

Indo-Dutch CSR and Sustainability Forum (INDUS Forum) National Consultation Meeting – I

15th September 2016, Taj Mansingh Hotel, New Delhi

Brief Report of Meeting

1. Introduction

Centre for Responsible Business (www.c4rb.org) is implementing a project referred to as the Indo-Dutch CSR & Sustainability Forum (INDUS-Forum) with support from the Embassy of Netherlands in India. The aim of the project is to initiate, promote and facilitate dialogues, debates and thought leadership on substantive aspects of CSR and Sustainability among businesses and relevant stakeholders of the two countries (India and The Netherlands), especially in the context of trade and investment flows between the two countries.

CRB has carefully identified and mobilised Dutch businesses operating in India, select Indian firms operating in the Netherlands, academics and think tanks to be part of this initiative. The Forum is expected to cover specific thematic areas based on the common understanding and priorities of Dutch businesses working in India and Indian businesses working in the Netherlands.

A first meeting of this Forum (INDUS-Forum) was organised in Delhi on 15th September 2016. Around 40-odd participants including leading Dutch businesses working in India, Indian companies working in The Netherlands, civil society organisations and industry experts participated in this event (refer Annexure II for the list of participants). The event was inaugurated by H E Mr Alphonsus Stoelinga, Ambassador of The Netherlands to India, Nepal and Bhutan. The overall purpose was to share the objective and the anticipated outcome from this one-year project, and receive inputs/feedback on the initial research that CRB has been undertaking in this project (refer Annexure I for the programme). Further, it was expected that participants would provide their ideas on what issues/activities the Forum should focus on.

2. Inaugural Session

- Rijit Sengupta welcomed all the participants in the event – especially those who had come from outside cities like Bangalore, Jamshedpur, Mumbai, etc. He briefly introduced the genesis of the INDUS-Forum project and its anticipated outcome. He urged all the participants in the meeting and other relevant, key actors to contribute to this Forum in whatever ways possible.
- Michiel Bierkens from the Dutch Embassy added his voice to that of CRB in welcoming all the participants – and urging them to contribute actively in the discussions and indeed in the project. He clarified that the businesses and other stakeholders would have to take ownership of the process and lead this project from the front.
- H.E. Amb. Alphonsus Stoelinga, Embassy of the Netherlands warmly opened the first consultation meeting session welcoming the participants and setting the stage appropriately for meaningful engagements among businesses and stakeholders to follow. While H.E. indicated the Embassy's mandate to promote business in India, he emphasized on the need for sustainable business conduct by these companies.

- He addressed the participants highlighting the need for a platform to exchange lessons and good practices with a focus on due diligence in supply chains through knowing (where the risks are) and showing (how to handle the risks).
- The Ambassador, on one hand, indicated government's efforts towards supporting sustainable development among businesses through sector risk assessments studies (done by KPMG), role of Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH), Solidaridad, and other such initiatives.
- On the other hand, he strongly urged the businesses to take advantage from such partnership forums to take forward the sustainability agenda and substantially contribute towards Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Emerging Issues from the Panels and Floor discussions

Panel 1: Introduction to the INDUS-Forum Project

- Participants were introduced to the objectives of Indus Forum as a common platform for businesses to share and learn from each other's experiences on CSR and sustainability.
- Common findings emerging from engagement with businesses and key stakeholders include difficulties in engaging communities and NGOs, translating policy into practice on the ground, limited awareness of sustainability in tier 2 and tier 3 suppliers and challenges engaging with NGOs. The businesses and stakeholders also hold a common view for the forum to focus on issues relating to supply chain, labour, environment and strategic NGO-business partnerships.
- These findings fostered a lively panel discussion with Vidya Srinivasan (Genpact) and Teenal Sethi (Rabobank) converged in highlighting the role of the forum in disseminating learning from other companies' CSR/ Sustainability activities. Anil Bhardwaj (FISME) emphasized on the challenges in engaging with the MSME sector on sustainability and stressed the Forum to be cognisant of these challenges. He thought integrating sustainability into the supply chain of large businesses was a possible way, but highlighted that SMEs needed support and hand-holding even then. Mr. Bhardwaj indicated that the platform should be innovative in its thinking, and fostering curiosity and playfulness to fostering out-of-the-box thinking on CSR and/or sustainability. FISME also proposed to bring their strong network of 743 small industrial associations for the forum and bringing communication links through the Knowledge News Network (KNN) of FISME for greater outreach for the Forum..
- While Genpact as a service industry looks upto the forum for tertiary service providers who could be credible for partnering with respect to safety and other sustainability aspects to address their supply chain related challenges. Genpact has been investing a lot of time and effort into augmenting its Sustainability practices, in order to make their employees motivated to work for the firm, which behaves as a good corporate citizen. Rabobank looks at available criteria for checking their customers (business who Rabobank finances) on sustainability practice. RaboBank has the ambition to be India's top 5 banks practicing CR and Sustainability – and was keen to learn from the experience of others in the sector, especially working in Agriculture and Energy sector. Floor discussions further highlighted the need for special attention for the agricultural sector coming from Solidaridad.. the

