

Goethals News

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Dear Friends,

Corporate Social Responsibility – the act of the corporate sector reinventing itself as a socially conscious citizen eager to give back to the society to which it belongs – is gaining importance by the day. As academicians and captains of the corporate sector work towards finding the common high ground, the Department of Environmental Studies, St. Xavier's College, Kolkata will create a platform for

thought leaders and our students to discuss issues relating to "Environmental Stewardship and Corporate Social Responsibility" as part of the 3rd SXC Global Earth Summit.

This issue of the "Goethal's News" comprise of articles that will be a part of the deliberations at the conference and I am sure they will be of interest to the readers. Industry and Academia can no longer remain in isolation – not because of their complementary nature – but because the need of the hour is a joint, collaborative effort to address the ills facing mankind, especially in the realm of climate change and global warming. Some of the pieces contained herein clearly highlight how the concerns that are global are calling for clear, combined and concise response from humanity per se.

The Goethal's Library has always been in the forefront of expanding the horizons of knowledge. This issue is just another step in the direction of the light that we seek.

With Blessings,
Rev. Fr. Dr. J. Felix Raj, SJ
Director



Corporate Social Responsibility Towards Earth-Centeredness

Fr. Dr. S. Xavier, SJ

HOD, Dep. of Environmental Studies, SXC, Kolkata.

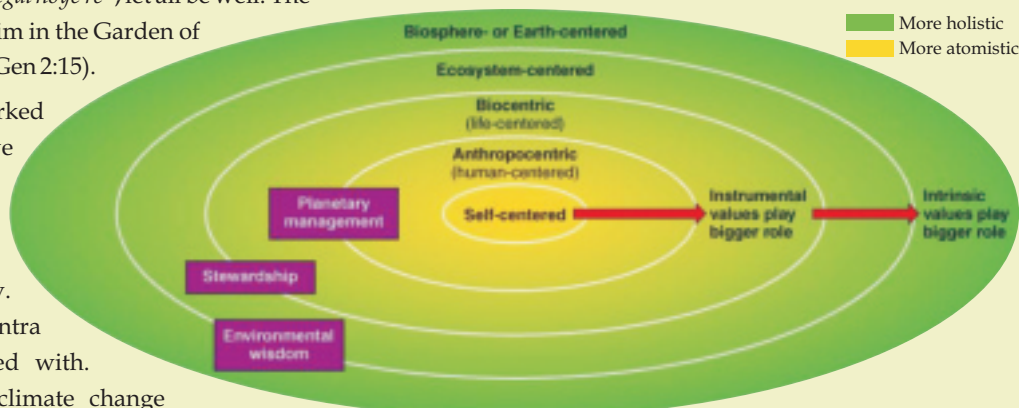
The wellbeing of life is assured by the qualitative and quantitative elements of the environment. When the Creator, at the end of creating the Earth and different form of life, expressed his awe and wonder at

His creation "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good (Gen1:31)." He wished "Sabka mangal hoye re", let all be well. The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen 2:15).

But it is Man's greed that worked towards selfish motive. We have squandered the richness of life and resources with our consumerist lifestyles. "Buy one get one free" is the order of the day. "yeh dil mange more", is the new mantra the youth of today brainwashed with. Advent of new diseases with climate change

playing catalyst threatens our life expectancy.

It is at this juncture, we need to realize that the desire to move from self-centeredness human-centeredness life-centredness ecosystem-centredness **Earth centeredness**. Corporate Social Responsibility plays a vital role to promote the concept of earth-centeredness.





A GREEN PLEDGE

Fatema Kangaroo

B. A. Political Science, IInd Year, SXC, Kolkata.

The responsible use of natural resources and protection of environment by using it in a sustainable manner is referred to as environmental stewardship. Environmental stewardship has a host of concepts attached to it, of which the resilience of the ecosystem is one of the key concerns. Resilience basically implies to the ability of an ecosystem to recover or regenerate after suffering from some kind of damage or loss. Example: when a part of the grassland is destroyed due to over grazing, the land remains barren and thus may eventually be eroded. But if the grassland is looked after by introducing fertilizers and manures which would enhance the growth of the grass again, the grassland may attain its original form and thus continue to perform its survival functions. Therefore, environmental stewardship on the lines of resilience can be understood when the two words are looked into separately: 1) The Environmental system that provides a range of ecological services and 2) Stewardship which emphasis the roles of the environmental managers which look into the resource distribution and allocation.

People depend on natural resources directly and indirectly for a livelihood. But with rising population, these resources are increasingly exploited to benefit the producers which adversely affect the environment. This has been going on for decades and seems to be an eye opener. Thus, the population and the business community needs to be environmentally responsible and accountable. It is not just the responsibility of those who derive energy resources but also of those who are in anyway dependant on Mother Nature for their survival and livelihood. It is often seen that

large business houses and industries overuse and exploit the natural resources in such a way that the damage is irreparable. But the fact the resources are suffering a great deal due to such greed of the industrialists, makes it their responsibility to devote some time and finance into developing ways for sustainable use of resources. Other ways of ensuring sustainable production is compliance with the existing environmental laws of the country, reducing waste generation, heading community works etc. There are remarkable examples which have been set up by large corporate houses which are successfully functioning on sustainable lines and also doing their bit to save the degrading environment.

