

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB)

An Overview
December 2023

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1 | Who We Are

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) was established in 2011 as a think-tank to promote and facilitate uptake of sustainable business practices across various sectors in India, supported by **evidence** (policy & action research), **knowledge** (capacity building & advisory) and **network** (multi-stakeholder platform/fora)

Vision

*Businesses
integrate
sustainability into
their core business
practices*

Mission

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



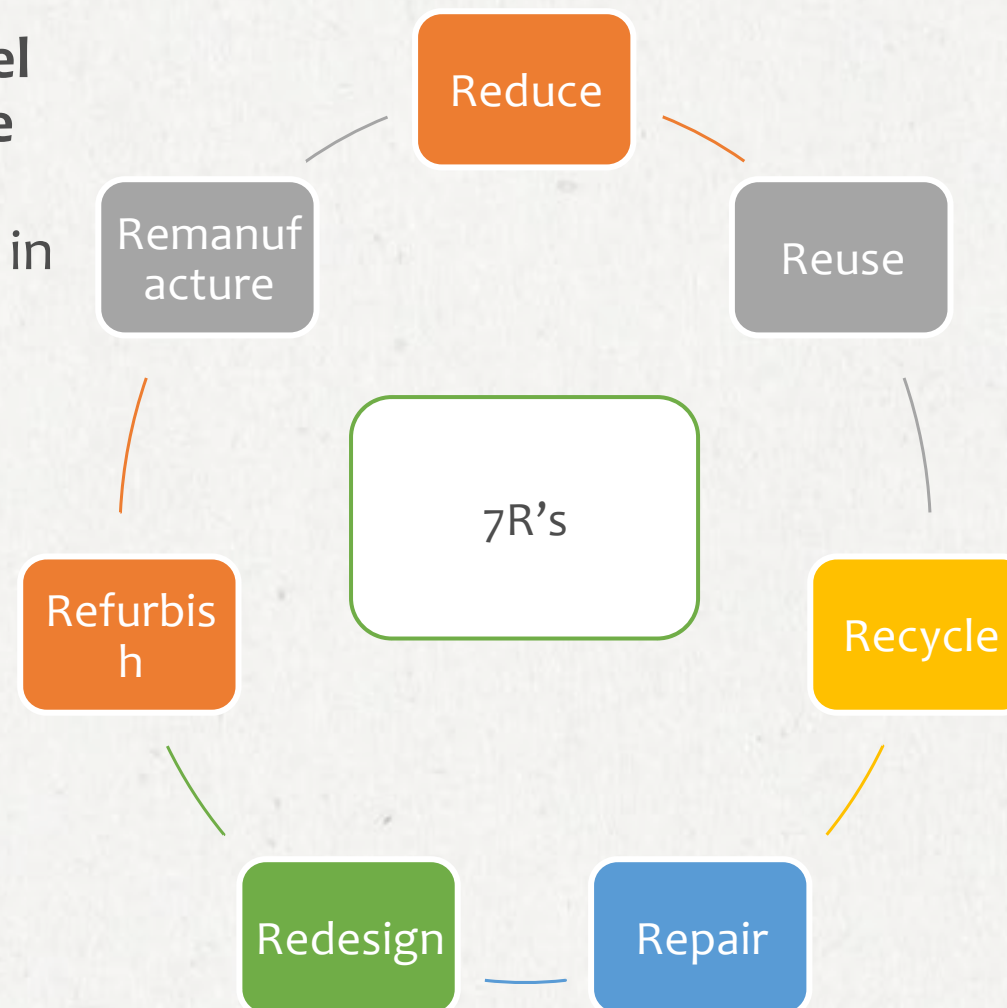
2 | Where We Work

