



Centre *for* Responsible Business

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-23

Executive Summary

Design and Delivery of Responsible Business and Sustainable Value Chain in an Emerging Economy

Background

Centre for Responsible Business (CRB) completed 10 years in 2021. In this, our second decade, CRB is keen to be able to identify and document our positive impacts. We are in the process of developing **CRB Strategy 2030**. The impact pathway that we have envisaged, pivots on our vision - 'Businesses integrate sustainability into their core'. It envisages a long-term objective that endeavours to gather knowledge for businesses to embrace sustainability as a core element of its strategy model, and make informed decisions accordingly. We have tried to contribute to this, not only for firms (small and large) but also in certain sectors, and broadly at the level of businesses.

CRB facilitated businesses' (of various sizes and natures) engagement/interaction with relevant stakeholders, and helped curate networks related to various aspects of responsible and sustainable business in India, and beyond. Over the year, CRB continued to build these linkages mostly in the Apparel and Textiles, Agrifood and Electronics sectors. In addition to engaging national level policymakers, we interacted with a few State governments and public agencies as well. We built connections with relevant government stakeholders to inform policy related processes and stakeholders, particularly in the Textiles; Agri-commodities (Palm Oil, Cotton); Finance; Electronics and IT sectors.

Here is an evidence of **practice, partnership** and **policy** related intermediate impacts achieved over the year - that help demonstrate our commitment to our long term objective.

Practice

- Built capacity and knowledge of select Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators to better engage with market actors (buyers) committed towards sustainable agri-value chains
- Built awareness and understanding among textile/apparel suppliers (and allied enterprises) on circular innovations and practices, thereby creating greater visibility and some level of acceptance of the need for circular transition
- Empowered SME with tool(s) for GHG reduction thereby creating visibility for such enterprises and for them to feel confident of being part of the 'India climate story'
- Trained agri-food businesses on 'capitals valuation' method, to help them consider their impacts and dependencies on 'capitals' while making a business decision
- Mainstreamed business and human rights related due diligence to help prevent and mitigate risks in business/supply chains
- Engaged with industry associations and financial institutions to underline opportunities to drive sustainable palm oil uptake in India

Partnership

- Created the ground to mobilise EU business in India through a collaborative initiative, to drive impactful CSR and sustainability outcomes
- Consolidated the multistakeholder collaborative platform on Sustainable Palm Oil (I-SPOC) and conceived one on Regenerative cotton (ACRE)

Policies

- Convened expert stakeholders from the North and South and shared views on the interface between national and international policies related to sustainable (global) value chains (especially in the wake of various international legislations being developed on sustainable value chains, driven by the EU and other OECD Member States)
- Across sectors, highlighted the imperative of co-existence for public and private regulation on sustainable business
- Engaged with policymakers and opinion leaders (including at G20 India events) to raise demand side constraints for uptake of sustainably produced goods/recognition for sustainable enterprises

CRB continues to gather evidence about the context and realities relevant for design and delivery of responsible business and sustainable value chains in an emerging economy (i.e., India). We hope to contribute actively on this and other sustainable business-related discussions and dialogues, as the G20 India Presidency gradually unravels in 2023-24.

Rijit Sengupta

Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Responsible
Business



About CRB

CRB is a think-tank working towards promoting an understanding among relevant stakeholders on social, environmental and economic sustainability issues.

The organisation has been actively partnering with various ministries and agencies of the government of India; academic institutions; civil society organisations; industry associations; business etc. to contribute towards measurable positive impacts on people, environment, communities and livelihoods.

Our Vision

Businesses integrate sustainability into their core business practices

Our Mission

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



Photo by Kushal Medhi on Unsplash



THEMATIC AREAS

*Pursuing our vision of enabling businesses to integrate sustainability into their core business practices, the organisation carries out **action and policy research**; contributes towards **building capacity and expertise**; and **convenes multiple stakeholders** to find solutions to complex sustainability challenges in India and beyond.*



Circular Economy

1. Objective

Circular economy is an economic system aimed at minimising waste, maximising resource efficiency, and promoting sustainable development. It involves shifting from the traditional linear “take-make-dispose” model to one that focuses on reducing, reusing, recycling, and recovering materials and products. In other words, a circular economy is a way of conducting business which is less adversely impacting the environment while also enhancing business competitiveness.

India, as a rapidly developing country with a large population and growing industrialisation, faces significant challenges related to waste management and resource depletion. Implementing a circular economy model can help india address these challenges and achieve sustainable development goals. CRB continues to work in various industry sectors like apparel & textiles, agriculture and IT & electronics among others to address the issue of circularity.

Circular Economy is an area of strategic focus for CRB, with the following objectives:

- Build capacity and awareness of industry players (with special attention to SMEs)
- Developing the ‘business case’ balancing risk mitigation and ‘value creation’
- Document and encourage ‘good practices’ across industries
- Undertake evidence-based policy engagement to integrate the principles of circular economy in industrial/sectoral policy
- Contribute towards development of incentives schemes/programmes to support innovations that advance circularity
- Present needs, aspirations and experiences from the ‘Global South’ at various international platforms
- Develop and/or contribute towards development of multi-stakeholder driven initiatives/platforms

2. Focus

Circular Apparel

Globally, the textile sector has witnessed a shift towards sustainable practices driven by a number of factors. Across the textile value chain, stakeholders have become more aware of the impacts of their decision-making. Further, awareness among consumers and other stakeholders has prompted brands to increase transparency in their supply chains, with clear responsibility on manufacturers, suppliers and raw material providers to make sure their processes are environmentally and socially sustainable. It has now been widely accepted that circular economy or circularity in the textile and apparel sector (circular apparel) can provide some solutions.

CRB has undertaken projects on circular apparel, 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. Thus support balanced and sustainable growth of the industry

Circular Electronics & IT

In india, e-waste is primarily managed by the informal sector and there is high dependency on this sector to manage IT/electronics products at end of life. One possible path to capacity building of the informal sector is using the power of purchasers and engaging them in the creation of end-of-

life requirements, or criteria, in an india IT product sustainability standard that would leverage the resources of IT manufacturers and would also link to SDGs.

