Centre for Responsible Business
integrate sustainability into core business practices

Profile of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in India

E-Dossier
Volume I

Initiative
Walking together with VSS in India

About CRB

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) was established in 2011 as a 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 developed its annual international sustainability conference (*India & Sustainability Standards*) as an initiative for international and national sustainable business and voluntary sustainability standards practitioners to dialogue on sustainability challenges, using a result based approach.

Achievements

In recognition of its interventions on sustainable business/SDGs, CRB has been recognized/affiliated as Partners and/or Advisers of various initiatives:

- One Planet Network (UN Environment, Paris)
- Trade for Sustainable Development (ITC, Geneva)
- World Benchmarking Alliance
- ISEAL Alliance
- UN Forum on Sustainability Standards
- CSR Europe
- India Institute for Corporate Affairs
- Quality Council of India
- Bureau of Indian Standard

Mission | Create and provide high quality, affordable and accessible resources and services to enable businesses to fulfil their responsibilities to all stakeholders.

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WALKING TOGETHER WITH VOLUNTARY SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS IN INDIA

An Initiative of Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) for Sustainability Standards organizations operating in India to be better informed about each other's' features and initiatives and explore opportunities to collaborate.

Introduction

From CRB's engagement and interactions with Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) organisations and various international actors globally, the need for collaboration among VSS has often been identified as an imperative. This is on account of the proliferation of VSS to cover sustainability across various thematic areas and sectors. According to a UN Forum on Sustainability Standards (UNFSS) report 2018 (***Voluntary Sustainability Standards, Trade and Sustainable Development[1]***), while the number of VSS has greatly increased globally, the significant variation in the number of active VSS suggests challenges related to duplication and overlap between standards across markets.

Given that a number of Sustainability Standards are operating in India, CRB believes, ***our country can take a lead in enabling greater engagement and collaboration between VSS***. This would help address some of the challenges encountered in the Indian market (both individual and common), highlight policy issues and leverage opportunities.

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) has for some time been considering the need to initiate such a process of discussions/deliberations between Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) operating in India - to better understand each other's domain/experience, share lessons and good practices, highlight policy pointers and identify common areas of interest.

With this view, CRB started '**Walking together with VSS in India**' – an initiative that would entail **quarterly meetings (once every 3 months)** with VSS working in India, to start with. One of the *action points* emerging from the first meeting organized in January 2019 was for VSS organisations to know each other's domain and activities better. This *'dossier'* has been developed to meet this need – capturing submissions made by various VSS organisations. It is the **Volume 1** of the dossier – and we hope other VSS organisations, which haven't been covered in this dossier will be included in the subsequent Volume(s).

– CRB Team

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[1]https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/unfss_3rd_2018_en.pdf

Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

Salient Features of the Standard

About RSPO

RSPO is a not-for-profit, which unites stakeholders from the 7 sectors of the palm oil industry: oil palm producers, processors or traders, consumer goods manufacturers, retailers, banks/investors, and environmental and social non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil.

The RSPO has developed a set of environmental and social criteria which companies must comply with in order to produce Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO). When they are properly applied, these criteria can help to minimize the negative impact of palm oil cultivation on the environment and communities in palm oil-producing regions.

The RSPO has more than 4,000 members worldwide who represent all links along the palm oil supply chain. They have committed to produce, source and/or use sustainable palm oil certified by the RSPO.

Domain(s) Covered

RSPO covers of the mentioned sustainability issues and themes. More details can be found in our 'Impact Report' here: https://www.rspo.org/library/lib_files/preview/508

Experience in India

One-person team in India since 2015, covering the South Asia region. 125+ RSPO members operating in India, including 50+ Indian entities. No active government engagement yet but one of the working groups of I-SPOC is expected to drive this initiative. The mail goal is to increase the uptake of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO) in India and improve the livelihood, environmental and social performance of Indian farmers.