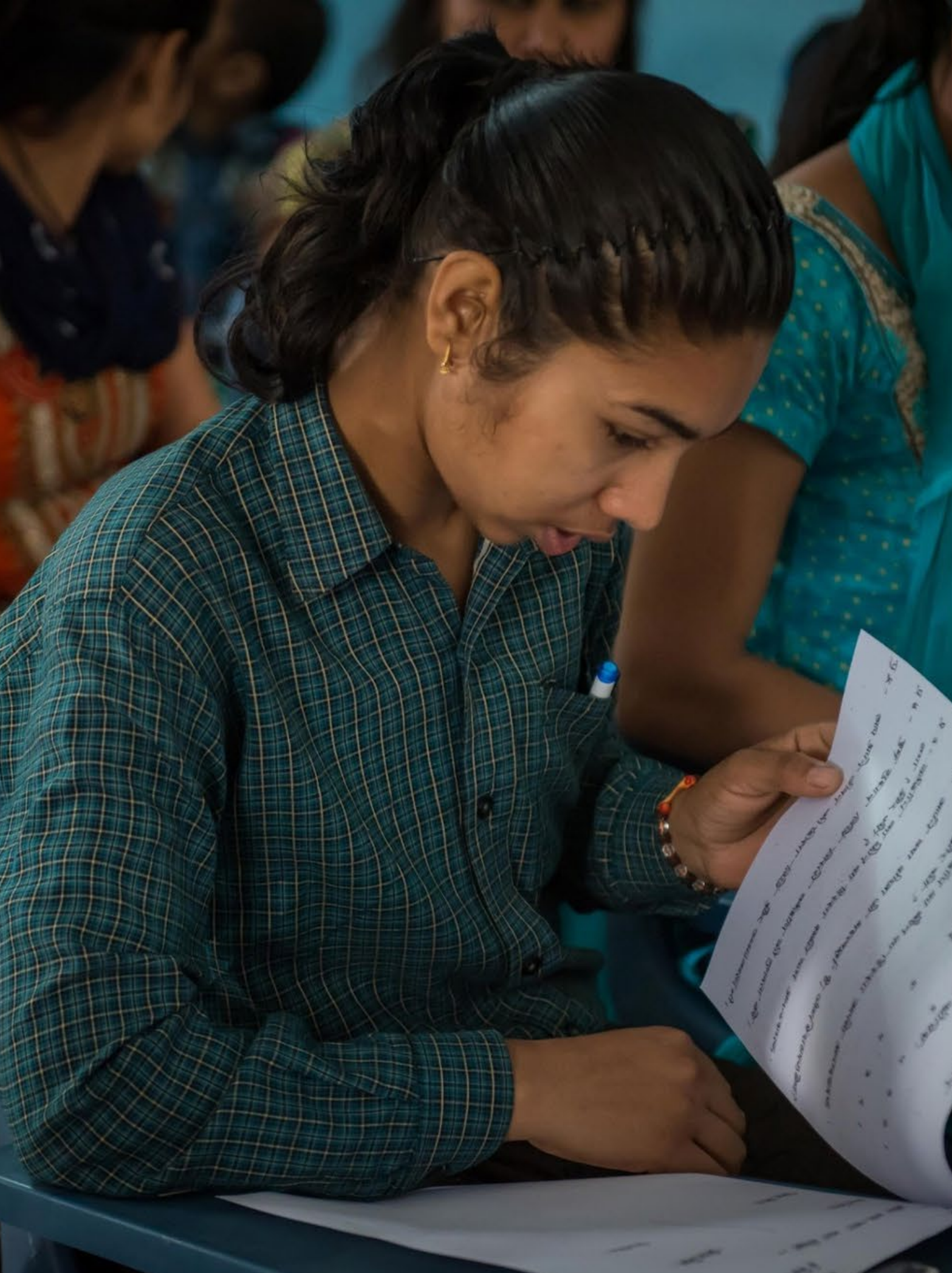
2.1 Thematic Areas

Circular Economy

Circular economy – defined by the Ellen Macarthur Foundation as an economy which is **regenerative by design and where materials and energy flow in closed loops within the value chain** – can offer solutions to numerous sustainability issues faced by the world. Reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, redesign, refurbish and remanufacture, also known as the 7Rs, are the basic tenets of circular economy. In other words, circular economy is a way of conducting business which is less impactful towards the environment, and provides value to all stakeholders in the value chain. It also boosts business competitiveness.