Accordingly, CRB has been working with partners with the aim of bridging the gap between the state of policy and current end of life practices by exploring capacity building opportunities for end-of-life management of IT/electronics equipment.

3. Key Outputs

Examining R2 Standard's Potential in Supporting the Transition Towards a Sustainable and Circular Electronics & IT Sector in India

Managing electronic waste has become a major issue globally. The R2 standard, owned by SERI, is the market leader in guiding recyclers in responsible recycling. R2 has a global presence, and its benefits are well known among stakeholders. It guarantees environmental and social ethics in material handling and processing. CRB was engaged by SERI to explore the potential for strengthening the standard and connect stakeholders who would support SERI's initiatives in india through their expert advice. The objective was to understand the electronics value chain, its key stakeholder groups, challenges in the recycling sector, and the scope of the R2 standard in mitigating and implementing a circular economy in india.

Sustainable Procurement - Policy & Practices In India IT & Electronics Hardware

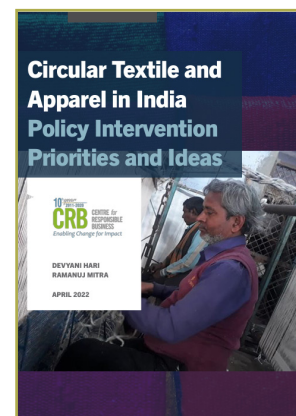
CRB undertook a study to explore the challenges and opportunities of sustainable procurement of IT hardware in india, from the lens of policy and practice. It also delved into the scope of voluntary sustainability standards in promoting sustainable procurement.

Water Risk Assessment of the Indian ICT and Microelectronics Sector

CRB and AWS undertook a water risk assessment for the main electronics clusters in India. The preliminary process involved identifying all the electronic and IT manufacturing states in india. Through secondary research, a total of 57 cluster locations were mapped out in 20 states based on the various key segments including consumer electronics, IT hardware, telecommunication equipment, electronic components, strategic components, industrial electronics, and others.

Circular Textile and Apparel in India Policy Intervention Priorities

When circular economy priorities are linked with social benefits such as fair wages, good working conditions, augmented by transparency in business practices, opportunities open up for businesses to cater to global value chains. The A&T sector can especially benefit from such a "social circular economy". It can boost exports by adhering to global norms and voluntary sustainability standards, while creating new jobs by prompting and formalising activities such as recovery, repurpose, repair, and recycling of garments, post-production and post-consumer textiles, etc. This report aims to highlight the potential of a circular economy for the A&T sector and relevant policy interventions to support a transition of the current linear economy. It provides an overview of the sector and some components of a circular economy, along with the priority areas that need focus in the coming years.



4. Way Forward

Over the course of last year, significant headway has been made in mobilising stakeholders in a few significant apparel and textile sectors in the country. CRB will continue its efforts through potential areas of action such as:

- Facilitating CE dialogues in more textile and apparel clusters across the country to identify policy and practices areas
- Capacity building for stakeholders including policy actors in different clusters on potential for circular textile & apparel
- Designing pilots for showcasing circular practices
- Documenting existing good practices and innovations for circular apparel

5. Select Activities

Awareness and Capacity Building on Sustainable Electronics

CRB organised an awareness session for the employees of BHEL electronics division as part of world environment month.



Inspire and Mobilise Action to Reduce Food Losses in Retail Supply Chains

WRI India, CRB and FOLU India organised a consultation to focus on understanding the scope, challenges, and opportunities for reducing food loss in the context of the retail value chain in india

Roundtable Consultation with Tiruppur Exporters and Manufacturers Association.



In collaboration with Tiruppur Exporters & Manufacturer Association (TEAMA), CRB held a roundtable consultation with 38 tiruppur garment companies owners on government schemes, incentives and creating a sustainable cluster to boost india's garment & textile exports. The purpose of the consultation was to understand the strengths and weaknesses of existing government schemes, incentives, and buyer-suppliers relations and explore

possible ingenious solutions and schemes to address their weakness in the context of sustainability interventions and consolidate their strength. Besides this, the discussion also identified the most pertinent aspect of sustainability that can be considered for the cluster and successfully generated policy input and scheme-level inputs.

Brands with Purpose: Time to Walk the Talk

CRB co-hosted an insightful session on “Brands With Purpose: Time To Walk The Talk” at the india fashion forum. The session brought together experts and practitioners who shared their insights on the fashion industry sustainability landscape and brands that are purpose driven. Further, into the session, discussions were held on how sustainable practices can be used to create long term value for consumers.

6. The Team



Devyani Hari
Director Programmes
devyani@c4rb.in



Ramanuj Mitra
Senior Program Officer
ramanuj@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



Business & Human Rights

1. Objective

At CRB, we understand business and human rights as integral to the realisation of India's constitutional vision of equitable and sustainable growth for all. Business and human rights (BHR) is a field that focuses on the responsibility of businesses to respect and promote human rights in their operations, supply chains, and business relationships. It recognises that businesses have a duty to avoid causing or contributing to human rights violations and should take measures to address any adverse human rights impacts.

There is today, both among businesses and its stakeholders a growing acknowledgement of building business with purpose that goes beyond the conventional norms. To further the agenda, CRB has focused on:

- Raising awareness among key stakeholders on business and human rights
- Convening dialogues on policy and practice among stakeholders on various issues pertaining to business and human rights, viz. UN Guiding Principles on Business & Human Rights, Supply Chains Transparency, Human Rights Due Diligence and the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights
- Supporting policy level action including working with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India in the process of developing India's first draft National Action Plan on Business and Human rights
- Developing a regional multi-stakeholder business-led platform on Business and Human Rights
- Document and encourage 'good practices' across industries
- Supporting capacity building and training of stakeholders to help ensure that employees and supply chain partners are aware of human rights issues and understand their roles and responsibilities in upholding human rights standards
- Engaging in collaborative initiatives with other businesses, industry associations, and stakeholders to provide guidance, support, and shared learning opportunities
- Offering advisory services to businesses on conducting HRDD and reporting etc

2. Focus

Human Rights Due Diligence

Human rights due diligence refers to the process by which businesses identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for their potential adverse human rights impacts. In the context of India, human rights due diligence is crucial for businesses operating in the country to ensure that their operations and supply chains do not contribute to or cause human rights violations. CRB has been engaging with several businesses to help them with:

- Adopting and communicating clear policy statements that emphasises their commitment to respect human rights and outlines their approach to human rights due diligence.
- Conducting comprehensive human rights impact assessment which covers all aspects of the business, including operations, supply chains, and relationships with contractors and business partners.
- Establishing effective grievance mechanisms to enable individuals or communities to report human rights violations and seek remedy.

