

# Multi-stakeholder Dialogues for Collaborative Actions on Sustainability and SDGs

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KOLKATA,  
INDIA



## Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue for Collaborative Actions on Sustainability and SDGs

8<sup>th</sup> May 2023, Kolkata, West Bengal

### 1. Introduction

On 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) and The Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCC&I), with support from the EU Delegation to India, organized a multi-stakeholder dialogue on collaborative actions on sustainability and SDGs. The event was held at the *Williamson & Magor Hall*, BCC&I in Kolkata, West Bengal. The event is part of a series of such roundtable dialogues being organised in four cities across India by CRB in partnership with credible local partners. The aim of the roundtables is to explore opportunities for deepening collaboration between CSOs, businesses, government, and other key stakeholders on sustainability and thereby accelerate pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The event was attended by 50-plus senior state-level practitioners representing CSOs, businesses, government, and other key stakeholders. The dialogue was designed to explore opportunities for deepening collaboration between stakeholders on sustainability and SDGs. The event was divided into three sessions, and concluded with some specific action items to help accelerate progress on the SDGs in the State of West Bengal. Here is a brief report of the proceedings.

### 2. Summary of Proceedings

#### 2.1 Inaugural Session

**Mr. Manojit Sengupta, Co-Chairperson, Energy Environment and Water Committee, BCC&I and Delivery Centre Head- Eastern Region, TCS** in his welcome address underlined that policies and actions for attaining the SDGs must be driven by ensuring that responsibilities are taken up by all relevant stakeholders. Mr. Sengupta praised BCC&I for consistently promoting the three aspects of sustainable development - Ecology, Economy and Equity, through their thoughtful and significant work and programs for industries and other stakeholders in West Bengal and beyond. He concluded by reminding the participants that our Mother Earth is in crisis and to protect the only home to mankind, collaboration and synergy among stakeholders is urgently needed.

**Dr. Meera Mitra, Member, CRB Governing Body**, delivered the opening remarks of the program. Dr. Mitra in her remarks pointed out that, although India is one of the key players and co-creators of the SDGs, the country is lagging behind as India ranks 121 out of 163 UN Member countries in achievement of the SDGs. In order to achieve the Goals from a business perspective, Dr. Mitra emphasised the need for innovative businesses models/solutions which are aligned with the needs of the State on specific social, economic and environmental parameters. There is still considerable need and scope for improving awareness of the wider stakeholders on the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, she opined.

**Mr. Laurent le Danois, Team Leader, Co-Operation Section, Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan**, in his special remarks focused on four points and observations relating to *The Global Gateway*, a new strategy of the European Union developed in December 2021, based on the EU Directive on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG). Keeping in mind, the significance of the ESG Directives, he asserted that the Global Gateway strategy aims to narrow the investment gap for SDGs. Mr. Danois shared the developments related to the EU Due Diligence Directive and other legislations being developed, that proposes strict regulation to ensure that all business activities and partnerships of EU businesses along their value chains (globally) result in positive (and traceable) sustainability impacts. He observed that such legislations imply that it cannot be business as usual anymore, and has to be supported through collective thinking and actions.

**The Chief Guest** for this event, **Smt. Vandana Yadav (IAS), Principal Secretary, Industry, Commerce & Enterprises, Government of West Bengal & Chairperson and Managing Director, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC)**, stated that West Bengal is a frontrunner in terms of *Good Health and Wellbeing (SDG 3)*, *Clean water and sanitation (SDG 6)*, *Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7)*, *Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)*, *Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)*, and *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)* according to the *NITI Aayog* report. Smt. Yadav shared how the State Government has tried to integrate SDGs into various policies and programmes, and shared some of the experiences, viz. Green City Mission, State aided Industrial Park development, ethanol production initiative, Kanyashree, Shobuj Sathi among others. She underlined the importance of collaboration on SDGs, to demonstrate the leadership position that the State can play in achievement of SDGs in the country. She also welcomed ideas based on the discussions at this event to mainstage sustainability in the forthcoming Bengal Global Business Summit 2023 in November.