The growth of environmental stewardship is truly global. Though this concern was initially considered as 'the luxury of the West' as termed by most developing nations in the world, the concern was hard to contain. It soon crept into all the industrial nations of the world making them aware of the damage already done and the initiatives needed to be taken to repair it. The stewardship is now not just a concern in big industrial houses but also smaller industries. A fact that clearly needs to be understood is that environmental stewardship should not be limited to just industrial houses. As a member of the community and society anyone may take the initiative to perform his set of duties towards saving the environment. By assuming the leadership role one can increasingly participate in environment friendly activities and volunteer to work on a few local projects. When a government engages in environmental stewardship it tends to give it a legal status hence international recognition to the world economy about its new initiative. It helps not only to improve the image of the country but also results in eventually lower costs and safe working environment. Thus one should always remember that what we do today makes an incredible upon our future.

INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA INTERFACE

A STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

Namrata Roy and Vikramjit Lahiri

M.Sc Bio Technology, 11th Year, SXC, Kolkata.



Welcome to the Anthropocene, the Age of Man in the Quaternary era of Geological time! Man occupies the high seat of dominance in this era. Man has developed himself to occupy the niche of the 'ultimate consumer'. But, somewhere along the line, Man has been recklessly careless. Man somehow forgot that he was, he is and he will always be a part of Nature. He desired to control Nature and her elements. Alas! That was not to be. As He polluted the environment, plundered resources and destroyed biodiversity, He threw the world into crisis. What could He do now?

Man has found an answer to this question in the form of Sustainable Development. In effect, it is resource use with emphasis on conservation. Sustainability calls for minimum wastage and maximum reuse and recycling. It stresses on reducing harmful impacts of human development on the environment. Sustainability does not imply that we stop using natural resources; it dictates that we utilize them judiciously. One of the prime reasons often and widely cited for environmental degradation is industrialization. Industries pollute and generate waste. Yet, we simply cannot do without them. So, an optimization of both facets is required. We need our industries to pollute less, to recycle more; to waste less and reuse more.

The academia can play a very important role in environmental conservation by shaping the minds of tomorrow. The academia can

bring about awareness both on and off campus. The more people understand their environment, the more they can do to conserve and improve it. Academic institutions, through its students, can reach out to various communities, thus bringing about change on a larger scale than industries can. Many academic institutions are situated in such areas. By taking an initiative, they can not only improve conditions on campus but also reduce the problem in the surroundings.

The academia can play its most important role in leading innovation. Innovation from the academia is very necessary for progress on the road to a greener world. With the conventional methods of agriculture, energy harnessing etc. becoming increasingly less eco friendly, cleaner and greener methods to meet the needs of an

ever growing population becomes an imperative.

The industry on its part should co-operate with the academia by putting the innovations to practical use, moving away from the so called 'conventional' methods and provide greater scope for research and development within their own departments. Industries should take part actively in the innovation processes and provide enthusiasm to the academia.

Many academic institutions are now waking up to the needs of the environment and taking major strides towards conservation and sustainability. The following is an example of the academia rising to its responsibility: Harvard began a Green Campus Initiative in 2000 and has continued to grow its 'green roots' since then. The 'Sustainability at Harvard' project focuses on the energy conservation in campus buildings and the integrated local and organic produce in the school cafeterias; a recent project being synthesis of biodiesel from kitchen oil and its use in the university buses.

Sustainability might seem to be a utopian concept, but that is our only shot at getting back the pollution-free world, a world without anthropogenic extinctions, that Man once inhabited. The chance must not be passed up. Sustainable development is the need of the hour. Our environment and resources have to be conserved, for our very own survival. We need to preserve our planet; it's not like we can go shopping somewhere else in the cosmos.

AN ANALYSIS OF

CLEAN

DEVELOPMENT

MECHANISM



Akanksha Naygandhi and Prerna Dokania

B.Sc Economics, IInd Year, SXC, Kolkata.

Live and let live! Irrational exploitation of natural resources by humankind to fulfill its self-oriented ambitions, have in fact deteriorated the quality of life on earth! Economic development and environment degradation are complementaries, but it is the need of the hour to choose health over money.

The “green mile” is the short mile that a prisoner walks before he is executed on prison grounds. “Humankind should put an end to environment degradation, or environment degradation will put an end to humankind.” As humankind approaches the doomsday, we cannot afford to be oblivious to the crime we have committed, to the ethics we have violated, to the wrath we are going to face its time we take responsibility for being passive (read : ignorant). The errant and the sufferer will face the same consequences. Its time to solve this “free riding problem” , to harmonise development and environment , to do justice to all life forms, to do justice to humankind – the errant should pay for the benefit of the sufferer.