Human rights due diligence is an ongoing process, and businesses should continually monitor and evaluate their efforts, adapt their practices, and learn from challenges and successes. By integrating human rights due diligence into core operations, businesses can contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights.

Promoting the Application of BHR by Enterprises

Through its work on business and human rights, CRB has played a key role in disseminating knowledge and expertise and build collaborative networks to implement actions for promoting business and human rights across different sectors. To further the understanding and application of BHR by enterprises, CRB has been working with organisations to further the uptake of BHR within their establishments.

Human Rights Risks And Impacts Assessment

Designed, developed and implemented industry and sector specific interventions on business and human rights, including human rights due diligence. CRB works with organisations to study their human rights risks and impacts from a value chain perspective through engagement with relevant industry stakeholders and ecosystem actors, and then proposes a remediation framework.

3. Key Outputs

Business and Human Rights Network

There has been a paradigm shift in the global BHR framework. While a number of OECD member 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 CRB, Business & Human Rights Network aims to simplify BHR concepts, identify opportunities, encourage BHR uptake, and thereby make businesses more competitive and resilient. Learn more here: www.bhrnetwork.com

HRDD for a Large MNC Energy Company

CRB undertook a detailed human rights due diligence (HRDD) for exercise to assess human rights risks associated with the engagement of a large MNC energy company with contract workers and communities across its various portfolios in India. CRB has developed a detailed and robust methodology to undertake HRDD exercise, based on international tools/methods for assisting businesses to understand current/potential human rights risks, using the UNGPs framework. A HRDD exercise is a first step to initiate actions to address human rights problems related to business operations.

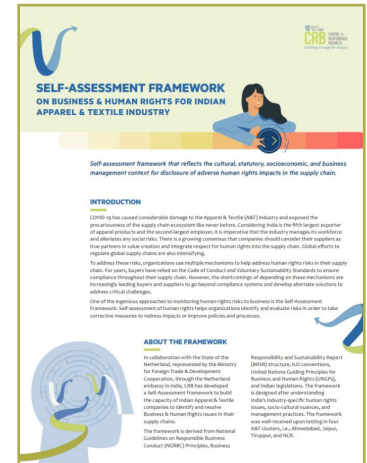
HRDD for a Multinational Steel Company

CRB undertook an in-depth human rights due diligence for a multinational steel company. The analysis comprised secondary and primary data analysis and assessment of the company Business & Human Rights Policy. Importantly, based on the analysis and findings, an overarching Business & Human Rights framework was recommended, compiling solutions and good practices in the steel sector

Self - Assessment Framework

CRB developed a Self-Assessment Framework to build the capacities of Indian Apparel & Textile companies to identify and resolve Business & Human Rights issues in their supply chains.

The framework is derived from National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC) Principles, Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) structure, ILO conventions, United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), and Indian legislations. The framework is designed after understanding India's industry-specific human rights issues, socio-cultural nuances, and management practices. The framework was well-received upon testing in four A&T clusters, i.e., Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Tiruppur, and NCR, learn more [here](#).



4. Way Forward

Business and Human Rights form the cornerstone of all the work undertaken by CRB, it cuts across the different thematic and operational works areas. Going forward, our endeavour will be to strengthen and diversify the vertical to include various other aspects of BHR. Through our work in the field, we would strive to further the understanding and application of BHR. This will be achieved through a collaborative and multi-pronged approach, which will entail consolidation of the work undertaken thus far, working with partners to design and develop frameworks, tools, trainings that enable adoption of BHR by enterprises, raise awareness through the creation of multi-stakeholder platforms, undertaken policy research and advocacy to advance the discourse on BHR. Some of the concrete activities planned in this direction include the following:

- Developing a roadmap for regional economic integration among south asian countries with focus on business and human rights issues.
- Awareness raising through capacity development measures and multi-stakeholder dialogues on relevant topics (supply chain transparency, HRDD, risk and impact assessment) with eminent experts and practitioners
- Design, develop and implement industry and sector specific interventions on business and human rights, including human rights due diligence. Some of the sectors CRB has been actively engaged in include mining, tea, apparel and textile, forestry, and palm oil. The BHR issues investigated and worked on include child rights, worker rights, vulnerable and marginal community rights, women rights, etc.
- Use the on-ground experience and knowledge (across sectors) to undertake evidenced-based policy work.
- Furthering the reach of our platform Business and Human Rights Network and engaging with members to further the understanding and application of Business and Human Rights within their organisations

5. Select Activities



Emerging Trends In Sustainability, Responsibility & Due Diligence – Unlocking Potential For Businesses In South Asia

CRB in association with Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom and Bombay Chamber of Commerce and Industry hosted a panel discussion on “emerging trends in sustainability, responsibility & due diligence – unlocking potential for businesses in south asia” the purpose of this panel discussion was to deliberate on the emerging global trends and expectations and to assess the preparedness of south asian businesses.

6. The Team



Nandini Sharma
Director
nandini@c4rb.in



Vivek K. Singh
Assistant Director
vivek@c4rb.in



Neha Tomar
Senior Programme Manager
neha@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



Private Sector & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. Objective

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 by the United Nations and its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), the expectations and actions toward meeting the agenda's goals have gained momentum.

The focus has also expanded from the government to the private sector as a driver of sustainability/SDGs. Many segments of the private sector, supported by various national and international organisations, provide frameworks and guidance on how to integrate sustainable policies and business practices in order to achieve long-term prosperity for businesses and societies, while carefully managing or restoring environmental resources.

Overall, the private sector's active engagement in the context of SDGs in India is vital for driving sustainable economic growth, promoting innovation, addressing social and environmental challenges, and achieving the targets set by the United Nations. It requires collaboration and partnerships between the government, private sector, and other stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to sustainable development.

