

# CSR TODAY

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**URBAN INDUSTRY SHOULD  
INVEST IN GREEN SOLUTIONS  
FOR COVID-19 RELATED**

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## **CSR INITIATIVE**

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## **CSR CONCERN**

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## **CSR FUTURE**

Eco-friendly Consumer Start-up 'The Better Home' Launches Home Cleaning Products





# CSR TODAY

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# We need to have a relook at CSR



**Rajesh Tiwari**  
Publisher  
[rt@iccsr.org](mailto:rt@iccsr.org)

**CSR IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH LIKE-MINDED PARTNERS OF THE SOCIETY AT LARGE. AND FOR CORPORATES, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST PERTINENT MEANS TO CONNECT WITH THEIR AUDIENCE. IT SENDS A MESSAGE THAT IF YOU HAVE COME UP WITH A BIG PLAN, IT WILL EVENTUALLY HELP THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic has posed many challenges, across sectors. The changing dynamics perhaps calls for the need to have a relook at the way the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) works. Not much, but some changes here and there may be needed.

The Centre has recently urged more companies to take up CSR in a big way. "Historically speaking, social responsibility is one of the well established phenomena in India and the country has the world's richest tradition of CSR," said Minister of State for Finance and Corporate Affairs Anurag Thakur at the 18th FICCI CSR Awards event.

"CSR is an opportunity to work with like-minded partners of the society at large. And for corporates, it is one of the most pertinent means to connect with their audience. It sends a message that if you have come up with a big plan, it will eventually help the local community," he said, urging companies to participate in CSR activities proactively.

At the event, he also discussed various government initiatives to push companies to take up CSR activities and said that firms must themselves seek out to control the damage that they do to the environment and nature. "Not only in neighbouring areas but all over the country, if you will there is a need to uplift and help, you must do that," he said.

A well planned and well-executed CSR activity can help in fostering a strong bond between the company and its people. It also helps in developing a deeper human connection. He added that the consumers now are also aware and they like to align with companies that invest their time, money and efforts in creating a sustainable environment for all.

From this financial year, the focus of CSR activities is concentrated in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic and addressing lockdown issues.

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund, or PM CARES Fund, that was set up in view of the pandemic, has been the biggest beneficiary. Donations to the fund qualify as CSR and are eligible for 100% deduction under Section 80G of the IT Act. Inadvertently, the fundraising by PM CARES has hit the flow of CSR funds towards other NGOs.

The NGOs and voluntary organisations are struggling to raise funds for causes other than COVID-19 as individuals and companies donate more towards relief measures. In FY21 so far, funding for non-government organisations (NGOs) has lowered 43 percent from FY20, according to a report. During the same period in FY21, funding not directed towards a specific initiative has plunged 63 percent, the report said.

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## STL and World Bank's 2030 Water Resources Group Join Forces to Combat the Widespread Water Crisis



**S**TL, an industry leading integrator of digital networks, today announced its collaboration with 2030 Water Resources Group, a public, private, civil society partnership hosted by the World Bank Group. STL and World Bank's 2030 Water Resources Group will proactively work towards identifying innovative and tech-driven solutions to conserve water resources and promote water security.

The growing demand for the world's water resources to meet domestic, industrial and agricultural needs has been increasingly adding to the already existing water predicament. The CWMI report states that by 2030, India's water demand is projected to be twice the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for millions of people and an eventual six percent loss in the country's GDP. Water conservation is one of the initiatives that STL has been consistently working on. Through various programs in Aurangabad, the

company replenished over 785,000 cubic meters of water in the community, benefitted over 28,000 lives and has even reduced its freshwater intake for manufacturing.

STL and World Bank's 2030 Water Resources Group (2030WRG) aim to address the water crisis by designing and working on joint programs that include:

- Exploring unique approaches for applications of appropriately treated wastewater for groundwater recharge
- Conserving water
- Enabling access to clean and safe drinking water
- Applying treated water for afforestation
- Sensitizing stakeholders through community engagement programs

Commenting on the partnership, Akanksha Sharma, Head CSR and Sustainability, STL said, "STL proudly champions sustainable, socially responsible business practices and

undertakes community development initiatives. STL has been relentlessly working to improve the quality of life for marginalized and rural communities. Water scarcity in India is a prevailing issue and needs immediate attention. We need to address the root cause; depleting ground water tables and improper use of this resource. STL is delighted to partner with 2030WRG and embark on a holistic and unique program that addresses each of these issues simultaneously. Our aim is to create shared value for the community by promoting sufficient access to clean water for everyone."

