

# RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



EXPERT SPEAK

BUSINESS RESPONSIBILITY AND CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY ANIRBAN GHOSH

BIODIVERSITY & ITS OPPOSING EFFECTS ON HUMAN LIFE

**DEVOSMITA BHATTACHARYA** 

IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS
TO HUNGER AND
MALNUTRITION IN INDIA

**BHAVYA SHARMA** 

E-VEHICLES: DID HYPE TRUMP SAFETY?

**RAMANUJ MITRA** 

info@c4rb.org

# From the CEO'S Desk

Most of CRB's friends, partners and the wider stakeholder community would have read news about the unfortunate demise of our Founding Chairperson, Dr Bimal Arora on 2nd March 2022 in the U.K. CRB draws inspiration from Bimal's dedication and diligence in creating the organisation and stays committed in realising his Vision. The Governing Body of CRB and our Senior Management are determined to establishing CRB as a leading organisation on sustainability and responsible business not just within India, but beyond. We will pursue this goal over the course of the second decade of our existence, that started in 2022.

CRB has introduced a new thematic area – *Environment and Climate Change*, as the sixth topic in our programmatic mix. Interventions in this thematic area will focus on: (i) Role of Private Sector in connection with Deforestation/Sustainable Landscapes – Biodiversity Conservation – Climate Change and (ii) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction by Businesses, in particular SMEs and small enterprises.

At the organisational level, we are preparing ourselves to demonstrate positive impacts on people, planetary resources and prosperity in the long term, and we intend to do so by working in specific geographies and in industry clusters through innovative partnerships, enabling policies and facilitating responsible business practices.

We look forward to collaboration with like minded organisations and experts

Rijit Sengupta CEO, CENTRE FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS



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# A Tribute to Dr Bimal Arora

### From the Governing Body Members

We the CRB Governing Body Members were shocked to learn about the sudden and unexpected demise of our dear colleague, the Founding CEO and then Chairperson of CRB, Dr. Bimal Arora on 2nd March 2022 in the UK.

Those who knew Bimal and his work, knew him as a passionate and tireless champion of Sustainability and Social Development. Bimal as the CEO of CRB till 2015 brought the organisation to a stable and self-sustaining foundation very quickly, before transitioning to become the Chairperson of the Board of CRB.

One of his contributions - CRB's flagship event - Indian Standards and Sustainability - Conference and Dialogues has now become an event of national and international eminence. For CRB, this annual affair has helped draw the attention and support of government, private sector, academia, research institutions and civil society, both locally and internationally. Building on his vision, CRB's frontiers on sustainability has been expanded energetically by our CEO, Rijit Sengupta.

As a colleague to us Board Members, we were, and continue to be challenged and infused with Bimal's views of developing CRB as a leading southern voice on Sustainability and developing CRB into a formidable think tank on the topic globally.

This direction envisaged by Bimal and endorsed by the CRB Board, will continue to guide CRB, expanding CRB's wide ranging activities and impacts on Sustainability.

Replacing Bimal's untiring spirit and commitment to Sustainability will be a challenge. However, the Board is fully committed to help evolve CRB into an entity following his aspirations. We will miss Bimal, as surely will CRB's leadership and staff. Needless to say, how he will be missed by his colleagues at the University, friends, partners and the massive network of sustainability practitioners in India and worldwide that Bimal worked to bring together.

# BIODIVERSITY FOR HUMAN WELLBEING



Biodiversity is essential for all life forms to exist on Earth. It supports our basic needs of food and nutrition security, energy, development of medicines and pharmaceuticals as well as freshwater, which are crucial for good health. It also provides us with opportunities for economic development [according to the World Economic Forum's report on "Nature Risk Rising", more than half of the world's GDP (\$44 trillion) is highly or moderately dependent on nature], aesthetic pleasure, leisure activities and scientific research to improve our overall well being. The medical, veterinary and scientific communities have reached a consensus and embraced the 'One Health' movement, which is an integrated and unifying approach towards sustainably balancing and optimising the health of our ecosystems by recognising the interdependencies and connections between human, animal, and environmental health. Various studies suggest that the biological diversity of microorganisms, flora and fauna provides extensive health benefits for the species across our ecosystem.