CRB has undertaken initiatives in **apparel and textiles; electronics** and **agriculture** sectors highlighting opportunities from adoption of circular economy principles in these sector and benefits to the environment, industry and people





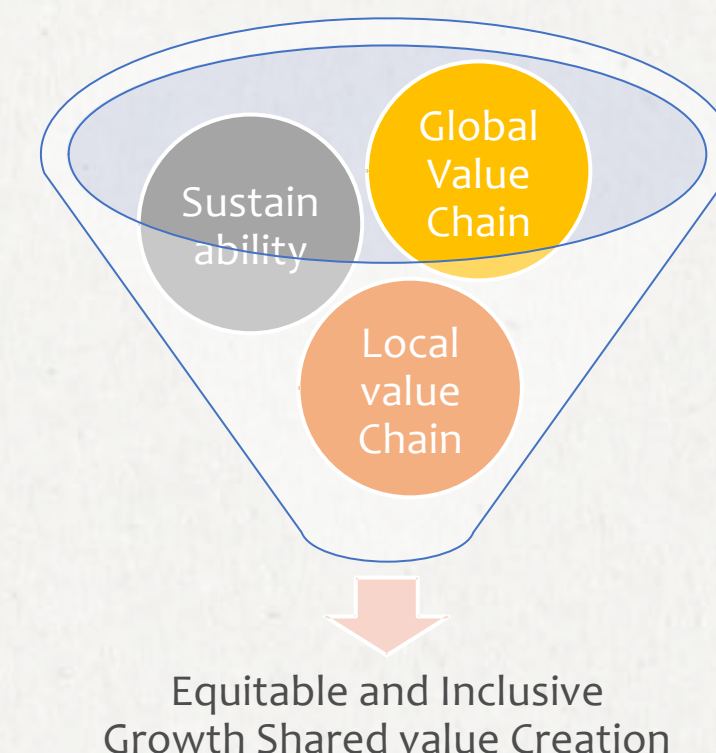
Private Sector & SDGs

Integrating sustainability into global and local value chains is becoming increasingly common, not only for creating equitable and inclusive growth, but also for shared value creation. Since its adoption in 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has provided a consistent framework and language for the private sector to participate in development process.

Government of India has contributed in creating components of an enabling environment to facilitate private sector leadership on sustainability, responsible business.

CRB has engaged closely with development of **frameworks**, e.g., NGRBC, BRSR, NAP, Sustainable Finance. The organization constantly explores possibility of application of NGRBC in specific sectors/initiatives of the economy.

Further CRB has endeavoured to identify **good practices** from across sectors wherein businesses of various types have contributed to SDGs (thereby strengthening and demonstrating the ‘business case’)



Voluntary Sustainability Standards

VSS Organisations have become increasingly important especially in international trade – by providing a credible and operational framework to demonstrate business contribution on sustainable development, SDGs.

CRB has been engaging with VSS in India broadly in three ways, which stem from CRB's understanding about the need for better integration of VSS to improve sustainable business performance in India:

- Facilitate **interaction** between VSS Standards Setters and Indian Stakeholders
- **Partnership** with VSS Organisations in India across sectors
- Platform for **Collaboration** among VSS Organisations in India
- Undertaking **research**, e.g. VSS contribution to SDGs in India

VSS COLLABORATION INDIA





GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS



Business & Human Rights

At CRB, we understand Business and Human Rights are integral to the realization of India's Constitutional vision of equitable and sustainable growth for all. For any economy to be resilient, it should be founded on just & fair inter-relationships. In India, the centrality of this philosophy is embodied in the Constitution as part of the fundamental rights & directive principles. Today, in the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, we find business & human rights at the heart of the ensuing humanitarian crises. Globally, the pandemic has exposed & accentuated the fault lines that exist in our current growth/development models. There is a crying need to redefine growth and bring human rights to its centre.

