

10th *anniversary*
2011-2020

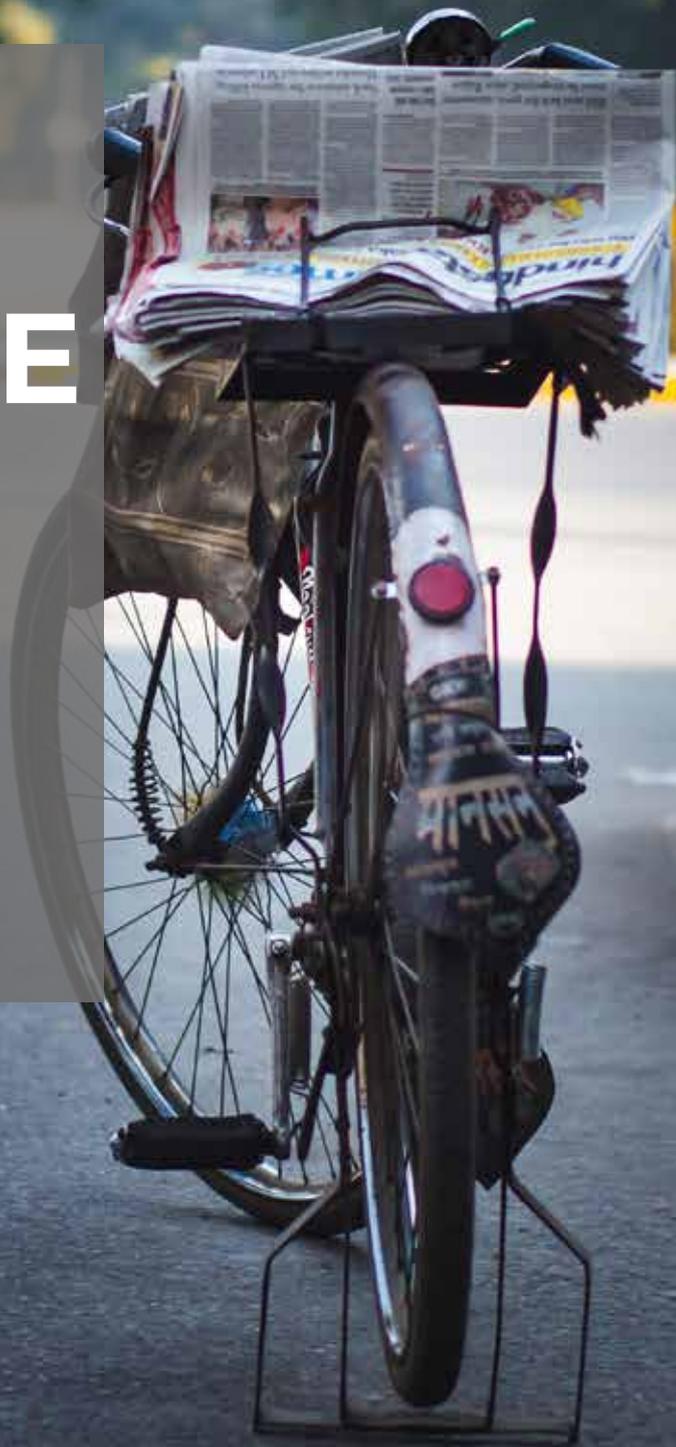
CRB

CENTRE *for*
RESPONSIBLE
BUSINESS

Enabling Change for Impact

CENTRE *for* RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

Annual Report 2020/21



Our Vision

‘Businesses integrate sustainability into their core business practices’

Our Mission

‘Create and provide high quality, affordable and accessible resources and services to enable businesses to fulfill their responsibilities to all stakeholders’

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CEO's Message

As I paused to reflect while writing this message, the first thought that came to me was that I feel extremely fortunate on personal as well as professional fronts, especially looking back at the impact that COVID19 has had on everything around us. A number of acquaintances and family members haven't been so fortunate and had to submit to the pandemic. A much larger number of entrepreneurs, professionals, workers haven't had luck on their side as they lost their jobs and have struggled to get back into a decent livelihood. I stop - to spare a thought for them and can't help but feel fortunate!

When we closed our regular physical office in mid-March, 2020 we were quite unaware and unprepared as most, with what was to follow. Like many we were entering the unknown; and also an unfamiliar territory of working remotely and from our ill-equipped home desks. We scrambled to set up some systems and processes at CRB to ensure we worked together as a team and induced elements of flexibility and fellowship to ensure we remained closely connected as a cohesive unit in the hostile environment that ensued. Our Board was fully supportive and patient with us and the team worked very hard to ensure that the deadlines were met and outputs delivered with some time adjustments. We thank our partners and funders who were more than patient with us. In spite of the difficulties and uncertainties, I am proud of what the team has been able to achieve this year. We have worked closely with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP) for India and on the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework. We have engaged closely with NITI Aayog as they start examining Private Sector Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India.

In my message in last year's Annual Report,

I had mentioned that, "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". The above steps taken by the Government of India in the thick of the pandemic highlight the importance it accords on sustainable/responsible business in the road to recovery. CRB has also been invited to be part of the Government of India's initiative on Sustainable Finance. I cannot think of any other year with so many important milestones on responsible/sustainable business. This opens up considerable opportunities for us in working together to enable transformative change – a keystone to societal resilience.

We have worked with a number of businesses – small and large to capture their experiences in building sustainable value chains, pursuing circularity, advancing decent work and being gender responsive. In addition to external triggers like supply chain due diligence legislation by key trade partners, businesses have also realised the importance of managing risks and challenges that impact their supply chain, resource use and production processes.

At the international level, we were able to bring some of these realities and possible solutions involving partnerships between the global 'North' and the 'South' at important policy platforms of the International Trade Centre (Geneva), One Planet Network & International Resource Panel, UNEP (Paris), which we are part of. These messages were also conveyed to our international partners like World Benchmarking Alliance, Capitals Coalition, ISEAL Alliance to name a few.

As we celebrate our 10th Anniversary in 2021, I see CRB's value-addition on responsible/sustainable business emerge under three

broad heads: generating relevant knowledge and expertise; facilitating an enabling ecosystem and nurturing innovative collaborations.

We continue to generate knowledge that highlights and supports the business case for responsible/sustainable business; generate background information and create understanding and expertise among relevant stakeholders. Going forward we will endeavour to produce knowledge products and tools that are easy to access and use by a wide variety of organisations/businesses/stakeholders.

