



How well do companies know their sustainability practices?

We take the back-packet route to, well, find out



In this issue...

■ **CB Exclusive**

Planting trees? Yes! Are they doing fine? May be. Or may be not.

■ **Talk Straight, Talk Sustainability**

Brig. Rajiv Williams, Jindal Stainless Ltd, responds

■ **Viewpoint**

Why animal testing for cosmetics must stop



The Standard Chartered-Shroff Eye Care Education Academy has been playing a stellar role in helping meet the ever-growing need for qualified ophthalmologists in India.

The Academy has also been conducting unique programmes on eyecare management and optometry and ophthalmic paramedical trainings that impart professional skills, guided by the objective of creating dignified employment opportunities for young people from less privileged and marginalised sections of the society. These programmes further address the burgeoning demand for support staff at eye-care institutions across the country.

The courses are offered to the youth free of cost and are supported primarily by Standard Chartered Bank under their corporate social responsibility, and to some extent by the Academy's own earnings.



Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital is one of the oldest eye-care institutions in the country, carrying on a legacy of more than a 100 years.

Editorial 4

Letters to the editor 5

Updates 6

Being Sustainable 16



CB Exclusive

Planting trees? Yes! Are they doing fine? Maybe. Or maybe not. Actually no idea! 18

Most tree planting-related press releases issued by corporates and NGOs focus almost entirely on the number of trees being, or to be, planted in so-and-so locations. Rarely does the content mention



the expected 'survival rate' – which necessarily involves the strategy and mechanisms for nurturing, monitoring, and assessing impact, which by the way also means that the planting is preceded by extensive exercises to understand the lay of the land, climate conditions, soil factors, what trees will be best suited given the local conditions, local biodiversity dynamics, and not in the least the equation between the land and the communities who live there.

Cover Story

How well do companies know their sustainability practices? We take the back-packet route to, well, find out 26

There's this little important detail on every product that we buy – the manufacturer's contact coordinates (address, phone number, email ID), wherein we can send in feedback and/or complaints. Easy to miss, and we actually do. Unless maybe we are saddled with a defective piece.

Beneficiaries

Telling the Tale 34

So as to document the 'change' in the lives of communities – the beneficiaries of social projects of companies and non-profits.

Viewpoint

Why animal testing for cosmetics must stop: A perspective 38

Animals cannot speak; they cannot explain the physical and psychological effects of the substances being tested on them. There can be no 100% reliable feedback from them. The results based on observation and viscera testing are at best tentative and do not guarantee the same effect in humans. Fact is that animal testing delivers results of only 70%–80% accuracy so far as humans are concerned. On the other hand, combination methods of chemistry and cell-based alternative methods can deliver accurate results of 90% or above.

Talk Straight, Talk Sustainability 42

CB's attempt to get questions from aware, responsible and conscious consumers answered directly by the country's leading corporate brands – brands that are a part of millions of households and lives across the country. In this issue, Brig. Rajiv Williams, corporate head – CSR, Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL), responds on things that define the sustainability and responsibility core of the company, including why steel has its green moments.

Book Reading

Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature 46

by Jairam Ramesh



Founder editor: **Padma Pegu**

Co-founder & chief strategist: **Ranjan Rayna**

Sr. feature writer: **Sanjana Pegu**

Head research: **Rahul Choudhary**

Art director: **Mohd. Shakeel**

Administrator: **Raghunath Dutta**

Young thinker: **Rayna**

Edited, printed and published by Saucepan Media Pvt. Ltd
H 1541, CR Park, New Delhi-110019

Website: www.causebecause.com

Subscribe: subscribe@causebecause.com

Copyright notice
Saucepan Media Pvt. Ltd
H 1541, CR Park, New Delhi-110019

You cannot modify, publish, transmit, participate in the transfer or sale of, reproduce, create new works from, distribute, display, or in any way exploit, any of the content in whole or in part.

This copy is sold on the condition that the jurisdiction for all disputes concerning sale, subscriptions and published matter will be settled in courts/forums/tribunals at Delhi.

Let us talk about failing, about things that may have been, and things that aren't how they seem to be



I will tell you what phony is? A soft drinks-and-instant-snacks major sending out a press release on its campaign for promoting whole grains in our daily diets. The manufacturer of fuel-guzzling SUVs planting saplings to offset its carbon emissions. Any company, NGO or social

enterprise using the phrase 'touched such-and-such number of lives' to tell us that their social programme is making a difference. Something about this phrase is unsettling (and doesn't ring true) – those using it clearly think that the rest of us are buying it.

(Yes, I recently read *The Catcher in the Rye* for maybe the 8th, 9th, or 10th time, and this time felt even more grateful to Mr Salinger for supplying this word 'phony'. It sums up a lot of the things about the world today that can't stand any test of time, reason, reasoning, and fairness.)

What else?

Being grandiloquent about what one's CSR/social/education/empowerment/healthcare project has done is acceptable to a certain extent perhaps. But in the grand scheme of things, if one were to be really realistic about the scale at which goals will need to be set and met to make more than a ripple and a splash—in other words, make a difference, make the difference count, and make it sustainable—our CSR reports, sustainability reports, impact reports, evaluation reports, progress reports, etc., will reflect this. Solutions and insights will be in the context of the problem to be solved, and include all stakeholders and all peers.

That failures are a part of those solutions and insights is a given. But do we hear of any project, initiative or experiment in the social or sustainability domain that has failed? Of course we don't! And of course they do fail some of the times at least.

So why? Why don't we share stuff on that? Isn't it possible that by sharing the stories of not-so-successful projects we may be helping others – they will be the wiser for our oversights, won't they – and more importantly, ourselves.

And what about those projects that needed to do a longer journey before finding acceptance and participation from the communities they were meant for? For every project that gets a spontaneous welcome, there must be five or ten others that have to deal with initial indifference and scepticism, if not outright resistance. What was that journey like, and how did it turn the corner?

For every corporate willing to put their money where their mouth is – which means they are putting in intellectual and financial might, making a commitment that they are there for the long haul, building up capacities, and so on, there are the numerous others looking for the immediate publicity that aligning with trending hashtags can bring, with results that are never quite clear. Indeed, I am going to remember examples of press releases that arrive just in time for World Environment Day (WED), World Toilet Day (it's true!), International e-Waste Day, World Financial Planning Day, Children's Day, International Day of Girl Child, National Energy Conservation Day (for which a zinc and lead mining company is observing a 'no vehicle day'), and suchlike.

In response to one of the WED-related press releases from a soft drinks-and-junk-snacks company, my email wanting to know '*how does 2030 actually look like – the optimistic scenario vis-à-vis the pessimist's scepticism*' – and the company's understanding of 'ecosystem restoration' (the theme of this year's World Environment Day) met with radio silence.

This I wrote back:

'It is one thing to 'mark' days like WED – more tokenism than real commitment. And quite another to be able to spell out commitment in terms of action on the ground and real impact, and also striking a balance between profit and people's/planet's wellbeing.'

Radio silence.

In a nutshell, when you say you are looking to 'positively impact' those thousands of lives (land life, marine life, any life), I want to understand what exactly you mean. If you can't explain that, I suggest you go back to your programme objective and basics, and come back with a great 'true' story.

Padma Pegu

Letters to the editor

Firstly, a huge round of applause for the team that put this together. I glanced at a few sections and found the stories riveting and well written.. the mag is also beautifully laid out and invites you to soak in the content. I am waiting to go through it in more detail this weekend. Will get back, but in the meantime fabulous stuff. Congratulations

-Aruna C Newton

I read your editorial and sustainability article with interest. You are raising important questions and addressing key issues.

-Ramji Raghavan

Thank you so much.
Good read.

-Saurabh Sharma

Thank you for sharing the issue, much valued. All of us, individually and as corporates have our bit to do and make a difference.

-Varsha Chainani

I think the e-magazine has come out extremely well and very creatively presented.

-Brig. Rajiv Williams

I found it to be very interesting and useful for a good learning experience.

-Rajesh Mukhija

Beautifully designed and very informative . The topics are really interesting. A lot to learn about how brands are doing work on CSR and sustainable development.

-Tribhuwan Joshi

I found the stories quite interesting, especially since some of the topics were of relevance to BASF and our vision of creating chemistry for a sustainable future.

For instance, your editorial about 'The Consumer in Me' correctly points out the use of plastics and how companies are coming together to create a shared goal for reducing plastic waste. This is a big area of focus for companies in the chemicals sector as they look towards developing innovative solutions including recycling/chemcycling of plastics and even offer the total carbon footprint for their solutions. You'd perhaps also be aware of the global group Alliance to End Plastic Waste, which is working towards ending the menace of plastic waste. BASF is one of the founding companies for the alliance.

More efforts are required on our side on DE&I, so that we can move towards achieving the global goal of including more women in traditionally male dominated industries like chemicals manufacturing. Here's to more positivity, optimistic outlook and efforts all around.

-Ravindra Thapa

Thanks for such a beautifully written feature. I really like the way you have presented the information. It really calls out to the person reading it to make informed choices.

We are glad to be a part of this feature. Hopefully, together we can make a bigger impact on the planet and its people.

-Madhurima Tongia

CauseBecause is really doing a phenomenal work of documenting and sharing such good work being done by corporates and other social development entities.

-Dr Avanish Kumar

Wonderful to see the extensive and exhaustive edition.

-Sudarshan Suchi

The magazine was definitely an interesting read with some really good content.

-Cathay Pacific PR & marketing team

Wonderful content, as usual.

-Elizabeth Bocarro

ONGC: Helping homegrown handicrafts

The energy major is supporting 15 projects focused on the country's indigenous handicrafts, in line with the government's observance of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Observing India's 75th year of independence, PSUs under the petroleum ministry have undertaken 75 projects to commemorate each year of Independence.

The third project by ONGC – an Assam Handloom project called Ujwal Abahan – was recently launched by Rameswar Teli, Minister of State (MoS), Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Labor & Employment. The project will support and train over a hundred artisans of Bhatiapar of Sivasagar in Hathkharga handicraft.

As stated by the minister during the launch, the Assam Handloom project is worth over Rs 26 lakh. He expressed confidence that it would not only benefit local weavers, but also boost the rural economy. He



also emphasised that technological development would be key to increasing productivity through such projects.

Petroleum Secretary Tarun Kapoor noted that the skill-based training included in the projects was a major leap towards empowering people from disadvantaged communities. ONGC's director (HR) Alka Mittal assured about the company's continued support to such projects to make artisans self-reliant. Crafts contribute around Rs 13,000 crore to the economy of the nation every year, she added.

JSW Foundation: All for restoring the glory of Kashmir's Mughal Gardens

The Foundation has signed an MoU with the Government of Jammu & Kashmir to restore the historic gardens, located at Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh. While JSW Foundation will extend technical and financial support, the Government will provide assistance and continue to provide funding for the project through support resources and other infrastructure.

Shedding more light on the initiative, Mrs Sangita Jindal, chairperson of JSW Foundation, says: 'These two sites are a hallmark of the Mughal empire's landscape design. We will be collaborating with renowned heritage and conservation architect Ms Abha Narain Lambah for this project. Through our

MOU with Government of Jammu & Kashmir, I am pleased to formalise JSW Foundation's commitment to restoring the breathtaking beauty of these gardens.'