CRB has worked across sectors with various approaches/methods/tools, which businesses can adopt to pursue specific SDG targets and indicators, and measure them. In addition to supply chain sustainability, buyer supplier/producer partnership, public-private collaboration and voluntary sustainability standards offer some such possibilities. CRB has also been engaging with NITI Aayog at the macro-level with evidence gathered from these interventions to build the case and general awareness about private sector contribution to SDGs in India.

2. Focus

Global Value Chains and SDGs:

CRB has explored how private sector companies in India could better contribute to the achievement of specific SDGs, particularly inclusive education and life-long learning (SDG 4), employment and decent work for the youth (SDG 8), women's social and economic empowerment (SDG 5), sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and Climate Action (SDG 13) through the PROGRESS project. Learn more [here](#).

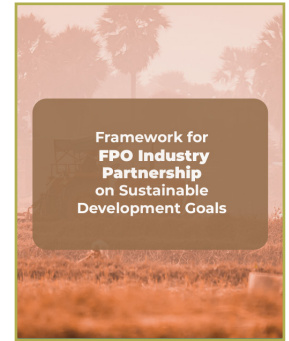
Mapping Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Expenditure of EU Companies in India and their Contributions to the SDGs

In Europe as in India, corporate social responsibility is vital. Actions undertaken to adhere to CSR obligations by private sector stakeholders can have a significant impact on the lives of people, in terms of working conditions and health but also for the protection of the environment and for boosting innovation as well as education and training opportunities. Addressing CSR is as much in the interest of companies as of society as a whole: research has confirmed that CSR adds to the competitiveness of enterprises. CRB engaged in gathering insight into the CSR expenditure of EU companies in India and their contributions towards SDGs and sustainability through the scaling EU businesses' contribution towards SDGs in India. Learn more [here](#).

3. Key Outputs

Framework for FPO Industry Partnership on Sustainable Development Goals

CRB and India Foundation for Humanistic Development (IFHD) teamed up to develop a framework with the goal of underlining opportunities for FPOs, especially the small/marginal farmers, to engage market actors by strengthening and disclosing their performance on SDGs. This assessment of the performance of the FPOs vis-à-vis SDGs is based on a set of indicators that were developed jointly by the two organisations with inputs from experts and practitioners in the agri-food sector and validated by a group of FPOs and organisations working with FPOs from across a few states. A number of agri-food businesses in India have strong public commitments to promote sustainable, inclusive and climate smart agriculture practices, along their value chains. FPOs are expected to use this framework to self-assess their performance. This exercise is expected to support improvement of internal processes and systems to help them better engage with the market. CRB and IFHD will continue to refine this framework by applying it through pilots together with FPOs in select States, and look forward to partnering with organisations that have experience and interest of working for smallholders and in farming communities. The development of this framework was done under the aegis of the Promoting Responsible Value Chains in India for an Effective Contribution of the Private Sector to the SDGs (PROGRESS) project, supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and undertaken by CRB in collaboration with Aston University, UK. View the framework [here](#).



Mapping and Conceptualising of EU CSR and Sustainability Action Platform in India

CRB and the Delegation of the European Union to India joined hands to assess contribution of EU businesses to sustainability and SDGs in India. In addition to reviewing the contribution of EU businesses through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects and sustainability initiatives, the study also aimed to explore the need and relevance of an EU business driven CSR and Sustainability platform in India. View the report [here](#).

4. Way Forward

There is no doubt that private sector participation is critical to the achievement of the SDGs and engagement with the private sector remains central to CRB's work and cuts across its various thematic and sectoral areas. The private sector can lead the way on innovations, traceability, efficiencies and capacity building for value chain actors. At the same time, there is a need to support private sector actors with a strong business case for sustainable action, awareness and knowledge sharing, facilitating unconventional collaborations, developing sustainability roadmaps and understanding sustainability risks and impacts from their actions.

5. Select Activities

Collectively Building Sustainable And Resilient Global Value Chains

This consultation was organised by CRB in collaboration with CSR europe. The aim of the discussion was to understand how countries that are part of global value chains collaborate to achieve common goals on sustainability and resilience? What has been the experience in such collaboration, what are key lessons for the future, and what are changing expectations in the stakeholder roles.

Collaboration for Delivering on SDGS through Responsible Global Value Chain

CRB in association with Aston Business School and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) hosted the event “Collaboration For Delivering On SDGS Through Responsible Global Value Chain” in New Delhi. The event hosted discussions on the policy and international developments driving sustainability in GVC and reflections from practitioners and researchers on the design and future of sustainable value chains. Over 70 participants and 14 speakers attended the event.



Experts' Dialogue for Advancing Sustainability and Responsible Business in the North Eastern Region

CRB along with Media Management Group for Literacy and Development organised a roundtable discussion on 'Experts' Dialogue for Advancing Sustainability and Responsible Business in the North Eastern Region'. Experts from various sectors attended the event and shared their perspectives on sustainability challenges

and opportunities in the region.

Dr Lorho S. Pfoze, member of parliament (Lok Sabha), shared his valuable insights and reflections and highlighted the way forward to ensure benefits to both people and nature in the region.

CRB & IFHD - Workshop With FPOs

CRB with India Foundation for Humanistic Development (IFHD) held a Consultation on the Framework for FPO-industry partnership guided by SDGs in Bangalore. In attendance were leaders and members of FPOs that deliberated on the framework to further provide inputs. Further, two keynote speakers shared their thoughts that validated and commended the joint work on the framework. In the keynote address, the speakers further reflected that the framework complements the on-going work of the government of karnataka and is expected to be widely shared.





Mapping and Conceptualising of EU CSR and Sustainability Action Platform in India - Report Release

CRB and the Delegation of the European Union to India released the report, "Mapping and Conceptualising of EU CSR and Sustainability Action Platform in India."

6. The Team



Rijit Sengupta
Chief Executive Officer
rijit@c4rb.in



Devyani Hari
Director
devyani@c4rb.in



Devosmita Bhattacharya
Programme Officer
devosmita@c4rb.in



Nitya Chhiber
Senior Programme Officer
nitya@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) in India

1. Objective

Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) are frameworks and certifications that businesses can adopt voluntarily to demonstrate their commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. These standards provide guidelines and criteria for responsible practices across various sectors. In the context of India, VSS have gained prominence, and several initiatives are being undertaken to promote their adoption.