We not only continue to engage with relevant policymakers and shapers at the national level to contribute towards the enabling ecosystem, but also increasingly with financial institutions, innovators, market actors and drivers. We are working on an initiative that would build the demand for sustainably produced goods and enterprises – bring SMEs/producers closer to buyers/brands/investors.

We also continue to experiment and innovate with collaborations of various kinds to enable multi-stakeholder driven dialogues and actions on various sustainability related issues and challenges. This ranges from bringing NGOs working with the youth to enable effective and constructive youth

engagement on sustainability; facilitating dialogue and actions involving a group of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in India; convening sectoral and thematic stakeholders together to build collaborative sustainability initiatives; and in some rare cases transforming confrontation to collaborations between organisations.

As we embark on our journey into our second decade, I am conscious that it will remain a challenging task every bit of the way, given the aspiration that CRB nurtures and our vision that 'Businesses integrate sustainability into their core practices'. We cannot and will not drop our shoulders as we push the boundaries and shall continue to be inspired by the work of and growing interest among a wide range of stakeholders on sustainable/responsible business.

I am reminded of Napoleon Hill's famous saying, "One of the most common causes of failure is the habit of quitting when one is overtaken by temporary defeat" (*Think and Grow Rich*). We have the guts and the stamina for this marathon – and shall not quit mid course.

In spite of the difficulties and uncertainties, I am proud of what the team has been able to achieve this year. We have worked closely with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs on the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP) for India and on the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework. We have engaged closely with NITI Aayog as they start examining Private Sector Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India.



Rijit Sengupta

CEO, Centre for Responsible Business



CRB Thematic Areas

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Circular Economy is an area of strategic focus for CRB and given below are the objectives that CRB aims to achieve for CE:

- Build capacity and awareness of industry players (with special attention to SMEs) – emphasise on developing the 'business case'
- Document and encourage 'good practices' across industries
- Undertake evidence based policy engagement to integrate Principles of circular economy in industrial/sectoral policy
- Contribute towards development of incentives, schemes/programmes to support innovations that advance circularity
- Present needs, aspirations and experiences from the 'Global South' at various international platforms
- Develop and/or contribute towards development of Multi-stakeholder driven Initiatives/ Platforms

This year, CRB undertook the following activities in this thematic area:

Apparel & Textile

There is enough evidence that highlights that the apparel and textile (A&T) industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world. There are numerous environmental and social issues linked with various components of the A&T value chain globally. However, there is a shift in the textile sector towards more sustainable practices driven by a number of factors. Across the textile value chain, stakeholders have become more aware of the impacts of their decision-making. A change in consumer buying behaviour, which dictates the decisions of brands and manufacturers, has prompted brands to increase transparency in their supply chains, with clear responsibility on manufacturers, suppliers and raw material providers to make sure their processes are environmentally and socially sustainable.

In this context, CRB has initiated multiple projects on circular A&T, that aim to identify and facilitate key policy and practice interventions that can provide impetus to nudge the Indian Textile and

Apparel sector onto a circular path and thereby support balanced and sustainable growth of the industry.

ReFashion Hub

A collective initiative bringing together multiple stakeholders invested in

wastewater reuse and management (water use efficiency) in the textile industry with long term positive climate impact. The stakeholders include textile bodies, industry leaders, fashion businesses, young designers, artisans and consumers to drive conversation about wastewater generated by the textile and water industry.

The ReFashion Hub strives to:

- Raise awareness and drive conversation about wastewater generated by the fashion industry
- Call for commitment from textile bodies, industry leaders, fashion businesses to reduce the fashion water



footprint and for treatment of textile wastewater

- Engage with government departments to strengthen implementation of policies on reuse or management of textile wastewater

Under this project CRB organised consultations and meetings to seek inputs from the state governments in Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra and Gujarat as well as businesses on the current condition of wastewater reuse in the textile industry and the various policies and incentives that can bring a transformation here. The recommendations from these consultations may be found [here](#).

Circular Apparel Innovation Policy Lab

CRB led an initiative titled the **Circular Apparel Policy Innovation Lab (CAPIL)** in partnership with [Laudes Foundation](#) and implemented together with [Intellicap](#) and [Fashion for Good](#). The project was implemented with the objective to explore and suggest policy interventions required for enabling a circular economy transition in the textile and apparel sector in India and concluded in August 2020.



Key Events

Workshop on 'Role of Policy in Promoting a Apparel Sector'

17th September 2020

CRB held a national-level workshop on how public policy can enable and

accelerate circular economy transition in the apparel and textile industry in India, in partnership with Circular Apparel Innovation Factory (CAIF) & Fashion For Good & supported by Laudes Foundation. The objective of this workshop was to synthesise the findings on cluster-

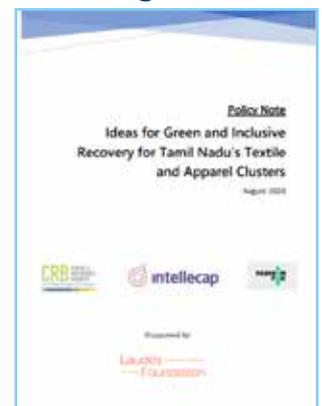


level challenges and initiatives on circularity and to deliberate on some of the policy considerations to accelerate action on circular apparel. The full report may be found [here](#).

Workshop on 'Circular Economy: Strategy for Green & Inclusive Recovery for Tamil Nadu's Textile & Apparel Clusters'

21st August 2020

CRB, along with CAIF and FFG, held this workshop to solicit inputs from stakeholders from the apparel and textile sector in Tamil Nadu, on priority issues and solutions required for a transition towards a circular economy. Policy intervention ideas were also discussed, which could help a sector-wide transition in the state. Despite the challenges posed by COVID, the virtual workshop was attended by manufacturers, innovators, brands, and government agencies from Tirupur, Coimbatore, Karur, etc. The full report may be found [here](#).



Twitter Chats

13 January, 2021

CRB participated in a Twitter chat, organized by the Refashion Hub, 'on the impact of fast fashion on water wastage'.