The CDM is a flexible mechanism (Article 12) of the Kyoto Protocol IPCC 2007, which generate CER units that are used in emission trading schemes. CDM meets two objectives, firstly, to assist parties not included in Annex I (industrialized nations) in achieving sustainable development; and secondly, to assist parties included in Annex I in achieving compliance with their quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments. CDM is supervised by CDM Executive Board (CDM EB) and is guided by the Conference of Parties (COP) and they make sure that the Certified CERs are issued if there is actual and additional reduction in emission owing to being CDM based. This explains the principle of “additionality”. CDM project activity might involve, for example, a rural electrification project using solar panels or the installation of more energy-efficient boilers.

Employing eco-friendly, non-polluting methods, involve higher prices attached to production process. The concept of CDM revolves round the setting off of such additional costs borne by host countries , through purchase of CER by the annex 1 countries. The project mitigation cost (PMC) is the present value of all capital and

operating costs over the life of the project less the present value of any revenue from sources other than the sale of CERs (e.g. for electricity generated), divided by the anticipated emission reductions over the life of the project.

We observe that as the amount of CO₂ reduction rises , the cost of remodelling the domestic industries rises. Now if such CER are available in the market for a price say P, the annex 1 countries would prefer buying the CERs for all reduction above the price line, because it will be a cost advantage for them. While if the target can be achieved at lower cost, below the price line, CERs shall not be bought.

The potential impacts are technology transfer, financing, net global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy security, clean energy investment and the regional distribution of projects.

Thus, though CDM offers relative flexibility to annex 1 countries to meet their targets, they still gain from the prospect of, being able to shift the burden unto the host countries in name of sustainably development projects. Hence the question still remains, is the sinner paying for the sin he/she has committed. Is this the green mile we want? Is it even making a difference in the aggregate sense! Because the social cost remains same, the total pollution level of annex 1 industries are secured!?

Let justice prevail and let the sinners pay for the impairment they have caused. There can be a policy of imposing sin tax. Sin tax will be a tax paid by the countries who have been disgraceful to the environment. It is usually found that the sin committed is directly proportional to the extent to which the countries have been developed, in turn their GDP. So, for example GDP of an Annex 1 country is 6 units and of a host country is 3 units then they should pay tax in the ratio of 2:1. This tax can then be collected by the United Nations (thereby acting as a OMBUDSMAN), and can allocate the funds according to the renewable energy prospects in the developing countries. Thus, the errant pays for the benefit of the sufferers.

Is "Environmental Stewardship" The Answer To All Our Woes?

Kanwarjit Singh Arora and Ophelia John

B.A. Multimedia, IIIrd Year, SXC, Kolkata.

*"I brought you into a fertile land to eat its fruit and rich produce. But you came and defiled my land and you made my inheritance detestable." Jer. 2:7.
"And He called him and said to him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous in much. You cannot serve both God and mammon...." Luke 16:2,10,13.*



The above mentioned references from the Bible are not merely just words to be adorned and ornamented in the form of a thought-provoking quote but a step towards stirring our souls and their so-called thriving consciousness about their surroundings. It is a *death bell*, if I may say so, to call attention towards the deterioration and adulteration in our environment. It also strives to take necessary steps for saving our depleting resources - to wind down the malaise-stricken Earth from the shadows of our ill-actions which are at a spitting distance to cause irreparable loss to mankind.

Today, the need of the hour and one's priority is to selflessly protect the environment without thinking about the others' contribution in it and nurture it for the prosperity and well-being of mankind. It is here the concept of "Environmental Stewardship" comes into prominence. At the most basic level, stewardship means taking responsibility for our choices. Therefore, "Environmental Stewardship" simply means the mankind's responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices.

This sense of responsibility is a value that can be reflected through the choices of individuals, companies, communities, and government organizations, and shaped by unique environmental, social, and economic interests. It is also a behaviour demonstrated through continuous improvement of environmental performance and a commitment to efficient use of natural resources, protection of ecosystems and a baseline of compliance with environmental requirements. Environmental stewardship is not a new phenomenon. In fact, it has deep and diverse roots in our country. From farming to hunting, from conservation practices to spiritual beliefs, one can find an appreciation for natural resources and the valuable services they provide in many diverse settings.

Environmental stewardship also offers a powerful tool for governance, particularly at this point in time. While this country has made tremendous progress in addressing the most visible and egregious forms of pollution - that is to say, from smokestacks and wastewater pipes - we still face the challenge of dealing with countless small, diffuse sources of pollution, such as polluted runoff and individual vehicle emissions. We also face the loss of habitat and biodiversity within ecosystems and emerging issues, such as the unknown environmental impacts of nanotechnology. For many of these problems, stewardship solutions seem to offer the best approach because they frequently address the root causes.

