

# CSR TODAY

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Chairperson & MD  
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### CSR INITIATIVE

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Bringing Smiles  
Program - Digital  
for Good

### CSR SUSTAINABILITY

Vital for life, heat and  
power—what you never knew  
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### CSR FUTURE

In climate-stressed  
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Onward toward  
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change



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# CSR initiative needed in adventure



**Rajesh Tiwari**  
Publisher  
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**THE KILIMANJARO INCLUSIVE CLIMB THE PARTICIPATION OF BLIND AS WELL AS SIGHTED CLIMBERS TO SEND OUT A STRONG MESSAGE THAT ALL OF US ARE PART OF THE SAME SOCIETY AND CAN CO-EXIST TOGETHER**

In a trendsetting initiative, a team of blind and sighted climbers from India and Israel scaled Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest peak of Africa. Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania stands at about 4,900 metres (16,100 ft) from its base, and 5,895 metres (19,341 ft) above sea level.

The team three blind climbers (two from India and one from Israel) and 10 able-bodied individuals (from India and Israel) undertook the expedition from 8-14 September.

The Adventures Beyond Barriers Foundation (ABBF) and Summiting4Hope (S4H) jointly organized what was India's first "inclusive climb" to the Africa's tallest peak.

Inclusive expeditions re-evaluate our rigid views about disability and shatter stereotypes that plague Persons with Disability (PwDs).

Through great difficulty S4H founder Anusha Subramanian and Divyanshu Ganatra, the founder of Pune-based ABBF, managed to secure funding for the project.

In fact, there is need for more CSR into adventure, particularly, where PwDs are involved.

"The Kilimanjaro inclusive climb the participation of blind as well as sighted climbers to send out a strong message that all of us are part of the same society and can co-exist together. Mountains and the outdoors do not differentiate between anyone, so why is it that we differentiate among people? I have always believed that to change something, you have to be the change yourself. We can, indeed, play and grow together beautifully," points out Subramanian.

The inclusive climb also bore witness to the youngest climber Baepi Donio, a 14-year-old boy from Israel. ..

"Exclusion is something that PwDs have to deal with a lot, because with disability, in

our country, comes invisibility. The real challenge is to be empathetic, to be understanding, to be able to dialogue even though we (PwDs and able-bodied people) may have our differences," adds Divyanshu Ganatra, the founder of Pune-based ABBF and one of the blind climbers from India.

For such adventure initiatives, finding source of funds is perhaps more difficult than the actual expedition.

CSR refers to the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society, namely on economic, environmental, social and human rights, and on corporate governance aspects. It focuses on the impact and the risks on the rights and concerns of the stakeholders to a Group, clearly identified and participants in the enterprise's strategy on CSR.

India, admittedly, is not the most hospitable of places for people that have some form of disability. But things are changing, albeit slowly. A fair number of resorts and hotels, big and small, now put in a lot of effort to make the stay of differently-abled people as comfortable as possible. As with everything, check whether the destination you're headed to does have facilities that are accessible to the disabled.

There are, in India, adventure-activity operators that keep the needs of the differently abled in mind – again, do a background check on whether these travel providers have the wherewithal, and also the necessary training, to make the experience for the differently abled as pain- and hassle-free as possible. The country does not have a great record when it comes to looking after the safety and comfort of the differently abled, but a few set-ups have, admirably, gone the extra mile to make themselves disabled-friendly.

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## ACC encourages reading and education in Chandrapur District

*ACC TRUST facilitates the distribution of 31,000 new books worth over 80 lakhs; sets up 29 libraries; organises 2-day workshop for government and private schools to benefit 7000 students.*

In yet another initiative to improve the quality of education in the country, ACC Limited, one of India's leading producers of cement and ready mix concrete today facilitated a massive book distribution drive providing students of Chandrapur District access to 31,000 new books weighing about 28 tonnes, worth 80 lakhs. As part of its flagship programme ACC Vidya Utkarsh, ACC TRUST has provided quality reading material ranging from storybooks and textbooks on science and social studies to literary masterpieces to over 123 schools, and has set up 29 new libraries at Cluster Resource Centres within Chandrapur District.