The Mughal Gardens of Kashmir are shining examples of the great paradise garden traditions of the world. In the valley of Kashmir, these sites have become the archetypes of the Timurid-Mughal garden tradition. The six imperial gardens of Kashmir are proposed to be nominated to UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Among them, the gardens of Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh, (1619–1635 CE), built during the reigns of emperors Jahangir and Shahjahan, epitomise the mastery of Mughal gardeners and engineers.





Pangolins are not your medicine.

Stop believing in unscientific remedies that kill our wildlife.
Put an end to wildlife trafficking.



TRAFFIC
the wildlife trade monitoring network



REIMAGINE
RECREATE
RESTORE



WORLD
ENVIRONMENT
DAY



INOX, Pune: First cinema in India to install fast charging points for electric vehicles

Multiplex chain INOX Leisure Ltd has installed Ather Energy's fast charging points, Ather Grid, in the parking lot of INOX Bund Garden, Pune. Ather owners can fast-charge their vehicle at a speed of 1.5 km/min, while Ather Grid also provides normal speed-charge options to all electric two-wheelers and four-wheelers free of cost.

In a press release shared with CB, COO of INOX Rajeev Patni says: 'As India is progressing towards electric mobility with more electric vehicles on road, making EV charging stations at all parking sites will gradually become a norm, and we are proud to be leading this initiative by installing the same at one of our iconic cinemas. As an environmentally responsible organisation, we are committed to take steps towards sustainability and a much cleaner and greener environment. With this additional service, our patrons can now charge their vehicle batteries while comfortably enjoying a movie. Furthermore, with the central government encouraging a shift to electric vehicles by 2030, our aim is to install more such charging stations across INOX multiplexes in India.'

Claiming that Ather Grid is one of India's largest two-wheeler fast-charging networks, Nilay Chandra, VP – marketing and charging infrastructure, Ather Energy, is confident that the 'partnership with INOX will allow us to make our charging stations more accessible to EV owners across the country.' The company has already installed over 200 charging points in 21 markets and intend to add a total of 500 Ather Grid points by the end of the year. Apparently, Ather Energy is one of the few OEMs in India which is investing substantially in building EV charging infrastructure.



Tata Steel: Will recycle steel

The company has commissioned its new 0.5 MnTPA steel-recycling plant at Rohtak, Haryana. In a press release, it claims that the plant is the first such facility in India, equipped with mechanised equipment such as shredder, baler, and material handler. The scrap will be procured from various market segments including end-of-life vehicles, obsolete households, construction and demolition, and industrial, through an app FerroHaat®.

The scrap will be processed through mechanised equipment and thereafter supplied for downstream steel making. Steel produced through the recycled route has the advantage of lower carbon emissions, resource consumption and energy utilisation.

Simultaneously, Tata Steel has launched two brands – Tata FerroBaled® and Tata FerroShred® for the baled and shredded ferrous scrap produced in its new facility. These products are high-quality processed scrap and expected to provide the much-needed raw material fillip to the Indian steel industry by making available quality processed ferrous scrap and reducing the dependency on imports. The products will offer value propositions like higher yield, better productivity, lower conversion costs, and lower transportation and handling costs.

The following questions from CauseBecause did not receive any response from the company:

- What is the 'steel mix' currently for the company – percentage of recycled steel and conventionally produced steel? Going ahead, how will this change?
- What measures are being taken to minimise/counter the many environmentally adverse effects of steel production?
- With demand for steel continuing to rise, are there alternatives with which to manage that demand?

Godrej & Boyce: These are their ESG goals for next decade

- Double energy productivity by 2030
- Generate over one-third of overall revenues from Good & Green products by FY22
- Reduce carbon intensity by 60% by 2030
- All manufacturing activities across locations will continue to be water-positive and nearly zero waste to landfill
- Introduce recycled content up to 25% in plastic-product packaging

The goals include a commitment to continue offsetting its plastic quantities by 100%.

Underlining the company's priorities, Jamshyd N Godrej, chairman and managing director of Godrej & Boyce, says: 'At Godrej & Boyce, we focus on four key strategic pillars – employability, innovating for Good & Green products, creating a greener India, and creating shared value through community development. We are working relentlessly to contribute towards India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, while simultaneously creating value for our business, the communities and the planet through our unique and scalable initiatives.'

Kamal Nandi, EVP and business head, Godrej Appliances, informs that 54% revenue of Godrej Appliances comes from Good & Green products. At present, the business uses 50% renewable energy in its manufacturing facilities across the country.

Head of environmental sustainability Tejashree Joshi says, 'Having facilitated over 600 green buildings, we

have achieved 50% reduction in specific energy and water use. We have also conserved several acres of mangroves in Vikhroli, sequestering over 10 lakh tons of carbon.'

Regarding the company's social impact, head of CSR & sustainability Ashwini Deodeshmukh emphasises that creating employability continues to be a focus. Over the last 10 years, their skilling initiative, Disha, has trained 1.6 lakh young people across 18 states and 80 towns and cities. The company also claims to have improved the quality of education for 6,800+ children.

Over the last 10 years, Godrej & Boyce has invested more than Rs 500 crores towards its ESG initiatives. In terms of the impact, here are some highlights based on the company's statements:

- Energy productivity in the last 10 years has nearly doubled (+96%)
- 50% renewable energy share in manufacturing units
- 13% drop in manufacturing units' energy consumption over 4 years
- G&B has been able to offset 48% of their carbon footprint in the last 10 years
- All manufacturing units are water-positive
- 39,900 MT of e-waste collected and disposed of responsibly
- First company in India to introduce ozone depleting substance-free refrigerators
- First company globally to produce air conditioners that have 'zero' ozone depletion potential (ODP) and minimal global warming potential (GWP)
- 5,300 women across 3 cities have been empowered to form 117 SHGs and 29 enterprises
- Implemented policies to safeguard women in the workforce (with the maternity benefit policy in effect, the return-to-work ratio is 98%)



CEAT: Trying to talk 'responsible travel', but with a fleet of 9 vehicles



The fleet – comprising 9 vehicles (including the Thar, Fortuner and Gypsy—none in the 'environmentally friendly' category) and 25 participants – will cover various territories in Ladakh, with the first one planned from August 1 to 14, and the second from August 21 to September 3. The official press release from the company says that the expeditions will highlight, showcase and promote the culture of responsible travel. Apparently they are aiming to drive home the 'natural grandeur, diversity, culture and people of the forgotten lands,' and while at it, talk about things like waste generation, zero litter, cultural competence, benefits to local economy, etc.

Unanswered questions

CauseBecause reached out to CEAT Tyres' representatives with three questions for better understanding of the strategy and intended impact, but there was no response. These were the questions:

- a) Who precisely is the target group for the communication and how will the content be disseminated?
- b) How will the impact of the programme be assessed?
- c) Do you plan to make the expedition itself sustainable, in terms of the travel, stay and other ways whereby the carbon footprint can be minimised?

The PR reads

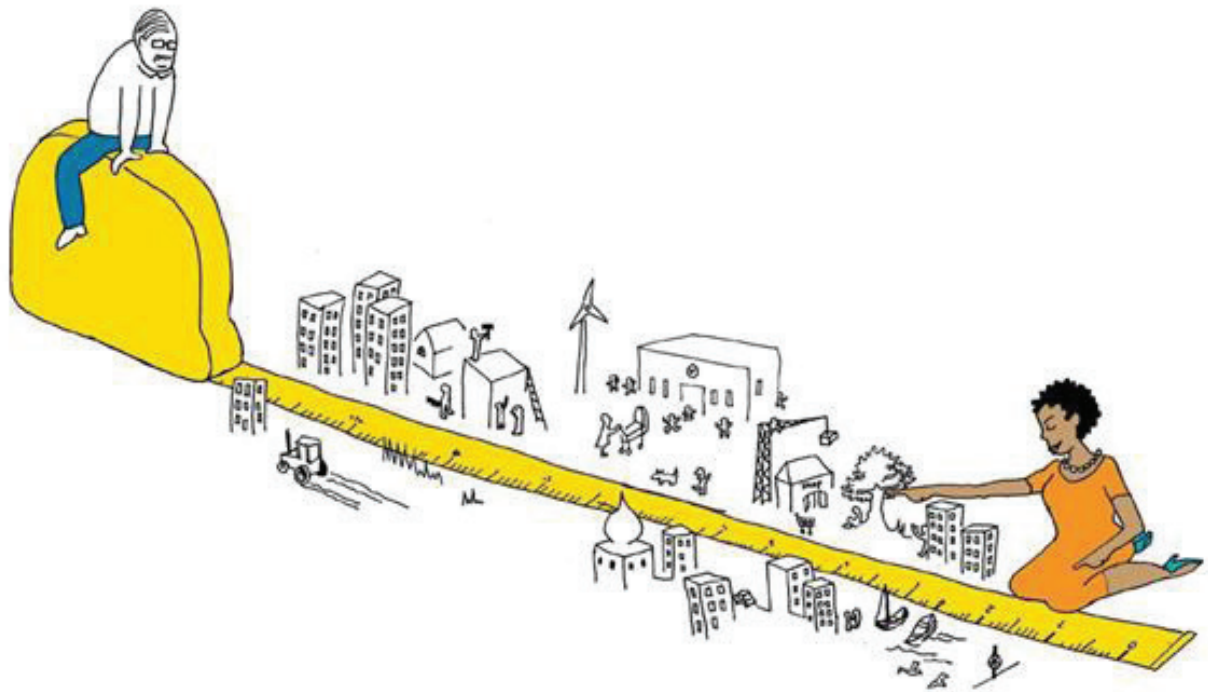
The company has partnered with Wander Beyond Boundaries (WBB) to organise the two 4x4 extreme-terrain driving expeditions, which are being called 'Zanskar & Beyond'. The expeditions will start and end at Leh, covering 1,100 km in approximately 14 days, with an average of 8-hour driving daily.

In the press release, Nidhi Salgame, founder and director, WBB, expresses confidence that the two journeys 'will not only increase awareness about the various contours of the region and its culture, but also propagate the culture of responsible travel.' Explaining the urgency for action, she says: 'Zanskar is a pristine geography in Western Ladakh; had remained tucked away from the ballooning tourism in Eastern Ladakh, and therefore was insulated from its ill-effects for decades due to limited road access. But with two new roads opening in the last two years, there has been a sudden influx of tourism. Unless the pristine natural and cultural beauty is preserved proactively, it is a matter of time before we lose it.'

In the same release, Amit Tolani, chief marketing officer at CEAT Tyres, stresses that 'a responsible and sustainable tourism culture needs to become mainstream if the area is to survive the onslaught,' and that 'this awareness must be deliberately built, embedded, and impressed upon – both with local and well-meaning tourists.'

Whether these are achievable in the course of two expeditions – without clarity on the strategy – remains a moot point.

What **social returns** are you getting on your CSR investments?



Let us measure them for you.

Team CauseBecause has developed a unique SRoI Framework specifically for programmes designed as per Schedule VII of Section 135 in Companies Act 2013.

Call for demo: info@causebecause.com | 91 11 49987602

Tata Steel: Will start capturing CO2 and use it too



The company has commissioned a 5 tonnes per day (TPD) carbon capture plant at its Jamshedpur Works, making it the country's first steel company to adopt the carbon-capture technology that extracts CO₂ directly from the blast furnace gas. The captured CO₂ will be reused on site, in sync with Tata Steel's circular carbon economy approach.