"Water conservation continues to be a global challenge and at 2030WRG, we are continuously exploring innovative technologies for solving this. We have been pleased to see that STL has implemented various water conservation initiatives at its Aurangabad facility as well for the surrounding communities. We are excited to partner with them to bring technological advancements in water conservation and look forward to working together", said Ajith Radhakrishnan, Country Coordinator India, 2030 Water Resources Group, World Bank.

STL and 2030WRG, through this comprehensive and distinctive program; reinforced through STL's operations, will start with Aurangabad and intends to transform the region in a way that it can claim water security and no water scarcity.

## GMRVF Hyderabad Center Introduces online Skill-based Training Courses for Youth during COVID-19 times

**W**hile the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the shutdown of educational institutions and training centers across the nation, GMR Varalakshmi Foundation (GMRVF), the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) arm of GMR Group has introduced an innovative online solution to train school/college dropout youth to enhance their employability skillsets during the lock-down.

GMRVCEL (GMR Varalakshmi Centre for Empowerment and Livelihoods-Hyderabad) at Shamshabad is a Skill Development Centre supported under CSR of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited bad International Airport, which has been offering several skill based training facilities to the unemployed youth from across the state since 2008. However, due to compulsive shut-down of the training center amidst Covid-19 pandemic, this was impacting the youth adversely who were dependent upon the skill-based training courses imparted by GMRVF.

For the benefit of the youth, GMRVF introduced customized online training classes, which could be accessed by the candidates from the safety of their homes. GMRVF has adapted all available courses (except Driving) into 'Blended Learning Method'. This approach combines online educational literature and opportunities for virtual interaction along with physical training (to be conducted once the center opens as per Govt. guidelines). The course is also beneficial as it offers students some elements of control over their time, place, path, or pace.

For this training module, the candidates who are selected are being



### Enhancing the employability of the Youth during Covid-19 lockdown

### Blended Learning Method offers more control to the Candidates to learn at their pace

### Practical classes to be conducted on the training center opens as per the govt. guidelines

given online training classes in their respective line of subjects. They are taught Selected Job Role content, Soft Skills, Spoken English and also assessed through Online Assessments during these sessions. Once the centre operations recommence as per the govt guidelines, the practical sessions will be imparted to these candidates. Through this way of online teaching methodology the students are not at a loss in any manner and stand to benefit with the education that they get.

The courses under blended learning methods include – Drywall & False Ceiling Technician, Excavator Operator, Welding Technician, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Technician, Automobiles and Two wheeler repairing, Solar Technician, Electrical House Wiring, Hotel Management (F&B), Computers - MS Office & DTP (Only for Women), and Tailoring. All school and college dropout youth are eligible to join these courses.

# CSR INDIA UNITED

## PRAHAR calls for industrial growth in remote regions for poverty alleviation where workforce has receded in the COVID pandemic



**P**RAHAR (Public Response Against Helplessness and Action for Redressal), an NGO dedicated towards finding solutions for problems of the helpless, today called for a comprehensive national strategy targeting accelerated industrial growth in remote regions of India to bring relief to workforce which has receded there because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This call-for-action is part of the NGO's recently launched 'National Movement for

Livelihood Resurrection' campaign in the COVID-19 era.

Commenting on the subject, Mr Abhay Raj Mishra, President and National Convenor, PRAHAR said, "Covid-19 lockdowns have led to unprecedented reverse migration of workers in India. Also, the pandemic has caused mass-scale destruction of livelihoods in urban regions. Instead of continuing to push for industrial growth in corridors near urban centres, we need to incentivize

expansion and setting up of new industries in remote regions with abundant labour workforce. There is statistical evidence that one organized sector direct employment in a poor region triggers 10 or more new indirect livelihoods as compared to only average 4 livelihoods in developed regions. Therefore, this is an opportune time for India to also adopt a reverse industrialization strategy to complement reverse migration of its workforce."

"Today, there are examples of how a single industrial project, delivered well, can uplift the socio-economic condition of the entire region. We need to learn from these and emulate them for a rapid scale-up", he added.