CRB's interventions in this area, includes inter alia:

- Raising **awareness** on BHR in sectors, among key stakeholders
- Engagement at the **policy** level (supporting development of India's draft NAP on BHR, with MCA)
- Providing **advisory** to large complex businesses on Human Rights Due Diligence and related topics
- Demonstrating the '**business case**' for proactive business engagement in prevention and mitigation of human rights related risks in value chains.

SMEs & Sustainability

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are backbone of the Indian industry and indeed the economy. CRB recognises that integration of responsible businesses cannot happen in Indian industry without involving the Indian SMEs sector. It is an imperative, therefore to **empower SMEs by explaining the business case for sustainability.**

CRB has explored various innovative approaches to engage SMEs on the sustainability agenda:

- Sustainable Marketplace for SMEs
- Integration of SMEs into Sustainable Value Chains
- Documenting good practices across SMEs
- Building the 'business case' of sustainability among SMEs
- Training and Capacity Building on specific issues





Environment and Climate Change

CRB has applied its approach of engaging and supporting the private sector to combat climate and environmental deterioration by involving multiple stakeholders to co-create solutions. Its work on this thematic area is broadly classified into two areas:

Private Sector's contribution to Sustainable Landscapes, Biodiversity Conservation & Climate Change

- Promoting Sustainable Palm Oil in India
- Exploring the possibility of Wood Value Chain Alliance (decarbonising Building & Construction)
- Coalition for Responsible Sourcing & Trade of Commodities

SMEs role in GHG Reduction

- Pilots across key sectors/industry clusters in India to enable SME leadership to reduce GHG emissions
- Highlighting the importance of 'Just Transition' – and developing operational roadmaps in certain sectors

I-SPOC

2 | Where We Work

2.2 Strategic Sectors



3 | How We Work

3.1 CRB USPs

- Enabling policy environment
- Innovative partnerships
- Knowledge and expertise



3 | How We Work

3.2 Operating Verticals



Action & Policy
Research



Multi-Stakeholder
Engagements



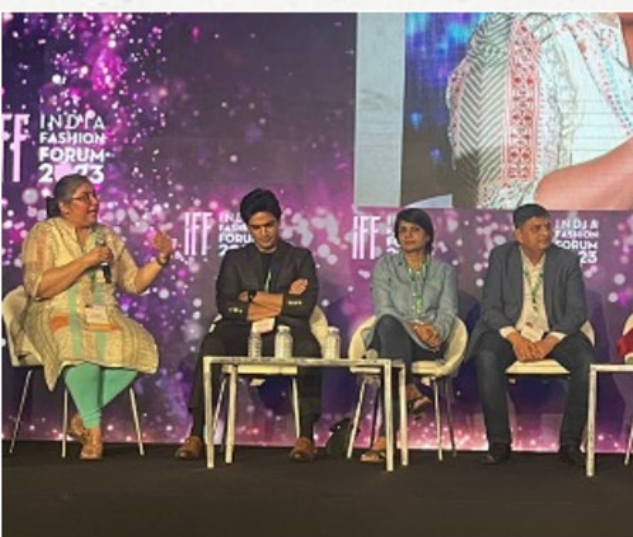
Training & Capacity
Building



Strategic Advisory
Services

4| A Brief Walkthrough

4.1 Select Initiatives



Sustainable Palm Oil

Palm oil is an essential ingredient in many FMCG Product and personal care items. India is the second largest consumer and biggest importer of palm oil. Given the diversified use, palm oil has been and continues to be one of the primary factors of deforestation in some of the world's most bio-diverse forests in south-east Asian countries.

CRB has been promoting awareness about the need for and opportunities from uptake of sustainable palm oil with actors along the supply chain in India.