Businesses are investing in environmental stewardship because it results in lower expenses, better products, a stronger corporate brand and improved relationships with neighbors, suppliers, customers and government regulators. Government agencies are creating incentives that can lead people and organizations to voluntarily make environmentally-sound choices. These trends suggest that the time is right for a broad-based commitment to environmental stewardship.

Organizations and people from different walks of life still possess the inhibition of adopting stewardship behaviours owing to several reasons, for instance, the perception that small actions do not really make a difference, difficulty in making "Green Products" competitive in the marketplace, lack of attention to environmental performance by investment and financial institutions - to name a few. It is in these circumstances that as a leading environmental agency, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has an important role to play in promoting environmental stewardship within businesses and communities all around the world.

In company to this, the Environmental Stewardship Program (ESP) is an Australian Government initiative that focuses on the long-term protection, rehabilitation and improvement of targeted environmental assets on private land or impacted by activities conducted on private land, including freehold and leasehold. The Stewardship Program is jointly administered by the Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. The Environmental Stewardship Program provides long-term opportunities for farmers to get involved in conservation of their land and supports the vital role our farmers in biodiversity conservation and the stewardship of our natural environment.

With "Environmental Stewardship" under our belt, we can go a long way to address our environmental problems and seek an answer to our woes.

HOW GREEN IS CSR?



Three major reports (of recent years) documenting what can happen in the absence of regulation:

- In the year 2000, Coca-Cola which emphasizes 'using natural resources responsibly', is accused of depleting village wells, in India, in an area where water is notoriously scarce.
- In January 2002, *Hooked on Tobacco* raised serious concerns about the health, safety and livelihoods of contracted farmers growing tobacco for a subsidiary of British American Tobacco in southern Brazil.
- In May 2003, *Fuelling Poverty: Oil, War and Corruption* examined the curse of oil on poor communities in resource-rich developing countries like the Shell in Nigeria.

Neha Modi

BBA, IInd Year, SXC, Kolkata.

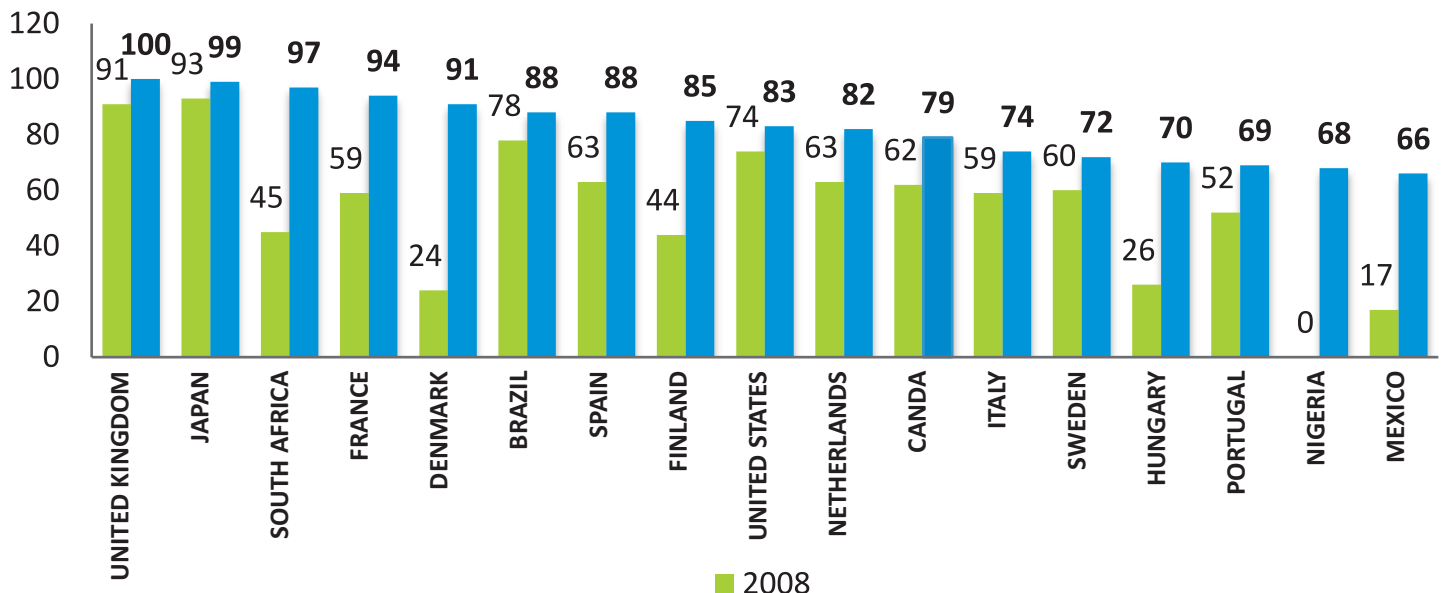
Time and again flaws in self-regulation appear in the gap between the claims of company CSR policies and the reality of poor communities affected by corporate actions. While there are some companies that act responsibly much of the time, and many companies that act responsibly some of the time, the CSR landscape is uneven and full of potholes. CSR has become a source of profit for the organization and not for the environment. The organizations that emphasizes on CSR most frequently, prove out to be the ones that are often found engaged in exploiting the environment, causing depletion of the resources of environment, damaging the environment as a whole.