### Lanjigarh Case Study By Sattva Consulting - social impact resulting from setting up of Vedanta's alumina refinery and captive power plant in the region

Sattva Consulting (<https://www.sattva.co.in/>), an independent social impact strategy consulting and implementation firm has conducted a ground-research in the Kalahandi district of Odisha which has revealed significant socio-economic transformation of the region after Vedanta commissioned its alumina refinery and captive power plant in Lanjigarh in 2003. Vedanta is one of the world's leading mineral resources companies and the largest producer of aluminium in India.

Till the year 2000, the Kalahandi district used to be one of the most poverty-stricken regions of Odisha and India. The district used to score extremely low on indicators like poverty ratio, literacy, per-capita income, connectivity, safe drinking water, coverage of health infrastructure, household savings, banking network and education etc. With support from the Government things started to change from the 2000 and specifically in the last 17 years the region has shown remarkable transformation on all key parameters, after the Vedanta



Gravel piles along the Rouge River in Detroit, Michigan.  
Source: Suzanne Tucker

URBAN INDUSTRY SHOULD INVEST IN GREEN SOLUTIONS FOR COVID-19 RELATED

# HEALTH DISPARITIES

Air quality in urban residential communities near industrial facilities will not be improved by nature alone. But nature can contribute to the solution, write **Margaret O’Gorman & Daniel Goldfarb**

**T**he coronavirus pandemic is taking a heavy toll on communities of color. One recent study found that Black Americans are dying of COVID-19 at 3.5 times the rate of Whites. A CDC report suggests that this disproportionate burden could be linked to existing health differences, often present in communities with challenging economic and social conditions.

Within these communities, air quality contributes to negative health outcomes. A link between air pollution in the form of fine particulate matter and deaths from COVID-19

has been established, whereby “a small increase in long-term exposure to PM2.5 (fine particulate matter) leads to a large increase in the COVID-19 death rate.” In Italy, four regions of the Po Valley, an area characterized by high levels of particulate matter, saw 80 percent of all total deaths recorded in that country. Beyond COVID-19, fine particulates in air have been shown to “accommodate” a wide range of microbial communities, including many that drive negative health outcomes.

The negative health impacts of air pollution on low-income communities and people of color is well known,

but the pandemic has brought it into starker contrast. While significant structural social change is needed to address these disproportionate burdens, a simple and affordable approach could alleviate some of the burden for families in vulnerable communities: more natural space. Trees clean the air by absorbing pollutants and also by acting as a physical barrier to particulate matter. Studies have shown that trees in cities across the U.S. remove 711,000 metric tons of particulates (\$3.8 billion value) annually.

When we think about trees in cities, we usually think about street trees



# Scientists agree to protect 30% of the seas. But which 30%?

Scientists recommend protecting at least 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030 to safeguard biodiversity and build ocean resistance to climate change. But reports show an overlap in their recommendations of safeguarding biological areas of the sea.

**S**ail 200 nautical miles, or 370 kilometers, from any coastline, and you'll enter a region called the "high seas," beyond the control of any country. While many people never get to dip below the surface of the open ocean, it hosts a rich and complex submarine world.

The upper layers generate rich phytoplankton blooms, which attract a multitude of species and create ideal feeding grounds for whales, sharks and turtles. Dive deeper, and you'll find bioluminescent jellyfish, long-snouted eels, and sponges made from silica, the same substance as in glass. There are entire mountain ranges in the deep ocean, as well as hydrothermal vents formed from millions of years of volcanic activity.

Despite the rich biodiversity of the high seas, only about 1 per cent are currently protected. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea does provide some specification of what activities can and can't be



Whale shark in Surat Thani, Thailand  
Image: jzielcke, CC BY-SA 2.0

done in the open ocean, but experts say it doesn't do enough to protect the high seas.

In 2018 and 2019, representatives from the UN gathered to discuss the establishment of a new high seas treaty, which would aim to protect marine biodiversity through a series of marine protected areas (MPAs). Right now, most MPAs are established near coastlines and within the exclusive economic zones (inside that 200-nautical-mile band) of various countries, falling within those nations' authority.

To establish MPAs in the high seas would be an unprecedented move, and would require the cooperation of many governmental bodies and organisations. But if it's accomplished, it would be a landmark deal and a game changer for ocean conservation.