Current Projects

- I-SPOC – Was launched by CRB-WWF-RA-RSPO in 2018 to build consensus amongst Indian stakeholders for the promotion and uptake of sustainable palm oil.
- India National Interpretation of RSPO's global standard
- Sustainability Ambassadors Partnership with CRB to build consensus amongst relevant stakeholders for CSPO uptake, including industry, civil society, media and end consumers.
- Youth for Sustainability – Online and offline campaigns and strategic partnerships with youth networks like Young India Challenge, AIESEC.

Achievements

Three primary achievements so far:

1. Launch of I-SPOC and its support by 15+ organizations in India so far at the end of its first meeting in May 2019. Besides this, through the partnership with CRB, we have more industry ambassadors for RSPO in India. Uptake of CSPO in India has increased approx. 10X in the last 18 months from 10,000 MT to 1 lac MTs.

2. India NI for RSPO's global standard and its support by 12+ organizations in India across the supply chain, including mills, farmers, refiners, FMCGs, Banks and NGOs. The India standard draft is currently going through a 60-day public consultation after two working group meetings.

3. Agreement amongst stakeholders in India for the application of RSPO's upcoming 'Independent Smallholders Standard' and an agreement on the definition of smallholders in India.

The relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the above achievements can be seen by the increased momentum across the value chain in India and active support and/or funding by some of the industry/civil society leaders like Unilever, WWF, IDH, CRB, RA, ISEAL Alliance, HSBC, Rabobank, FSC, P&G, Ferrero and many more.

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Ethical Toy Program (ETP)

Salient Features of the Standard

About ETP

ETP was created in 1998 by a small group of visionaries who believed in the power of collective action to make a difference to the lives of workers in companies' supply chains.

In 1998, a group of UK companies, NGOs and trade union organisations, with the backing of the then Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short, launched a radical approach to protecting workers' rights in global supply chains. Their aim was to build an alliance of organisations that would work together to define how major companies should implement their codes of labour practice in a credible way - and most importantly, in a way that has maximum impact on workers.

The companies that joined ETP in 1998 were ASDA, Premier Brands, The Body Shop, Littlewoods and Sainsbury's. From that handful of pioneers, the membership now comprises over 90 companies, collectively reaching nearly ten million workers across the globe.

Domain(s) Covered

ICTI Ethical Toy Program Certification requires factories to uphold the following standards to support the rights and well-being of factory workers:

Audit Process
Factories are transparent, auditors given full access to premises; able to conduct worker interviews without interference

Business Ethics
No attempts to improperly influence the process or the outcome of audits

Discrimination
No discrimination in recruitment, workplace or dismissal

Disciplinary Practices
Employees are treated with dignity and respect at all times

Employee Representation
Rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining are recognized and respected

Employment Practices
Compliance with applicable employment regulation and requirements, labor contracts provided to all workers

Environment and Chemical safety

Modern Day Slavery
No forced, involuntary or prison labor, no recruitment fees, all overtime is voluntary

Safety
Workplace conditions are safe, employee health is safeguarded, protective equipment provided and utilized, effective emergency procedures

Underage Labor
No child labor, enhanced protections for young workers

Wages
Legal, fair, and accurate pay received without delay

Working Hours
Hours are not excessive, adequate rest breaks provided

Full details of our coverage are available in the Ethical Toy Program Audit Checklist.

We offer ethical certification, training and worker well-being programs to factories in India. Our focus is strengthening Indian manufacturing through ethical production – helping factories to raise ethical standards for their workers, meet international standards and achieve business success. We also offer a Buyer Membership scheme to brands and retailers which includes access to our responsible sourcing platform –

Experience in India

Compliance with environmental regulations, training to ensure chemicals are handled safely

Connect. We work closely with industry associations, trade bodies, NGOs and other stakeholders to advance responsible sourcing.

Current Projects

- Supply chain auditing and certification

- Factory capability building and training

- Worker well-being (including Women's Empowerment and Supporting Migrant Workers)

- Collaboration, knowledge sharing, best practice sharing

Achievements

The Ethical Toy Program is the world's leading responsible sourcing program for the global toy industry – our ethical factory certification is accepted by brands and retailers worldwide

Our approach is effective ensuring that all non-compliances are addressed, we support factories to achieve our standard with training and progress visits.