This carbon capture and utilisation (CCU) facility uses amine-based technology and makes the captured carbon available for onsite reuse. The depleted CO₂ gas is sent back to the gas network with increased calorific value.

Inaugurating the plant, TV Narendran, CEO & MD, Tata Steel, said: 'For the sustainability of the steel industry globally and particularly in a growing country like India, it is essential that we find economical solutions for capturing and use of CO₂ at scale. Leadership in mitigating emissions, accessing low-cost clean energy, and providing circular economy solutions will define our sector's journey going forward.'

'The operational experience gathered from this plant will give us the required data and confidence to establish larger carbon-capture plants in future. As the next step, we aim to establish scaled-up facilities of CO₂ capture integrated with utilisation avenues.'

Tata Steel has undertaken a two-pronged approach of carbon direct avoidance (CDA) and CO₂ capture and utilisation in pursuit of the decarbonisation goal. In September 2020, the company joined hands with the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) to work in the field of carbon capture, utilisation & storage (CCUS), to build a strong ecosystem in the country for meeting the decarbonisation commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Cadbury Gems' 'birthday' party A (very) virtual attempt to spread joy and gems

The press release did not provide much of an explanation except that the company wanted to host 'a laughter-filled, adrenaline-pumping birthday bash' and also 'guarantee a gems-filled experience that was chocolaty, colourful and abundant.' (All adjectives are theirs.)

The rationale was that families had 'missed out on the fun of celebrating birthday parties during the pandemic.' As per the press release, participating children and their parents were part of a world record where thousands of them popped open a pack of 'More Chocolaty Gems'.

When CB reached out to the company's representative for them to clarify if there was a corporate social responsibility (CSR) aspect to the activity, there was no response. We also wanted to know if there was a sugar-free or less-sugar version of the gems the company was trying to promote among children. No response to that either.

It is mentioned in the press release that Cadbury Gems is also partnering with some NGOs to host the event in a few orphanages and 'celebrate the day with cakes and goodies'. However, no details about the NGOs, locations or dates are mentioned.



LANXESS: Creating new sustainable plastics for the circular economy

The specialty chemicals company is increasingly using bio-based or recycled raw materials in its plastics production.

A new variant of the composite Tepex is 100 per cent based on the biological raw materials flax and polylactic acid. 'We have combined fabrics made from the natural flax fibres with bio-based polylactic acid as a matrix material, and thereby developed a composite manufactured entirely from natural resources. We are now able to produce it to a level of quality suitable for large-scale production,' explains Stefan Seidel, head of Tepex Research and Development at LANXESS.



The extremely strong material is suitable for use in sports articles, in the production of automotive interior parts, and in electronics for case components. LANXESS produces the composite at its site in Brilon, Germany.

Tepex can be recycled completely. After its use, the product can be shredded and easily processed into new plastic.

LANXESS also relies on sustainable raw materials for its polyamide-6 plastics, Durethan. In the latest product, 92 per cent of the raw materials have been replaced by sustainable alternatives; the long-term plan is to increase the proportion to 100 per cent.

The sustainable origin of the raw materials is certified according to the rules of ISCC Plus (International Sustainability and Carbon Certification'), using the mass balance approach. This method compares the quantities of raw materials used with the quantities of products produced and creates an accounting link between input and output, similar to the purchase of green power.

LANXESS uses 'green' cyclohexane from sustainable sources such as rapeseed oil or other biomass as raw material. The high-performance plastic is also reinforced with 60 per cent by weight of glass fibres recycled from industrial glass waste.

The alternative raw materials are chemically identical to their equivalents of fossil origin. Therefore, the plastic has the same properties as its fossil-based counterpart.

In the future, LANXESS will add 'Scopeblue' to its most sustainable products. The brand label marks products that either consist of at least 50 per cent circular (recycled or bio-based) raw materials or whose carbon footprint is at least 50 per cent lower than the one of conventional products.

Let there be more Olympians

Lakshya Institute, a Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar winner, has partnered with Dream Sports Foundation (DSF), the philanthropic arm of Dream Sports, to support seven promising athletes across five sports in their pursuit of the Olympic dream. They are calling this mission 'One Dream, One Lakshya' (ODOL).

The ODOL programme is designed to identify and provide comprehensive support to potential Indian Olympians through coaching, financial aid, training equipment, and national and international tournament exposures. The seven athletes who are the programme beneficiaries will receive intensive



training for the Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028 Olympics. They represent five sports disciplines, namely shooting (Nupur Patil, 19 years), boxing (Devika Ghorpade, 16; Nupur Sheoran, 22), wrestling (Sunil Kumar, 22), badminton (Tara Shah, 16; Riya Habbu, 17) and table tennis (Sreeja Akula, 22).

UNEP and Gov sign Host Country Agreement: Will enhance collaborative environmental action

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and India have signed a Host Country Agreement on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. India was represented by Bhupender Yadav, Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, while Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, signed the Agreement on UNEP's behalf.

The Host Country Agreement comes as Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his commitment to climate change by presenting his 5 key agendas at the COP26 key climate summit on 1 November 2021.

The Agreement was approved on 15 September 2021 by the Indian Cabinet of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister; it provides UNEP India equal legal stature as other UN agencies in India and will enable UNEP to work even more closely with the Government on key areas of environment in India, in South Asia, and at the global level.



'India plays a hugely important role in global action on the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and waste,' Andersen commented. 'We at UNEP look forward to deepening our partnership with India, towards strengthening the country's ability to deliver on the environmental dimensions of sustainable development.'

The Host Country Agreement will further enhance science and technical assistance provided by UNEP India to the Government towards mitigation of key environmental issues. It will strengthen the collaborative efforts of UNEP India, an important implementing agency for the Government of India under the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

It will also enable UNEP to better support the Government of India on Conventions and Multilateral Environment Agreements, the environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, and other internationally agreed global environmental goals. The Agreement will facilitate UNEP to broaden its collaboration with ministries and other stakeholders.

Stating that 'the presence of UNEP would enable a more effective delivery and coordination of UNEP's programme of work in India,' Yadav informed that 'a UNEP presence will now be established within the context of the UN country team and the UN Technical Assistance Framework with the Government of India.'

Bajaj Finserv: An employability programme with a new name and some new goals

Primarily aimed at making graduates employable for a wide range of industries, Bajaj Finserv's employability programme is now called BEYOND. Under this, the company will be introducing new certificate programmes and building a placement division that will help beneficiaries find relevant career opportunities. Bajaj Finserv's Certificate Programme in Banking, Finance and Insurance (CPBFI) will now be one of the programmes

under BEYOND.

On this development, Sanjiv Bajaj, chairman & managing director, Bajaj Finserv Ltd, made the following points in a press release: 'The BFSI industry faces acute shortage of local talent and high attrition, especially outside the Tier 1 towns. Our employability initiative, aimed at upskilling fresh graduates while addressing the employability gap in the country, is now creating a trained and

versatile pool of resources for the BFSI industry. We are setting up a placement division to provide employment opportunities for our alumni. Through customised training programmes that address all aspects of employability – namely attitude, skills and knowledge, BEYOND will prepare the first-generation graduates from smaller towns and cities to realise their full potential and build a successful career in the financial services industry.'

Bridgestone: Making Pune railway station disability-friendly

The company has installed station information signage in Braille, provided scannable sign language videos, and put up ramps for easy access by wheelchair-bound passengers about to board their trains. The Braille maps in metal describe the entire railway station and all the facilities at the station. Smartphone-scannable audio and sign language video QR codes have been installed at various locations – these communicate video-based information about the railway station both in audio and sign.

As part of the upgrade programme, Bridgestone has installed Braille platform indicators and Braille general signages for all the offices and facilities in the railway station. Braille itinerary booklets have been kept at the railway ticket and information counter. General signage with braille will also be found at toilets and waiting rooms.

Informing that a similar programme is being completed at Indore railway station, Parag Satpute,



managing director, Bridgestone India, says: 'These efforts will help our differently enabled friends to travel independently. These features also reduce the risk of being misguided as well as the risk of accidents. This is the first of such initiatives we have planned.'

Axis Bank: Inviting 'young minds' across India to come, be creative



It's a drawing and essay writing contest and part of Splash 21, a virtual event being hosted by Axis Bank for children in the 7–14 years age group. There are two themes: for 7–10 years old children, it's 'together we can', and for the 11–14 years group, it's 'a better tomorrow'. The participants can choose to submit entries in drawing or essay writing, or both.

Regarding the initiative, the bank's chief marketing officer Anoop Manohar says: 'We aim to reach out to every child in India who aspires to dream big. We have got great feedback on such events in the past and look forward to big-scale participation for this one from little ones all across the country, which will help us see the world through their lens.'

This year, Splash also empowers individuals to contribute towards the education of kids impacted by Covid-19. The aid will be directed to Khushii, a child-care NGO founded by well-known cricketer Kapil Dev. Axis Bank will also contribute Rs 10 for each registration.

Axis Bank has invited educationalists and mentors from top schools and institutions to be a part of the jury for the competition. The top 2 national winners, one from each category, will be awarded a scholarship of Rs 1 lakh; one runner-up from each category will win a laptop; and all participants will be given digital certificates. Moreover, 100 shortlisted contestants will get an opportunity to receive guidance from six highly-qualified mentors from The Art Society of India, and will also be awarded gift hampers.

Those interested can register and submit their entries from 6 December 2021, at www.axisbanksplash.in.

Myntra: Will do its cotton sourcing better

The fashion and lifestyle e-commerce company has partnered with Better Cotton Initiative (BCI), a global non-profit organisation heading the largest cotton sustainability programme in the world, to source cotton for its in-house brands. To begin with, Myntra will focus on sourcing 10% of its cotton requirements from BCI, and in the next five to seven years aim to increase it to ~50%.

To make it easier to adopt, scale and measure, a mass-balance model will be followed where Better Cotton can be mixed with conventional cotton through the supply chain. While this means Better Cotton is not physically traceable to end products, BCI farmers benefit from the demand for Better Cotton.

Apparently, Myntra has become the first e-commerce enterprise in India to partner with BCI. On the partnership, Neetu Jotwani, VP –product development & sourcing, Myntra, says: 'As the leading fashion and lifestyle retailer in the country, we aim to incorporate more environmentally responsible practices throughout our supply chain. Partnering with Better Cotton Initiative means we will continue the journey to source more sustainable cotton across our entire business, working towards a brighter future for the cotton industry and those whose lives depend on it.'

Motivated to enrich global cotton production and make cotton farming sustainable, BCI aims to make Better Cotton the first choice among manufacturers. In the previous cotton season, BCI, along with its partners, trained over 2.7 million cotton farmers in sustainable practices that utilise less chemicals and water to extract maximum efficiency from the farmland. Better Cotton now accounts for 23% of the global cotton production.



On its part, Myntra has been taking initiatives to meet its sustainability goals – examples being 'Myntra for Earth', which hosts over 70 eco-friendly brands that collectively offer 5,000 styles; and its partnership with Canopy, aimed to conserve forests by adopting sustainable packaging and material sourcing and moving towards eco-friendly tags.

Carpets Inter: Recycling and reducing waste

The company's new collection Reuso is a high-performance modular carpet tile and environmentally friendly, as per their official press release. It is designed to 'make use of every square inch of available product in order to decrease waste.'

The brand's eco-friendly carpets, which have been developed and tested for over 17 years, have recycled over 787 million PET bottles so far. The goal is to recycle 1 billion bottles by 2025.



