability/sustainable business' was organised.

Youth for Sustainability Coalition

CRB together with a number of NGOs working with the youth on SDGs/ Sustainability has developed a loose network - 'Youth for Sustainability' to promote responsible consumption and climate action. The coalition intends to support youth groups to engage with businesses, academic institutions, government and local authorities.



4.2 Impact Conclave

It has been acknowledged by researchers and practitioners that multi-stakeholder Sustainability Initiatives (MSSI) are one way to address sustainability challenges across sectors. CRB has been an advocate of MSSI in India – and championed it through the Annual Sustainability Conference – India and Sustainability Standards.

There is a need for continuous engagement of stakeholders to find solutions to sustainability challenges in specific sectors and also a need to engage a wider range of stakeholders (including: government, businesses, industry actors, standards organisations, CSOs, academia, international organisations and experts).

In order to address these challenges, CRB has teamed up with Aston Business School (Aston University, UK) to jointly develop an online (digital) platform to engage multiple stakeholders to co-create or identify sustainability solutions, share experiences/learnings, develop ideas and access leading knowledge globally on the subject. This platform is being referred to as Impact Conclave – and was launched at the 6th Annual Sustainability Conference of CRB (20-22 November 2019).



05 Global Alliances & Recognition



- CRB has partnered with The Capitals Coalition as the implementation partner for the UNEP project [TEEBAgriFood](#), funded by European Union
- CRB is a member of the International Task Group on Science-based Policy for Sustainable Consumption and Production of the United Nations Environment Programme; refer [here](#)
- A moment of pride for CRB as we were invited to be part of a select global Advisory Group on Trade for Sustainable Development (T4SD) for the International Trade Centre based in Geneva, Switzerland; refer [here](#)
- The One Planet Network renewed CRB's membership of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee (MAC) of the Consumer Information Programme under its Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) initiative (hosted by UNEP in Paris, France); refer [here](#)
- CRB became a member of the World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) – and has been engaged in providing inputs on some of the benchmarking exercises undertaken by the WBA Secretariat; refer [here](#)



06 Staff Upskilling & Capacity Building



Bhavya Sharma
Programme Officer,
CRB

Bhavya Sharma represented CRB at the Asian Youth for Sustainable Palm Oil Summit, organized by the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), in partnership with People's Movement to Stop Haze (PM Haze) and German International Cooperation (GIZ) Thailand on 03 November 2019 in Thailand, Bangkok. The discussions at the summit were mainly directed towards the challenges and solutions related to sustainable palm oil becoming the norm while exploring the environmental and social sustainability issues such as climate change, deforestation, livelihood of smallholders and the need to shift production and consumption patterns so the planet and its people prosper. The wider context of this question relates to the UN's SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production and SDG 13 on Climate Action.



Ramanuj Mitra
Programme Officer,
CRB

The Fund for American Studies (TFAS) is a non-profit organization established in 1967 in Washington DC to further American ideals (as understood by conservatives), and support and nurture thought leadership focused on free-market economics. TFAS Santiago (Chile) is a program where the aim is to understand the role of free market enterprise in Chile's economic growth story and expose students to International development from the Latin American perspective. Ramanuj Mitra attended the course which provided an understanding of the underlying political philosophy that supports free-market economics. Intense discussions and debates were held to understand the pros and cons of free-market systems and socialist systems.



Nandini Sharma
Associate Director,
CRB

Leading the work on business and human rights, Nandini Sharma was selected for a visiting programme, "Centering Human Rights in Smart City Design". The programme organised by Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), was conducted over 10 days in the cities of Berlin and Darmstadt in Germany. All candidates selected were from South Asian Countries (namely: India, Pakistan Bangladesh and Nepal) to ensure parity in human rights and development contexts. Over the course of the programme participants were introduced to different concepts pertaining to the application of the human rights lens to the planning of a smart city. Experts at the programme emphasized that "Smart City" is an evolving concept and so is centering human rights in it. Human rights challenges and priorities may differ from one country to the other, however, what is important is to prioritize and embed human rights at the very first stage of planning and designing a city.

07 CRB in Media

We need more than business as usual, to leave no one behind

In the latest blog in our series exploring how business and investors can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, Rijit Sengupta discusses the challenges and opportunities for businesses in India seeking to raise the bar on sustainability.



Guest blog by [Rijit Sengupta](#)

10 January 2020

[@RijitSengupta](#)



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Centre for Responsible Business Announces 6th Annual Sustainability Conference 2019

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CRB organizing meeting of stakeholders to form roadmap for PROGRESS project to promote Responsible Value Chains in India



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by Apparel Resources News-Desk

21-November-2019 | 3 mins read



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