representative from Bayer highlighted how they have helped forged partnership among stakeholders in the agri-sector for exchange of good practices/learnings among farmers and the farming community.

- Chair of the panel, Aditi Haldar (GRI) summed up the discussions highlighting the need for defining a set of criteria for corporates to help them choose their CSR and/or Sustainability 'focus areas'. She highlighted the need for a shift from investing/expenditure (which is what the current CSR regime does) towards outcomes of CSR and/or Sustainability related activities. She also suggested utilizing the CSR mandate as an opportunity to achieve long-term sustainability in India. The discussions further highlighted a need to bring in a basket of tools/mechanisms already available to the Forum.

Panel 2: Evolving thought leaderships on CSR and Sustainability

- The panel discussed the importance of collaboration and strategic alliances between corporates, with the vital inclusion of communities. Mr Michiel Bierkens (Dutch Embassy) reminded the audience of the importance of consumer awareness as a driver for sustainability, as is prevalent in the Netherlands. He also highlighted the significant role that the Forum could play in raising awareness on CSR/Sustainability in key sectors. Anup Sahay, representing Tata Steel highlighted the importance of corporate in scaling-up projects and looking to other corporates for inspiration and discussed how Tata Steel recently was inspired by DSM Sinochem – a Dutch company (incidentally also part of the panel). He also emphasized on the need for SME focus to be integrated into the CSR and/or Sustainability practices of companies. He also highlighted that some Dutch companies like Royal Haskoning specialise in flood management – and therefore has a business model which has sustainability as its core function. Dutch businesses could offer some such models, for Indian entrepreneurs for the future. Shiv Charan, DSM Sinochem suggested that the forum could inform corporates about the opportunities for engaging in CSR activities especially those which can create impacts on the ground and help address some of the most urgent sustainable development related issues for India. Alay Barah representing ICCO indicated that ICCO's strength lies on the issue of agriculture and that was an expertise that ICCO would bring to the Forum, especially given the emerging consensus for the Forum to look at the Agriculture sector closely.
- The sector perspective from NGOs' experience including their in forming partnerships with corporates emerged during the floor discussions. Save the Children, Fairwear Foundation, Akvo were some of the NGOs present who voiced their viewpoints on the issue. While there were some points raised on the need for businesses to understand communities more closely, there were also some views on the need for greater and closer monitoring to identify and record impacts. For NGOs, it was also necessary to understand businesses and business models better, so that there is better alignment leading to robust partnerships.
- In addition to agriculture, there was also suggestion for the Forum to focus on the Textile and Apparel sector – especially by Fairwear Foundation. In addition to formal suppliers, it was also highlighted that in some way the informal (home based suppliers) should also be brought into the discourse. Companies like Azko Nobel further reiterated the need for forum to focus on NGO-Business partnerships.

- Chair of the panel, Ms Vasanthi Srinivasan, Board Member, CRB commented on how in their language, the Dutch corporations present repeatedly use a “multi-stakeholder” framework. She questioned how this mind set can be applied in India. One of the key issues that she reminded the Forum to focus on was how CSR/Sustainability could contribute towards SDGs.
- The need for strategic partnerships also emerged as a key issue to build on for the Forum – such alliances could be forged between firms, between firms and stakeholders (NGOs, practitioners, etc.) and between a Forum like INDUS-Forum and other existing networks/alliances. The panel discussions also highlighted the need to come up with CSR and Sustainability related solutions and to make them replicable and scalable.