Since the Ethical Toy Program was first launched in 2004 we've raised standards across thousands of factories and improved working conditions for millions of factory workers.

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Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS)

Salient Features of the Standard

About AWS

AWS is a global membership collaboration comprising businesses, NGOs and the public sector. Our members contribute to the sustainability of local water-resources through their adoption and promotion of a universal framework for the sustainable use of water – the International Water Stewardship Standard, or AWS Standard – that drives, recognizes and rewards good water stewardship performance.

The AWS Standard offers a credible, globally-applicable framework for major water users to understand their own water use and impacts, and to work collaboratively and transparently with others for sustainable water management within the wider water catchment context.

The AWS Standard was developed through a four-year global, multi-stakeholder consultation seeking a framework that could be implemented by any site, in any sector, in any catchment around the world. Our standard is the only framework for water users that is fully compliant with the stringent guidelines for standards system laid down by ISEAL, the global alliance for credible standard systems.

Domain(s) Covered

Water Stewardship

Experience in India

AWS is continuing its efforts In India since 2015 to advance the uptake of Water Stewardship in India. Since 2018, the work has been supported by AWS India Coordinator who is working closely with Indian Stakeholders. Agriculture is central to our work in India, and over the last year we have trained over 500 farmers in AWS through an action learning project with the Global Agribusiness Alliance and through our involvement with the WAPRO Project, led by Helvetas.

These projects are based on a multi-stakeholder approach to water stewardship, and the learning from these examples is being used to shape our future work with collaboration at the centre.

Currently 6 Indian companies are implementing AWS Standard at their sites in 6 states of India – Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Haryana and we are receiving interests from more. We are also working on dPPP projects through our Members in India.

The Priority for AWS is to set up an AWS office in India to mobile India Water Stewardship Network and develop a governing structure for South Asia region.

Priority Sectors to work in India:

1. Agriculture Supply Chain (smallholders)
2. Food and Beverages
3. Textile Sector (SMEs and MSMEs)

Current Projects

- Action Learning Projects to develop regional guidance to make AWS Standard more accessible to Smallholders.

- Water Productivity in Agriculture Commodity (WAPRO) Project led by Helvatas to train smallholders on water stewardship.

- dPPP project with BMZ to develop best practice case studies in Water Stewardship and institutionalize India Water Stewardship network

- Pilot Project to verify the landscape approach of AWS Standard in Haryana with Mars and Helvatas.

Achievements

AWS has been successful in providing a pre-competitive environment and a platform to bring multi stakeholders together for collective actions to address the water risk problem in India. These collaborations and collective actions are shaping our future work in India.

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International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)

Salient Features of the Standard

About IIRC

The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) is a global coalition of regulators, investors, companies, standard setters, the accounting profession and NGOs. The coalition is promoting communication about value creation as the next step in the evolution of corporate reporting.

Domain(s) Covered

A holistic, relevant and transparent approach to corporate reporting.

6 Capitals – Financial, Manufactured, Natural, Social and Relationship, Human and Intellectual.

8 Content elements that include business model, risks and opportunities, strategy, outlook etc.

Experience in India

No team in India, One advisor, Couple ambassadors, knowledge partnerships with institutes such as CII, ICAI, IOD etc.

Current Projects

- Webinars and publications
- Alignment across frameworks (global)
- Increase capacity building
- Increase adoption

Achievements

Principally aligned with sustainability and corpgov regulations

Momentum driven adoption (3 companies in 2017, 30+ in 2018…)

Long term viability is dependent on benefits seen by corporates and the regulators

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Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)

Salient Features of the Standard

About GRI

GRI is an independent international organization that has pioneered sustainability reporting since 1997.It is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, serving a global audience through our regional hubs in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, South Africa and the United States. GRI reports are produced in more than 100 countries.

GRI helps businesses and governments worldwide understand and communicate their impact on critical sustainability issues such as climate change, human rights, governance and social well-being. This enables real action to create social, environmental and economic benefits for everyone. The GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards are developed with true multi-stakeholder contributions and rooted in the public interest.