2. Focus

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

Interaction between VSS Standards Setters and Indian Stakeholders

CRB's Annual Sustainability Conference India and Sustainability Standards, (www.sustainabilitystandards.in) offers a platform for international standards setting organisations/professionals working on VSS and other aspects of Sustainable/Responsible Business to interact with Indian stakeholders, across various sectors/thematic areas. Over the 10 years of implementing the annual Conference, CRB has been able to facilitate a multi-stakeholder led discourse, leading to certain actions on the ground.

Partnership with VSS Organisations in India

In order to improve awareness and effective uptake of VSS among Indian industry and other users, CRB has been partnering with various VSS in India. Over the course of the year CRB partnered/engaged actively with a number of VSS organisations including: Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, Rainforest Alliance, Alliance for Water Stewardship, TCO certified, SERI, Forest Stewardship Council & NCCF.

VSS Collaboration India

Given the multiplicity of VSS in the market, the users are often confused about the applicability of VSS. Experts at the international level have been calling for collaboration among VSS. CRB has taken this initiative since Jan 2019 to conduct periodic discussions involving VSS organisations (once a quarter) for them to better acquaint themselves with the experience (domain) of each other and identify areas of common interest and challenge. This initiative is referred to as 'Walking Together with VSS in India', and aims to help VSS organisations get better clarity about domains of expertise of each other and explore possible collaborative initiatives. Learn more [here](#).

3.Key Outputs

VSS	Outputs
SERI	CRB was engaged by SERI to explore the potential for strengthening the R2 standard and connect stakeholders who would support SERI's initiatives in india through their expert advice. The objective was to understand the electronics value chain, its key stakeholder groups, challenges in the recycling sector, and the scope of the R2 standard in mitigating and implementing a circular economy in india.
TCO Certified	<p>As countries and organizations try to integrate sustainability into their operations leading to high demand for eco-friendly products and services, procurement has been identified as a significant sustainability driver. Promoting and integrating sustainability concepts into the procurement process has led to terminologies such as "Sustainable procurement" and "Green procurement" among industry actors.</p> <p>CRB partnered with TCO certified to conduct a study to explore the challenges and opportunities of sustainable procurement of IT hardware in India, from the lens of policy and practice. It also delved into the scope of Voluntary Sustainability Standards in promoting sustainable procurement.</p>
AWS	CRB and AWS undertook a water risk assessment for the main electronics clusters. The preliminary process involved identifying all the electronic and IT manufacturing states in india. Through secondary research, a total of 57 cluster locations were mapped out in 20 states based on the various key segments including consumer electronics, it hardware, telecommunication equipment, electronic components, strategic components, industrial electronics, and others. The desk research also included identifying the various clusters that were fully operational after their proposed establishment.
RSPO	CRB has been working in partnership with RSPO to promote the uptake of certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO). Through the partnership, CRB has been able to promote awareness amongst relevant stakeholders including businesses, downstream players, associations, international organizations, policy actors, media and youth. CRB has also worked on generating awareness and increasing capacity and knowledge on the topic, supporting multistakeholder platform and dialogues related to opportunities and facilitating increased commitment and uptake of CSPO in India. Learn more here .

4. Way Forward

CRB will continue to engage with VSS organisations in India to further awareness of the domains of expertise of existing organisation and explore possible collaborative initiatives.

5. Select Activities

Roundtable On Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) Members Meeting

Bhavya Sharma, CRB (I- SPOC secretariat) spoke about the current trend of palm oil, the coalition - its relevance to promote uptake of sustainable palm oil and how and why an organization become a member of [The Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India \(I-SPOC\)](#). The meeting was attended by representatives from RSPO, RSPO's members (i.e. businesses) along with representatives from Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA), AAK , IDH and WWF-India.



Shaping Sustainability Systems To Achieve Sustainability Goals Online

CRB, ISEAL and VSS Collaboration India hosted a workshop on "Shaping Sustainability Systems to achieve Sustainability Goals".

The workshop focused on understanding the fundamentals of credible sustainability systems, how they can help companies achieve sustainability goals, and how they should be responding to developments in the sustainability landscape.

Consultation On RSPO Independent Smallholder Standards

Centre for Responsible Business participated in a public consultation on Independent Smallholder Standards hosted by Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) in Vijayawada . The consultation saw representation from farmers, processors, auditors and other civil society organisations who spoke about the standards in the Indian context



6. The Team



Rijit Sengupta
Chief Executive Officer
rijit@c4rb.in



Bhavya Sharma
Programme Officer
bhavya@c4rb.in



Devosmita Bhattacharya
Programme Officer
devosmita@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



VSS COLLABORATION INDIA

SMEs and Sustainability

1. Objective

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation and economic growth. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important global concern, SMEs in India are also focusing on integrating sustainable practices into their operations.

CRB recognises that integration of responsible business practices cannot happen in the Indian industry without involving the Indian SME sector. This discourse becomes even more relevant as we look to enhance our manufacturing capabilities and many more SMEs aim for integration into Global Value Chains. Sustainability is becoming the main differentiator for large buyers to identify suppliers in their value chains.

2. Focus

From CRB's experience across sectors, some of the critical elements in SME engagement on sustainability are:

- Engagement through the supply/value chain
- Leadership by SME Industry Association and Cluster Associations
- Enabling government support through schemes
- Integration into global value chains through voluntary standards, certification, etc.

3. Key Outputs

Promoting Family Friendly Workplace in the Apparel and Textile Cluster

CRB has been working with UNICEF to address SDGs 5 and 8 by exploring the possibility of developing a Family Friendly Workplace, specifically for female workers and their families in select Apparel and Textile Clusters in India. The aim of this initiative is to create an environment in these clusters that promotes equal opportunities and decent working conditions for women workers in the industry while supporting their children and families specifically in terms of childcare, early child development, health and educational needs, etc.

MSMEs Capacity Building on Race to Net-Zero

CRB partnered with the SME Climate Hub to accelerate MSME action on net-zero. MSMEs can begin their journey to reduce emissions with the SME Climate Hub's free tools and resources, and can discover how taking action can boost profits, gain market share, and create more resilience amidst changing customer and regulatory demands. Learn more [here](#).