Fireside Chats, The Impact of Fast Fashion on Water Wastage

CRB has also organised and facilitated social media interactive sessions that were live streamed and widely viewed. The purpose of these sessions were to highlight the different facets of managing wastewater and associated pollution in the apparel and textiles sector, particularly: (i) [Wastewater reuse](#) - harnessing a valuable resource; (ii) Common techniques for [wastewater treatment](#) and reuse for the textile industry; and (iii) [Managing wastewater](#) in the textile sector: using the right chemicals. They were organized on 28 January 2021, 19 February 2021 and 5 March 2021 respectively.

Representations at External Events

CII Texon 2020

2 December 2020

Devyani Hari represented CRB as a panelist at the CII Texon 2020 virtual event and discussed how circularity can create a sustainable fashion & textiles industry. The session focused on sustainable growth of the textiles & apparel sector in India.

CAIF Conclave

6 November 2020

The 2nd edition of CAIF Conclave 2020, hosted at the 13th Sankalp Global Summit, is India's largest convening of circular textile and apparel brands, innovators and enablers. Rijit Sengupta represented CRB as a speaker and shared his thoughts & experiences for 'building back better'.

Webinar on, 'Circular Apparel & Textile – A Strategy for Better Preparedness'

20 July 2020

The webinar was organized by Shri Vaishnav Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya,

Indore together with CRB & the Textile Association of India. The agenda of the webinar was to provide an overview of the apparel & textile sector & impact of COVID19. Devyani Hari represented CRB at the webinar and presented the need for a circular approach in the apparel and textile sector

CRB at the NIFT Webinar on 'Significance on Information & Communication Technology in Integrating Sustainability during COVID19 Lockdown'

29 May 2020

A workshop on 'Significance on Information & Communication Technology in integrating Sustainability during COVID-19 lockdown' on 29th May 2020, organised by NIFT Delhi, was moderated by Rijit Sengupta, CEO, CRB. The webinar saw eminent speakers who discussed how the ICT sector has incorporated sustainability in India; and emerging/new ways of promoting sustainability post COVID-19.

ICT& Electronics

As part of its work on the circular economy, CRB has engaged with brands, manufacturers, government and the civil society to understand various challenges in the sector and co-create solutions to alleviate both environmental and social issues faced by the IT&ES sector. India generated 3.23 MT of electronic waste in 2019; this is to increase up to 5 MT by the end of 2021. India's e-waste generation is 4 times its recycling capacity.

Key Events

Towards a Sustainable and Circular IT and Electronics Industry

29 October 2020

A session at CRB's 7th Annual Sustainability Conference - entitled *Towards a Sustainable and Circular IT and Electronics Industry* was held in order to explore priorities for circular economy for this sector, which include

- Adopting a lifecycle perspective to inform decisions so that they may have a larger impact
- Ensuring that circular economy in this sector is not restricted to cities and reaches towns and rural areas as well
- Establishing standards and encouraging transparency across the electronic waste value chain

The report of this event is available [here](#). Some of these priorities have also been embedded in a recent [Circular Economy Policy Paper](#) for the Indian Electronics & IT sector released by the Ministry of Electronics and IT. CRB will explore some of the opportunities identified in this paper through its interventions going forward in partnership with relevant Government agencies, producers and other industry actors, sectoral associations, sustainability standards organisations, experts, CSO, etc.

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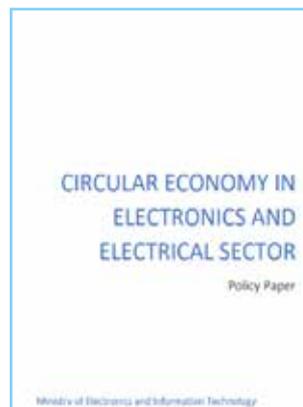


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Other Publications



Key Outcomes & Way Forward

Key Outcomes

CRB aims to disseminate research with relevant stakeholders while highlighting the business case for circular economy. It also aims to undertake evidence-based policy engagement to integrate Principles of CE in industrial/sectoral policy. To this end, CAPIL has contributed towards well-informed policies and implementation mechanics to support transition towards circular apparel in India, by bringing various stakeholders under one umbrella and providing evidence-based policy input.

CRB has also created a framework on circular apparel to understand the various aspects of the textile and apparel value chain where circular economy can make a difference. The [framework](#) helps capture input from stakeholders from the sector, mainly on the priority areas in each A&T cluster/region in India. More details about our work may be found [here](#).

Way Forward

Over the course of the past couple of years (2019-21), significant headway had been made in mobilising stakeholders in a few significant apparel and textile sectors in the country. Government bodies, especially state textile departments and industries commissionerates have been engaged in the conversation. State-specific policy briefs have also been submitted to relevant departments. The private sector, especially brands and suppliers have participated in both CAPIL and ReFashion Hub projects and shared their insights, challenges and initiatives.

However, there is immense scope for interventions for Circular Apparel and CRB will continue its efforts through potential areas of action such as:

- Facilitating CE dialogues in more textile and apparel clusters across the country to identify policy and practices areas
- Capacity building for stakeholders including policy actors in different clusters on potential for Circular Textile & Apparel
- Designing pilots for showcasing circular practices (e.g. How can local municipalities play a role in supporting reverse logistics for garment manufacturers to promote recycling)
- Documenting existing best practices and innovations for Circular Apparel
- Facilitate standard setting for circular apparel in India

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Business and Human Rights play an integral role in CRB's work and in the realisation of equitable and sustainable growth for all.

In the context of COVID19, 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 the fault lines and exacerbated inequalities that exist in our current development models and priorities for growth. In this context, CRB endeavours 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 (across various sectors and thematic areas), Human Rights Due Diligence and the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

Some of the key initiatives in this thematic area included:

Sustainable Tea Supply/Value Chain

CRB undertook a research on human rights related risks and suggested possible solutions/remediations for developing sustainable tea value chains in India and Sri Lanka in partnership with the Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA). In addition to review and analysis of existing secondary information, this research also involved engagement with relevant industry stakeholders and ecosystem actors in both countries.

Industry Capacity Building on B&HR As part of a joint initiative, Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), CRB and IGCC (Indo-German Chamber of Commerce), have partnered together to organize a series of webinars on a range of topics to build industry awareness on various aspects of Business and Human Rights. These webinars seek to provide businesses practical guidance for integration of business and human rights related know-how in their policy and practice. The aim is to equip businesses in India including SMEs with knowledge and practical information to strengthen their business

processes and strategies in view of the increasing focus of both public and private sector actors globally to address and mitigate human rights related risks in the supply/value chains across global production networks



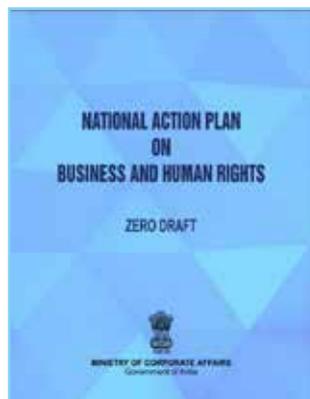
FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION For Freedom.
Good. It's Action.