This report follows up that work and documents the activities of three multinational corporations that have made much of their CSR activities - Coca-Cola, British American Tobacco and Shell. It measures the commitment they have made to more responsible corporate behaviour against their impact on poor communities in three specific instances. It finds that their actions do not, in these cases, match their words on CSR.

COCA-COLA, PLACHIMADA (KERELA)

Coca-Cola emphasizes 'using natural resources responsibly'. Yet a wholly owned subsidiary in India is accused of depleting village wells in an area where water is notoriously scarce.

The community's water is drawn up from the ground by the factory's pumps and processed by its machinery into cola, other



% of Companies Reporting CR Performance by Country for 2008 (green) and 2011 (blue)



fizzy drinks and even, ironically, a carbonated water called 'Kinley'. It then leaves the factory in bottles on the back of trucks. From Plachimada it is transported to Indian towns and cities where it is bought by those who can afford bottled water. Water is drawn from the wells of these community people to the tables of the urban elites, courtesy of Coca-Cola.

The company, in violation of laws, has been extracting 8 lakh liters to 15 lakh liters/day. The company has been dumping the sludge and slurry on lands of unsuspecting farmers promoting their use as fertilizers. The consequence of the company's blatant use, misuse and violations of existing laws along with the connivance of the concerned departments of the governments have led to the depletion and degradation of the natural resources like groundwater and land in the vicinity.

Water samples have also been analyzed by Dr. Mark Chernaik, a biochemist from Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (E-Law) - a network of American lawyers, scientists and environmental experts working to promote environmental protection. He found high levels of dissolved salts in the water, commensurate with rapid depletion of the aquifer. "Water from the two wells would be classified as 'very hard'," says Dr. Chernaik. In his report, he concludes that: 'Use of this water even for bathing and washing would cause severe nuisance and hardship.'

Coca-Cola closed the plant in 2005 because of protests by activists and residents. The environmental report found high levels of cadmium in the sludge caused declining crop yields, forcing substantial migration and steep unemployment in the area. Coca-Cola disputes the findings, pending a court ruling.

Coke had 100 percent equity in India. Their investment was not much. They came into the country with 600,000 rupees, which at the present rate of exchange is less than \$20,000. On this 600,000 rupee investment, they had taken out of the country, by a modest estimate, 250 million rupees (about \$8 million) as profit in the twenty years they had been in the country.

WE NEED TO ACT NOW

Priyanka Bajaj

B.A. Multimedia, IIIrd Year, SXC, Kolkata.

In this era of globalization,
there is a global concern awaiting our attention!

First, what is it?
Is it development, is it wars
is it politics, is it economy
or is it terrorism?
NO to all this, but yes to GLOBAL WARMING
cause this is what is most harming...
it is the rise in the surface's temperature,
because of greenhouse gases' enhancing nature.
which is devastating the wonderful living life,
no less but causing a global strife...

Second , what are the causes?
not one, but everyone knows
yes , it is the high emission of greenhouse gases,
it is the energy demands of the growing population,
it is deforestation,
and not to forget from the 1800s the rapid industrialization.
in short it is the humans....

Third , how will it affect us?
I am sure we don't know why DO we need to make it a big fuss?
it will...it will lead to the loss of this beautiful world,
the climatic changes, changes in the pattern of rainfall,
change in the flow of the rivers ,
more of floods, droughts, tornadoes and storms,
melting of ice sheets, increase in the water level
and also the extinction of several species...
last but not the least,
it will and will definitely lead to the decline of the human race.....

Fourth, what can we do ?
we can..we can cut down the emissions of the greenhouse gases,
save energy, save water, spread awareness,
limit or just put a stop to the use of vehicles moving on fossil fuels.
minimize the rate of pollution,
plant trees and design the environment.

TO SAVE OUR EARTH,
TO SAVE OUR WORLD,
TO SAVE OUR NATURE,
TO SAVE OUR LIFE,

We need to
We need to think like David Suzuki,
We need to behave like Wangari Mathai,
We need to work like John Todd.

What we need to do now is to take a bow
and say "WE NEED TO ACT NOW!!!!!!!"