Developing Sustainable B2B Marketplaces

CRB has partnered with Snowkap to develop a B2B marketplace linking suppliers and buyers based on sustainability parameters. The initial focus of the initiative is on SMEs in the packaging, apparels and agri-commodities sectors. Large buyers are increasingly basing their procurement decisions based on sustainability parameters such as the carbon footprint/ emissions, sustainable materials etc. This marketplace aims to facilitate matching suppliers to buyers as per their sustainability requirements. Additionally, it will support Indian SMEs in strengthening their sustainability practices.

4. Way Forward

Taking its work on this forward, CRB aims to

- To convey the business case for sustainability, inclusivity and circular economy to the Indian SME sector and encourage them to not have a negative impact on the environment and the society.
- Awareness on adoption of resource efficiency concepts, methods, policies and techniques among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through on the ground implementation in collaboration with national and international stakeholders.
- Private sector participation and collaborations to ensure conducive industry ecosystem. Utilise CRB's experience to develop a 'roadmap' for an inclusive and sustainable supply chain and work together with SMEs, NGOs, Academia and Government.
- Connect SMEs, smallholder collectives (FPOs), to create sustainable value chains through a process that tries to align the interest of the buyers with that of the SMEs/FPO

5. Select Activities

Meet With Owners Of Apparel Export Factoreis In Jaipur Apparel & Textile Cluster



CRB and UNICEF India with support from AGES Jaipur gathered to discuss making the Jaipur RMG industry a Family-Friendly and sustainable model cluster.

Discussion With Tiruppur RMG Exporters

A productive discussion with Tiruppur RMG exporters on the existing compliance system, self- assessment, challenges the local industry faces, environment and social sustainability and co-creation of industry-led initiatives.



Consultation With Ahmedabad RMG Suppliers

A consultation with RMG suppliers in Ahmedabad cluster. The discussion revolved around the challenges faced by suppliers, social sustainability, it's risk to the business and possible solutions.



Multi-Stakeholder Consultation: Family-Friendly Workplace Initiative Need Assessment Study

A multi stakeholder consultation was organised by CRB bringing together Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Ltd. (RIICO), Association of Garment Exporters Sitapura (AGES), UNICEF India and RMG Companies to discuss the results of the family-friendly workplace initiative need assessment study. During the consultation, stakeholders identified priority ground actions. They agreed to devise a holistic approach to advance labour, women and child rights and make the Sitapura RMG industry inclusive and socially sustainable.



6. The Team



Devyani Hari
Director Programmes
devyani@c4rb.in



Vivek K. Singh
Assistant Director
vivek@c4rb.in



Vinay Pandey
Senior Programme Manager
vinay@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



Environment and Climate Change

1. Objective

Addressing challenges that climate change poses to businesses, economy and indeed society at large is critical to achieving long-term sustainability. Such actions must protect the interest of people, especially the most vulnerable.

Continued collaboration among government, civil society, businesses, and individuals is crucial to achieve sustainable development and mitigate the impacts of climate change

2. Focus

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

- Private Sector's contribution to Deforestation/Sustainable Landscapes, Biodiversity Conservation & Climate Change
- Business/SMEs role in GHG Reduction

3. Key outputs

Deforestation Free Commodities Supply Chains In India

CRB and WWF India undertook specific activities by engaging key stakeholders on deforestation free commodities supply chains in India – specifically edible oil and timber. The aim of these engagements has been to highlight the need for and identify opportunities from a balanced approach towards meeting the growing demand with little or no negative impact on forests and landscapes. In addition to engaging industry stakeholders in these commodities (edible oil and timber), the organisations would also initiate dialogues with downstream actors like retailers and e-commerce companies. Further, using evidence based on industry interactions, the organisations will also share perspectives and recommendations with relevant policymakers and influencers at the national, sectoral and regional levels. Learn more [here](#).

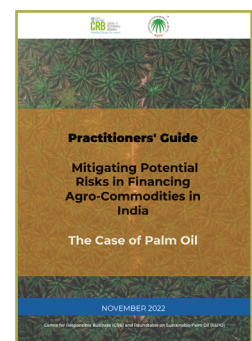
Sustainability Ambassadors

Ongoing partnership with RSPO involved:

- Continued engagement with industry to improve awareness and capacity on sustainable palm oil
- Developing knowledge module for financial institutions
- Development of policy inputs found on trade, labour, public procurement and finance

Regenerative Cotton

India is one of the world's largest producers of cotton, with the majority of the crop being grown by smallholder farmers. However, the cotton value chain in India faces several sustainability challenges, including water scarcity, soil degradation, and the use of synthetic inputs that can harm human health and the environment.



To address these challenges, CRB and Solidaridad launched the Sustainable and Regenerative Cotton Production Program in India. The program aims to promote sustainable cotton production by building the capacity of farmers and engaging with stakeholders along the cotton value chain. Specifically, the program seeks to promote the adoption of regenerative farming practices, which can improve soil health, increase water-use efficiency, and reduce the use of synthetic inputs. Learn more [here](#).

FOLU India CREST

FOLU India CREST action coalition brings together five organizations, viz. FOLU India, CRB, IDH, WWF India, and WRI India. The action coalition has been named as Food and Land Use India (FOLU India) Action Coalition for Responsible Sourcing & Trade of Commodities (in short FOLU India CREST). Additional details about FOLU India CREST may be found [here](#). The objectives of the coalition include:

- To identify India's position and potential as a steward in promoting sustainable and responsible international supply chains, especially – in the global south, by setting an example, of pushing the agenda in international forums (e.g., G7, G20).
- To identify the potential for India to set examples for balancing between domestic and distant sustainability issues as a consumer country
- To address issues as a producer country regarding intensifying domestic production and addressing policy and other gaps in strengthening the export supply chains as more sustainable ones.