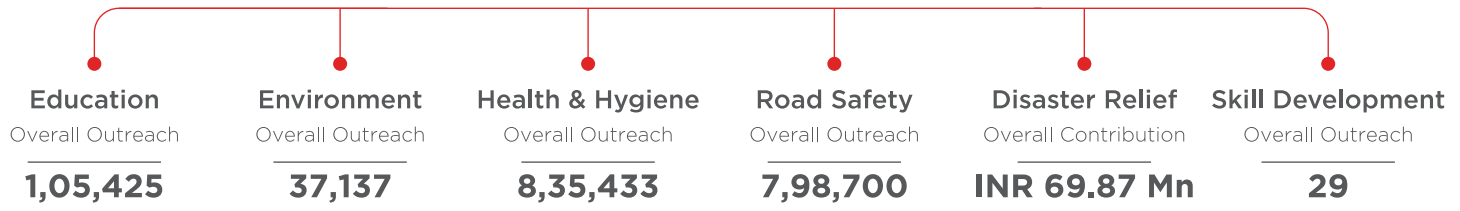
The Reuso carpet tiles are said to have the following features:

- 1. Ability to mix colours and batches:** This allows cost-effective installation that is gentler on the environment.
- 2. Eco soft backing:** The backing is composed of 80% post-consumer recycled PET and 5% post-industrial recycled PET reengineered from millions of discarded drinking water bottles. This eco-friendly product not only satisfies the stringent performance criteria of a carpet tile, but also outperforms typical PVC and bitumen hardbacks, as well as urethane cushion backs in terms of lifespan, walking comfort, acoustic benefits, and indoor air quality.
- 3. Noise reduction:** Because Reuso carpet tiles are an excellent sound absorber, they can lower the sound of walking by 25 to 34 decibels – whereas laminate flooring reduces surface noises only by 1 to 6 dB.

Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives “Embodying Resilience”

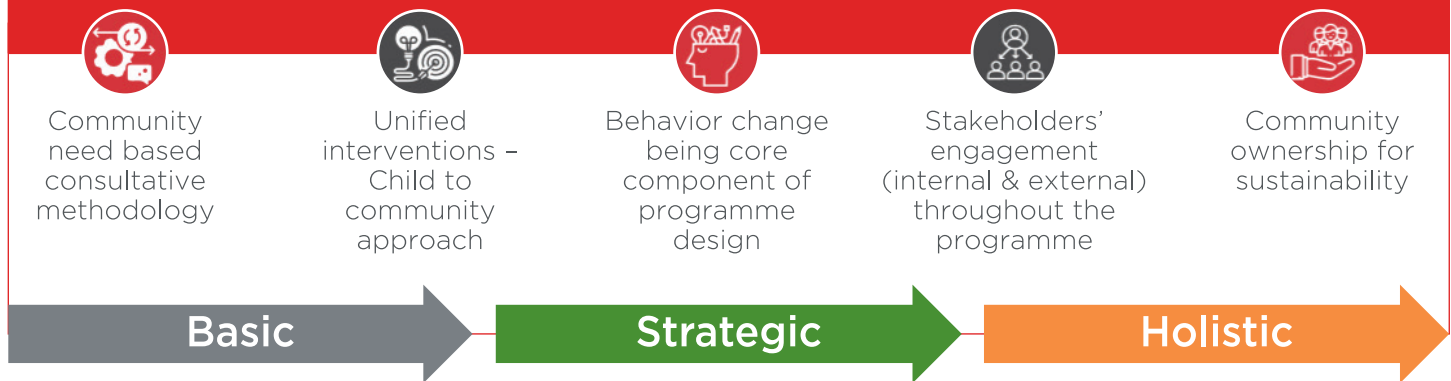
“Our vision for corporate social responsibility is to be a socially committed organization engaged at building vibrant communities in harmony with nature, aiming to become the most admired company in India, and meet customer expectations and be rewarded with a smile.”

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



TKM contributes to **7 SDG's** and **16 targets**. We have touched **18,23,309 lives** through our sustainable community development interventions.

TKM'S SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL



Key activities



Modernisation of the Government Schools Infrastructure & Learning Improvements



Employee Volunteerism Activity- iCARE



Providing educational support to Government School Children



Construction of School Sanitation Units in Government Schools



Project Shaale Aarogya



A Behavioural Change Demonstration - ABCD



Toyota Hackathon on Road Safety



Planting trees? Yes! Are they doing fine? Maybe. Or maybe not. Actually no idea!

What do these diverse entities – PayPal, Capgemini, Cyient Foundation, Vanarai, NMDC, Amrita University – have in common?

You guessed it. Yes, they have all issued press releases informing that they have planted so-and-so number of saplings, and will keep doing so until such-and-such number is reached.

Which begs the question: is that all there's to it, more or less? The numbers, that is. Most tree planting-related press releases issued by corporates and NGOs focus almost entirely on the number of trees being, or to be, planted in so-and-so locations. Rarely does the content mention the expected 'survival

rate' – which necessarily involves the strategy and mechanisms for nurturing, monitoring, and assessing impact, which by the way also means that the planting is preceded by extensive exercises to understand the lay of the land, climate conditions, soil factors, what trees will be best suited given the local conditions, local biodiversity dynamics, and not in the least the equation between the land and the communities who live there (it is absolutely critical that local communities develop a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the trees planted).

Going by the numbers, budgets, scale of campaigns and media coverage, tree planting is more popular than ever. On the face of it, it's a simple,



straightforward and appealing response to a crisis – or crises, since there is climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, soil erosion, and so on. For corporates and non-profits, it also makes for persuasive messaging – one that stakeholders and the public will readily grasp and empathise with. When one says they are planting a million trees, what's there to be not impressed about?

That's one of the things – the numbers (again). For many large-scale tree-planting programmes, the focus is on the number of new trees that end up in the ground, not on planting the right trees in the right places or caring for them after planting to ensure they survive. The numbers can be hugely distracting and somewhat misleading with regard to the eventual impact.



Sure, the fate of a tree-planting programme cannot be clear in the immediate future. Obtaining long-term outcome data on forest cover remains a challenge. Precisely the reason why such programmes must have transparency, monitoring and reporting built into their very design.

Here are some key questions to be clear about and criteria to consider when evaluating the effectiveness of a tree-planting programme.

- What is the goal (forest restoration, biodiversity restoration, carbon sequestration to mitigate global warming, protecting water resources, improving agriculture, generating income)?
- What is the strategy for achieving the desired survival and growth rate for the planted trees?
- Who are the stakeholders?

A recent paper – 'Limited effects of tree planting on forest canopy cover and rural livelihoods in Northern India', published in September 2021 in *Nature Sustainability* – suggests that large-scale tree plantings may not improve forest cover or provide livelihood benefits to local people. Based on a study of tree plantings done in Himachal Pradesh's Kangra from 1965 to 2018, the paper claims that the projects actually shifted tree composition from broad-leafed varieties used by local people for fodder and firewood to needle-leaf species which are not as useful.

The researchers used satellite imagery to study two aspects of the plantings: forest canopy cover and forest composition. Forrest Fleischman, associate professor at University of Minnesota and one of the co-authors of the study, suspects that some of the trees may have died quickly because they were planted in poor-quality habitat. Also, farm animals could have destroyed the saplings if they were planted in former grazing lands. Fleischman notes: 'On average, there was no change in canopy cover after plantations – even decades after (when we would expect the planted trees to be fully grown – and thus adding to the canopy cover). So, at the most basic level, planting trees didn't accomplish an increase in forest cover.'

- How are the needs and interests of local communities being addressed? (Involving local communities and getting them on the same page about objectives can go a long way in making the programme successful and sustainable. Not only are local communities best placed to undertake nurturing duties, such work also create employment opportunities and improve livelihoods.)
- Are the locations for the planted trees mapped (as GPS coordinates for each tree, as an area outlined on a map, or some such)? (A benefit to having the specific locations mapped is precise monitoring using high-resolution satellite imagery.)

Fact is better than fiction

In the meantime, let us not get carried away by the numbers game. And by all means, let us call out the hypocrisy of, for example, a mining corporation planting trees. Causing soil erosion on the one hand and saying that you are planting trees to stem soil erosion are mutually exclusive, don't you think? There's the irony too, of course.

In January this year, scientists at Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in the UK pointed out that tree planting was often being presented as an easy response to the climate crisis, and a way out for businesses to excuse their carbon emissions.

What they told CB Impact

So, Team CB Impact, the research and assessments arm of CauseBecause, was tasked with finding the universally accepted methodology to

- count the number of saplings planted,
- assess the survival rate of the planted saplings,
- assess their average growth rate, and
- assess their overall environmental (including CO₂ sequestration) and socio-economic impact if any.

Seems quite simple on the face of it, right? But what if the assessment is to be carried out for nearly 4 million saplings planted at over 200-odd locations across the country? If a justifiable minimum sample size of about 30 per cent (which we reached at after consultations with officials at Forest Research Institute and Indian Council of Agricultural Research) is to be considered for assessment, the team would have to go out there to see, touch, and measure not less than 1,200,000 trees – an exercise involving considerable human and capital resource.

We wondered how those typical planting entities – for and not for profits – were managing such assessments. Of course we wondered. Have they found out a simpler methodology or are they simply talking numbers based on their assumptions? In order to get a handle on the situation, we shot emails to some of the organisations that claimed to have planted millions of trees across India.

Bikrant Tiwary, CEO of Grow-Trees, the company that claims to have planted over 96 lakh trees with support from corporates and individuals,

said: 'We make a few sample plots (to cover 25% of the plantation) and extrapolate the number from the same. This happens when the project size is in lakhs and scattered in a large area.

'We count row by row (over 50% sample) when it is planted in a continuous landscape. However, to confirm whether trees were planted or not, we have many more ways to check, like the attendance register of the labours, nursery database, transportation database, etc.

'The above-mentioned practices are used for our internal audit but external auditors may use their own techniques (not influenced or directed by us).'

Raj Mohan of Sustainable Green Initiative has a different approach. He explains: 'All our trees are nurtured and managed by local communities and farmers – they are the first stakeholders as well as the beneficiaries of the same. They are the ones who count them for us, mark their locations along with pictures on Google Maps, and keep us updated on the growth and health of the saplings. If an independent assessor has to measure the impact of our plantings, all that s/he has to do is to engage with the community members, who will take them around and introduce them to all the trees, which are their babies.'

On the other hand, three emails and multiple text messages from us to Peepal Baba, or Swami Prem Parivartan (of Give Me Trees Trust), who claims to have planted more than 2 crore trees (highest claim so far by any organisation in the country), did not receive any revert. The team even filled a query form on their website, with no response.



CB Impact methodology to assess large-scale planting under CSR/funded projects

Step 1: Desk review of available documents

As a first step, a thorough desk review of all available material related to each programme is done. This includes literature provided by company/donor as well as planting partner.

The documents include:

- a. Baseline survey study/reports
- b. Project concept notes, implementation framework, project proposals
- c. Monitoring, internal assessment and past evaluation reports
- d. Funds utilisation certificates from partners
- e. Receipts/bills of sourced saplings
- f. Transport bills or saplings supply/delivery log reports
- g. Receipts/bills for additional resources such as manure and sprays
- h. Maps or geo tags of locations

Survival rate is the percentage of living saplings against the total saplings planted. After summarising field data (dead/missing and living), survival rate is calculated by dividing the number of living saplings by the total number of seedlings planted, and multiplying the same by hundred.