National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights

The 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 expected to develop a NAP incorporating the three pillars of the UNGPs (Pillar 1: State duty to Protect; Pillar 2: Corporate Duty to Respect & Pillar 3: Access to Effective Remedy) and based 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. CRB supported the Ministry of Corporate Affairs through research and technical inputs, facilitating multi-stakeholder consultations and meetings to develop a draft National Action Plan that has been doing the rounds within the Government circle - and is expected to be embraced by the country soon. The fact that the Government took up this arduous task in the middle of the COVID-19 (and perhaps the only country to do so), also signals the importance that has been accorded to this subject. Further details may be found [here](#).



of child benefits. Currently, both the organisations, in partnership with the Indian ready-made garment businesses - large, small, and medium, aim to capacitate industry stakeholders, engage in wider advocacy and communication and, design a long-term collaborative framework/ Theory of Change (ToC) for industry-wide uptake of FFP in India.

CRB and UNICEF

have collaborated for the initiative on Operationalising Family Friendly Policies (FFPs) in the Indian Apparel and Textile Value Chain. The UNICEF FFP framework is a tool to support businesses in meeting social sustainability requirements, especially decent work issues in supply chains, and enhance private sectors' contribution to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). With a focus on investment in the wellbeing of workers and their families, the FFP framework endorses 4 key components: paid parental leave, on-site provisions of breastfeeding and quality childcare facilities, and provision



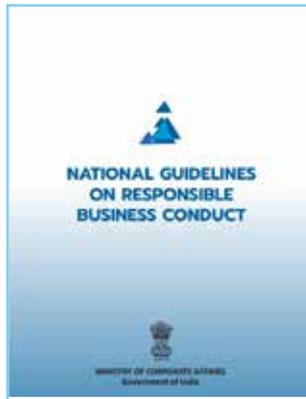
Key Events

CRB, FNF & IGCC webinar series on Business & Human Rights

10 December 2020



The series was kickstarted on the International Human Rights Day (December 10, 2020) with a focus on understanding the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights; Introduction to the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP); and aligning India's journey especially to help businesses on Pillar 2 of the UNGPs (Corporate Responsibility to Respect) through the development of the [National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct](#). The discussion can be found [here](#).



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Key Outcomes & Way Forward

Key Outcomes

Through its work in this space, CRB has played a key role in disseminating its knowledge, expertise and networks built over the years and translated it into actions for promoting business and human rights across sectors. To further the understanding and application of B&HR by enterprises, CRB, in partnership with FNF, has conceptualised and developed a series of awareness building videos, available for viewing [here](#) and [here](#).

Way Forward

Business and human rights form a key cornerstone of CRB's activities and cuts across the different thematic and operational works areas. Going forward, our endeavour will be to strengthen and diversify the vertical to include various other aspects of business and human rights. Through our work in the field, we strive to further the understanding and application of BHR. This will be achieved through a collaborative and multi-pronged approach, which will entail consolidation of the work undertaken thus far, working with partners to design and develop frameworks, tools, trainings that enable adoption of BHR by enterprises, raise awareness through the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms, undertaken policy research and advocacy to advance the discourse on BHR. Some of the concrete activities planned in this direction include the following:

- Developing a roadmap for regional economic integration among South Asian countries with focus on business and human rights issues.
- Awareness raising through capacity development measures and multi-stakeholder dialogues on relevant topics (supply chain transparency, HRDD, risk and impact assessment) with eminent experts and practitioners
- Design, develop and implement industry and sector specific interventions on business and human rights, including human rights due diligence. Some of the sectors CRB has been actively engaged in include mining, tea, apparel and textile, forestry, and palm oil. The BHR issues investigated and worked on include child rights, worker rights, vulnerable and marginal community rights, women rights, etc.
- Use the on-ground experience and knowledge (across sectors) to undertake evidenced-based policy work. CRB continues to engage with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to develop the India National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights by providing research and technical support.



PRIVATE SECTOR & SDGS

Integrating sustainability into global and local value chains is imperative for equitable and inclusive growth and for pursuing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2015, with the adoption of the Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations, there has been consensus about the key role of the private sector and businesses in meeting the SDGs. CRB has worked across sectors with various approaches/methods/tools, which 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. 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.

1. Through the **Partnership for Nutrition** under the aegis of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Rajasthan, Cargill and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), CRB has launched a programme to improve nutrition status in Jaipur, Rajasthan. Further details about the project may be found [here](#).



2. CRB has undertaken a study in partnership with the EU Delegation to India, to **map the contribution of EU businesses on CSR and Sustainability in India** and also explore the possibility and contour of a platform for EU businesses in India on CSR and Sustainability. Further information about this project can be found [here](#).

3. **TEEB Agri food Implementation Project** is a collaboration between CRB

and [The Capitals Coalition](#), funded by the European Union. This



project aims to build the capacity of businesses in the Agri food sector in India to utilise the capitals valuation method (natural, social, human and produced capitals) in business decision making. The project is being undertaken in seven EU partner countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and Thailand. A number of events and training activities are being undertaken by CRB and the Capitals Coalition involving businesses in this sector. Further details may be found [here](#).

4. **Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition**



for India (I-SPOC) is a business-led multi-stakeholder initiative created to promote the consumption, import and trade of sustainable palm oil and its derivatives along the supply chain. The coalition aims to create broader awareness on sustainability issues

within industry and among consumers and also facilitate multi-sector industrial dialogue on sustainable palm oil uptake. The coalition also works to 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 work of the coalition is segregated into three working groups: (i) Government Policy, (ii) Supply Chain (importers, refiners, suppliers) and (iii) End Users (retailers and FMCG) and more information may be found [here](#).