Food Loss & Waste - Implication on GHG Reduction

From CRB's study of the agricultural value chain, many agri-businesses are working directly with farmers to facilitate good agronomic practices that result in better soil health, water stewardship, as well as regulating chemical fertilizer usage; for example via capacity building on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs)

Bamboo to Decarbonise Commercial Sectors In India

The Indian construction sector, driven largely by the growing demand for housing and infrastructure, has become increasingly reliant on carbon-intensive materials like cement and steel. However, wood and bamboo, which have historically been used in indigenous construction, are renewable and have limited carbon footprints. To promote the use of wood and bamboo in the construction sector, WRI India and CRB undertook a study under the Climate Smart Forest Economy Program (CSFEP) to explore the feasibility of a value-chain alliance for tree-based products in India. The study engaged key stakeholders, including producers of wood, entrepreneurs and traders of wood, architects, construction companies, government departments, technology institutions, certification agencies, and academia, through a series of consultations.

TEEB Agrifood Operational Guidelines for Business

CRB partnered with The Capitals Coalition as the implementation partner for the project TEEB Agri Food, funded by the European Union. The TEEB Agri Food project aimed to contribute to a more sustainable agriculture and food sector in seven EU partner countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and Thailand

CRB's goal was to engage with the agri-business networks in India & communicate the project's work to relevant businesses and offer insights and perspectives into the project as it progresses. Learn more [here](#).

4. Way Forward

CRB's work programme on this topic will continue to focus & build on :

- Promoting sustainable palm oil trade, production and consumption
- During regenerative agriculture systems to enable smallholder benefits
- Build capacity of SMEs to reduce GHG emissions

5. Select Activities



Regional Consultation To 'Explore Feasibility Of A Value Chain Alliance For Bamboo In The North East'

CRB with WRI India convened Key Stakeholders from North Eastern States to discuss opportunities and challenges in promoting Sustainable Bamboo Value Chain, based on ground level experiences in Guwahati.

Bamboo Value Chain Consultation In Bhopal

WRI India and CRB participated at the regional consultation to explore the feasibility of a value chain alliance for bamboo in central India in Bhopal, the group addressed various dimensions of a sustainable bamboo value chain.



Reclaim To Regenerate: Towards Regenerative Cotton Sector In India



CRB entered into a strategic partnership with Solidaridad to promote regenerative agricultural practices in the cotton sector in India. To launch this initiative, an event was hosted in Nagpur, Maharashtra by the three organisations. The object of the event was to share details about the Initiative, convene key stakeholders, and deliberate on the way forward for regenerative cotton in India.

The ACRE Alliance was launched at the event. Through this Alliance, Solidaridad and CRB believe the required shift in agricultural practices will be possible because of 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.

In addition to the launch of the alliance, the event featured a farmer felicitation, a photo exhibit by Dinesh Khanna and stalls.



6. The Team



Rijit Sengupta
Chief Executive Officer
rijit@c4rb.in



Aditya Petwal
Assistant Director
aditya@c4rb.in



Bhavya Sharma
Senior Programme Officer
bhavya@c4rb.in



Nitya Chhiber
Senior Programme Officer
nitya@c4rb.in

7. Partners

Some of the partners engaged included:



WRI INDIA



The
Food and Land Use
Coalition
India Country Platform



CAPITALS
COALITION



Solidaridad

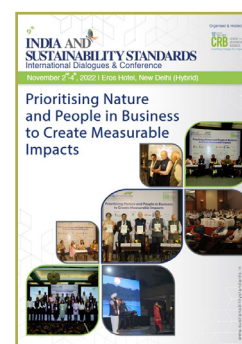


India & Sustainability Standards 2022



The 9th edition of CRB's Annual Sustainability Conference, India and Sustainability Standards was held in Eros Hotel, New Delhi (hybrid format) from November 2 - 4, 2022. The event was attended by over **1100 attendees, 140+ speakers, 60+ partners**. The theme of this year's conference was, '**Prioritising Nature and People in Business to Create Measurable Impacts.**'

The conference delved into several key issues together with representatives of multiple stakeholder groups about experiences of businesses and other stakeholders in India and beyond to identify replicable models/approaches of pursuing climate goals, addressing environmental impacts, combatting biodiversity loss, promoting equality and diversity. The discussions inside the room and outside examined various factors and resources that have and can support business transformation towards these impacts.



ISS 2022 Report

In addition to the dialogues conducted over the 3 day event, the conference witnessed:

- A special concert by Ricky Kej, 2x Grammy Award Winner, whose performance took every individual on a journey, wherein the lyrics, the music, the voice, and the imagery created an unparalleled atmosphere that made one feel thankful towards all that the Earth has given us, and further strengthened the message that we need to respect and care for the same.
- A networking village was also set up which provided the conference attendees the opportunity to network. Simultaneously, there were a series of activities also lined up in this space, which included a caricature artist, an interview stage and a 'thought board'.



Other Engagements



Meeting with Huib Mijnaerends, Deputy Ambassador, Netherlands

As part of our partnership with the Netherlands Embassy in India, Centre for Responsible Business has developed a Self-Assessment Framework on Business & Human Rights for Apparel & Textile Industry. CRB presented the framework to the new Deputy Ambassador and colleagues from the Embassy, Ms. Shweta Kaushik and Mr. Joost Oostenbruggen. We look forward

to working closely with the Embassy on the further dissemination and uptake of this tool.

India Food Forum 2022

Rijit Sengupta along with Sanjana Das and Rittika Barua from WWF-India represented The Sustainable Palm Oil Coalition for India (I-SPOC) at the India Food Forum 2022 which was held at the Westin Mumbai, Powai Lake from 7th-8th December 2022.

Senior officials from DBL, Aishwari Agro Foods, Plant Based Industry Association amongst others visited the I-SPOC booth which was set up during the event.



Responsible Sourcing Summit India

Bhavya Sharma and Aditya Petwal represented CRB at an event organised by IDH, which saw representation from several Indian businesses including Akay Natural Ingredients Private Limited, who came together to discuss creating a roadmap and an implementation plan, thus paving the way to show visible impact in responsible sourcing. The agri-businesses also signed

an IDH Responsible Sourcing Pledge to commit to intensify work on responsible sourcing in supply chains.

Meeting with Rohit Kumar Singh, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India

Rijit Sengupta met with Rohit Kumar Singh, IAS, Secretary, Ministry Of Consumer Affairs, Food And Public Distribution today and discussed issues pertaining to sustainable consumption especially in context of mission LiFE.