Domain(s) Covered

The GRI Standards are the first global standards for sustainability reporting. They feature a modular, interrelated structure, and represent the global best practice for reporting on a range of economic, environmental and social impacts.

It covers all the specified Sustainability issues and Themes. GRI Has 33 Standards mentioned as below:

Universal Standards –
Foundation 2016
General Disclosure 2016
Management Approach 2016

Economic Standards
Economic Performance 2016
Market Presence 2016
Indirect Economic Impacts 2016
Procurement Practices 2016
Anti-Corruption 2016
Anti-Competitive Behaviour 2016

Environmental Standards
Materials 2016
Energy 2016
Water and Effluents 2016
Biodiversity 2016
Emission 2016
Effluents and Waste 2016
Environment Compliance 2016
Supplier Environmental Assessment 2016

Child Labor 2016
Forced or Compulsory labor 2016
Security Practices 2016
Rights of Indigenous people 2016
Human Rights Assessment 2016
Local Communities 2016
Supplier Social Assessment 2016
Public Policy 2016
Customer Health & Safety 2016
Marketing & Labeling 2016
Customer Privacy 2016
Socioeconomic Compliance 2016

Experience in India

GRI is an independent international organization that has pioneered sustainability reporting since 1997. In India GRI started operation in 2010 and has core team of 04 Colleagues. Our Supporters are GRI Community, various stakeholders such as (Business, Civil society, Industrial Association, Academia). GRI South Asia has regional reach in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Govt Engagement – Governments have a direct interest in sustainability reporting. Widespread sustainability reporting can help markets function more efficiently and help drive progress toward sustainable development goals. GRI currently working with different kind of Ministries and Regulatory bodies related to Sustainable developments.

GRI's mission is to empower
decisions that create social,
environmental and economic
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Social Standards
Employment 2016
Labor/Management relations 2016
Occupational Health & Safety 2018
Training and Education 2016
Diversity and equal Opportunity 2016
Non Discrimination 2016
Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining 2016

everyone. In order to deliver on its mission, GRI has identified four focus areas for the coming years

1. **Create standards and guidance to advance sustainable development:**
2. **Harmonize the sustainability landscape**
3. **Lead efficient and effective sustainability reporting:**
4. **Drive effective use of sustainability information to improve performance**

Current Projects

- **GRI Community** - The GRI Community brings together a global network of businesses and organizations committed to demonstrating how transparency can be a catalyst for change. GRI Community members drive improvements in their own businesses, and serve as true role models for the wider business community.

- **SDG Agenda 2030 South Asia**- A collaborative initiative by GRI and the United Nations Global Compact, 'Business Reporting on the SDGs' – an Action Platform, aims to accelerate corporate reporting on the Global Goals.

- **DFAT -** Engaging with the Stock Exchange and Regulators of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to increase Corporate transparency through Capacity Building of listed Companies**.**

- SIDA - The overall objective of this program is that business and state actors take effective steps to realize responsible business conduct to contribute to sustainable development.

Achievements

In effective sustainability reporting cycle, which includes a regular program of data collection, communication, and responses, should benefit all reporting organizations, both internally and externally.

- Increased understanding of risks and opportunities
- Emphasizing the link between financial and non-financial performance
- Influencing long term management strategy and policy, and business plans
- Streamlining processes, reducing costs and improving efficiency
- Benchmarking and assessing sustainability performance with respect to laws, norms, codes, performance standards, and voluntary initiatives
- Avoiding being implicated in publicized environmental, social and governance failures
- Comparing performance internally, and between organizations and sectors
- Improving reputation and brand loyalty
- Enabling external stakeholders to understand the organization's true value, and tangible and intangible assets
- Demonstrating how the organization influences, and is influenced by, expectations about sustainable development

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Fair Wear Foundation (FWF)

Salient Features of the Standard

About FWF

Fair Wear Foundation (FWF) is a non-profit organisation that works with garment brands, factories, trade unions, NGOs and governments to improve working conditions for garment workers in 11 production countries across Asia, Europe and Africa.