The UN negotiations have focused on protecting 30 per cent of the ocean by the year 2030, which is what scientists say is necessary to safeguard biodiversity, avoid fishery collapse and build ocean resistance to climate change.

"The high seas, being two thirds of the world's oceans, has a lot to contribute to a global target of protecting 30 per cent of the world's oceans," Elizabeth Karan, project director of the Protecting Ocean Life on the High Seas programme at Pew Charitable Trusts, told Mongabay.

"But there is no legal mechanism to do so just yet, so we really need to push towards finalising the new high seas treaties ... so we can take those actions in the high seas, in addition to what countries may be able to do and need to do domestically



Log yard near the Mahakam River in Borneo, Indonesia

# We lost a soccer field of primary rainforest every 6 seconds in 2019

By Mikaela Weisse & Elizabeth Dow Goldman

**T**he tropics lost 29.4 million acres of tree cover in 2019, according to data from the University of Maryland, released recently on Global Forest Watch. Of that loss, 9.39 million acres occurred within humid tropical primary forests, areas of mature rainforest that are especially important for biodiversity and carbon storage. That's the equivalent of losing a football pitch of primary forest every 6 seconds for the entire year.

Primary forest loss was 2.8 percent higher in 2019 than the year before

and has remained stubbornly high for the last two decades despite efforts to halt deforestation. At least 1.8 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions are associated with 2019 primary forest loss, equivalent to the annual emissions of 400 million cars. Although the rate of primary forest loss was lower in 2019 than the record years of 2016 and 2017, it was still the third-highest since the turn of the century.

The 2019 data reveal that several countries suffered record losses, and fires created astonishing impacts in primary forests and beyond. Although the situation remains bleak at the global level, some countries showed signs of improvement, offering lessons for other nations. Here

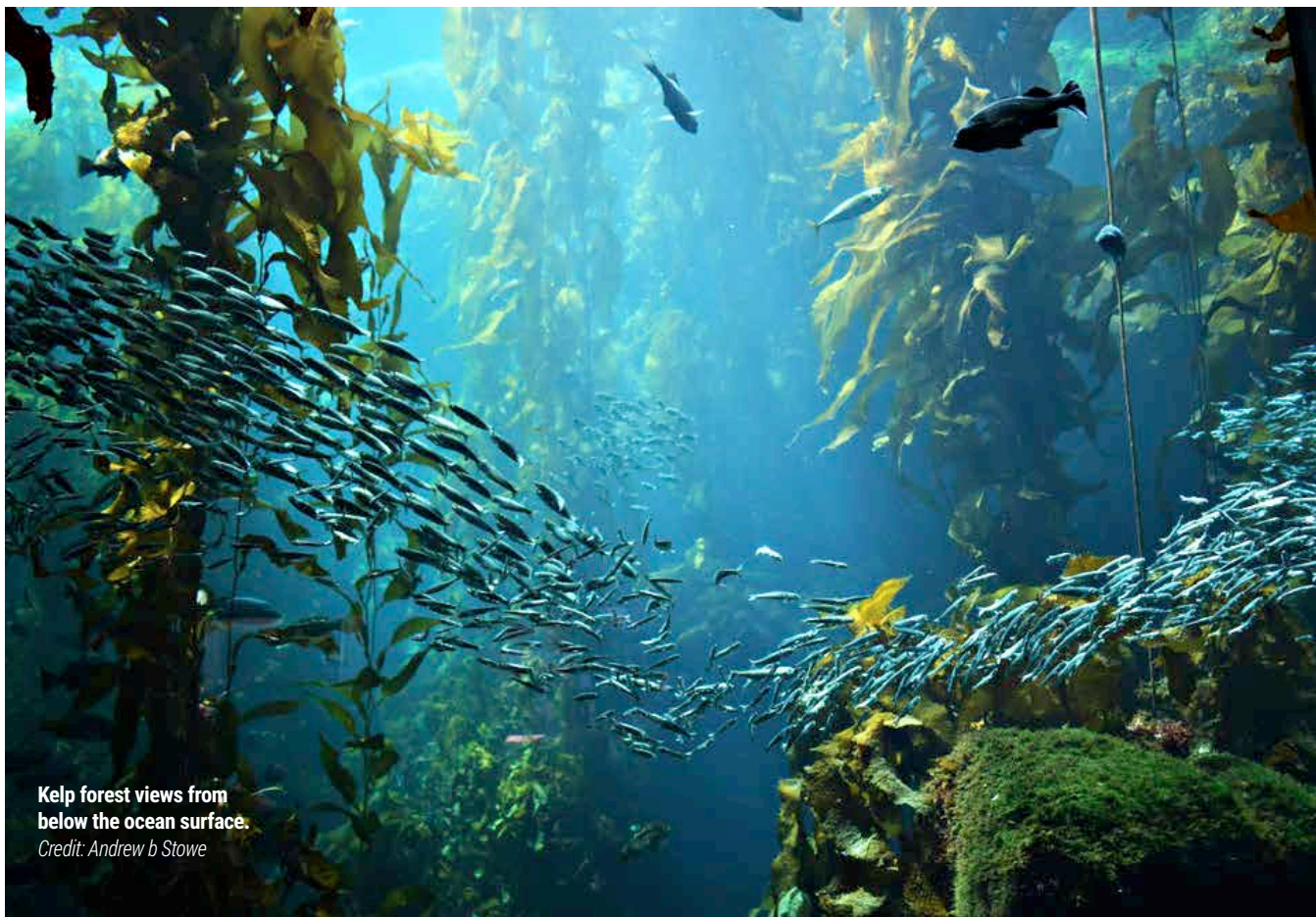
are the locations of note for tree cover loss in 2019 (use the slider to toggle between 2018 and 2019 data):