(David Suzuki is a Japanese Environmentalist, Wangari Mathai is African Environmental Activist and John Todd is an American Environment Designer)

CSR IN INDIA

Keyur Agarwal, Divek Sadhwani, Harshil Agarwal and Shubham Kejriwal

BBA, IInd Year, SXC, Kolkata



CSR is not a new concept in India. Since its inception, corporates like the Tata Group, the Aditya Birla Group, Indian Oil Corporation been involved in serving the community. Through Charity and Donations, organisations have been doing their part for the society. The basic objective is to maximise the overall impact on the society and stakeholders. Corporates feel that CSR is not a form of indirect expense but it is important for protecting the goodwill and reputation, defending attacks and increasing business competitiveness.

Companies have specialised CSR teams that formulate policies, strategies and goals for their CSR programs and set aside budgets to fund them. These programs are often determined by social philosophy which have clear objectives and are well defined and are aligned with the main stream business. The programs are put into practice by the employees who are crucial to this process. CSR programs ranges from community development to development in education, environment and healthcare etc.

For example, a more comprehensive method of development is adopted by some corporations such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Unilever Limited. Provision of improved medical and sanitation facilities, building schools and houses, and empowering the villagers and in process making them more self-reliant by providing vocational training and a knowledge of business operations are the facilities that these corporations focus on. Many of the companies are helping other peoples by providing

them good standard of living. On the other hand, the CSR programs of corporations like GlaxoSmithKline Pharmaceuticals' focus on the health aspect of the community. They set up health camps in tribal villages which offer medical check-ups and treatment and undertake health awareness programs.

Also Corporates increasingly join hands with Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and use their expertise in devising programs which address wider social problems. For example, a lot of work is being undertaken to rebuild the lives of the tsunami affected victims. The SAP Labs Center of HOPE in Bangalore was started by this venture which looks after the food, clothing, shelter and medical care of street children.

Not one but all corporates should try and bring about a change in the current social situation in India in order to have an effective and lasting solution to the social woes . Partnerships between companies, NGOs and the government should be facilitated so that a combination of skills such as expertise, strategic thinking, manpower and money to initiate extensive social change will put the socio-economic development of India on a fast track.

The government of India is a considering to pass a law that would make CSR mandatory for the Indian industry. The debate was started last year in December when the Indian government proposed to change the Original Companies act from 1956 and add a number of amendments to the Companies Bill. The new Bill decrees that companies worth \$100 million or above or that meet similar standards should dedicate 2% of their net profits to CSR activities. The Government not only sought to force companies to invest 2% of their net profits in CSR actions but also to make reporting mandatory so companies would provide explanation whether they were able to allocate this annual amount to CSR activities. This year the Indian government decided that CSR will remain voluntary but reporting is compulsory.



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Subham Agarwal, Deepak Aarwalla, Piyush Choudhary and E. Akshay

B.Com (M), 11th Year, SXC, Kolkata.



I would like to start with a quote said by Architect Frank Lloyd Wright, famous for his eco-friendly structures, *"The best friend on Earth of man is Tree"*.

And rightly so, no other living thing provides as many priceless services to mankind. Trees provide us with life saving medicines, improve the quality of air, protecting watersheds, etc. We here are talking about the environment major part of which consists of trees. Of late the concept of environmental stewardship has grown up due to the ever increasing demands of the mankind causing deforestation, rehabilitation of several species and even extinction of them. Lets understand the term stewardship. As a term 'STEWARDSHIP' means to 'take care of something without thinking about our own selfish needs'.

Historically, stewardship referred to the occupation of a steward, initially, given to household servants to bring food and drinks to a castle dining hall. The term was then expanded to indicate a household employee's responsibility for managing household or domestic affairs. The term continues to be used in these specific ways, but it is also used in a more general way to refer to a responsibility to take care of something belonging to someone else.

The link between stewardship and environmentalism is a contentious one. What does it mean for humans 'to take care of the world'? Environmental stewardship is typically thought of as entailing reducing human impacts into the natural world. However, Neil Paul Cummins claims that humans have a special stewardship role on the planet because through their technology humans are able to save life from otherwise certain elimination. Thus Environmental stewardship as a whole refers to taking care of the environment without thinking of our own personal interests. Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices. Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) championed environmental stewardship based on a land ethic "dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it."

Environmental Stewardship has a number of wide ranging objectives, which include, Protection of water and soil, Prevention of erosion and water pollution, Flood management, Wildlife conservation etc.

The methods by which environmental stewardship can be adopted are very common and we all know a lot about it just we need to act now. They are conservation, recycling, reuse, restoration, etc. These are practiced by many of us but that is not sufficient enough. The main people who should be responsible about the environment are those whose actions affect the environment. They need to become environmental caretakers or the environmental stewards.

Coming to the environmental stewards they can be defined as individuals or the organizations putting systems in place that will enable them to use resources efficiently, reduce waste and minimize on the negative impacts on the environment and provide a healthy, more efficient and effective working environment. Two important definitions relating to stewardship is energy conservation and energy efficiency. An example -a fluorescent bulb as opposed to an incandescent bulb. Capital improvements and retrofits can also enhance Energy efficiency.