However, over the past few decades, human activities have caused harm to the environment at an unprecedented rate, as a result of which, biodiversity is rapidly declining globally. The World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Risks Report recognises 'biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse' as one of the top 5 risks of our times. Increased population and industrialisation have had significant disruptions on ecosystems which not only made some species vulnerable and extinct but also led to a spillover of certain zoonotic diseases.

The Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted the need to address biodiversity loss and the health of our ecosystem in order to prevent another zoonotic pandemic by altering the way we interact with nature. Known drivers of zoonotic diseases such as land-use change, intensive livestock production, wildlife trade, and climate change emphasize the need to safeguard biodiversity as a pivotal part of the response to the pandemic.

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Over the past two years of the pandemic and the situations arising as a result of it, there has been a profound impact felt on the economy, society, and also on nature. This has been at the local, regional and global levels. While on the one hand, lockdowns as a result of the pandemic, meant a reduction in pollution levels and in the exploitation of wildlife resources due to a decline in human activities such as ecotourism, it also marked a gap in monitoring and evaluating the impact of conservation programmes. In addition to this, there was an increase in the pressures on natural resources owing to reverse migration and unemployment, with habitats in some parts of the world being at risk. An instance of this was found in the destruction of the Amazon rainforest which rose by 55% in the first four months of lockdown compared to the same period in the previous year. Although there has been an increasing recognition of the need for national and international collaborations and policies for biodiversity conservation, countries such as Indonesia have relaxed environmental regulations, resulting in unprecedented levels of logging, raising concerns for biodiversity in the country.

Human practices like deforestation and land use conversion disturb the ecological balance by affecting the zoonotic host species (such as rodents, bats, primates, etc.), which increases the contact rate between the two species and the risks of cross-species disease transmission. In 2020, Gibb et al. published their research in the Nature magazine titled "Zoonotic host diversity increases in human-dominated ecosystems", where he catalogued 6,801 ecological assemblages and 376 host species worldwide, and his analysis (after controlling for research effort) revealed that land use has global and systematic effects on local zoonotic host communities. He specified, "known wildlife hosts of human-shared pathogens and parasites overall comprise a greater proportion of local species richness (18–72% higher) and total abundance (21–144% higher) in sites under substantial human use (secondary, agricultural and urban ecosystems) compared with nearby undisturbed habitats.".

It is therefore evident that human actions need some intervention and conservation of biological diversity is key to sustain healthy ecosystems and the services they provide. Even though human beings have caused much harm to the environment, people are now aware of the consequences of those actions. This gave rise to the concept of 'sustainable development. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly had proposed 17 sustainable development goals which are a set of interlinked and interdependent global goals to be accomplished by the year 2030, designed to be "a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". But it is not only the responsibility of the UN or the governments of member states to work towards these goals. While we do need continuous research in these areas for the governments to come up with and implement better, effective policies, every individual has a role to play. We need to be mindful of our surroundings and invest in enriching our ecosystem and its resources. Living life the sustainable way will help mitigate the harm done by making our ecosystem more stable. After all, sustainability is not a task but a lifestyle choice. This way, we will be able to enjoy the benefits of nature and minimise threats such as climate change, exotic diseases, habitat loss and natural calamities.





For a long time post World War II we have had a reasonably stable economic environment to operate in; most changes that have occurred, have done so over a period of time, have often been short-lived, or their impact has been felt gradually. This stability afforded us the luxury to focus solely on developing our economy and society, not quite realising the unintended consequences that were building up for life on earth. Now that we have been operating beyond planetary boundaries for decades, the safety net protecting us all along is under threat – the rope is running out.