*The Inaugural session was concluded by the vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Subhodip Ghosh, Director General, The Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry.*

**Fig1: Inaugural Speakers**



**L-R-** Mr. Laurent le Danois, Team Leader, Co-Operation Section, Delegation of the European Union to India and Bhutan; Smt. Vandana Yadav (IAS), Principal Secretary, Industry, Commerce & Enterprises, Government of West Bengal & Chairperson and Managing Director, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC); Dr. Meera Mitra, Member, CRB Governing Body; Mr. Manojit Sengupta, Co-Chairperson, Energy Environment and Water Committee, BCC&i and Delivery Centre Head- Eastern Region, TCS.

## **2.2 Panel Discussion**

The topic of the panel was ***“Enabling Business- CSO (Civil Society Organizations) - Government Collaborative Action on SDGs: Experiences and Future Pathways”***. The panel consisted of **Dr. Sudip Kumar Sinha**, IAS, Secretary, Department of Finance, Government of West Bengal; **Mr. Asim Prasad**, Chief General Manager & Zonal Head, Kolkata, GAIL (India) Ltd.; **Ms. Madhulika Sharma**, Chief Sustainability Officer, ITC; **Mr. Arijit Raha**, SG & CEO, Indian Tea Association; **Mr. Tatheer Zaidi**, General Manager- Pollution Management in MSMEs, Solidaridad.

**Fig2: Panel Discussion**





L-R- **Mr. Asim Prasad**, Chief General Manager & Zonal Head, Kolkata, GAIL (India) Ltd; **Dr. Sudip Kumar Sinha**, IAS, Secretary, Department of Finance, Government of West Bengal; **Rijit Sengupta**, CEO, CRB; **Ms. Madhulika Sharma**, Chief Sustainability Officer, ITC; **Mr. Tatheer Zaidi**, General Manager- Pollution Management in MSMEs, Solidaridad; **Mr. Arijit Raha**, SG & CEO, Indian Tea Association

**Mr. Arijit Raha, SG & CEO, Indian Tea Association** shared that the SDGs has created a universal language for all stakeholders to rally around common social, environmental, economic goals. He added that SDGs also offered the business case to channelize efforts, especially at the level of the tea plantations, where the need was the most felt. He added that the openness and initiative by the State Government in designing and deploying enabling policies has helped the tea industry – especially pertaining to nutrition of women workers and protecting the interest of small growers. There is growing demand (given consumer's interest to support sustainable enterprises/value chains) for certified and traceable products like tea – which is likely to only grow in the future, given international legislations on sustainable supply chains.

**Ms. Madhulika Sharma, Chief Sustainability Officer, ITC**, with respect to the recipes of collaboration of attaining SDGs mentioned that, ITC has been collaborating with the Government, NGOs and other stakeholders long before the SDGs were identified and exercised by the UN in 2015. Large businesses will continue to be engaged on sustainability in India, especially because of the SEBI requirement for reporting on sustainability (using the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting framework). SDGs provide a framework to facilitate aggregation of data/information at the state/national level. This can be made more effective if State governments devise a system to collaborate with all stakeholders to report on SDG progress at the State level.

**Dr. Sudip Kumar Sinha, IAS, Secretary, Department of Finance, Government of West Bengal**, cited several initiatives of the State Government for strengthening its social protection system, increasing women participation in the labour force, elderly care and support. He indicated that a concerted effort has been made by the State government to incorporate specific SDGs into various socio-economic policies of the State. He added that the private sector will have a significant role to play in case of climate finance, and the Government is exploring how climate related initiatives can be better incorporated into the State budget, moving forward. He cited a UNDP Report (2020) that underlined that participation of private sector in collaboration with the government on SDGs can unlock market opportunities worth \$12 trillion USD with respect to four sectors such as, good health and wellbeing (SDG 3), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and, Life on Land (SDG 15).

**Mr. Tatheer Zaidi, General Manager- Pollution Management in MSMEs, Solidaridad**, appraised how using a 'consortium approach' involving the State Government, private sector, civil society and technical experts can create positive socio-environmental-economic impacts, as has been done in case of the Leather sector in West Bengal. He indicated that the

success of this model is inspiring others in the country. He added that one of the most important recipe for collaboration is to ensure and demonstrate – value for all partners.