So in short all a environmental steward needs to do now is to protect the environment by the above given methods. If such a caretaker of the environment can apply those method tactfully then it will surely improve the quality of the environment and will be surely a superhero saving and protecting the environment. Otherwise if not taken seriously now then such a steward will become an upcoming comic strip character. The need of the hour therefore is two-fold: to detach ownership and execution and to unite academic excellence with industrial precision. Together we can create a unified human response in the form of environmental stewardship.

GREEN FACE OF CSR?



Sourav Mukherjee and Prachi Agarwal

BA, Multimedia, SXC, Kolkata

We are made wise not by the recollection of our past but by the responsibility for our future" on the verge of this 21st century these lines of sir George Bernard Shaw are still very much applicable not only in the journey of human morality but as well as in the context of today's corporatisation and industrialisation. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not a new concept, but over the past decade its focus has shifted from labor issues and local philanthropy towards environmental actions. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Corporate Responsibility (CR) or Sustainable Business are commonly heard, but rarely understood, phrases. So what does it all mean?

Is planting saplings by the employees of a company on a particular day of the year CSR? Or

The using of a Green Logo for the company/products a CSR Initiative?

Corporate Social Responsibility is concerned with treating the stakeholders of a company or institution ethically or in a responsible manner. 'Ethically or responsible' means treating key stakeholders in a manner deemed acceptable according to international norms. The whole point of this movement is to encourage companies to make profits while subjecting the 'process' to responsible behaviour, i.e. it is not profits at any cost but how profits are made.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is about businesses considering the interests of society by taking responsibility for the impact of their activities on everything and everyone they touch, including the environment. Green is a philosophy and social

concern for the conservation and improvement of the environment.

In the backdrop of tough competition and "Liberalisation - Privatisation - Globalisation" (LPG) wave sweeping through countries and continents, the Government and corporate are realising that a growth without a social face cannot be sustained for long. They are increasingly heeding concepts like 'inclusive growth', 'Responsible Business Enterprise', and to cap it all - Good Corporate Governance practices. As such, they are successfully intertwining their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with their business strategies to the benefit of all.

CSR is strictly a voluntary action of a company to go beyond business. CSR however, is not a mannequin to cover up

the business activities to make them look 'good'.

A prominent case against Nike in the US Supreme Court illustrates this point. This case simply reinforces the criticism that CSR is nothing more than a PR exercise. Corporations would not be so concerned about potential legal actions if they valued truth, transparency and accountability as much as they claim. The submissions to the court show how important it is for corporate America to defend itself against a legal ruling which would make it more difficult for companies to make false and misleading statements to defend their image.

Like the iceberg, most CSR activity is invisible...It is often an active attempt to increase corporate domination rather than simply a defensive 'image management' operation.

Now, to answer the question that we started with, How Green is CSR? And bearing in mind what we have discussed here. We can say that Green and CSR are different concepts from the same idea, still we are asked to believe that corporate persons - institutional psychopaths who lack any sense of moral conviction and who have the power and motivation to cause harm and devastation in the world - should be left free to govern themselves.'

The idea of sustainable development, each concept fulfilling the other as its natural and perfect compliment. While CSR includes economic and environmental responsibility it seeks to withhold the philosophy that is conveyed by Green.

Once Abraham Lincoln Said - "You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today".



CLEAN ENERGY OPTIONS

Soumendu Das

B.Com (M), 1st year, SXC, Kolkata

Clean technology has moved from vision to reality, and it's now a priority on the CEOs agenda of every company. Due in part to rising energy costs and national attention to global climate change, the clean technology industry is a new and rapidly growing industry. Today more companies than ever have realized that they can become "green" and also in effect profitable. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) has successfully demonstrated that market based mechanisms can achieve some cost effective emissions reductions in developing countries.

Solar, wind, biomass, geothermal and some types of hydropower are all considered to be types of renewable energy which many a times helps to emerge the concept of CDM. Traditional dirty forms of energy such as petroleum, coal, natural gas and nuclear electric power all give off harmful by-products when used.

The CDM has two-fold purpose-

To assist developing nations in achieving sustainable development, thereby contributing to the ultimate objective of the convention, and

To assist developed nations in achieving compliance with part of their quantifies emissions and reduction commitments

The highly industrialized countries (known as Annex 1 Parties) have a legally-binding obligation under the Kyoto Protocol to achieve quantified reductions in their enormous GHG emissions. The less developed countries (non-Annex 1 Parties) are not required to reduce their comparatively small emissions.

In effect, the CDM allows countries to continue emitting greenhouse gases, so long as they pay for reductions made elsewhere. The justification for this is based on the premise that it would be far more expensive to implement emission reductions in industrialized countries than in developing countries; and, in addition, the developing countries would gain sustainable development benefits from the entry of "clean" and more energy-efficient technologies. During the last "Rio20" Earth Summit the Kyoto Protocol has been affirmed again.