## Fires in Bolivia spread out of control

Bolivia experienced record-breaking tree cover loss due to fires, both within primary forests and in surrounding woodlands. The country's total tree cover loss in 2019 was over 80 percent greater than the next-highest year on record.

The widespread fires in 2019 occurred due to a combination of climatic conditions and human activity. Many of Bolivia's fires likely were started by people — as they are every year to clear agricultural land for planting — but spread out of control





# Can the forests of the world's oceans contribute to alleviating the climate crisis?

We are throwing ourselves into a heated environmental debate where people say, 'Well, that's not permanent.' But nothing is permanent — and it's the reservoir of carbon that we need to increase because of the climate crisis that we're in, writes **Emma Bryce**

**S**ixty years ago, Tasmania's coastline was cushioned by a velvety forest of kelp so dense it would ensnare local fishers as they headed out in their boats. "We speak especially to the older generation of fishers, and they say, 'When I was

your age, this bay was so thick with kelp, we actually had to cut a channel through it,'" said Cayne Layton, a postdoctoral research fellow at the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies at the University of Tasmania. "Now, those bays, which are probably at the scale of 10 or 20 football fields,

are completely empty of kelp. There's not a single plant left."

Since the 1960s, Tasmania's once expansive kelp forests have declined by 90 percent or more. The primary culprit is climate change: These giant algae need to be bathed in cool, nutrient-rich currents in order to thrive, yet regional warming in recent decades has extended the waters of the warmer East Australian Current into Tasmanian seas to devastating effect, wiping out kelp forests one by one. Warming waters also have boosted populations of predatory urchins, which gnaw on kelp roots to compound the loss.

# Sustainability reporting during Covid-19 times

The Covid-19 pandemic has made timely disclosures more important than ever but longer-term strategic matters must continue to be given due regard. SGX RegCo, Singapore's stock exchange, shares the most important social aspects that should be included in sustainability reporting.

By **Tan Boon Gin** and **Michael Tang**

**U**rgent action to deal with various business disruptions has characterised the first phase of corporate response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These include activating business continuity plans to comply with safe distancing measures, finding alternative supply chains amidst lockdowns globally, and navigating legal contracts and force majeure events.

SGX RegCo provided guidance to the market in our Regulator's Column dated 22 April 2020 on disclosures during Covid-19. We highlighted the importance of providing sufficient information to investors on material changes as and when developments arise or where near-term earnings prospects change.

As we enter the next phase of Covid-19 with the gradual reopening of borders and the resumption of more economic activities, issuers need to



Wearing facial masks and practicing safe distancing are some of the Covid-19 measures that have been taken. The pandemic has made timely disclosures more important than ever but the focus must continue to be on longer-term strategic matters. Image: Seraiah Wolf, CC BY 2.0

reevaluate how they can operate safely in the new environment. This goes beyond just restarting businesses.