Our 130 member brands are showing that there is a fairer way to make clothes. They are using their influence to create change. Together, we're tackling problems that others think are unsolvable. But we also want to create change beyond our members' supply chains. That's why we're also sharing replicable solutions with the rest of the industry. We provide evidence to other brands and industry influencers of what a fairer garment industry could look like.

Together we're creating a new normal for the garment industry.

Domain(s) Covered

FWF work is based on the 8 Code of Labour Key Practices (CoLP)

1. Employment Is Freely Chosen
2. Freedom Of Association And Collective Bargaining
3. No Discrimination
4. No Child Labour
5. Payment Of A Living Wage
6. Reasonable Hours Of Work
7. Safe And Healthy Working Conditions
8. Legally Binding Employment Relationship

Key Focus Areas:

- Living wage
- Gender Based Violence
- Social Dialogue

Experience in India

- Active since 2003
- Textile Sector -CTM units
- Work with around 160 factories suppling for 40 FWF members
- **Team:**
  i. Country representative
  ii. Programme Manager
  iii. 3 audit teams
  iv. Training Consultants
  v. Complaint hotline Handlers in 5 languages
  vi. 3 NGO partners
- Delhi/NCR, Bangalore and Tirupur main geo focus areas
- **Plans for 2019 – overall strategies**
  i. Create evidence from pilots and monitor results
  ii. Support collaboration with Dutch embassies in the production countries
  iii. Select and track pilots
  iv. Jointly identify lobby opportunities with other MSI
  v. International lobby strategies for the three themes
  vi. Continue to work with brands to influence policies

Current Projects

Core Areas of Intervention in India:

- Monitoring and Verification audits of supplier factories
- Training on Gender Based Violence of supplier factories
- Complaints Handling & Remediation
- Other programs in India focus around the 3 key focus areas-living wage, gender-based violence & social dialogue and research (building evidence to influence brands and government)

Achievements

FWF by combining a multi-stakeholder, practical approach with innovative ways to improve labour conditions in the garment sector, is fulfilling an increasingly important role as an instigator of much-needed change in this garment industry. FWF will continue to focus its efforts to ensuring that we have real impact and improve labour conditions in the sector. For more updates please read our annual report 2018.

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Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)

Salient Features of the Standard

About GOTS

The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) was developed through collaboration by leading standard setters with the aim of defining requirements that are recognised world-wide and that ensure the organic status of textiles from harvesting of the raw materials through environmentally and socially responsible manufacturing all the way to labelling in order to provide credible assurance to the consumer.

Since its introduction in 2006 the Global Organic Textile Standard has already demonstrated its practical feasibility. Supported by the growth in consumption of organic fibres and by the remarkable demand for unified processing criteria from the industry and retail sector, it has gained universal recognition, enabling processors and manufacturers to supply their organic textiles with one certification accepted in all major markets. With the introduction of the logo and labelling system the GOTS is already visible not only on the shelves of natural textile shops but large-scale retailers and brand dealers as well. This is a milestone in consumer recognition and a strong acknowledgement of our reliable quality assurance concept.

Domain(s) Covered

- Use of certified Organic fibres
- Screening of dyes/chemicals for hazardous substances, toxicity and biodegradability
- labour standards
- occupational health
- child labour
- ecosystem impacts
- environmental quality
- supply chain coverage
- traceability
- anti-corruption
- waste treatment, etc.

Experience in India

1st GOTS certificate in India was issued in the ear 2008. India is the country with highest number of GOTS certified facilities since 2008. Licensees include all parts of textile supply chain from ginning to retailers and B2B traders.

Member of UNFSS-QCI INPPSS.

Achievements

1. GOTS is Synonymous with organic in Indian textile industry today.
2. Enhance profitability of businesses, premium for GOTS goods.
3. Reliable tool for importers and exporters to verify organic status of textiles.
4. a) 8 Lakh + workers in India working in GOTS certified facilities, with positive social compliance conditions. b) Functional Effluent treatment plant in all GOTS certified facilities.

GOTS covers all three pillars of sustainability. Known as 'Gold Standard' for Sustainability.

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