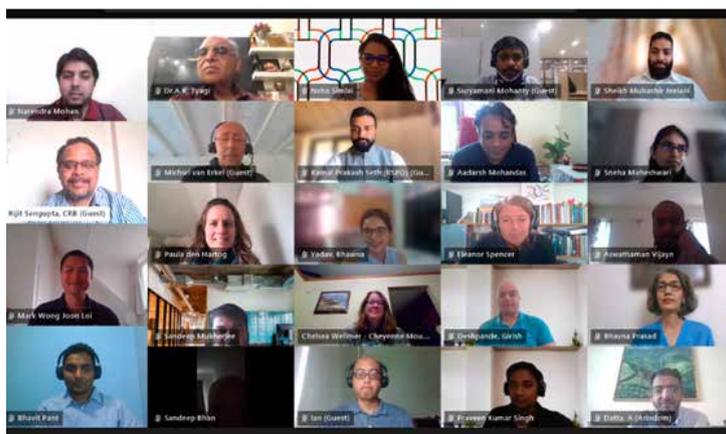


Key Events

Third Members' Meeting

24 April, 2020

This meeting was organised with the objective of formally introducing the members to their Working Group and their Group Chairs and to finalize the Action Plan.



Fourth Members' Meeting

15 December, 2020

The objective of the Fourth Members Meeting was to officially launch the I-SPOC biennial report (2018-20), the Business Guide on Sustainable Palm Oil and the Value Proposition Deck. Each of these were

developed by the Founding Members with collaboration of members. The meeting also looked at the activities undertaken by each of the three Working Group; Government Policy, Supply Chain and End Users, between January and December 2020 through presentation by Group Chairs [biennial report 2018-2020](#).

Businesses with Purpose Future-Proofing Businesses in a Post COVID-19 World

16 April, 2020

Highlighting the role of the media in creating awareness and sensitizing businesses, consumers and other stakeholders on the concept of 'businesses with purpose', a [Media Webinar](#) was organised on the theme "Businesses with Purpose Future-Proofing Businesses in a Post COVID-19 World" by CRB, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and WWF-India. The webinar brought together various actors from the field of businesses, media, think tanks and civil societies to express their thoughts and opinions on media and businesses working together during and after the pandemic to push the sustainability agenda forward collectively.

5. Sustainability Ambassadors on Palm Oil

is CRB's partnership with the Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) to promote awareness about the need and opportunities for greater uptake of sustainable palm oil along the supply chain. The overall goal of this partnership is a businesses commitment and action towards certified sustainable palm oil in India. Some of the key activities and events under this include:



- Engagement with Businesses for Commitment and Actions on Sustainable Palm Oil ([Sustainability Ambassadors](#))
- Offering learning and sharing opportunities through the 'Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India' platform ([I-SPOC](#))
- Design and delivery of awareness and capacity building on the subject
- Sustainable Palm Oil Dialogue for India during CRB 7th Annual Conference - India and Sustainability Standards ([ISS 2020](#))

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



is CRB's project with the Aston India Centre for Applied Research (AICAR), Aston University, UK. The project seeks to explore and investigate how private sector companies can better contribute towards achievement of specific SDGs, particularly inclusive education and life-long learning (SDG 4), employment and decent work for the youth (SDG 8), women's social and economic empowerment (SDG 5), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13). The project is unique in that it combines academic research and policy and practice research. The stakeholders engaged in the project provide both inputs for the research and the research outputs will also be geared for their knowledge and application.

Key Events

Addressing the adverse impacts of the Pandemic on women workers in the Apparel & Textile Value Chain

14 August, 2020

CRB organised a [roundtable discussion](#) with key stakeholders of the A&T sector to understand what solutions can be explored to address the challenges to the women workers in the A&T sector especially in the context of the pandemic.

PROGRESS session at CRB Conference 2020 titled Business Resilience in times of Crisis: A multi – sector Perspective on Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8) on

29 October, 2020

Representatives from the various project sectors (A&T, Agro-Processing and Gems & Jewellery) and academia shared their inputs on how the issue of Decent Work has been addressed in volatile, uncertain situations and spoke about the challenges faced by value chain stakeholders across sectors to ensure Decent Work.

Workshop on Delivering on SDGs: Aligning action by the Global North with Southern priorities

10 December 2020

CRB organized this virtual workshop with two parallel sessions was focused on 'decent work & gender equality in global value chains' and 'managing food loss & food waste – a multi-stakeholder approach'. Catch the full conversation [here](#).

TX-PROGRESS-GLOW Korero-Roundtable Discussion

9 December 2020

[TX - PROGRESS - GLOW Korero-Roundtable discussion](#) was organized in collaboration with Traidcraft Exchange & Project G.L.O.W. The discussion explored

what resilient livelihood structures could look like in the context of a post-pandemic world.

Webinar on ‘COVID19 & its impact on Food Waste – A Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue’

19 June 2020

CRB hosted this virtual roundtable discussion to discuss the impacts on the agricultural value chain – specifically the problem of food waste due to COVID19 and how policies, private sector initiatives & ground-level interventions can help find lasting solutions, especially in the context of SDG12 – Sustainable Consumption & Production. Read the full report [here](#).



Representations at External Events

Alliance for Water Stewardship Global Conclave 2020

18 November 2020

Rijit Sengupta represented CRB at the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) Global Conclave’s session that explored "What's so transformational about Water Stewardship?", and why building trust & confidence among civil society, private sector & government agencies is critical to enable effective collaboration.

The 8th World Sustainability Forum

15-17 September 2020

This Forum was held virtually in Basel. Further details may be found [here](#).

Event on ‘Private Sector Contribution to the Decade of Action: Catalyzing Collaboration across the Global North & South’

30 September 2020



CRB together with World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA), co-hosted a parallel event at UNGA2020 titled, ‘Private Sector Contribution to the Decade of Action: Catalyzing Collaboration across the Global North & South’. The event explored how we can ensure closer alignment between the North & South to facilitate concerted and accelerated action on sustainability, how international businesses and their partners can expect to collaborate post COVID19 given changes to global value chains, what kinds of collaborative models/ approaches have worked, and how future collaborations & stakeholder engagements are likely to develop.

Event on ‘Value-Chain Approach to action on Sustainable Consumption and Production Findings’ from the One Planet Network-International Resource Panel Task Group presented at UNEA5

19 February, 2021

Rijit Sengupta represented CRB in the multi-stakeholder Task group as CRB is a member of the One Planet Network. The Task Group gathered virtually on the sidelines of the UNEA5 (Digital Side Event)

to discuss the findings of the Value-Chain Approach methodology. A panel discussion featuring members of the Task Group can be found [here](#).