Survival rate = Number of living saplings/Number of saplings planted multiplied by 100

This review allows the research team to zero in on the following aspects/key stakeholders for conducting focused interviews and focused group discussions:

- a. Planting locations
- b. Local communities
- c. Government officials, panchayat leads, opinion leaders, other community members

Step 2: Field research – planting sites

The field research for planting will primarily assess:

- a. Species of saplings
- b. Approximate width and height
- c. Canopy size
- d. Overall health (if infected or suffers with some infestation/disease)
- e. Long-term survivability possibility
- f. Other challenges/disadvantages – with regard to, for example, soil quality, climatic conditions, animal fodder, and suchlike

• *Method of assessment of survival rate of saplings planted in rows and columns*

For areas where planting is done in less than a hectare of land, the survival rate of saplings is generally measured by manually counting all the living saplings. However, for areas of more than a hectare, the assessment is done by counting the number of saplings planted in the sampled number of rows.

The methodological sampling for conducting the assessment of living saplings/trees is done on the basis of the size of the area where the planting has been done. In areas less than 2 hectares, surviving saplings in every fifth (5th) row are to be counted. In areas more than 2 hectares (20,000 sq. metre), manual counting of every tenth (10th) row is done. The surveyor assesses every sapling planted in the 5th row (10th if area is more than 2 hectares).

• *Method of assessment of survival rate of saplings where they are 'not' planted in rows and columns*

If the area is less than one hectare, counting for all the saplings is done by following the simple 'mark all trees' technique.

In a planting area of more than 2 hectares, random sampling is done by dividing the overall area as a virtual graph. Depending upon the size of the area, the surveyors divide the area into virtual plots with virtual rows and columns, and assess every sapling planted in the tenth (10th) row. Assessment is done for every 5th row where the planting is done in a scattered manner.

For example, if the total planted area is 2 hectares (20,000 square metre) and has dense planting, then the same is divided into 5 virtual plots of about 4,000 metres each, and then further divided into virtual rows (if necessary, lines are drawn on the ground with chalk or limestone powder), of which every 5th row is assessed by the surveyor.

• *Survival rate to be segregated according to species*

If the planting consists of more than one species, survival count should be checked species-wise. Hence, apart from the total survival rate, the surveyor also segregates and assesses which species has how much survival rate in which planting area.

About CB Impact

CB Impact, the research, evaluations and strategic consulting arm of CauseBecause, has steadily expanded over the past decade. The team engages with corporate groups, non-profit entities as well as government departments to conduct research studies including baseline and need assessment surveys, midline and endline impact assessments, and project evaluations, and lends strategic support in the conceptualisation of large-scale social programmes.

In addition, CB Impact has been instrumental in the materialisation of government, corporate and NGO partnerships, and also engages in advocacy to influence policy. Last and certainly not the least, CB Impact engages in knowledge sharing with the objective of enhancing the impact of initiatives focused on the overall development of society and our precious environment.

Services

- ▶ **Formative evaluations**
- ▶ **Monitoring and midline evaluations**
- ▶ **Endline evaluations and impact assessment**
- ▶ **Social return on investment (SROI)**
- ▶ **Partners' credentials and validation**
- ▶ **Partnership support**
- ▶ **Communication collateral**
- ▶ **Domain consultancy**



Our Reach

17
States

48
Districts

300+
Partners

Areas of Impact

Education | Livelihoods | Environment | Gender parity | Skills | Sports | Health & hygiene



Our capacity

As our research engagements continue to expand, so does our capacity to evaluate and assess the impact of large-scale projects. In the past few years, the team has been involved in the evaluation of more than a 100 high-investment projects.

Rs 700+ crore

Cumulative value of evaluated projects

130+

No. of programmes evaluated

60+

No. of organisations engaged with

375+

Network of on-ground associates

The community

The CauseBecause community – individuals who support and participate at our events, contribute towards and read and share our newsletters and magazine, and engage in talks with us to exchange ideas, insights and experiences – continues to grow organically. Alongside, the network of Thought Leaders who have been felicitated at Coffee for Cause (since the first edition in the year 2015) has grown as well.

Now, with the inclusion of information and features on sustainable products, services and alternatives, a bunch of conscious consumers – whose numbers can only go up – have also become a part of the CauseBecause community. All said and done, in its 12th year, CauseBecause is poised to take its next momentous leap on the strength of this community that will make all the difference in the way we understand, perceive, practise, and propagate sustainability.



For partnership queries, write to info@causebecause.com

Step 3: Assess impact on communities around the planting sites

To assess the benefits of the planting programme for communities living in the vicinity of the planting sites, focused interviews and group discussions are held with community members, panchayat leaders, forest officials, opinion leaders and other relevant stakeholders. This helps in assessing the direct impact of the planting on the communities as well as on the local environment.

Some aspects that should become clear in course of the exercise are:

- a. Their involvement/role in the planting programme
- b. Their role in monitoring, nurturing and supervising saplings
- c. Involvement and role of panchayats
- d. Livelihood generation/socio-economic impact on local communities
- e. Opinion on survival rate
- f. Their ideas, suggestions, remarks for future course of action

(Read these lines from a press release: *'The fruit-bearing trees add to the family income when the produce is sold in the market. Thus, the organisation helps increase green cover, reduces carbon impact, provides income-generation options and mitigates rural migration. The underlying principle is to empower rural families so that they can participate in the growth and development story of the mainstream society.'*)

Fact is that the wrong trees in the wrong place can cause considerably more damage than benefits.

Hence, time to jot down some facts (and thereby clear misconception

- There is no certainty that planting trees on a massive scale will result in more rainfall or lesser soil erosion – for example, if the land is being (mis)used for activities such as sand mining, dam building and real estate development.
- Tampering with existing landscapes, ecosystems and land-use patterns to plant trees will, more likely than not, be self-defeating. For example, planting trees where forests did not historically occur may end up destroying the natural habitats of plants and animal species adapted to open ecosystems.

- Planting non-native trees could cause problems for local species.
- Planting trees without addressing the root causes that brought about forest degradation in the first place is not the best course of action because those root causes may destroy the planted forests as well.
- Reforesting an area with only a single type of species (known as monocultures) might result in ecosystems that won't function as efficiently as they did before – which means they may not grow the same.
- Reforestation is a promising climate change-mitigation tool, but planting trees is not a substitute for decreasing fossil-fuel emissions.
- The rate at which trees store carbon varies up to 100-fold, depending on factors like climate and soil quality. Whether naturally regrowing forests can do that job better compared to new trees needs greater attention and consideration.

There is a school of thought that tells us that the best way to protect our forests is by protecting the rights of the people who depend on those forests – let there be no encroachment on these lands, and the forests will stand. After all, they have cared for their lands and forests and the biodiversity therein for generations. If at all, efforts should be to empower them.

Restoration ecologists have cautioned that tree planting should not be equated with forest restoration – instead, diverse restoration strategies should be adopted in diverse ecosystems. There are important benefits forests provide, and it's right that there is a growing effort to reforest the world. Attention to how we are reforesting and replacing existing biodiverse land covers will prove to be as critical as the need to give to our planet what has been robbed of it. ■





In the last nine years, we have planted over 2.9 million (mostly) fruit trees that have rejuvenated the country's lungs and at the same time helped alleviate hunger and poverty. From Sundarbans in West Bengal to the plains of Haryana and the mountains of Uttarakhand, spanning 12 states in all, our green footprint has been increasing steadily.

In the process, SGI has also created sustainable livelihood opportunities for thousands of women and small farmers from marginalised and indigenous communities.

This is a journey that has been tremendously fulfilling and enriching, and we have been fortunate to have had the unstinting support of various organizations, who made it all possible.

Our gratitude to

Hero MotoCorp | Indigo | L&T | IndusInd Bank | Ola Cabs | NIIT Technologies
Max India Foundation | Earth Day Network | One Tree Planted | Ecosia



How well do companies know their sustainability practices?

We take the back-packet route to, well, find out

There's this little important detail on every product that we buy – the manufacturer's contact coordinates (address, phone number, email ID), wherein we can send in feedback and/or complaints. Easy to miss, and we actually do. Unless maybe we are saddled with a defective piece.

Then a CauseBecause team member had a brainwave – *let us make good use of these details and ask some well-known brands/companies about the things they have been doing for the sake of sustainability.*

Makes sense, right? There's all the evidence in the world that a small and increasing number of people are paying more and more attention to things like –

Cover Story ▶

- Is this product good for me and also good for the environment?
- Is the company making this product in an environment-friendly at all (think waste management, think carbon emissions)?
- Is this company ethical (think supply chain, think treatment of workers, think inclusiveness)?

These conscious consumers want to know whether companies are doing right by the planet, first and foremost, and by the people they are selling stuff to. Now, there's no easy or simple way to know that for sure, but having them say that they are doing a few things right is a start—a commitment, if you may. In any case, a good brand in general will be forthcoming about information.

So, here we go.

Just 3 questions

We settled on three questions that would cover most of the points we wanted covered—basically, 'getting the most results with the minimum fuss' sort of thing. And one would write to the customer care/feedback email ID (refer to first paragraph) as an ordinary customer (which is true), not as a reporter.

Reproducing the email content:

'I am a regular consumer of your products and have a few queries for the brand/company:

1. Do you have a mechanism to track where all the packaging material goes? Do you know how much of it is being recycled/reused and what happens to the rest?
2. What initiatives or policies are in place to balance the company's carbon footprint – from manufacturing to supply chain to the product's end of life (including packaging)?
3. What are some of the benefits of the products?'



Back-packet route explained

CauseBecause follows the simple, standard protocol of reaching out to companies for their inputs or quotes for a news piece or a feature. Our editor, feature writer or correspondent writes to the company's communication, CSR or sustainability team for the same. Over the years, more and more entities have been actively responding to most of our queries (especially those who have sustainable business practices to talk about, or causes that they have invested in and want to propagate/be known for).

However, for this particular piece, we did not reach out as Team CauseBecause, but as individuals, as conscious and aware consumers who wish to know more than what is written on the products' labels, things that are more than about a product's quality and price and are more about the company's sustainability commitment.

We used our personal email IDs (not CauseBecause IDs) and wrote to the company's 'customer care' – the first point of contact for any consumer to reach out and communicate with their brand.

The purpose of the month-long exercise was to find out a) how the companies or the popular brands' customer care would respond to their consumers' queries on sustainability and CSR practices, and b) if they had enough content in the public domain.

▶ JUICY CHEMISTRY

Mechanism to track packaging material/how much of it is being recycled/reused

Unfortunately, there is no mechanism to track where all the packaging material is going. Although in accordance with the COSMOS standard all material used in packaging needs to be highly recyclable (glass/aluminium/paper and PET-G for our liquid shampoos), we have little control on what the user is intending to do with the packaging material. To facilitate recycling of our bottles, Juicy Chemistry has a recycle programme and the details of the same are given here: <https://juicychemistry.com/pages/re-cycle-reward-program>.

Carbon footprint – from manufacturing to supply chain to the product's end of life

We are currently working with Tree-Nation to offset our carbon footprint. Apart from that, we have our 'organic' credentials. We are not reliant on synthetic



fertilisers for growing our produce, thereby drastically reducing the organisation's overall carbon footprint. We use predominantly nitrogen-based fertilisers in our farming. As an ISO 14001-certified organisation, we are also an environmentally responsible entity.