Living comfortably on earth is critically dependent on deep decarbonization in this decade. We have no time to lose and must do whatever is possible today. Climate science says that we must reduce emissions by half by 2030 and become net zero by 2050. It is believed that the technologies required to achieve the 2030 goal are already available while new technologies need to come to market for the 2050 goal to be met.

Business has an opportunity to transition from being responsible for the problem to being responsible for the solution. A climate solution can scale when it becomes economically feasible and creates value for the consumer. Business has the responsibility to bring new climate solutions to market and help achieve economies of scale. This is in addition to adopting green technologies itself and run a green operation.

As climate triggers multiple technological transformations in areas like lighting, cooling, electricity generation, green materials, electric mobility to name a few, sustainability is becoming synonymous with business continuity and resilience. No business can afford to fall behind in the technological transformation in its industry if it wishes to remain afloat and be relevant, even if it doesn't understand the impact of climate change and the imperative for managing it.

The need for new climate solutions to achieve 2050 goals provides a wonderful opportunity for new businesses. Soon we could be seeing businesses do things like converting kinetic energy to electrical energy, making solar films flexible, making air taxis real, building net zero buildings, making meat in the laboratory – all businesses that do not exist today!

Organizations use natural resources to fashion solutions that satisfy customer needs. **These** resources are finite and need to be handled responsibly, so there is an obvious need for extreme innovation that will make businesses greener, and propel new green businesses that will offer innovative solutions to consumers. Together this will facilitate the collective transition to a more sustainable world.

The Mahindra Group defines sustainability as an endeavour to "Build enduring business while rejuvenating the environment and enabling stakeholders to Rise". The need to manage risks arising out of climate change and the opportunities that it is triggering is making it very clear that for businesses to be resilient, sustainability is not just the best way to do business, it is the only way.





Nutrition and eradicating hunger are central to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 development agenda. Despite strong constitutional provisions, legislative policy, plan and programme commitments, India has struggled to reduce undernutrition and micronutrient deficiency diseases. This is evidenced by the fact that in 2021, Global Hunger Index, India ranks 101st out of the 116 countries with sufficient data to calculate 2021 GHI scores. With a score of 27.5, India has a level of hunger that is serious. India trails behind its South Asian neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In addition to this, India is home to almost one-fourth of the world's chronically undernourished people (195 million undernourished). Coupled with the fact that 4 out of 10 children in India do not meet their full potential due to chronic undernutrition or stunting, it is evident that SDG 2 – Zero Hunger cannot be achieved globally unless it is achieved in India.

Addressing the issue of hunger requires coordination and concerted efforts from a host of stakeholders including the public and the private sector. In this context, the Centre for Responsible Business (CRB), United Nations World Food Program (UNWFP) and Cargill India have collaborated to address the issue of malnutrition and SDG2 in India. The project, 'Poshan Pehal aur Pragati' seeks to address Nutritional Security in India by aligning with the priorities of the <u>POSHAN Abhiyan</u>. The project does so by engaging the public and the private sector to collaborate and find ways to co-create possible approaches to address the goal of improving the nutrition intake in the first 1,000 days of a child's life starting from conception till two years after birth by improving the nutritional quality of Take-Home Ration (THR) served to children, pregnant and lactating mothers in Rajasthan. The project is working by taking a multifront and multi-stakeholder approach providing information on nutrition, access to quality nutrition, product innovation, targeting micronutrient deficiencies and innovative collaborations and partnerships at the community level. The programme identifies the private sector as an important stakeholder in enhancing and strengthening the efforts on the delivery of SDG 2 and national nutrition targets.





Consumer sentiment on e-vehicles is high in the country. The demand is especially high in the e-scooter segment, which offers a clean and efficient mode of transport to India where two wheelers are popular. The central government as well as various state governments have been giving incentives to e-vehicle makers as well as consumers to increase uptake. As more charging infrastructure comes up in the country, owning and operating e-vehicles will be the new norm in mobility.

But recent developments have raised some red flags. Reports are coming in from various parts of the country about electric two wheelers catching fire. So far, luckily no individuals have been hurt from these incidents. These incidents raise some questions on the rigour and adequacy of safety testing employed at the manufacturing facilities.

