

EU India Business Collaborative Initiative on Sustainable Development, Climate Action and Inclusivity



1. BACKGROUND

In 2023, the UN in its July report on SDGs raised an alarm, imploring the international community to push for bold actions by stressing that 'business as usual' approaches to sustainability have to stop. It was felt ambitious interventions would be required to salvage the future of millions living in poverty and hunger; women and girls fighting for equal opportunities; communities facing climate disaster or fleeing conflicts. A full-fledged 'rescue plan' was a call of the hour. The 'G20 Leaders Delhi Declaration' later in the year, summarised these concerns as well by emphasising on solutions put together by synchronising national and international policy; driving innovations related to finance, technology and community needs; and moving towards enhancing collaborations across levels.

It is accepted that businesses have adopted various approaches to addressing sustainability challenges including - balancing public and private financing; the incorporation by businesses in their strategies and operations of sustainability principles; finding common thematic sustainability grounds while collaborating with other businesses; reaching out and partnering with supply chain actors to achieve specific impacts. It is also essential to include and partner with academia, the scientific community and CSOs to deliberate on specific sustainability challenges. Although there are citeable examples and good practices on collaboration between businesses, government and other actors on SDGs in India, arguably there is a much greater need to undertake more ambitious actions to facilitate a wider acceptance of collaborative sustainability initiatives. This is required in order to accelerate progress towards specific SDGs.

CRB and the EU Delegation to India have initiated a 2-year project entitled, 'EU India Business Collaborative Initiative on Sustainable Development, Climate Action and Inclusivity' - to enable effective collaborations on sustainability/SDGs involving EU businesses and supply/value chain stakeholders.

2. PROJECT DETAILS

2.1 Goal

Reinforce EU-India cooperation on sustainable modernisation, clean energy, climate action, trade and investment in line with mutually agreed priorities, embracing digitalisation, circular economy and innovation.

2.2 Outcomes

- Collaborative initiative of EU and Indian stakeholders on specific sustainability targets [related to Climate, Biodiversity, Gender and Water] tested and established, within a Global Gateway Team Europe approach.
- Contribute to self-sustaining, industry-led EU-India collaborative initiative on sustainable business in India, applying digitalisation, circular economy and innovation.
- Contribute to policy dialogue to put sustainable trade and investment at the heart of inclusive growth and development between EU and India

2.3 Outputs

- Designed a collaborative initiative driven by EU companies in India contributing to SDGs particularly related to Climate, Water, Biodiversity and Gender
- Developed the structure, governance and service portfolio for the 'EU India Sustainable Business Collaborative Initiative' to support collaboration starting with SDGs related to Climate, Water, Biodiversity and Gender in India.
- Contributed to policy perspectives and discussions for strengthened EU-India sustainable development/sustainability partnerships;
- Developed a How to Guide for EU businesses, their supply/value chain actors and stakeholders on collaborating effectively to address specific sustainability challenges related to Climate, Water, Biodiversity and Gender

3. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

3.1 Knowledge and Analysis

Research will be undertaken to document 'good practices' related to collaborative initiatives of EU businesses with Indian stakeholders contributing positively towards - Climate, Biodiversity, Gender and Water. The research will lead to a report entitled, '*EU India Sustainable Business Collaborative*'.

This draft report will be deliberated in two regional consultations before its finalisation. A '*How to Guide on Sustainable Collaboration*' will be developed based on insights from the report and experts' views, gathered from the two consultations.

3.2 Events and Outreach

The preliminary findings of the research contained in the '*EU India Sustainable Business Collaborative*' report, will be discussed in two regional consultations. One consultation will be held in a State with significant EU business presence (and CSR contribution), while the second could be considered in one with less EU business presence (and little CSR contribution). The focus at the consultations will be to co-develop ideas on how successful collaboration could be designed and implemented at state-level. This 'guide' will leverage and build on existing practices, including a 2023 (CRB and EU Delegation) report, that proposed ingredients for effective collaboration between businesses on sustainability and climate action for India.

3.3 Capacity Building

The project will target up to 120 industry practitioners with the '*How to Guide on Sustainable Business Collaboration*', which will include four training sessions with a target of 25-30 practitioners each. These practitioners selected from the states will include EU businesses, Member States, Bilateral Chambers of Commerce, supply/value chain actors beyond Tier 1 and others. An e-module based on the How to Guide will also be developed and disseminated widely.

3.4 State-level Pilots

The second year will see pilots on sustainable business that embraces circularity, digitalisation/innovation towards achieving positive impacts on climate, biodiversity, gender and water, being designed. This will engage EU and Indian stakeholders in the two states where CRB will identify a group of 6-8 EU businesses, organisations and experts who will be brought together to develop these collaboratives.

4. STAKEHOLDERS

4.1 Project Stakeholders

These will include EU business representatives, Member States, EU Member states' chambers of commerce and industry, various actors in the supply/value chain of EU businesses in the country.

The final beneficiaries are intended to be stakeholders beyond Tier 1 in the supply/value chain of EU businesses which include SMEs, sectoral industry associations, Farmer Producer Organisations, suppliers and manufacturers, entrepreneurs, agri-entrepreneurs, business membership organisations and others industry related institutions. EU member states and chambers of commerce, bilateral forums will be crucial partners to provide vital insights to the project.

4.2 Stakeholder Engagement

The research output, referred to as the EU India Sustainable Business Collaborative report will be deliberated at the two regional consultations inviting insights and inputs from experts and representatives of EU businesses, member states, EU chambers of commerce and other supply chain actors. It will invite active participation from the target groups and beneficiaries of this project to help build confidence in the successful implementation of the project and its objectives. The engagement with stakeholders will include bolstering and building confidence in EU businesses to evaluate supply/value chains in the East and North East where EU presence is low and therefore invest CSR that will align with specific SDGs related to the four impact areas as outlined in this project. This is also intended to be achieved by identifying local drivers of change in the East and North East, who will help the project engage with potential supply chain actors. CRB has partners in Karnataka/Maharashtra and West Bengal who can be relied upon to initiate this engagement.

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