Retailers Association of India's Retail Leadership Summit

24 February, 2021



CRB and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) were the silver partners for Retailers Association of India's Retail Leadership Summit 2021. Rijit Sengupta, represented CRB and I-SPOC as a panelist for the discussion on, 'Leadership in Sustainable Sourcing - How to transition to certified Sustainable Palm Oil in India., at a session organized by RSPO at the summit. In order to increase engagement with attendees in a virtual 3 day long event, CRB in collaboration with RSPO had also set up a booth in the networking lounge. The booth was active for all three days.

Webinar on 'Sustainable Procurement in Food Retail in India – Building Business Resilience with SDGs', 9 October 2020

This webinar was conducted in collaboration with Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and the Retailers Association of India (RAI). The session brought together a variety of food and FMCGs retailers in conversation with leading FMCG businesses and organizations that are advocates of deforestation free supply chains. It also helped in highlighting and creating understanding about 'business case' for promoting sustainable procurement – especially by addressing supply chain risks and increasing transparency along with consumer trends. Details may be found [here](#).

Consumer Assisto International Conference, 15 March 2021

On the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day, Rijit Sengupta represented CRB as a panelist at the Consumer Assisto International Conference, and shared his views on the present & future of consumerism & role of sustainable living.

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Key outcomes & Way Forward

Key Outcomes

During its annual ISS conference, CRB conducted the session on *Partnership for Nutrition Catalyzing public – private partnerships on Nutrition Security*. The session was used as a launchpad for the initiative on nutrition security that the three organisations WFP, Cargill and CRB have come together with, the details of which may be found [here](#).

CRB's goal in engaging with the agri-business networks in India has been to disseminate research with relevant businesses and offer insights and perspectives. Perhaps the most crucial contribution of the TEEB AgriFood Implementation Project thus far is the [Agri-food Operational Guidelines](#). The guidelines were presented to a wide range of stakeholders, and participants were given the opportunity to learn, provide comments and input into the development process.

Another highlight was during the [Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India \(I-SPOC\) Third Members' Meeting](#) which saw representatives from 20 organisations and businesses to discuss the government policy, supply chains and consumer behavior involved in the uptake of sustainable palm oil in India. The objective of this meeting was to formally introduce the members to their Working Group and their Group Chairs and finalize the Action Plan 2020-21. The full report may be found [here](#).

Lastly, as a part of PROGRESS, a number of sectoral case studies are prepared for dissemination with different stakeholders to encourage wider adoption of new and effective practices for sustainability.

Based on the experience across projects and insights received from stakeholders, CRB Contributed a paper to NITI Aayog which may be found [here](#). Inputs from this paper were incorporated in India's Voluntary National Review of the SDGs that was presented at the High Level Political Forum on SDGs, July 2020.

CRB has also provided inputs on strengthening the national reporting process on SDG 12. This was organized by the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), through the European Union funded SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy. Another example of our work includes the Food Loss and Waste as a Policy and Practice area under the agro-processing sector with a workshop organized that included sectoral stakeholders and experts with the key messages being captured in a Briefing Paper. More details on our work may be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Way Forward

There is no doubt that private sector participation is critical to the achievement of the SDGs and engagement with the private sector remains central to CRB's work and cuts across its various thematic and sectoral areas. The private sector can lead the way on innovations, traceability, efficiencies and capacity building for value chain actors. At the same time, there is a need to support private sector actors with a strong business case for sustainable action, awareness and knowledge sharing, facilitating unconventional collaborations, developing sustainability roadmaps and understanding sustainability risks and impacts from their actions.

Further, the SME sector needs more emphasis and hand holding to adopt greener and more inclusive policies. CRB will deepen its partnerships on the issues of circular economy, sustainable value chains and business and human rights with the private sector over the next few years.

CRB has been engaged with a NITI Aayog initiative that aims to assess **Private Sector Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals** in select industry sectors in India. The report is likely to be out in 2021.

VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS (VSS) IN INDIA

CRB has a nuanced understanding about the need for better integration of VSS to improve sustainable business performance in India.

From this, stem the three key ways, through which CRB has led the way in engaging with VSS organisations:

Interaction between VSS Standards Setters and Indian Stakeholders

CRB's Annual Sustainability Conference, India and Sustainability Standards (or ISS as it is referred to), facilitates interaction and learning process not only for a host of international standards setting organisations but also sustainability professionals and a wider set of relevant ecosystem actors on developing sustainability solutions. Over the years it has created opportunities and a safe-space for diverse and often excluded stakeholders to understand divergent perspectives across various sectors and thematic areas. Over the years, CRB has become a leader in facilitating multi-stakeholder led dialogues on various complex sustainability issues, especially enabling key stakeholders to come together who have otherwise not interacted as much.

Key Events

VSS Contribution Towards SDGs in India, India and Sustainability Standards

29 October, 2020

The 7th edition of the conference (ISS2020), saw the session on VSS Contribution Towards SDGs in India. This session led to the following takeaways

- The need to incentivise sustainable

consumption in developing economies was highlighted'

- The role of people driven rather than market driven sustainability standards so as to ensure better implementation and acceptance was also discussed.
- The need for using a common language across the value chain to effectively communicate the implementation of VSS was raised.

Partnership with VSS Organisations in India

To improve awareness and the effective uptake of VSS among Indian industry and other stakeholders, CRB has partnered with various VSS organisations in India over the years including - Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS); Global Electronics Council (GEC); Rainforest Alliance; Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO); Responsible Mica Initiative (RMI); etc. Over the course of the year, CRB has had interactions with a number of VSS organisations in India - who have expressed their interest to collaborate.

VSS Collaboration India

VSS COLLABORATION INDIA

In 2019, CRB launched VSS Collaboration India to start the dialogue process with

VSS organisations in India. Through CRB's engagement and interactions with VSS organisations as well as with various experts and actors, the need for collaboration among sustainability standards has emerged as an imperative. VSS Collaboration India conducts quarterly physical meetings and identifies actions and activities that have the potential to enable better understanding among VSS organisations of each other's activities and impacts in India. This initiative also facilitates the sharing of lessons, good practices, policy pointers and identifying common issues of interest for joint interventions. In this period, two meetings of this coalition were organised as under:

Key Events

The Fifth Meeting on 'COVID19: Challenges & Opportunities for Sustainable Business & VSS organisations'

2 July, 2020

The objective of this meeting was to discuss and learn from the perspectives and experiences of the VSS organisations over the course of the pandemic and the lockdown. The discussions covered the following: Understanding the impacts of COVID19 on business continuity and sustainable business practices in India
Discussions on COVID19's impact on VSS organisations & mitigation measures - sharing of experiences
Perspectives and suggestions from VSS organisations to 'Build Back (Forward) Better'.