In other cases, e-scooters have shut down in the middle of traffic or faced breakdowns at inconvenient locations, forcing potential buyers to rethink their decision about further purchases.

It should be noted that the safety and performance issues have occurred mainly in the scooters manufactured by the relatively new entrants in the market. These companies have no prior experience in manufacturing of vehicles in general; moreover, the electric vehicle ecosystem is relatively new as compared to internal combustion (IC) engine-based vehicles. This calls for further scrutiny in the practices adopted by these manufacturers, who seem to be eager to get on the e-vehicle bandwagon and make quick profits.

Although fire hazard has been reported in

smartphones and as well as in cars manufactured by giants like Tesla, the short timeline in which some of the new Indian companies have been rolling out their e-scooters make their safety and R&D practices more suspect.

Failure in the safety angle doesn't only put the lives of Indian consumers in danger, but it also tarnishes the image of the Indian automobile industry, which has created a name for itself over decades by exporting affordable and reliable vehicles.

The fires have been caused by issues in the battery packs (Li-ion batteries) used in the scooters. These batteries have high energy density, which make them a good fit for e-vehicles but are also prone to catching fires. Additionally, a rise in ambient temperature increases the risk of fire. Given that the ambient temperature is going to rise in India owing to the approaching summer, but also due to climate change, intensive R&D is needed to make EV Batteries safe for Indian conditions.

Several news outlets have covered this issue and they have been investigating the causes. The manufacturing companies have also promised to look into the causes and ensure more safety features in their products.

Other than the batteries, it seems that the testing of software and electronic modules have also been inadequate.

E-vehicle manufacturers must act timely to restore the confidence of consumers in our automobile ecosystem.

# **CRB ACTIVITIES**

### REPRESENTATIONS

National Stakeholder Consultation:
Determining the Scope and Feasibility of a
Value Chain Alliance for Wood in India,
15 March, 2022

Rijit Sengupta represented CRB at a National Stakeholder Consultation: Determining the Scope & Feasibility of a Value Chain Alliance for Wood in India organised by WRI India to discuss demand, supply and policy related barriers as well as enabling factors.



### Roundtable on Mainstreaming Resource Efficiency in Textile Industry in India February 4, 2022

Devyani Hari represented CRB at the online webinar organised by TERI and presented the preliminary findings from the circular apparel status paper at the roundtable

### **CONVENING**

# MANAGING PLASTIC WASTE IN THE IT & ELECTRONICS VALUE CHAINS 28 January 2022

An insightful discussion with Shobha Raghavan, Saahas Zero Waste and Sean DeVries, SERI on Managing Plastic Waste in the IT & Electronics Value Chains as part of Prem Jain Memorial Trust's Harit Bharat Mahotsav, 2022.

### 8th meeting of Voluntary Sustainable Standard Collaboration India 9 February 2022

The 8th meeting of Voluntary Sustainable Standard Collaboration India was held on 9 February 2022 virtually. This meeting's focus was on "VSS and Climate Change in India". It was attended by prominent leaders from different industries who are working on sustainability and issues related to climate and climate change in India. The steps taken by the Indian Government to address the issue such as highlighting a pathway to reduce the use of fossil fuels, lower carbon intensity, and achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 were also discussed. The role of the VSS Collaboration India in supporting the VSS organisations to achieve India's climate ambitions by 2070 was also highlighted. View the recording here.



### TEEB AGRIFOOD FOR BUSINESS CLOSING SESSION, 17 FEBRUARY, 2022

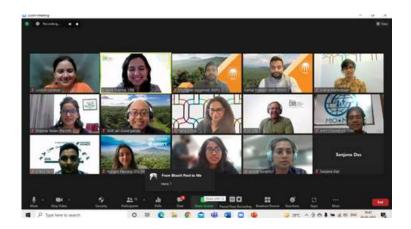
CRB and Capitals Coalition conducted the closing session for TEEB AgriFood for Business, Promoting a Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sector'. The session consisted of a keynote address by Dr Ashok Dalwai who elaborated a global perspective on food system transformation and the importance of business action. There were also case studies presented by Arvind, Go4Fresh and Ecociate who incorporated the methodology in their decision making. The session concluded with a discussion on next steps for the Hub in India.