Additionally, ACC TRUST has organised a two-day workshop for headmasters and librarians from government and private schools to brainstorm on ways to improve the quality of existing libraries and how they could improve reading habits among students. At the end of the two-day workshop, all the learnings and suggestions will be compiled and handed over to the district administrator for their consideration and action. Through these efforts, ACC is empowering over 65,000



(L-R): Vijay Khati, General Manager – CSR, ACC Limited; Avinash Shirake, Principal – Savitribai Phule College of Social Work, Yawatmal; Jitendra Papalakar IAS, Chief Executive Officer – Zilla Parishad Chandrapur; Brijbhushan Pazare, Chairman – Social Welfare Department, Zilla Parishad Chandrapur; Kurian Chandapillai, Head – Business Services, ACC Limited and Kotam Vamsidhar Reddy, Director Plant, Chanda Cement Works

students from 123 Schools and 32 colleges in the district. The workshop was graced by Jitendra Papalkar (IAS) CEO ZP - Chandrapur, C. Kurian, Head Business Services - ACC Limited and K.V Reddy, Director Plant - ACC Chanda Cement Works. Pratyush Panda, Head CSR - ACC Limited, Sanjay Dorlikar, Education Officer - ZP Chandrapur, Lokhande, Education Officer Primary - ZP Chandrapur, Fr Robert, Principal - Viyani Vidya Mandir, Brijbhushan Pazare, Chairman - Social Welfare, ZP Chandrapur, Satyajeet Amale - Police Station Incharge Ghugus were present.

Commenting on the initiative, Neeraj Akhouri, Managing Director & CEO, ACC Limited said, "It is said that reading is to

the mind what exercise is to the body. Many deserving children and youth in our country do not have access to quality reading material. Through ACC Vidya Utkarsh, we are continuously investing in improving education and reading habits amongst students. We are proud to lead this effort to complement the efforts of the Chandrapur administrators and educators."

ACC Vidya Utkarsh facilitates quality education to children in host communities through a hub and spoke model. 15 ACC established schools have developed into Centres of Excellence over the past decades which play the role of a hub to enhance the quality of education in government schools.



## Mumbai Press Club pledges support to Goonj 'Rahat Floods' campaign

As part of its social responsibility, Mumbai Press Club is pledging its support to Goonj campaign 'Rahat Floods', meant for raising resources to support flood-affected Kerala along with other states that deserve help.

Goonj has been playing a critical role in rehabilitating flood affected people and is also engaged in rebuilding the state from its current plight caused by nature's fury. Several Indian corporates and institutions have partnered with Goonj for this noble cause considering its innovative and deep work and proven credentials as an organization that also specializes in disaster management and globally recognized for its efforts since 1999.

### For individuals:

All members of the club can donate to the cause using the Goonj payment link <https://www.goonjapp.in/donation/>. All contributions will be eligible



for income tax benefits as applicable under Section 80G.

### For companies:

As per views expressed by senior officials in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, corporate contributions to Kerala floods is eligible for mandatory 2% CSR spend. Disaster relief can cover wide range of activities that can be appropriately shown under various items listed in Schedule VII.

Companies can use this payment link to make donations <https://www.goonjapp.in/donation/>. Goonj shall ensure company contributions will be backed by documentation including an impact assessment report. Endurant Partners shall liaise with Goonj to assist companies keen to participate in this Press Club appeal, to ensure their contributions shall qualify for the mandated CSR spend as per Section 135 of the Companies Act.

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# Coming full circle?

## The state of circular economies around the globe



High-income economies consume 10 times the amount of resources per capita that low-income economies do. So it's worth asking: What is their progress toward a circular economy? The results are mixed, writes **Mikhail Klimentov**

**N**atural resource consumption is growing at an alarming rate. United Nations estimates suggest that the level at which humanity is using up earth's naturally occurring resources, including water, land, air, forests and minerals, will double by 2050. This situation — a byproduct of growing global populations, consumption trends in developed economies and the economic transformation of developing countries — is clearly unsustainable. In the long term, our ravenous resource consumption puts us on a course toward grave economic, social and geopolitical consequences, ranging anywhere from a degradation of the standard of living, to the disappearance of habitable land, and even to war.

A transformation of economic models may be the solution. Currently, most production and consumption follows the linear “take-make-dispose” model; a more sustainable option may be the circular “reduce-reuse-recycle” model. The circular economy can “close the loop,” explained one Oliver Wyman report, by “reusing end-of-lifecycle products as raw materials, sharing idle resources, using renewable resources, or extending the product lifecycle,” ultimately paving the way toward a reduction in resource use.

The potential benefits of shifting to the circular economy are tremendous. There are the readily apparent benefits of a system based on reuse, namely the reduction of waste and emissions. But even beyond this, the circular economy would reduce dependence on imports

and stimulate economic growth by creating new jobs and spurring development of green technologies.

High-income economies consume 10 times the amount of resources per capita that low-income economies do. So it's worth asking: What is their progress toward a circular economy? The results are mixed.