Outcomes

- Background research and analysis highlighting key factors for promoting sustainable palm oil uptake in India
- Partnership with RSPO identifying champions across the FMCG and expanding SH engagement to cover financial sector, youth, media
- Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India (I-SPOC) – conceived by CRB, WWF, RSPO and RA to promote sustainable consumption, import and trade of palm oil and its derivative

Way Forward

- Incorporating Sustainability Principles in Domestic Production
- Working with relevant stakeholders across value chain to raise awareness
- Further consolidating I-SPOC and building capacity of members and observers
- Facilitating Strategic Communication and Awareness Generation activities.

Forest-based Commodities' Value Chains

CRB is a founding member of the FOLU India Coalition for Responsible Sourcing and Trade of Commodities (FOLU India CREST). Further, CRB is working on a collaborative project with WRI India that is exploring the scope and the feasibility of forming a value chain alliance for trees and its products from India. Another project that CRB has been working on is in partnership with the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil to promote awareness about the need and opportunities for greater uptake of sustainable palm oil along the supply chain in India.



Outcomes

- Developing Sustainable Value Chains for Forest based/risk Commodities; especially ensuring sustainability principles are embraced in production and procurement
- Engagement at Policy and Practice level to balance trade of forest based/risk commodities with conservation of forest resources

Way Forward

- CRB has embarked on a number of projects related to Responsible Sourcing of Agri/forest based commodities. Burgeoning population and growing demand for commodities require rejigging policy and practices to achieve SDGs and Climate goals in India and beyond

Sustainable Agricultural Value Chains

CRB has been working on the issues of Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain, focusing on better market linkages for producers (including ‘collectives’) and promoting food loss and waste.

Further, CRB has engaged both public and private sector actors to consider capitals valuation in making business decisions.

Outcomes

- Engagement with policy actors and the Private Sector on Food Loss and Waste (SDG 12.3)
- Facilitating sustainable, market-ready FPOs in Agro Value Chains/Markets
- Application of the ‘Capitals valuation’ approach (natural, social, human and produced) into business decision-making

Way Forward

- For CRB, the agricultural industry is a critical one not only on a national level but on an international level as they are critical in the momentum to meet the SDGs agenda. Furthermore, the work on sustainable agricultural value chains is a means to leverage a multi-stakeholder approach for which CRB is well known.
- Understand potential causes of food waste, opportunities to reduce food waste, good practices, challenges to implementing solutions for food waste.



Women Workers & Families

CRB has worked with leading brands, buyers, supplier, associations in the apparel and textile sector to create awareness and measurable impacts related to empowerment of women workers and their families.



Outcomes

- Better awareness and capability of senior and middle management in factories across on social sustainability issues
- Understanding the business case for suppliers to demonstrate better performance on social sustainability issues
- Cluster-level initiatives in partnership with Textile/Apparel Associations in specific locations

Way Forward

- Cluster-specific initiatives in select locations in India, especially those gaining importance both in the domestic as well as in the international market. Some of the specific areas of focus of such interventions would be: skilling; health and nutrition; child-friendly spaces; early childcare and education.

Circular Apparel & Textiles

There is enough evidence 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 chain globally. Across the textile value chain, stakeholders have become more aware of the impacts of their decision-making.

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.



Outcomes

- CRB led a Policy Innovation initiative to identify enabling policies and practices to support CE transition in A&T clusters.
- A multi stakeholder initiative was designed for wastewater reuse and management in the textile industry with long term positive climate impact.
- Capacity building interventions and tools for adoption by textile and apparel manufacturers
- A needs assessment for promoting circularity at cluster level and to develop a how to guide on establishing sustainable and circular practices in SME clusters

Way Forward

- Adoption of CE principles and practices can help improve competitiveness of the sector and create jobs and innovations. CRB will continue its efforts through potential areas by facilitating dialogues, capacity building, designing pilots for circular practices, document existing best practices and facilitate standard setting for circular apparel in India.

Sustainable Global Value Chains

In the context of global value chains (GVCs) and sustainability, India occupies a pivotal position, navigating the intricate dynamics of production networks with a focus on economic growth and environmental responsibility. As a key player in GVCs, India has witnessed a surge in its participation across various sectors, fostering both challenges and opportunities.