# I-SPOC: STEERING COMMITTEE AND MEMBER MEETINGS 9 March 2022

The Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India (I-SPOC) conducted its 7th Members Meeting on 10 March 2022. The meeting was conducted virtually, and had in attendance the Steering Committee Members, I-SPOC Members and Observers.

The discussion at the meeting included updates from the Secretariat, the three Working Groups and deliberation on actions that the Coalition should take in order to increase membership in 2022.



# DISABILITY INCLUSION IN SOUTH ASIA: PERSPECTIVE FOR LABOUR MARKET (IN COLLABORATION WITH FNF) 24 March. 2022

CRB and FNF South Asia held a discussion on disability inclusion in South Asia and heard from experts about challenges faced in the workplace and the need for empathy. Watch the full discussion here.



### **ENGAGEMENT**

#### **#KNOWYOURPALM**

CRB in partnership with RSPO launched the #KnowYourPalm campaign to raise awareness about the need for sustainable palm oil. For this, CRB has conceptualised and developed awareness building videos to encourage better understanding of sustainable palm oil. The first video in our series may be found here and the second one here.





### **Launch of Nutri Innovation Challenge**

CRB in partnership with the UN World Food Programme and Cargill launched the Nutri Innovation Challenge as a part of its project Poshan Pehal aur Pragati to identify scalable solutions that will contribute towards creating an enabling environment for nutrition seeking behaviour using innovative and inclusive approaches. The programme will provide seed funding and mentorship to the selected applicants to help enhance their potential to successfully implement and scale their ideas. It will help access relevant expertise that will enable the selected applicants to stay competitive and relevant to the changing market dynamics through responsible and responsive business models. Further details about the challenge may be found here.

# FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK











## CRB IN THE MEDIA



WHY US

Partner with us for Pres

**Calling Changemakers** to Identify Solutions on na **Malnutrition and** <u>Hunger in India!</u>

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Wednesday, February 23, 2022 1:59PM

Nutrition Innovation Mini-Challenge to Of



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**ANI Press Releases** 

# Calling changemakers to identify

ANI PR 2

Calling changemakers to identify solutions on malnutrition and hunger in India!

# RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS **NEWS ROUND UP**

BY VINAY PANDEY



### **SMES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### SUSTAINABILITY IS NOW COUNTED AS A MAJOR PILLAR OF EXPORT BUSINESS: AEPC

Apparel industry is aware that without sustainable supply chains, the fashion sector will become less viable and sustainability is now counted as one of the major pillars of export business, industry body Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) said. "The Indian apparel" industry is very well aware of the alarming fact that without sustainable supply chains, the fashion industry will become less and less viable. Sustainability is now counted as one of the major pillars of apparel export business and a growth tool," AEPC Chairman Narendra Goenka said in a webinar. Read more here.





### SMES AND SUSTAINABILITY

### **GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES INNOVATIVE SCHEME TO** PROVIDE INCUBATION, IMPROVE DESIGN, **COMMERCIALIZE PATENTS FOR MSMES**

The MSME Ministry on Thursday launched the MSME Innovative Scheme with the combination of existing subschemes around incubation, design, and intellectual property rights (IPR) for MSMEs. The new scheme would act as a hub for innovation activities facilitating and guiding the development of ideas into viable business propositions that can benefit society directly and can be marketed successfully, the ministry said at the launch. However, the erstwhile three schemes of incubation, design and IPR will also continue to operate as individual programmes.