VSS Contribution Towards SDGs in India, India and Sustainability Standards

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- The role of people driven rather than market driven sustainability standards so as to ensure better implementation and acceptance was also discussed.
- The need for using a common language across the value chain to effectively communicate the implementation of VSS was raised.

Further details may be found in the conference report [here](#).



The Sixth Meeting, VSS Collaboration in India

23 November, 2020

This meeting sought to conceptualize the 'VSS Collaboration India' initiative and discuss its Goal/ Purpose, Structure (Governance, Constitution, Steering Committee, Working Groups), Activities (Annual Work Plan, Responsibility Allocation, Coordination, Funding), and Roadmap (Theory of Change).

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Way Forward

- A Working Group constituted by CRB comprising 6 different VSS Organisations recommended the following collaborative to be considered: (i) Knowledge; (iv) Policy engagement; (iii) Capacity Building
- A report on VSS Contribution to SDGs in India is being developed with inputs from VSS Organisations, documenting good practices and experiences
- Explore how VSS Organisations can support businesses build back better in India

SMEs AND SUSTAINABILITY

CRB recognises the importance of Small and Medium Enterprises or SMEs in highlighting the business case for sustainability.

From CRB's experience across sectors, some of the critical elements in SME engagement on sustainability are:

- Engagement through the supply/value chain;
- Leadership by SME Industry Association;
- Enabling government support through schemes and
- Integration into global value chains through voluntary standards, certification.

SME engagement formed a critical component of CRB's interventions in the following projects:

ReFashion

Hub - this is a collective working to

bring together multiple stakeholders invested in wastewater reuse and management in the textile industry with long term positive climate impact. The stakeholders include textile bodies, industry leaders, fashion businesses, young designers, artisans and consumers to drive conversation about wastewater generated by the textile and water industry. More information about our work may be found [here](#)



UNICEF - CRB

and UNICEF have collaborated for the initiative on Operationalising Family Friendly Policies (FFPs) in the Indian Apparel and Textile Value Chain. The UNICEF FFP framework is a tool to support businesses in meeting social sustainability requirements, especially decent work issues in supply chains, and enhance private sectors' contribution to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). With a focus on investment in the wellbeing of workers and their families, the FFP framework endorses 4 key components: paid parental leave, on-site provisions of breastfeeding and quality childcare facilities, and provision of child benefits. Currently, both the organizations, in partnership with the Indian ready-made garment businesses- large, small, and medium, aims to capacitate industry stakeholders, engage in wider advocacy and communication and, design a long-term collaborative framework/ Theory of Change (ToC) for industry-wide uptake of FFP in India.



Circular Apparel Innovation Policy

Lab CRB is leading an initiative titled the **Circular Apparel Policy Innovation Lab (CAPIL)** that is funded by the Laudes Foundation and supported by Intellecap and Fashion for Good in CAPIL. 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. More information about our work may be found [here](#).

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Foundation

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AAVISHKAAR GROUP

Way Forward

- Convey the business case for sustainability, inclusivity and circular economy to the Indian SME sector
- Private sector participation and collaborations to ensure conducive industry ecosystem
- Utilize CRB's experience to develop a 'roadmap' for an inclusive and sustainable supply chain and work together with SMEs, NGOs, and government
- Connect SMEs, smallholder collectives (FPOs), to sustainable value chains through a process that tries to align the interest of the buyers with that of the SMEs/FPOs

Photo by Amit Ranjan on Unsplash

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CRB 7th ANNUAL SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE 2020

**INDIA AND
SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS**

CRB organised its 7th Annual Sustainability Conference (India and Sustainability Standards) from 28th to 30th October 2020, virtually. This year's conference theme was – 'Sustainability a key to Business Resilience in an Uncertain World'.

The three-day conference brought together over 800 participants, 200 speakers from across the world, over 60 partner organisations committed to the theme of the conference – as they dissected and discussed a number of critical sustainability issues across the 28 thematic and sectoral sessions.

Delegates appreciated the ISS platform for continually being able to mobilise diverse stakeholders from across the globe to explore sustainability solutions with Indian practitioners. The ISS conference is unique in bringing together government, industry, civil society, academia and businesses, along with introducing new actors into the dialogue on sustainable business. This year was unique as it was the first time in CRB's history that this conference was



conducted as a virtual conference. Owing to travel restrictions due to Covid-19, there was an unprecedented reliance on technology in order to make this conference a success.

One of the emerging points was that although on one hand the pandemic has ushered in a period of uncertainty for individuals, businesses and governments, on the other, the looming disaster as a result of climate change has been well known. Hence, the pandemic must be used as an opportunity to reshape and reorient businesses and policies to address wider, more pressing issues of sustainability and to ensure that the recovery from the pandemic is guided by the principles of sustainability and the SDGs. Some of the key takeaways that stemmed from the three-day conference included:

- Adopting a systems approach ensures that we look at the entire system as a whole rather than its parts. This would allow for an integrated approach to addressing the SDGs and pave the way for a green and inclusive development.

SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

MARKET DYNAMICS & SOCIAL DILEMMAS OF
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS



- The need for improving access to digital technology and its transformative power for inclusive and equitable development were discussed.
- As practitioners across business, government, civil society, academia, it was discussed that there was a need to expand thinking of communities not just as beneficiaries but more as economic actors and mainstream them into value chains better.
- Local value creation is critical, and will need to be led by community-based organisations who will need sufficient investments and technological support. This is key to building resilience in terms of withstanding shocks where most needed. Most importantly, the conference highlighted that all stakeholders will need to come out of their comfort zones and innovate as it can no longer be 'Business As Usual' and develop tools/approaches/interventions to address the most pressing sustainability challenges we are confronted with, together.

Catch the conversation and discussion of CRB's Annual Flagship India & Sustainability

Standards Conference 2020 [here](#).