CRB has been working on the issues to explore and investigate how private sector companies - as part of Global Value Chains and production networks could better contribute towards the achievement of sustainability goals.



Outcomes

- Demonstrated evidence based models/approaches for GVCs to achieve specific SDGs in terms of decent work opportunities, empowerment and local environmental impacts
- Initiation of business (firm level), industry-level and investor level strategy and actions toward achievement of selected SDGs
- Capacity building interventions and tools for adoption by businesses

Way Forward

- CRB is developing a multi-stakeholder network will aim to serve as a comprehensive resource and a dialogue and networking space for promoting sustainable & responsible global value chains.

Regenerative Agriculture in the Cotton Sector

Agriculture is one of the few unique sectors which are dependent on as well as which impact biodiversity. Land use change associated with agriculture and forestry together contributes more than 18 % of global GHG emissions. Unsustainable practices in agriculture, especially around extracting excess groundwater for inefficient irrigation, unscientific application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and agriculture turning into a carbon source from a carbon sink, are being criticized in multiple national and international forums.

CRB aims to promote and popularise regenerative agriculture to promote livelihoods and ecological sustainability.



Outcomes

- CRB, Solidaridad Asia, and regenagri have launched the 'Alliance of Cotton & Textile Stakeholders on Regenerative Agriculture (ACRE)' to promote regenerative cotton in India. ACRE aims to bring a shift in agricultural practices through a new, more systemic form of collaboration between stakeholders across the value chain, which includes farmer groups, ginners, traders, buyers, brands, as well as agricultural and textile authorities.

Way Forward

- Promote regenerative agriculture practices among cotton and textile value chain actors
- Creation of enabling environment specifically through – policy measures, appropriate technology, innovations and financial resources
- Capacity building on regenerative agriculture practices, traceability, etc.
- Partnership with brands and associations through pilots

South Asia forum on Business & Human Rights

There has been a paradigm shift in the global Business and Human Rights (BHR) framework. While States are tightening regulations and policies on human rights due diligence, investors are eyeing it as a decisive factor for investments. Given the increasing momentum on the subject, it is imperative to create space for businesses to engage with stakeholders and understand the evolving policy landscape, expectations and opportunities around BHR.

An initiative of Centre for Responsible Business (CRB), Business & Human Rights Network aims to simplify BHR concepts, identify opportunities, encourage BHR uptake, and thereby make businesses more competitive and resilient.



Outcomes

- Developed an ongoing engagement platform for South Asian businesses to interact with diverse stakeholders to understand and explore opportunities in Business & Human Rights, thereby potentially enhance responsibility, resilience and competitiveness