The incubation part under the scheme would promote the adoption of the latest technologies among MSMEs that seek validation of their ideas at the proof-of-concept level. The ideas would be incubated at 'eligible institutions' recognised by the government to act as business incubators. The scheme would also have a provision of providing financial assistance of up to Rs 15 lakh per idea to these host institutes apart from up to Rs 1 crore support for procuring plant and machinery for MSMEs. Read more here

### VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

### SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS ARE A POWERFUL TOOL TO PROTECT BIODIVERSITY

Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) can play a bigger role in conserving our planet's resources and help strengthen the new post-2020 global biodiversity framework, experts say. The global community is failing to meet the scale of the biodiversity crisis that threatens to wipe out over 1 million animal and plant species, putting our economies, food security and health at risk. But the world can chart a new course. And trade has an important role to play. More than 190 countries are



currently negotiating, under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), new global biodiversity goals and targets that are expected to be adopted during the second phase of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2022. A recent workshop held by UNCTAD and the ISEAL sustainability alliance, in partnership with the CBD secretariat, highlighted how VSS could strengthen the upcoming post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Read more here.



#### **PRIVATE SECTOR AND SDGS**

### PM MODI URGES PRIVATE SECTOR TO DRIVE INNOVATIONS IN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged the private sector to drive innovations in the renewable and sustainable energy sectors. "Natural resources are depleting and, in such a scenario, a circular economy is the need of the hour and we will have to make it a part of our life. We need innovation in all spheres, new products are important. I assure the country's private sector that the government will stand by you in all efforts in this direction. We will work in a unified way to not only achieve our goals but we will also show the way to humanity," Modi said at the plenary session of a webinar on "Energy for Sustainable Growth". Read more here.

### **CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: WOMEN DRIVING TRANSITION FROM LINEAR TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY

To spread the message of gender equality, the United Nations observance of International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8. The theme for this year's Women's Day is: "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". The UN believes 2022 is pivotal for achieving gender equality in the context of climate change, and environment and disaster risk reduction. In a world where leading economies are increasingly finding it tough to keep a balance between spurring industrialization and producing less wastage, the transition from a linear economy to a circular one is naturally fraught with multiple challenges. In India, the transition from a linear to a circular economy is gaining pace. And several women leaders have emerged as the torchbearers of this movement. Read more here.



### **BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

## UN GLOBAL COMPACT CALLS ON BUSINESS TO ACT IN RESPONSE TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN UKRAINE

The UN Global Compact Network UK calls on the business community to act now and help civilians caught up in the devastating humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. We understand that the private sector is contending with sanctions against Russia, supply chain cost inflation, and overall instability; however, at times like this it is more important than ever for businesses to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence, putting people and planet at the heart of their actions. Read more here.





# STAFF CORNER

## **DHEERAJ KUMAR**

Finance and Admin Officer

Dheeraj is a CA aspirant and currently he is a Semi qualified Chartered Accountant with more than three years of professional experience in Financial planning & analysis, Accounting Taxation, reporting and response to statutory authorities under various compliances and to internal management through MIS.

He carries good experience in Implementing and Testing Internal Control which he used in managing an organization and auditing in CA Internship. He always gains faith wherever he works in little time.

He is a good learner and keeps himself busy with exploring new ideas to keep him ahead in his profession and motivating others in spare time. Teamwork, Cooperation and meeting deadlines are his core skills.

He believes to give importance to both Profession and Family.

# **ABOUT CRB**

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) was established in 2011 as think-tank to pursue its vision, 'businesses integrate sustainability into their core business practices'. Given that sustainability is a multi-dimensional problem especially in the context of India and other emerging economies, CRB has adopted a model of engaging multiple stakeholders to develop action plans for promoting sustainable/responsible business, across various sectors in India.

CRB has consolidated its programmatic activities into the following thematic areas:

- Circular Economy
- Business & Human Rights
- Private Sector & SDGs
- Voluntary Sustainability Standards
- SMEs & Sustainability

### Editorial Team siya batra & tania kahlon







USO House, USO Road, 6 Special Institutional Area Off Shaheed Jeet Singh Marg New Delhi-110067 (India)

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