**Mr. Asim Prasad, Chief General Manager & Zonal Head, Kolkata, GAIL (India) Ltd.**, underlined that the *ideal recipes for collaboration on SDGs were shared responsibility, good governance and achievement of social and economic equity*. He shared how using these principles is helping GAIL transform the natural gas ecosystem in West Bengal. GAIL is now following and strongly abiding by the national energy policy which advocates for accessibility, availability and affordability. According to Mr. Prasad, GAIL currently has 14,000 KM pipeline network of clean energy which is projected to grow to 20,000 KM by the year 2030. He also shared some aspects of the decentralised bio-gas initiative of GAIL that would not just help in promoting clean energy transition, but also in promoting local entrepreneurship, demonstration of advanced but easily deployable appropriate technology and creation of an enabling value chain in the State.

The following **highlights** emerged from the panel, and floor interactions:

- Collaboration isn't an automatic process, and needs to be carefully curated by identifying and engaging with the right partners, and using a common and acceptable language and narrative.
- There is a need to document some of the successful cases of collaboration among state-level stakeholders
- State Government and large private sector seem to be using the SDGs at the policy and practice levels, but there is a need to raise awareness across stakeholders
- Some initiatives like the Leather sector, compressed biogas, e-choupal provide interesting perspectives and lessons on successful collaboration that lead to achievement of specific SDG targets
- It is critical to also involve some of the stakeholders who remain outside the remit of some of these initiatives like the informal sector (vulnerable and critical in ensuring impacts at the bottom of the pyramid).

### **2.3 Breakout Groups**

Participants in this session were divided into 4 groups to work on ***“Enabling Business- CSO- Government Collaborative Actions for SDGs”*** to make presentation on *types of collaboration, details of the idea, specific target SDGs, the objectives, potential partners, challenges and opportunities, required support*.

The Breakout Group session was one of the highlights of the program, the participants came up with collaborative ideas in types of collaboration such as, Business-CSOs/ Government-CSOs/ Business-CSOs-Government. The ideas of collaboration presented were innovative, insightful and truly justified the purpose of the program to *exercise practice of making efforts*

*in attaining SDGs in businesses through Multi-Stakeholder collaborations.* The groups were named *Poribesh, Galaxy, Shamannay and Aspirants* and below are their collaborative ideas:

#### Poribesh:

- Promote Climate Resilient villages, wherein farming communities are able to increase their income by improving soil organic carbon through Regenerative Agriculture practices (SDG13). The other component of this initiative would be conservation and provision of safe drinking water.
- Promote awareness and capacity on climate smart urban agriculture, using hydroponics and ensuring agriculture under controlled environment by using AI and MLS

#### Galaxy:

- Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) was the focus of this group. The need for implementation of a national level policy needs was highlighted. The idea of this group hinged on promoting Sustainable Production and Consumption in select industrial Clusters of West Bengal. Using tech driven data collection and analytical tools to monitor progress of SCP practices was also suggested.

#### Shamannay:

- Engagement with informal sector to improve their awareness about rights and entitlements vis-a-vis schemes of national and State Govts. The level of awareness remains abysmally low.
- Creation of a State level stakeholders platform to monitor progress with implementation of SDGs, and to support the process. This platform will comprise multiple stakeholders including industry, government, civil society, academia, international agencies, etc.
- Implement an aggressive programme of building capacity of businesses on the risk of climate change and ways to address the same.

#### Aspirants:

- The primary focus of the team was to discuss ideas for clean energy for remote areas and child friendly cities and villages. The group proposed to work for child friendly villages and where they would have enough access to nutritional elements and quality education.
- Given the need to find local solutions to address global problems, it was proposed to examine the possibility of localisation of SDGs into PRIs (through some Pilots)

**Fig3: Some Glimpse of the Breakout Group**



### 3. Conclusion

Some of the **key take-aways** from the event were as follows:

- There are a number of examples of how stakeholders are collaborating among themselves to pursue specific SDGs, which needs to be documented and shared widely
- Local actors and stakeholders can help support the State Government in collection of data and evidence in the process of annual assessment of the progress on SDGs by the State. A system could be devised through which such collaboration is activated
- Some recipes for such collaboration were underlined during the event, viz. balanced and open dialogues between stakeholders; promoting the value chains approach; creating value for all parties; creation of a state-level platform or initiative to support and scale collaboration for SDGs



- The SDGs provide a framework both to the State Government and to the private sector to assess and track progress on social, environmental and economic parameters
- There is both appetite and interest in the Government of West Bengal to centre-stage Sustainability and SDGs in important business events like the flagship Bengal Global Business Summit

**Fig4: Participants at the event**