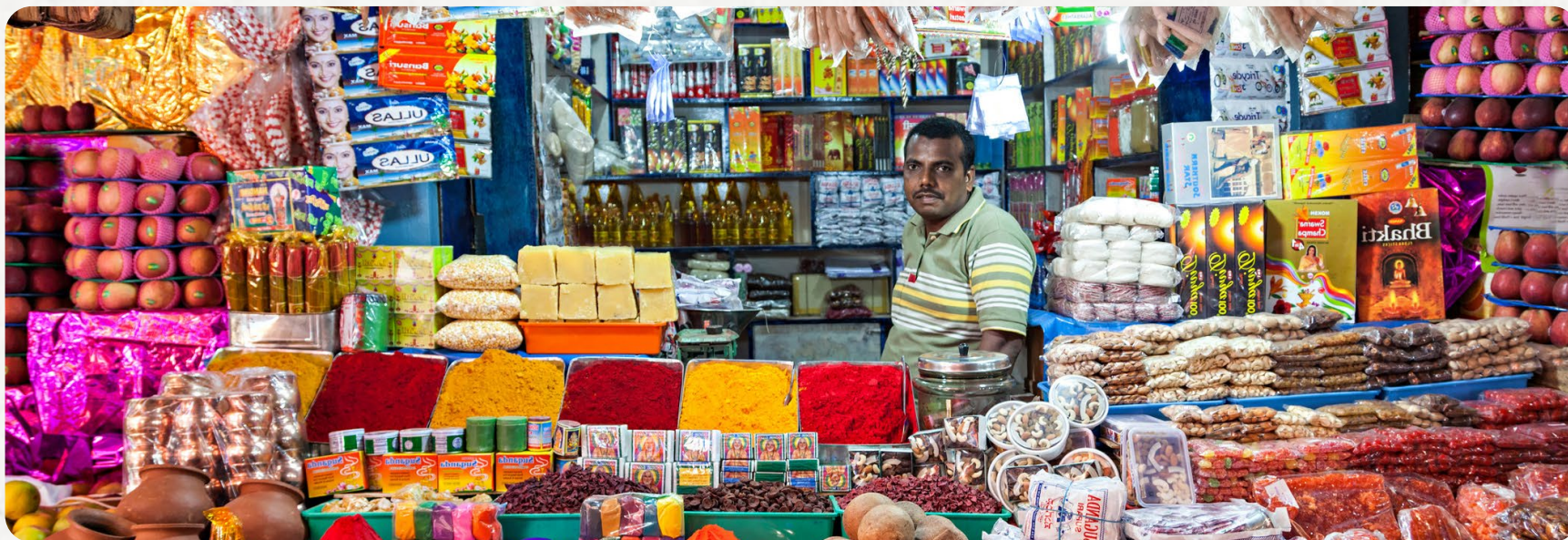
Way Forward

- Business & Human Rights Network is a business led multi-stakeholder initiative, with focus on businesses based in South Asia. It will continue to strive to create a robust bank of stakeholders, including Chambers, Policy-makers, Investors, Institutions, Domain Experts, Regional Blocs and International Organisations.

EU-India Sustainable Business Collaborative Initiative

The European Union has been a leader in promoting sustainability outcomes into how its Member States trade internationally especially with developing countries. The EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) released in February 2022 is a milestone, in this regard. Countries interested in deepening their trade relations with the EU would have to equip themselves with the requirements for social and environmental due diligence.

In this context, CRB along with EU Delegation in India are working together to explore deepening collaboration between CSOs, businesses and other key stakeholders in India on sustainability and SDGs with the hope to pave the way for increased collaboration and cooperation towards sustainable development in India.



Outcomes

- CRB conducted a pilot study on the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure patterns of EU Companies operating in India and their contributions towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in this country.
- Facilitated the participation of Government, Civil Society (CSOs, Academia, media, etc) and Businesses in regional dialogues in India on accelerating SDGs.
- Generated inputs for policy/political dialogue in India on 'Accelerating SDGs'.

Way Forward

- Facilitate collective action by EU businesses in India together with their supply/value chain actors, leading to positive impacts on nature, climate and equity.
- Development of a EU businesses platform on CSR and Sustainability to coordinate, coalesce and position business actions on CSR, Sustainability and SDGs in India.

SMEs and GHG Emissions

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the global economy as they represent about 90% of businesses. They are critical for countries to deliver on their climate commitments.

In this context, CRB has been engaged with SMEs with the goal of creating awareness and capacity building for MSMEs about GHG emissions and potential measures to reduce the same.



Outcomes

- CRB has led an initiative on furthering the understanding of MSMEs on their environmental impact
- Engaged with stakeholders like Financial Institutions, Central & State Governments, Industrial Departments, Industry Associations, and Brands & Corporates to support MSMEs for taking action on GHG emissions reduction.
- Developed knowledge products such as case studies, blogs, articles etc.

Way Forward

- CRB will undertake a new initiative focused on reducing GHG emissions for SMEs in the Textile and Foundry sector - the intervention proposes to handhold around 100 MSMEs through the process of emission audits, identifying potential solutions and implementing measures
- Continued engagement and handholding of MSMEs through capacity building and dialogue

Sustainable Consumption and Mission LiFE

The adoption of sustainable consumption not only contributes to environmental conservation but also supports long-term economic resilience and social equity.