India - Europe Business Sustainability Conclave

Rijit Sengupta, spoke about the India Europe partnership stating, “Europe and EU are not just important and leading trade and investment partners of India but have also been a supporter for various initiatives and programmes on sustainability and sustainable business.”

Increasing Economic & Opportunity for Women in the Textiles and Apparel Industry

Vivek. K. Singh represented Centre for Responsible Business as a speaker for the session on “Increasing Economic & Opportunity for Women in the Textiles and Apparel Industry at the 3rd Global Textile Conclave (GTC) organised by CITI India.



Decoding Impact: Sustainable Sourcing

Rijit Sengupta joined Jagjeet Singh Kandal (Country Director at IDH India) in a podcast, Decoding Impact: Sustainable Sourcing, hosted by Rathish Balakrishnan. In this episode on Sustainable Sourcing, the speakers delved into supply-and demand-side challenges in adopting sustainable sourcing within agribusinesses, the role stakeholders can play, and how the balance between the 3Ps — People, Planet and Profits — can be achieved through sustainable operations. Listen to the complete episode [here](#)



Meeting with H.E. Marten Van Den Berg, Ambassador of the Netherlands in India

Nandini Sharma, Rijit Sengupta, and Devyani Hari met with H.E. Marten Van Den Berg, Ambassador of the Netherlands in India. This time it was for his views on a collaborative international initiative.

Meeting with Rajeev Kher Former Commerce Secretary and Anil Jauhri, International Expert on Sustainability Standards

Nandini Sharma, and Rijit Sengupta, met with the Former Commerce Secretary, Rajeev Kher and International Expert on Sustainability Standard, Anil Jauhri and together deliberated on Sustainability Standards and implications on Trade and Investments for India.



Meeting with Secretary for Trade: Håkan Jevrell

Rijit Sengupta participated in an interesting discussions with Swedish State Secretary for Trade, Håkan Jevrell on various aspects of business environment and responsible business in India, over lunch hosted by Swedish Ambassador Jan Thesleff. Mihir Sharma, ORF in the picture



Meeting with Barbara Schaefer and Karin- Diana Deckenbach

Devyani Hari and Vinay Pandey, met with Barbara Schaefer, German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) and Karin- Diana Deckenbach, GIZ India at the CRB office to discuss the work that Centre for Responsible Business is doing and identify potential areas to collaborate.

Decoding Sustainability: Integrating Sustainability into Everyday Life

Centre for Responsible Business in collaboration with the Youth for Sustainability and PremJain Memorial Trust hosted a LinkedIn live on “Decoding Sustainability: Integrating Sustainability into everyday life”.



The 10 YFP Forum 2022



Rijit Sengupta, spoke at a session hosted during the One Planet network - 10YFP Forum. The session focused on the role consumer information can play in enabling the required transformations towards SCP, highlighting current challenges, and discussing key solutions to increase the effectiveness of consumer information and how to upscale the best available tools to drive more substantial changes.

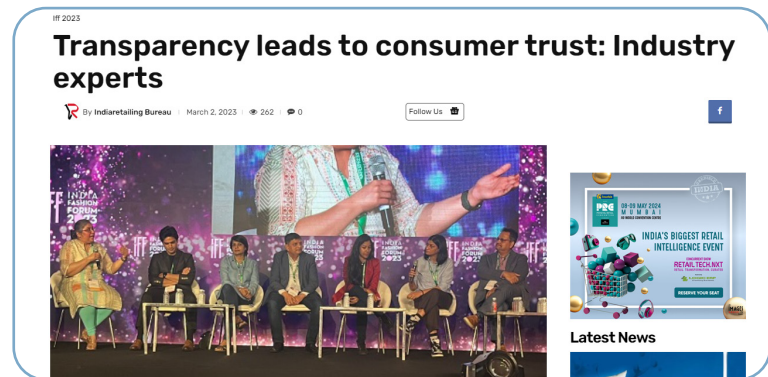
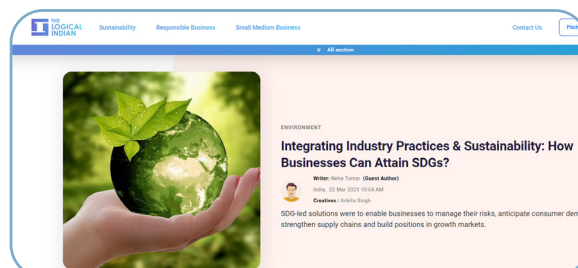
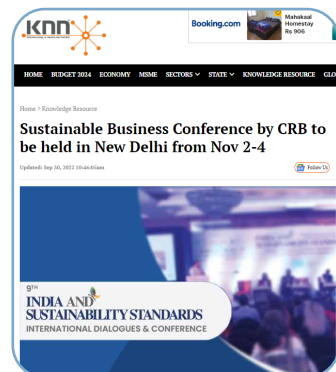
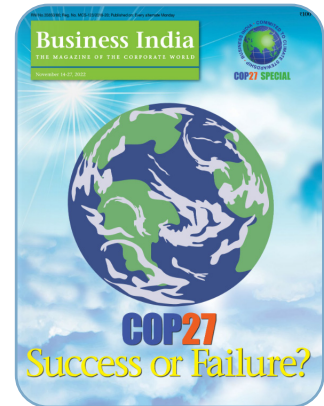
Climate Change And Business

Rijit Sengupta, spoke at the 9th Episode of the Climate Dialogue Series 2022- India on Climate Change and Business. The session touched on what risks businesses and industries should be most concerned about and how businesses can best prepare for a greener future and climate transition approach

Circular Economy Capacity Building For Micro Small And Medium Enterprises

Devyani hari, represented CRB at a capacity building programme for micro small medium enterprises (MSMEs) in ASEAN countries organized by the institute for circular economy development (ICED) and ASEAN-japan centre. The program focused on 3 sectors: agriculture, tourism, textile and fashion.

CRB in Media



Publications



[Subscribe to CRB's Responsible Business Quarterly Newsletter](#)



Contact Us

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

+91 9582994251

info@c4rb.org

www.c4rb.org

www.sustainabilitystandards.in