Product benefits

In addition to being an organic brand, we are also cruelty-free and use only recyclable materials—95% of our packaging items are glass, paper and aluminium. We have a huge range of products that are also vegan-friendly. We work with local craftsmen and cane workers to help them financially, and also ensure financial freedom for women workers so they can afford quality education for their little ones.

One can read more about our CSR here: <https://juicychemistry.com/pages/jc-care>

▶ **JUST ORGANIK**

'It is very heartening to see that our consumers are as conscious about the well being of the planet as they are about their own well being. The whole idea about organic is the well being of the smallest of the organisms in the soil so that chemicals do not kill them, ultimately resulting in a product that respects the sanctity of Mother Nature. Organic is about adapting natural and traditional crop-growing practises, and that's where it starts.'

Mechanism to track packaging material/how much of it is being recycled/reused

At this point in time, unfortunately the waste-management process in India is not streamlined. We do not have a mechanism whereby we can track the whereabouts of the used packaging material. We have put marks on the packaging so that consumers are cautious and can send it for recycling. In reality, it gets picked up by the ragpicker and goes for recycling. Having said so, we are in the process of launching biodegradable packing material and that

should be able to eliminate the concerns around this to a great extent.

Carbon footprint – from manufacturing to supply chain to the product's end of life

The actual process starts with the farming itself. We are currently a participant with a carbon credit programme and tracking the carbon credits. In the manufacturing process, most work is done in a facility that needs minimum artificial lighting. We are moving towards solar/renewable energy source for our energy needs to further reduce our carbon footprint.

Product benefits

Organic itself is the first step towards health, as you avoid harmful chemicals on your plate. These chemicals could be very, very harmful for your health. Just Organik products come from a land that was never polluted. Primarily cultivated in Uttarakhand, these products have a better nutrition profile and are softer on the digestive system. We encourage you to visit our website and read through the many articles on this particular subject.

▶ **MAMAEARTH**

'Mamaearth believes that goodness lies in the little choices we all make. That's why we've chosen for our products to be free of harmful chemicals and toxins. We also pledge to recycle more plastic than we use, and remain plastic-positive. We have partnered with Gem Enviro for the collection and recycling of plastic, and have recycled 240 metric tons of plastic in September 2021 itself.

For more on our pledges, and to see how much plastic we've recycled, you can visit <https://mamaearth.in/pledge>. We recently launched our Plant Goodness initiative wherein we link every consumer's order to a tree that we planted. As of now, we have planted 161,769 trees.

We intend to stay committed to our purpose and continue taking steps to make the world a better place, one toxin-free product at a time.'

▶ **NUTRIORG**

Mechanism to track packaging material/how much of it is being recycled/reused

Nutriorg is a health and wellness company, and its first responsibility is to protect Mother Nature. Talking about our packaging, we ensure that all materials are reusable and recycled. From plastic to glass-based packaging material, everything is eco-friendly. We use reusable plastic. Primarily we use high-density

Fun facts – automated assumptions

1. Some companies' auto response acknowledges the 'inconvenience caused' and apologises for the same, clearly assuming that all emails sent to them are complaints!
2. Automated responses, especially from the automobile companies, ask for your phone numbers and product details. If you do not share the same, the query closes and the 'complaint' is settled. So, our queries (not complaints) got registered as 'tickets' that were closed because of 'no further response from the customer'. Hence, so far as these companies are concerned, the onus is on us, the customers, to get the answers to our questions – they wouldn't respond unless we provided our personal details.
3. Some smaller brands (small only in terms of revenue, volumes and market share, not otherwise) also have the automated acknowledgement system, but do not consider all emails as complaints. Their quick responses in real time were quite surprising for Team CB.
4. It's not that the companies that did not respond do not have anything to share with regard to their sustainability practices. It's more likely that they do not have a mechanism/standard operating procedure or protocol to have such queries answered via the 'customer care' route.

polyethylene (HDPE) plastic to manufacture our plastic containers, and for the rest, we use glass bottles.

Our raw materials are entirely organic and pure. After recycling/reusing, the remaining waste is dumped in the company's pitches, which are 20 feet deep and broad – suitable for the decomposition process. For months the waste remains in the pitches to ferment, then used as 'khaad' in the field. The cow dung and urine are also used as khaad in our field sites.

Carbon footprint – from manufacturing to supply chain to the product's end of life

Nutriorg's farmlands have more than 2 lakh plantations. The number of plants that we grow is increasing every year. Our projects are 100% eco-friendly as we use solar energy and deep irrigation in our manufacturing and production process. We have a complete water-reverse system; water is recycled and reused.

At Nutriorg, we are committed to making nature-based products.

Product benefits

Nutriorg is dedicated to health and wellness, and all of its product range carries immense health benefits.

Among the key health properties are:

- Immunity-boosting
- Diabetic care
- Metabolism-boosting
- Blood purification (detox range)
- Heart care
- Maintaining blood pressure
- Strengthening bone and muscle health
- Improving gut health
- Energy-boosting
- Weight management
- Skin and hair care
- Improving oral health

▶ SEBAMED

The spokesperson directed us to the parent website – <https://www.sebamed.de>.

Mechanism to track packaging material/how much of it is being recycled/reused

When selecting packaging materials, the Boppard-based company ensures that

- weight and packaging materials are reduced
- paper packaging from sustainable forestry is used
- packaging materials are biodegradable
- packaging components can be recycled

Carbon footprint – from manufacturing to supply chain to the product's end of life

As per the company's claims, CO₂ emissions in the first quarter of 2018 decreased by 32% per kg of



Cover Story ▶

consignment weight. The key factors for this success in logistics were: bundling the flow of goods; route planning for vehicles, and utilisation levels of transport.

When selecting suppliers, the company focuses on the use of regional products and sustainable agriculture, and the sustainable management of supplier companies, among other things.

Product benefits

Particular attention is given to the choice of the raw materials, where not only the origin, quality and purity are taken into account but also that they have the lowest possible allergenic potential. When selecting the ingredients, the company focuses on near-natural products, tried-and-tested active agents and formulations that have scientifically proven, positive effects on the skin.

The surfactants in the skin-cleansing products and shampoos are almost 99% biodegradable and do not pollute the groundwater. Sebamed does not use highly controversial microplastics in its products.

▶ THE BODY SHOP

'Plastic pollution is a threat to our world. Only 9% of used plastic is recycled globally. The Body Shop India's 'Bring Back our Bottles' initiative is a conscious step towards controlling plastic pollution.

At The Body Shop, we believe that something good comes from good intentions. We encourage employees to learn new skills by funding various training programmes, togetherness activities and healthcare. We have a global policy for all our staff: spend at least three days per year doing volunteering work.'



▶ PUMA

The spokesperson directed us to this link – <https://about.puma.com/en/sustainability/our-approach>

Some extracts:

Sourcing materials and manufacturing products leave an environmental and social footprint behind. Only if we aim to make our entire sourcing and production processes more sustainable, we can optimize the impact PUMA has on the environment and communities. This is why we are sourcing key materials such as cotton, polyester, leather and cardboard from more sustainable sources. We are striving to eliminate more and more chemicals from our production processes and to reduce our carbon emissions in our own operations as well as in our supply chain.

The majority of our environmental and social impacts are created in our supply chain. Therefore, we are working in partnership with our vendors to achieve our common goals - from ensuring fair working conditions and effective pollution controls to the development and use of more sustainable materials.

▶ SONY INDIA

'At Sony, we are committed towards a cleaner, safer and greener environment. Our e-waste management reaffirms our commitment to ensuring compliance with environmental laws in India. Scientific disposal of e-waste reduces environment pollution. We have collection centres in most of the major cities in the country.'

The spokesperson shared this link – <https://www.sony.co.in/microsite/environment-policy/ewaste/>

The no-response responses

Some companies had their feedback mechanism completely on automation, which in the context of our queries made their responses funny—and irrelevant and useless too.

Some samples:

▶ Lakme

Dear Customer,

Greetings from Lakme India!

1. Please click on the link below to track your order or shipment status with your order id or tracking number.

<https://lakmeindia.com/pages/track-order>

2. Please feel free to contact us on 1800-313-9293 or write to us at support@lakmeindia.com regarding your concern or any other query related to your online product purchase from our website with the mail subject in this format - <Query type> | Order Id <XXXXXX>

We appreciate your patience and understanding. Hope to serve you again soon!

On the same date, another mail comes from the Lakme people which does not even pretend to wait for a response to the mail above. Reproducing the same here:

Dear —,

Your ticket - query - has been closed.

We hope that the ticket was resolved to your satisfaction. If you feel that the ticket should not be closed or if the ticket has not been resolved, please reply to this email.



▶ Colorbar

Before closing the query with the mail below, the feedback team sent about 5 to 6 mails that began with the very flattering 'Hey gorgeous..' (flattering only until you remind yourself that it's an automated response...)

Would like to share that Colorbar believes in creating a value system and setting examples for the world through our products.

We maintain high-quality standards and take extra initiative to be environment-friendly. Also, all our products are GMP certified. Hope it answers your query.

CB's queries were sent to these companies:

- Adidas
- Audi India
- Britannia
- Colorbar Cosmetics
- Fabindia
- Forest Essentials
- Geo-Fresh
- Greendot Health Foods (Cornitos Nacho)
- Juicy Chemistry
- Just Organik
- H&M
- Haldiram
- Honda Cars India
- IFB
- Kia India
- LG India
- Lakme
- Levi Strauss
- MG Motor India
- Mamaearth
- Mango
- Maruti Suzuki
- Modi-Mundipharma Beauty Products
- Nike
- Nutriorg
- Organic Tattva
- Panasonic
- Pepsico
- Puma
- Quest Retail
- Saksham Impex
- Sebamed
- Tata Motors
- The Body Shop India
- Trent (Westside)
- Whirlpool



▶ **Fabindia**

This is to acknowledge that your ticket has been created with ticket id 3234203 and subject 'query'. We are reviewing your query, we will get back to you with the best possible solution in the next 24-48 hours.

Due to recent outbreak of Covid-19, as a precautionary measure we are working from home with limited resources. Therefore your wait time might be longer while you call us or write an email. We assure you that we are working with utter most (sic) diligence to resolve your queries.

▶ **IFB**

We apologise for the inconvenience caused to you by the IFB product you are using. Kindly share your register mobile number (which given in the time of purchaser product) to assist you.

▶ **Maruti Suzuki**

We request you to send us the following information, to expedite in this case.

- *Kindly confirm whether you have purchased any vehicle or not*
- *If yes, then confirm the model name and variant (e.g. LXI, VXi) of the vehicle*
- *Kindly share the name and complete address of the concerned dealership*
- *Kindly elaborate your concern*
- *Share your contact number for further communication*

Thanking & assuring you of our best services at all times.



For automobile companies, these were the queries:

1. As per the new law, a vehicle's life is about 15 years. Do you have any policy/scheme to make consumers aware about this?
2. Do you have a system to track what happens to the vehicles that have reached their end of life?
3. Has the company done any research or any data with regard to how much total emissions (approximate/average of all models that they manufacture) are caused by a vehicle until it reaches its end of life?