The Mission LiFe campaign calls for individuals and communities to incorporate environmentally friendly practices in daily lives and subsequently contribute to circular economy and sustainability. The campaign envisages such change in demand, at consumption level, will prompt change in supply (production practices) and ultimately change in policies.

In this context, CRB has been working with various organisations to further the understanding of sustainable consumption and its relevance.



Outcomes

- Conducted a study to an analysis of global campaigns that match the ambition and goals of Mission LiFE by showcasing similar campaigns, good practices and practical recommendations on designing all-rounded campaigns.
- An initiative to map the Landscape For Certifications For The Indian Textile Sector With Special Focus On Increasing Export competitiveness of MSMEs and further the understanding amongst consumers on circularity and sustainable fashion

Way Forward

- CRB will continue its efforts through potential areas by facilitating dialogues and capacity building to nudge individuals, communities, governments or organisations towards change in behaviour.

India and Sustainability Standards (ISS)

Centre for Responsible Business's (CRB) annual flagship conference 'India and Sustainability Standards: International Dialogues and Conference' convenes a diverse set of stakeholders to dialogue and develop roadmaps across key sustainability issues and industry sectors – in supporting the momentum towards Sustainability.

This year, for the **10th Edition**, the conference continued to provide an enabling platform to showcase and deliberate on key sustainability topics. The conference engaged and enabled dialogue on various sustainability issues while inspiring innovation, action, and solutions that can contribute towards a sustainable future.

The event was attended by **1200+ delegates, 50+ partners, and 150+ speakers**. Started in 2013, India and Sustainability Standards is a collaborative event, where diverse stakeholders converge to dialogue and develop roadmaps across key sustainability issues and industry sectors for building the momentum towards Sustainability. This year's conference theme was '**Solutions for Sustainability & Inclusivity: Policy, Innovation & Collaboration**'.



4 | A Brief Walkthrough

4.2 Achievements & Affiliations

Members of & Partnerships with:

- One Planet Network (UNEP)
- Trade for Sustainable Development (International Trade Centre)
- World Benchmarking Alliance
- ISEAL Alliance
- CSR Europe
- Indian Institute for Corporate Affairs
- Quality Council of India
- Bureau of Indian Standards

Founder of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives:

- Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India (I-SPOC)
- Coalition for Responsible Sourcing and Trade of Commodities (CREST)
- Indian Water Stewardship Network (IWSN)
- Indo-Dutch CSR & Sustainability Forum (INDUS-Forum)
- Alliance of Cotton & Textile Stakeholders on Regenerative Agriculture (ACRE)

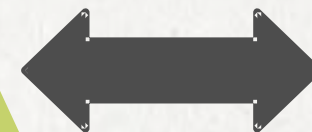
Partnerships with Govt:

- Business Responsibility & Sustainability Reporting Framework. MCA
- Draft National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, MCA
- India's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2020, NITI Aayog
- Working Group on Taxonomy, Sustainable Finance Taskforce, Ministry of Finance

5| Long-term Strategy

Long Term Outcomes

- **Growing Demand** for Sustainable Enterprises/Products
- **Leadership** taken by Businesses including SMEs and Producers in some sectors/clusters
- Principles of Sustainability/Responsible Business **integrated** into State Government policies, programs
- Multi-stakeholder **Platforms meet local interest and needs**
- **Balanced dialogue** and collaboration related to SVC between the **North & South**



Impact Areas

People: Producers, Workers, Communities, Professionals/Leaders

Planetary Resources: Efficient use of and uniform access to planetary resources

Prosperity: Enhanced competitiveness for Indian suppliers, traders based on improved sustainability performance (domestic & GVCs)

Partnerships: Non existent, innovative, balanced and impact driven Partnerships between Businesses & other SHs

Policies: Evidence based Policies at local, state, national & international levels

Thank You

CENTRE FOR RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS

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

CALL US : +91-11-41088853, 41841091