Clean technology is term that describes devices used to capture and distribute energy with less harmful effects on the environment than

traditional techniques. The terms 'alternative energy', 'fuel-efficiency', 'renewable' and 'clean' are sometimes considered substitutes. However, these terms are not interchangeable. For example not every type of renewable energy is clean and clean is not only comprised of sustainable renewable energy practices.

A CDM project activity might involve, for example, a rural electrification project using solar panels or the installation of more energy-efficient boilers. The mechanism stimulates sustainable development and emission reductions, while giving industrialized countries some flexibility in how they meet their emission reduction or limitation targets.

Greening programme in India

The Government of India has recognized climate change as a significant challenge and as a step towards mitigation and adaptation, National Action Plan on Climate Change has been released (30 June 2008) which also identifies potential role of CDM Program of Activities (PoA). The Action Plan identifies possible role of CDM PoA in financing efficient technologies and emphasizes on mainstreaming CDM PoA. Development in the priority sector, like households, small and medium enterprises and rural areas sectors is significant in economic growth and energy security of the country. Dispersed nature of the activities, lack of awareness about best practices and access to finance has restricted sufficient actions in these areas. As per the NAPCC, India's priority in days to come is to maintain the growth to cop up with the demand of increasing population. This has to be done in coherence with the resolution that country's per capita emissions will never exceed those of developed countries. To achieve this, economy will have to adapt low carbon or no carbon measures. Programmatic CDM route can be effective way of doing this. The Government has pointed seven major project areas like Family Type Biogas Plants programme, Medium & Large Size Biogas Plants programme, Solar Water Heating, Solar Cooking programme, Improved Cook stove programme, Biomass Applications in Industry and Village Electrification programme, for identifying potential in PoA CDM and proposes possible frameworks to implement these programs.

Rating NGO's to empower the CSR movement



Mahua Basu

Professor of Environmental Studies, SXC, Kolkata

Corporate Social Responsibility – the very term sounds so vaingloriously pious. Corporates, giving up their core concern of wealth creation turning their attention and loosening their purse strings for the benefit of the society at large. Entities giving back to society to which they belong, a part of the lucre they earn from it. Caring and sharing for the greatest good of all.

Naturally, CSR makes good copy and corporate entities around the world have been quick to hitch a ride on the bandwagon – filling their web space and glossies with clichés and innuendoes. Green Audits and Social Faces have become the order of the day – but has anything really been achieved? Has CSR delivered the soothing balm on society and her myriad woes that it was supposed to heal? Hardly. But instead of being drawn into the debate let us take a look as to what can be done to empower the CSR movement.

Having seen the movement from very close quarters and having interacted with all concerned I feel the basic reason why CSR has not taken off the way it should have is not because of a lack of will or the availability of funds with the corporates but more for the unavailability of channels for their gainful deployment. It is not right to label the corporates as callous and expect them to spend time and energies to channel their funds to the grassroots. They can provide the funds and ensure their proper deployment, but to expect them to actually go to the bottom of the pyramid and ensure execution – now that is taking things a bit too far.

This last mile connectivity, as it were, can be provided by the NGO's, who acting as conduits of corporate funds can really ensure a paradigm shift but here too there is a problem. "How do we know which NGO is genuine and which one is not" asked an exasperated CEO? "Most of them comprise of irritatingly intellectual individuals sermonizing about climate change from the cold confines of star rated properties. Who will guarantee that our funds will not be embezzled? That the ultimate purpose will be served?"

Fair Question and it is here that a holistic view needs to be adopted. Why can't we have an independent body – like CRISIL or ICRA – rating the NGO's and their projects? Let the NGO's submit themselves and their projects for evaluation and ranking to this body for a fee. These rated and ranked NGO's and their

projects can either be made available for funding by the corporates directly through the rating agency, or better still, through the various chambers of trade, industry and commerce. As a matter of fact, the rating agency, the trade bodies and other stakeholders can consult the Central and the State Governments to draw up a priority list so as to channel funds into sectors that need them the most.

This way, the Corporates will not have to worry about the actual deployment of their funds and the efficacy thereof while the cash strapped "genuine" NGO's will have easy access to funds they so desperately need. Being monitored and open for inspection by a professional body, the pilferage and leakages can be plugged to a very great extent.

What's in it for the corporates? Apart from the chance of walking the CSR talk they can earn ratings on their CSR performance from the same agency, which they can use as another feather in their or communication plume as opposed to hiding behind the clichés that nobody takes seriously. However there will be another game changer that the corporate sector should adopt in order for CSR to bloom. The corporates must rise above the "donate and forget" attitude towards CSR. They must encourage more employees to offer time for community development and must earmark resources (not only money) for CSR efforts – how about taking the local school's children to the shop floor to show them how you work? Or for that matter, why not lend some of the professionals to the local school where they can share their knowledge with the students and really spread the light of knowledge? Is it time to think anew?