For more information on CRB's India and Sustainability Standards Annual Conference, visit [here](#)



CROSS CUTTING INITIATIVES

Youth for Sustainability (YfS) India Alliance

The alliance was launched on 5 December, 2020, as the driving force in the 'Decade of Action, 2020-30', for Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG12) and Climate Action (SDG13) in India. The goal of the alliance is to bring together like-minded youth-focused and multi-stakeholder organizations and build consensus for individual, civil society, corporate and government policy actions. The alliances' main objectives are as follows:

- Youth Empowerment - Mobilizing youth-focused and multi-stakeholder organizations for SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production and SDG 13 - Climate Action



CRB has joined the Alliance as a Member and is a part of the Working Group on Digital and Youth Outreach. More details may be found [here](#).

- Youth Partnerships - Empower collaborative, decentralised, global and hyperlocal approach for action by the youth to become responsible consumer
- Youth Guidance - Encouraging youth to use the power of their vote and wallet for SDG 12 and 13 and become role model citizens



ACHIEVEMENTS & AFFILIATIONS

- CRB has been a partner and has engaged with various initiatives/projects of the Government of India including Ministry of Corporate Affairs; Ministry of Finance; NITI Aayog; Bureau of Indian Standards; Quality Council of India and India Institute of Corporate Affairs.
- CRB is engaged with a few leading international sustainability initiatives: (i) One Planet Network (UNEP); (ii) International Task Group on Science-based Policy for Sustainable Consumption and Production (UNEP); (iii) International Advisory Committee of the Trade for Sustainable Development programme of the International Trade Centre (ITC).
- CRB has been implementing projects in partnership with a number of national and international organisations, e.g., ISEAL Alliance, WWF India, Giz India, RSPO, FNF (Regional office South Asia), World Benchmarking Alliance, CSR Europe, Aston Business School, University of Michigan, Alliance Manchester Business School, etc.
- CRB's activities and interest is showcased each year at its annual conference 'India & Sustainability Standards' – a multi-stakeholder event covering a number of sectors and thematic areas. [This](#) conference brings together Indian and international policy-makers, standard setters, businesses and other concerned practitioners to dialogue on sustainability challenges, using a result-based approach.
- CRB is part of an ISO Working Group for a Guidance Document on Sustainable Finance Principles

LOOKING AHEAD

The year 2020-21 is an important milestone for CRB as it marks 10 years of its existence. Despite the onset of COVID and shifting to a completely virtual work set up, the organisation has grown both in terms of revenue and team strength. The last 10 years have been an exciting and wondrous journey for CRB. Starting as a centre of excellence, CRB is establishing itself as a sustainability oriented think tank. Focussing on issues of circular economy, business and human rights, voluntary sustainability standards, sustainable value chains and climate action, the organisation has developed considerable expertise in the sectors of apparel and textile, agro-processing, minerals and mining, and ICT & electronics. There is also growing interest to explore an additional thematic area - environment and climate change, given the relevance of this topic currently. CRB endeavours to build its work across certain critical cutting issues - sustainable finance, youth engagement on sustainability and gender equality.

CRB is at a strategic juncture as it looks to consolidate its experience and develop its strategic roadmap for the next decade. The organisation aims to build on its philosophy of multi stakeholder engagement and facilitate innovative collaborations especially targeting to include more marginalised and excluded voices. Further, CRB believes that a conducive eco-system comprising policy support, availability of finance, uptake of innovations & new technology solutions, and service providers will be essential for businesses to deliver on their sustainability commitments and agenda.

To this end, CRB envisions supporting evidence based policy inputs, capacity building of service providers and financiers and supporting action towards availability and uptake of sustainable finance. In addition,

appropriate knowledge, tools and framework will also enable increased action by businesses and other strategic stakeholders. CRB would like to facilitate the co-creation of such knowledge and frameworks. Lastly, CRB firmly believes that India has a strong narrative on sustainability and that experiences from the Global South should be shared widely in the international sustainability discourse. This outlook underlines CRB's participation and inputs into various international committees and initiatives to enable better reflection of sustainability perspectives from the 'global south' in international discourses and initiatives.

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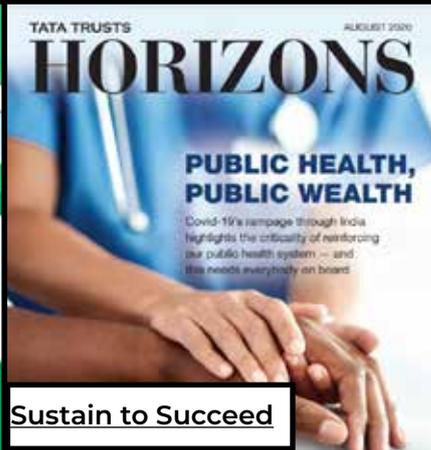
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ARTICLES



Collaboration key to Green & Inclusive Recovery for a Competitive Apparel Sector in India



Sustain to Succeed



International Youth Day: Can Youth Be The Catalyst For A Sustainable Future?



Sustainable economic recovery roadmap after Covid-19 in the offing



Focus on business sustainability in a post Covid-19 world



Understanding Planetary Health- Coronavirus Link: How Long Can The Earth Sustain Human Greed?



Building Resilience: Business Continuity Amid COVID-19 Pandemic



World Environment Day 2020: Aligning Interests Of People And Nature



Can We Afford To Let India's Firecracker Industry Perish?

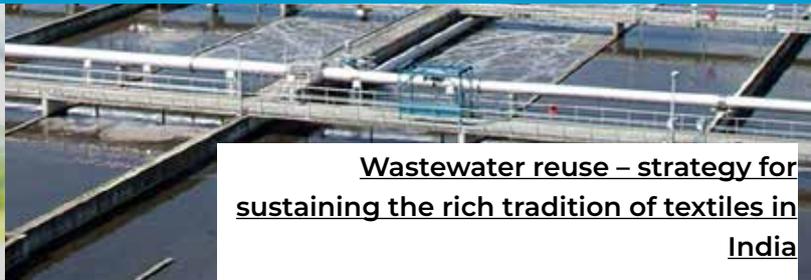


Transforming Private Sector Contributions to the Decade of Action: Evolving North-South Partnerships

BLOGS



[GREEN ACCOUNTING – A tool to measure Environmental Sustainability](#)



[Wastewater reuse – strategy for sustaining the rich tradition of textiles in India](#)



[The migrant labour crisis in the face of Covid-19: causes and mitigation](#)



[Gender Responsiveness in Today's Business and Human Rights Landscape](#)



[Climate-conscious mobility – some key aspects](#)



[Water treatment and reuse – Common infrastructure and Zero Liquid Discharge](#)

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