Certain business models may no longer work, while opportunities may arise in new ways of doing things. Coping with the pandemic has been possible through the accelerated digital transformation of the nation. Technology will once again be the enabler as the corporate sector and the broad economy move into the next phase.

In this milieu, a responsible board of directors would need to conduct a fundamental review of the company's business and its business strategy against the operating environment. It requires boards to look into the future and consider various scenarios that may play out.

When will things return to normal? Will they ever? If not, what are the plausible scenarios that may occur, and what is the company's

response? None of these has clear-cut answers, but boards are uniquely placed to guide the company through the crisis and beyond.

In the next phase, investors and other stakeholders similarly need to be kept updated. Issuers have called for a shift to a risk-based quarterly reporting regime to give them more latitude to consider longer-term strategic matters. We recognise that boards need time to think through these challenges and to formulate a response.

The annual reporting apparatus, in the form of business, financial, corporate governance and sustainability reports, is a convenient medium and an opportunity, for boards to demonstrate their considered analysis and lay out their plans and strategies to bring the company forward.

If boards have already considered these aspects prior to the annual reporting period, they should update



Signs and markings  
to enforce social  
distancing during the  
coronavirus pandemic.  
Image: Cynthia Griggs, CC  
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# HOW TO LIVE WITH THE PANDEMIC

Warmer and wetter weather might hold down the Covid-19 infection rate. But even if the hoped-for relationship between transmission and warm weather is valid, it may not be causal or straightforward, especially given seasonal behavior, write **Michael Ferrari and Parag Khanna and Spencer Wells**

**T**he Covid-19 crisis has caused scientists, governments, and public-health experts to scramble to understand the relationship between the transmission of zoonotic diseases (those that jump from animals to humans) and environmental

variability, patterns of human mobility, and commerce.

In the process, it has become painfully clear how much we have yet to learn about the world around us. But while no one can credibly predict what comes next, we can certainly be better prepared for the next phase of

global life with Covid-19. In a sense, viewing the disease and its impact through multiple lenses – epidemiological, economic, political, and social – obstructs our vision. Without a systematic, holistic approach, leaders will continue to miss important pieces of the puzzle.

Such an approach should start by rejecting the misleading divide between man and nature. The term “Anthropocene” that is now applied to our age has given us a false sense of control over the environment. Covid-19 has forced us to recognise that the Anthropocene signifies a relentless feedback loop in which our behavior unleashes chain reactions

# TIMESJOBS.COM

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**DESIGNATION:** Manager/ Executive

- **Experience:** 1 to 6 yrs
- **Salary:** As per Industry Standards
- **INDUSTRY:** Construction/Cement/Metal/Steel/Iron, Real Estate
- **Location:** Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- **Key Skills:** msw corporate social responsibility effective communication
- **Job Function:** HR/PM/IR/Training
- **Specialization:** Other HR/PM/IR/Tng
- **Qualification:** Any Graduate

### Job Description:

- 10 YG/CSR/010 Manager/ Executive Corporate Social Responsibility Post Graduate in MSW, NGO experience.
- Manager/ Executive
- **Experience:** 1 - 6 years
- Planning, developing and executing CSR initiatives. Build and maintain long term relationships with current and potential donors. Effective communication and

MIS reporting on CSR initiative. Monitoring, auditing and evaluations of all initiatives undertaken by the Foundation Undertake new local level initiatives.

**COMPANY:** HyreFox Consultants

**DESIGNATION:** Employee Engagement Specialist

- **Experience:** 0 to 3 yrs
- **Salary:** As per Industry Standards
- **INDUSTRY:** Consulting Services
- **Location:** Mumbai (Maharashtra)
- **Key Skills:** employee engagement corporate social responsibility communication skills
- **Job Function:** HR/PM/IR/Training
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- **Employment Type:** Permanent
- **Overview Location:** Mumbai
- **Job Title:** Employee Engagement Specialist
- **Experience:** 3.0 yrs - 4.0 yrs
- **CTC:** INR 4.00 lacs - 6.00 lacs.

**COMPANY:** Atkins

**DESIGNATION:** Senior Consultant- Natural Capital Lead

- **Experience:** 0 to 3 yrs
- **Salary:** As per Industry Standards