### The United States

According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data (PDF), since 2010, trends in recycling and landfilling of municipal solid waste have remained static. A small number of cities and organizations have committed to principles and goals aligned with the vision of the circular economy: New York City's Zero Waste initiative, for example, aims to reduce the amount of commercial waste by 90 per-



**MRS. RITA SINGH**  
Chairperson & MD  
MESCO Steel





# MESCO

## STEELY RESOLVE FOR CSR

Mesco Steel is leading the way in Corporate Social Responsibility. They have a defined multi-pronged and professional approach to CSR. *CSR Today* speaks to **Mrs. Rita Singh**, Chairperson and Managing Director of Mesco Steel (Mideast Integrated Steels Limited) to know their philosophy of CSR.

**T**he Company owns steel plants and mining reserves in Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and overseas. The vision of the company is spearheaded by Mrs. Rita Singh (Chairperson and Managing Director) and Mr. J K Singh (Chairman Emeritus). The company primarily caters to players in the domestic market but is now looking at exporting its products to Middle Eastern markets.

Incorporated in 1992 with assets in coastal Odisha, MISL currently operates an iron ore mine and pig iron plant in Odisha. MISL's main products are iron ore fines, calibrated lump ore and pig iron. MISL currently operates two 389 cubic meter blast furnaces at its plant in Kalinga Nagar, Odisha. The plant has a pig iron making facility of 1.2 million tonnes per annum (mtpa). MISL is planning a major expansion at its plant in two phases which will take



Staff at the working bay-Mesco Steel

the finished steel capacity to 3.5 million tonnes.

The company is also committed to its role in the upliftment and development of society at large. The company undertakes a large number of community development initiatives. Some of the prominent areas in which the

organization actively contributes through sponsorship and developmental work are education, sports, healthcare, infrastructure development, safety and environment. The Organization also runs an NGO called "Krishna Ashram" for Welfare of stray dogs and other animals.

# National Consultation on Reducing Malnutrition and Childhood Illnesses

**W**orld Vision India (WVI), a grass root humanitarian organization hosted a national level consultation on the theme 'Enroute to Kuposhan Mukh Bharat' at the India International Centre, in New Delhi yesterday. The panelists at the day long consultation discussed on the need for partnerships and focused multi-sectoral approach to scale up maternal and child health services in the country.

The experts analysed India's nutrition landscape and reiterated the need to develop a comprehensive plans with the respective state government departments, to fulfill India's commitment to global health and nutrition target, Sustainable Development Goals and National Nutrition Strategy. The consultation was an opportunity to share and disseminate best practices for reducing undernutrition, maximizing the impact and reaching the most vulnerable through proven community mobilization strategies and scale up models.

World Vision India has an integrated program across 60 locations to improve the nutritional status of pregnant women, newborns, infants and children less than 2 years of age. Through this consultation, the National Coalition for



(L to R) : Prof. Satish Agnihotri, IIT Mumbai; Mr. Cherian Thomas, National Director and CEO, World Vision India; Dr. Vinod Paul, Member, NITI Aayog; Dr. Sujeet Ranjan, Executive Director, The Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security

Food and Nutrition Security along with World Vision India intends to facilitate scaling up of best practices to eradicate malnutrition among vulnerable communities and put forward innovative ideas and solutions for tackling on-ground challenges and policy formulations.

Dr. Vinod K. Paul, Member, Niti Aayog said, "There is a window, where more children are becoming stunted, which is the first 24 months of a child's

life. This is when the brain grows as well, if not properly fed it would lead to intellectual loss. What you need is breastfeeding, if there was optimum breastfeeding from the baby's point of view then we can reduce 16 per cent of stunting. We need to focus on small babies, premature babies and undernourished babies, as they are not sufficiently fed. The focus needs to be given at this point of time, the first



# BRILLIO TECHNOLOGIES

## BRINGING SMILES PROGRAM - DIGITAL FOR GOOD

Technology companies can play an active role in delivering digital interventions for development given the country's leadership position on the global IT map. India's vast population is now getting connected in ways previously unimaginable. We are looking at a future in which, STEM education/ digital technology will be a great enabler in delivering education and growth.

**T**here is a significant gap in quality and access to education between government and private schools. Consequently, there is a lack of motivation to learn amongst students from underprivileged backgrounds. Government schools generally do not have the necessary facilities, such as science labs and computer labs.

Most companies wait to be profitable to start their social responsibility program. At Brillio, it was part our agenda from the very first year of operations. CSR was built-into our corporate strategy, and we have pledged in the year 2015 to help 100,000 underprivileged young minds by 2020.