Thought

When was the last time you wrote to the customer care of any of your favourite brands, the brands that you buy or use everyday – your toothpaste, clothes, vehicle, everything in your kitchen, your appliances, or the services that you pay for, and asked them about their contribution towards environment conservation and protection, about how much they care about their customers' health, or about what makes them socially responsible and conscious corporate citizens? ■

Jindal Stainless Foundation (JSF)



Jindal Stainless Foundation (JSF), registered under the Registrar of Societies, is the CSR arm of Jindal Stainless, established to work for the greater good of the community. Our aim is to focus 'Beyond Business Responsibilities', stressing on the importance of seeing a change in lives of communities around our plant locations as well as other geographies. Our key focus areas are Women Empowerment, Education and Skill Development, Integrated Health Care, Environment Sustainability, Community Development, and Integrated Farming.

Under the able guidance of Mrs. Deepikaa Jindal, Chairperson, Jindal Stainless Foundation, our seasoned CSR professionals implement several initiatives through national and international civil societies and non-government organisations. Under the aegis of JSF, it is our earnest endeavour to uplift our surrounding communities and transform the lives of people who cross our path.



TELLING THE TALE

So as to document the 'change' in the lives of communities – the beneficiaries of social projects of companies and non-profits

In Focus: Jindal Stainless Foundation

Enabling entrepreneurs

Sangita Das



Sangita Das, 30 years, comes from a lower middle class family in Jajpur, Odisha. She lives with her parents and brother. Her father lost his job at the local plant. Her mother is a housewife.

Sangita decided to build her career in the field of beauty and wellness. In 2014, after her graduation, she joined Jawed Habib Beauty and Wellness Training at Cuttack. Thereafter she was identified as a trainer by Sambhav Foundation, which was the executing NGO partner to run the beauty and wellness training course of Jindal Stainless Foundation. Sangita successfully trained 184 trainees.

After the agreement with Sambhav Foundation was over, Sangita was offered the opportunity to operate her own training centre. With the necessary infrastructure support in place, she opened her beauty and wellness centre at Danagadi. She has employed two girls at the centre and charges Rs 10,000 per trainee for the six-month course.

Sangita not only provides skill training but also motivates the trainees to become entrepreneurs. So far, she has placed 10 students in different parlours and encouraged 5 students to open their own parlours.

Kshanaprava Nayak



Kshanaprava Nayak – daughter of Pramod Kumar Nayak from a remote rural village in Odisha, Kumbhiragadia – started working with IIIT Skill Training Centre in July 2017. She has three sisters and a brother. Her father is a primary school teacher and mother a housewife. Her father treats all his children equally and made sure they all had good education.

After completion of B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering, Kshanaprava worked as a software designer and developer at Bhubaneswar and Ahmedabad. She came back home during 2017 and joined IIIT Computer Education Centre as one of the faculties.

Kshanaprava involved herself in the training centre and learnt all the processes such as teaching, imparting soft skills, mobilising and counselling parents and students, and admission campaign. Looking at her talent and capabilities, she was given the opportunity to manage the centre in self-financing mode, with support from Jindal Stainless Foundation (JSF).

On 1 January 2019, the IIIT centre was shifted from Trijanga Rehabilitation Colony to Danagadi proper. Here, in partnership with her colleague, Kshanaprava registered the centre as an MSME.

While the Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown derailed the centre's operations, Kshanaprava did not give up. She decided to revive it and did so with the help of JSF's CSR field staff and students. Since around 20 students from Duburi area were unable to commute to Danagadi due to lack of access to transportation means, Kshanaprava decided to open a satellite computer education centre at Duburi.

This journey of Kshanaprava continues and is a great example of what initiative and self-belief can achieve with a little help and the right guidance at the right time.

Meerabai Women's Self-Help Group

Swarnalata Pal



Thirty-five-year-old Swarnalata and her husband, Rankanidhi Pal, were very poor and living in a thatched house in their village, Manatira. They have three daughters and a blind mother to take care of. Her husband was a tailor in the rural village and was earning a paltry sum. They were simply unable to make ends meet.

Swarnalata was one of the 10 women who became members of Meerabai SHG. They attended many

training programmes on bookkeeping, accounting, food processing, agarbatti and candle making, papad and badi making, dairy, goat and sheep rearing, phenyl preparation, mushroom cultivation, etc.

Swarnalata went on to become the master bookkeeper of the SHG. She took up mushroom cultivation and badi making as business activities, and not only could afford her children's education but also built a pucca house.

About the project

Meerabai Women's Self-Help Group was formed by Jindal Stainless Foundation (JSF) in 2010, in Danagadi Block of Jajpur District, Odisha. The various income-generating activities have played a huge role in improving the socio-economic condition of the group's members.

JSF has provided the required training and organised capacity-building exercises for the members so that they can come out of the vicious cycle of poverty and indebtedness. JSF believes that women have the innate capability to grow and become self-reliant. The only intervention needed is to develop their confidence by helping them learn soft skills so that they can improve their livelihoods. Various types of training sessions were organised for the SHG members, on badi and papad making, snacks preparation, goat and sheep rearing, phenyl, agarbatti and candle making, poultry farming, mushroom cultivation, etc.

Badi business as an agro-processing enterprise model has helped the women in generating high income and utilising the money towards their

children's education, adding value to their nutritive diet by purchasing better food items, etc. This has checked malnourishment amongst the children.

The members of Meerabai SHG have not only pulled their families from the cycle of poverty and indebtedness, but also created a niche in identifying and empowering themselves politically, economically, and socially in the village and in the region. The SHG has been providing microcredit to its members which was a daydream some 15 or 20 years back. The microcredits have been constantly providing employment and additional income to the members. The nexus of moneylenders in the villages is not prevailing anymore.

Other members who came in contact with the Meerabai group are now moving towards improving their lives. As a matter of fact, members of Meerabai SHG are today recognised as master trainers. They have been chosen by Odisha Livelihood Mission to train other women SHG members in various districts. The SHG has also extended its support for the successful implementation of various government schemes in their village and gram panchayat.

In Focus: Operation Vasantha by Agastya International Foundation

V Sandhya, 20 years old

Pursuing B.Sc at CVRM Degree College, V.Kota



Background

Sandhya's father is a farmer and an auto driver while her mother is a homemaker.

'My first day at Agastya was very special to me. I was fascinated by the buildings and the environment at the campus. The first thing I did was watch a video on moral values in the Young Instructor Leader (peer-to-peer learning)

lab, following which we were divided into groups to perform a hands-on experiment on a hibiscus flower,' recalls Sandhya.

A shy and quiet child sitting in the back of her classroom, Sandhya's experience at Agastya was a journey of exploration. As a Young Instructor Leader (YIL), she introduced experiential learning to many children in her village, organised alumni meets for Agastya, briefly taught school-dropout children as a team member of Operation Vasantha, and organised rallies to spread awareness on AIDS and the importance of cleanliness and hygiene.

In her words: 'With my experience of facilitating and compering Agastya's alumni meets, I don't have stage fright anymore. I have confidence in myself that I can do anything. I have no fear in conducting seminars or explaining any experiments to my college peers.' This confidence gave her the courage to interact with others to solve certain pressing problems in her community.

For Sandhya, Agastya symbolises a storehouse of real-life experiences and educational enhancement. One instance that she remembers as having had a huge impact on her was the Maverick Teachers Global Summit meeting. She interacted with invitees from all over the world and amassed vital life lessons through collaborating and performing experiments with them.

Now Sandhya dreams of becoming an IAS officer and serving her country, particularly people from marginalised and impoverished communities. Her experience as a community leader has led her to identify the pressing problems in society, analyse them, and solve them.

About the programme

Education is the surest way out of poverty. Yet, many children in India never get the chance to take advantage of these, because their families are too poor to support them. Despite the concerted efforts of governments and civil society, many poor children drop out of school for the simple reason that if they don't work, they don't eat. Once a child drops out of school, it can be very difficult to return later – difficult socially, to fall behind peers who stayed in school and continued to progress through the curriculum, and difficult academically, because basic skills atrophy, and it can take considerable time and effort to make up lost ground.

Agastya International Foundation has taken up this challenge, working to bring school dropouts back into mainstream academic programmes. Agastya trains young, socially conscious volunteers – mostly college students – to go back to their home villages and tutor children who are not currently in school. Two to three times a month, the volunteers attend training workshops on the Agastya campus, where they sharpen their teaching skills and learn remedial education strategies. As an added incentive, volunteers receive a modest monthly honorarium to help defray their own educational expenses.

Each volunteer teacher takes on 20 to 30 students, holding classes for at least 2 hours a day, 6 days a week. Classes at the dropout centres typically are held outside of working hours, so that poor children do not have to choose between working to meet immediate needs and studying to improve their future prospects. Parents consent more readily to their children's participation in the dropout programme knowing that, at least initially, they won't lose income. Many parents are all too aware that a lack of education can trap their children in poverty, since according to an iron law of the job market: the lower the skill level, the lower the wages.

In the course of the programme, parents' attitudes toward education may undergo a striking change; when their children succeed in their studies, parents often encourage them to return to school full-time, as an investment in the family's future. Equally important, the children develop a love of learning, gaining confidence and self-esteem, as they become more competent learners.

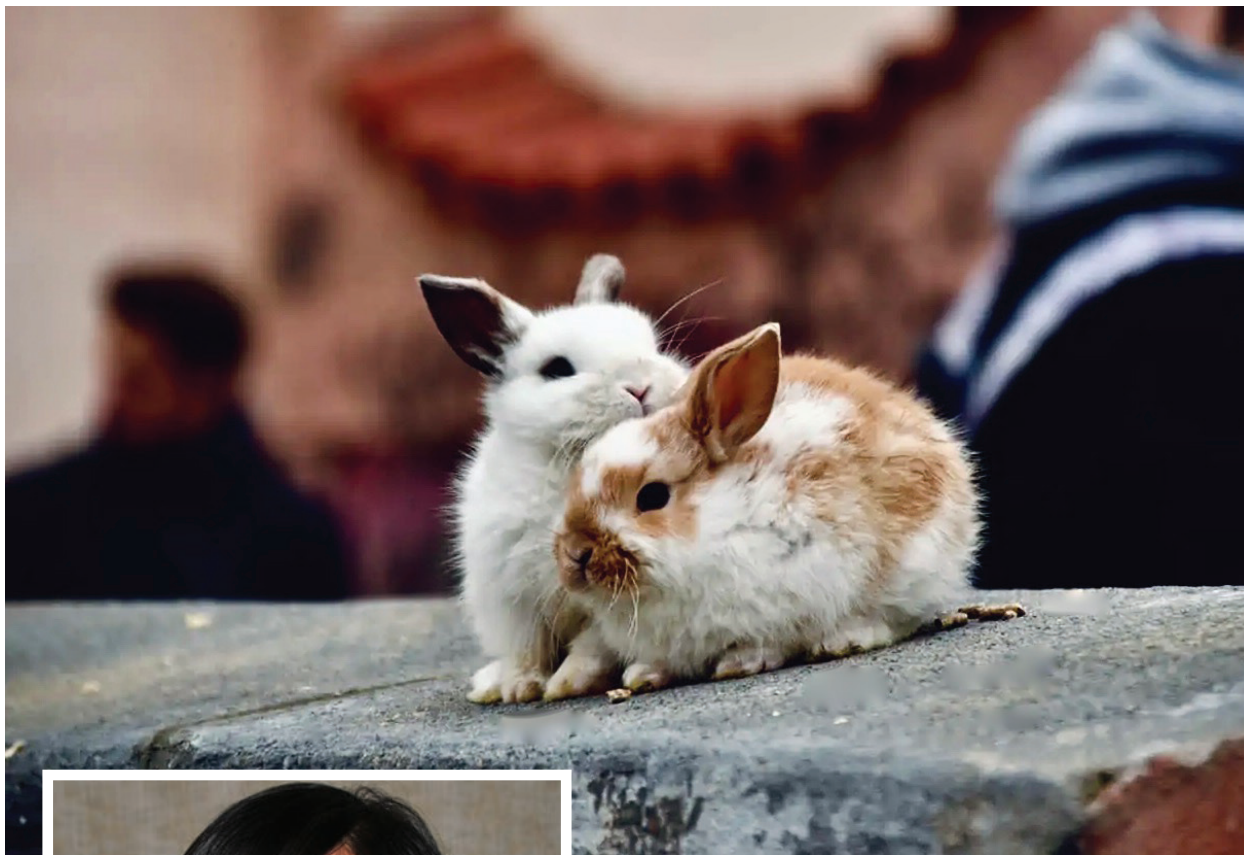
This feature is part of CauseBecause's continuing endeavour to understand, facilitate and document impact of social projects. ■



In the last three years, no girl student dropped out from our beneficiary schools in three states. Enrolment and attendance rates increased manifold and academic outcomes have been noteworthy.