4. Way forward

- Value of strategic partnerships and alliances within corporates (B2B) as well as between businesses and NGOs emerged as critical for taking the sustainability agenda forward. Also, the lessons from other forums could help enrich the discourse on the subject, which this Forum could provide.
- A need emerged on sector themes, as captured from the discussions, which could be agriculture, textiles and apparel, MSMEs focus, etc. The forum needs to be built on keeping these sectoral needs in the background, and see the emerging needs in subsequent consultations.
- The discussions also highlighted need for greater focus on outcomes using the 2% CSR mandate as an opportunity by businesses. Discussions between and among members should lead to learning from experiences, good practices and obtaining tools for achieving greater impacts. The forum could act as a repository of such tools/approaches.
- There is also a stronger need for conceptual clarity to decide on the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability – for the Forum, which would guide the way forward for activities.

Photo Gallery



Full Gallery of Pictures:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/c5pnnxsw5kzbl0f/AADhVszLO9kL7OZaVN5nm1dca?dl=0>

Annexure I: Programme

Indo-Dutch CSR and Sustainability Forum (INDUS Forum) National Consultation Meeting – I

15th September 2016,

Venue: Aftab Mehtab Hall, Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi

Agenda

0900hrs: Registration & Tea

0930 to 1000hrs: Opening Session

- Welcome note by Rijit Sengupta, Centre for Responsible Business (CRB)
- Welcome note by Michiel Bierkens, Embassy of The Netherlands
- Inaugural address by H.E. Alphonsus Stoeltinga, Ambassador of the Netherlands to India, Nepal & Bhutan

1000 to 1100hrs: Introduction to INDUS-Forum Project by Madhuri Nanda, CRB

Chair: Aditi Halder, Global Reporting Initiative

Discussants:

- Vidya Srinivasan, Genpact
- Teenal Sethi, Rabobank International
- Anil Bhardwaj, Federation of Indian Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise (FISME)

- Floor Discussions

1100 to 1115hrs: Tea Break

1115 to 1245hrs: Panel Discussion: 'Evolving Thought Leadership on CSR & Sustainability between India & Holland'

Chair: Vasanthi Srinivasan, Board Member, CRB

Panelists

- Shiv Charan, DSM Sinochem
- Anup Sahay, Tata Steel
- Alay Barah, Innovative Change Collaborative (ICCO)
- Michiel Bierkens, Embassy of the Netherlands

- Floor Discussions

1245 to 1300hrs: Closing Remarks (Summary of the Discussions & Way Forward)

- Rijit Sengupta, CRB
- Priya Dagar, Embassy of the Netherlands

1300hrs: Lunch

Annexure II: List of Participants

Name	Surname	Organization
Vidya	Srinivasan	Genpact
Amaresh	Amaresh	Genpact
V.K.J	Balasubramanian	Quavac
Anil	Bhardwaj	FISME
Ayan	Biswas	Akvo
Parthasarthi	Changdar	Akzonobel
Shiv	Charan	DSM India
Saikat	De	Bayer Crop Science
Pallavi	Deshpande	Save The Children
Rashmi	Jain	Save the Children
Jasmer	Dhingra	Sustainable Trade Initiative
Aditi	Haldar	GRI
Harmen van	Heist	Rural Spark Energy India Pvt. Ltd
Rob	de Jeu	Rural Spark Energy India Pvt. Ltd
Parminder	Kakria	Wipro
Alay	Barrah	ICCO
Pinky	Pradhan	ICCO
M S	Prakash	Ecorys
Nidhi	Pundhir	HCL Foundation
Anup	Sahay	Tata Steel
Teenal	Sethi	Rabobank
Shilpa Mittal	Singh	Women on Wings
Manpreet	Singh	KPMG
Suhasini	Singh	Fair Wear Foundation
Vasanthi	Srinivasan	IIM Bangalore
Jaskiran	Warrik	IDH
H.E. Alphonsus	Stoelinga	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
Petra J.M.	Smulders	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
Ila	Singh	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
Priya	Dagar	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
MPJ	Bierkens	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
Boudewijn	van Vloten Dissevelt	Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands
Rijit	Sengupta	CRB
Beroz	Gazdar	CRB
Madhuri	Nanda	CRB
Sonali	Singh	CRB
Louise	Cornett	CRB