Our team works with various government schools to reduce the digital divide. We strive to provide the same level of exposure and innovation to all. We want to support and invest in a new digital economy through smart classes, e-learning projects, innovation workshops, interactive self-learning initiatives, and active skills sharing. Along with our umbrella of NGO partners, we



co-innovate and intend to scale up in this space. End-to-end project management of all our programs is taken care in-house, by the CSR team; and with the help of our employees, either physically or digitally.

Launched in 2015, Bringing Smiles combines financial resources from Brillio, employee engagement around

the world, and partnership with schools and nonprofit organizations. More than 818 (~32%) of Brillio's 2,500-plus workforce have volunteered 12,623 hours of their time to the effort.

The primary focus of Bringing Smiles is to prepare young people, in the 10 to 16 year age bracket, globally for careers and life in a digital-centric, entrepre-



# Officials from Sri Lanka visit NIRDPR for training on local governance, decentralization, and social welfare programming for rural development

**Week-long exposure visit for international delegation organized by The Asia Foundation & NIRDPR**

**T**he Centre for Good Governance and Policy Analysis (CGGPA) at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) coordinated an international exposure visit of a delegation from the Northern Provincial Council, Sri Lanka from 17-21 September at the institute campus in Hyderabad.

Twelve elected representatives of the Northern Provincial Council, Sri

Lanka, including the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and members and six government's officials (Chief Secretary, Secretary – Council Secretariat, Secretary – Ministry of Education, Director – Social Services and three representatives of The Asia Foundation (TAF) participated in this visit.

The visit was intended to focus on rural development and decentralized practices in devolved institutions. It aimed at equipping the delegation with

the knowledge and experience that would help them make informed decisions and put in place effective policies within their local settings to improve policy formulation and implementation.

Following a thorough research of the specific needs of the programme and the range of participants, NIRDPR undertook the following exercises prior to and during the visit:

- Designing a course for a weeklong exposure tour
- Identifying appropriate resource persons/institutions for conducting technical sessions on selected themes/topics



**H**alf of consumers in Southeast Asia would pay more for environmentally-friendly products, according to a global survey conducted by Nielsen in 2017. That alone might suggest that sustainable products are taking off in the region. But are Asian consumers putting their money where their mouth is?

“Consumers voice positive opinion for sustainable products but do not always back it up at the check-out counter,” said Regan Leggett, executive director of thought leadership and foresight at Nielsen, a global measurement and data analytics company. “But if the price is competitive for two brands, sustainability could be the deciding factor.”

He added that while there has been positive momentum for sustainable products in Asia, it is difficult to accurately measure how well they’re selling. In many industries, the definition of what makes a product sustainable is often fuzzy. Furthermore, consumers are often unaware of a brand’s true sustainability credentials.

According to Leggett, global demand for more environmentally-friendly and ethically-made products should influence more companies to drive sustainability initiatives and make their claims more public.

However, as climate change and other environmental issues such as waste and plastic pollution become a growing concern for Asian consumers, sustainable products are now more popular in the region than ever before.

In 2017, the total volume of green purchases made on China’s leading e-commerce retailer JD.com increased by 71 per cent the same year the company more than doubled its range of sustainable products. Almost half of the sales were made by millennials aged 26 to 35, while the products that enjoyed the highest premiums were childcare and beauty products.

“People are definitely willing to purchase more sustainable and ethical products, but they also want to maintain their standard of living and



# Will sustainability ever trump price for Asian consumers?

People often say they will pay a premium for sustainable products. But there’s a difference between what people say in a survey and what they actually do in a store. Are Asian consumers ready to pay more for green goods?

convenience,” said Stephanie Dickson, founder of Green is the New Black Asia, an eco-conscious lifestyle festival.

This is especially true in Singapore where consumers tend to prioritise cost and convenience. When the country’s major supermarket chains considered introducing a levy on plastic bags to ease the country’s waste problem, the idea received heated criticism from customers and the charge was abandoned.

Nonetheless, more eco-friendly stores have cropped up around the country, encouraging sustainable consumption while also offering products at low prices. UnPackt and The Social Space, which sell goods like shampoo, dishwashing liquid, cereal and other daily food items in bulk without any packaging, are able to sell their prod-

ucts for 5 to 10 per cent less than the market rate.

Skincare and cosmetics label Lush, which opened in Singapore in 2011, similarly gives its customers the option of going Naked, by offering lotions, shower gels and shampoo bars packaging-free. According to the director of Lush Singapore, Sohana Rouf Chowdhury, the brand has seen an increase in customers looking for sustainable products. Lush sold 2,000 shampoo bars in Singapore last month, saving 6,000 plastic bottles from being created.

Asian consumers are more inclined to buy sustainable utility items that can be easily weaved into everyday life. “People are still looking for small replacements like a disposable cup or a bamboo straw or tapao [takeaway] con-

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