We are thankful to all our CSR partners who successfully engaged in implementation of Project Shiksha.

For ideas and partnership proposals, write to wecare@heromotocorp.com



Why animal testing for cosmetics must stop

A perspective

by Mauli Teli

Most commercially available cosmetics contain lard, gelatine and various forms of pig fat, lanolin (from sheep), carmine (that beautiful red stain, obtained by crushing cochineal beetles), beeswax, and other animal-derived substances. These typically help in easy transfer of product to the skin, lend them creaminess, and also help in preservation. These are all commonly available and bulk-traded items for production. Also, up until a few years ago, most products in the beauty industry were tested on animals under controlled lab conditions. This helped in establishing safe formulation before clinical trials.

When producing cruelty-free cosmetics, however, you have to rethink everything from ingredient sourcing to testing. The animal-derived ingredients have to be replaced with potent substitutes from plants – for example, pig fat and gelatine must be replaced with oils and butters like olive oil, coconut oil, or shea butter. This requires additional research and at times work out to be more expensive than animal-derived ingredients. Even certain formulation processes, geared towards working with animal ingredients, need to be remodelled – from ingredient pairings, proportion of raw material, temperatures and also stability, all of it needs revision when

moving to cruelty-free cosmetics. Moreover, while animal testing was relatively cost-effective and easy, and without legal and financial ramifications, testing on human volunteers is a tougher process. It involves consent from the volunteers, a detailed understanding of their individual health status, and documentation, and may also take time and incur significant costs when using technology like human-on-a-chip. While the knowledge and wisdom from past formulations usually allows for a slimmer margin of adverse reaction, there is still a risk involved when testing prototypes on live human subjects.

Reasons why testing on animals should stop

Animals have traditionally been used for testing in the formulation of drugs and cosmetics, as well as in neuroscience research and toxicology testing in various fields. One of the main reasons for animal-based studies is that the product strains already contain animal-derived enzymes, hormones or other chemicals, and the effect, if adverse, will be more pronounced in non-human subjects. Yet, fact is that animal testing delivers results of only 70%–80% accuracy so far as humans are concerned. On the other hand, combination methods of chemistry and cell-based alternative methods can deliver accurate results of 90% or above.

Animals cannot speak; they cannot explain the physical and psychological effects of the substances being tested on them. There can be no 100% reliable feedback from them. The results based on observation and viscera testing are at best tentative and do not guarantee the same effect in humans (case in point – various cancer drug tests done on rats were successful but showed no results when delivered to human subjects). Often, drug trials on animals deemed successful have failed spectacularly when replicated for humans.



Challenges in widening the market for cruelty-free cosmetics

When it comes to products like food, consumers all over the world are getting more conscious about what goes into their daily diet. This has now extended to the cosmetics segments. Just as the advent and subsequent popularisation of the farm-to-fork promise, more and more brands are moving towards clean beauty – that is, natural, vegan, organic and cruelty-free cosmetics, for both makeup and personal care. Alongside, there has been a huge influx of brands – both home-grown and international – to ride this ethical consumption wave. A subset of this new and fast-growing clean beauty category is halal-certified cosmetics. Products that are so certified contain no alcohol, pig fat, harsh chemicals like sulphates or parabens, or animal-derived ingredients. Everything, from sourcing to manufacturing, is tightly regulated.

Because halal as a way of life has less awareness among general public – due to a lack of communication or prioritisation, it is definitely in our interest to grow the category through education, awareness and acceptance from consumers looking for cleaner ways of living. Seemingly ordinary ingredients and products that are non-halal but are commonly used in everyday essentials have to be renounced in favour of purer, non-animal derived ingredients. This in itself is a shift in consumption and requires commitment, much like giving up plastic. The understanding of halal-certified products is also difficult to navigate considering religious connotations and preconceived notions. Slowly, however, things are changing; with the advent of the digital universe as a means of dissemination, more and more people are discovering, accepting and moving into the concept of halal products and services, to give themselves, their loved ones and the environment around them a cleaner, better future.

The global halal cosmetics market is rapidly on the rise, with a current market value at \$39.09 billion. Market research estimates that it will grow at a CAGR of 12.5% between 2021 and 2028, to reach \$100.3 billion. In addition, the global clean-beauty market in terms of revenue was estimated at \$5.44 billion in 2020 and is expected to reach \$11.55 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 12.07%. India is also not far behind – it is on its way to becoming one of the largest markets for halal beauty products with an opportunity size of at least Rs 11,500 crore.



Testing on non-human subjects, besides having obvious scientific flaws, is unethical and wasteful. The fact is that when you test a substance on an animal, you are not taking its consent and are subjecting the animal to fear, loneliness, sickness and eventual death.

Alternatives to animal testing

Using lab-culture techniques, it is now possible to grow groups of cells from those extracted from different parts of the human body such as skin, lung, gut and kidneys. These are then linked together as a lab culture to literally resemble 'human', but on a chip. This human-on-a-chip helps to analyse toxicity, stability of ingredient as well as side effects.

For cosmetic companies, scientists and biologists are now able to create a tissue in the lab from human skin cells which mimics human skin. This helps to understand the efficacy of makeup and skin-care products without animal testing. Computer-based modelling and testing software now exist, which in combination with cell-culture methods help to

significantly establish safety and efficacy of the formulations and products being tested.

Human volunteer studies form an important part of validation without animal testing. The difference is that due to advancement in detection and monitoring devices and substances like dyes and biomarkers, even exposure to a micro-quantity of the ingredient or product in question can be tracked for effects without being fatal or damaging to the subject. This also has the main advantage of these people being able to tell scientists exactly what they are going through and how they feel.

To sum up, there is absolutely no excuse now for companies to continue animal testing, at least in production of everyday items like makeup, skin care and hair care products. The scientific breakthroughs made by humans should be used to also safeguard other species and gradually bring an end to all animal testing. ■

Mauli Teli is CEO & managing director, IBA Cosmetics

ONE **ACTION** **ALLIANCE**

Launched in 2018–19, **One Action Alliance** (OAA) is a CauseBecause initiative to bring together conscious citizens, responsible corporate groups and non-profit entities to commit to **One Action** whose collective impact can bring about a needed, visible, and emphatic change.

Between 2018 and 2019, over 80 corporate groups and non-profits became signatories to the Alliance's campaign for discarding single-use plastic and have minimised the use of the same at their workplaces.



HARNESS

the **collective strength** of workforces at corporates and non-profits.

ENGAGE

in **collective action** – just one action that their counterparts at other entities are also engaging with.

BELIEVE

that **you are not alone** in it, because thousands of conscious individuals are there with you.

CHANGE

the **status quo**.

OAA is registered at United Nations Partnerships for SDGs platform as one of the organisations driving actions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For partnership queries, write to info@causebecause.com



‘Sustainability is not only about the process of creating. It’s also about the entire lifecycle of the product.’

– Brig. Rajiv Williams, Jindal Stainless Ltd

The growing number of consumers in India who are conscious about various environmental and social issues reflects a trend and a way of thinking that is picking up globally. These consumers prefer associating with – buying, consuming, propagating about, endorsing – products, brands and companies that care for the society and for the environment, and are conscious corporate citizens.

As things are, companies usually communicate with their consumers through their advertising, marketing and public relations activities, which are more of a one-way communication. Consumers do not actually get meaningful opportunities for getting to know their brand, nor is there a clear mechanism for engagement, especially with regard to the ‘conscious’ side of the brand.

As much as it is essential for brands to do more with regard to responsibility and sustainability, it is equally essential for them to communicate more about the same, to talk more and talk straight with consumers, with all of us. Not only to build trust, but also because talking and responding will help spread the word on conscious and responsible consumption.

The Talk Straight, Talk Sustainability series is Team CauseBecause's attempt to get questions from aware, responsible and conscious consumers answered directly by the country's leading corporate brands – brands that are a part of millions of households and lives across the country.

On this platform, the brand's representative responds to questions that revolve around the brand's environmental impact and initiatives, social initiatives, diversity and inclusion policies, advertising and marketing ethics, and everything else that it takes for a brand to be a conscious corporate citizen.



*Brig. Rajiv Williams,
Corporate head – CSR,
Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL)*

What follows are extracts from CB's conversation with **Brig. Rajiv Williams, corporate head – CSR, Jindal Stainless Ltd (JSL)**, on things that define the sustainability and responsibility core of the company, including why steel has its green moments.

Jindal Stainless is a part of our lives...

It's interesting, how the consumers of today are wanting to get associated with corporate names and brands who are socially responsible. Linking up with that aspect, stainless steel is a green product.

Using a stainless-steel product is definitely better than using a carbon-steel product, and more consumers are slowly grasping this difference. The per-capita usage of stainless steel the world over has galloped over the years. In India too, we're seeing a gradual increase in per-capita use of stainless steel. You will see it being used in many places and in many ways, in art and architecture, in airport cladding, or even in bus shelters.

Is stainless steel a 'green' product?

Sustainability is not only about the process of creating, whether it's stainless steel or carbon steel. That's just one part. It's also about the entire lifecycle of the product. Stainless steel is reusable; carbon steel is not. That is one of the most important aspects of stainless steel, besides its tenacity and other things that are already built into the metal's properties. Hygienically and environmentally, it is better and lasts a lifetime.

In times to come, people will realise that using stainless steel is sustainable.

How will the layperson – who is simply buying steel – know the difference between carbon steel and stainless steel?

You really can't distinguish between the two based on looks. Unless you have the branding. We make flat sheets, not the end products. But that flat sheet is a branded product. It's also worth knowing that while ordinary steel gets rusted in 2 to 3 years, stainless steel lasts forever.

Ideally, all consumers should be aware of sustainable products—stainless steel in this case—and make conscious purchase decisions.

How, though?

At one level, it's definitely the responsibility of the corporates to educate consumers and create that kind of awareness through social media, print media, electronic media, etc. That's something that has been lacking here.

At the same time, there are conscious consumers who are looking at carbon footprint, mapping the supply chain, noticing the trustworthy markings or gradings by competent authorities, and picking sustainable products. I am sure more and more consumers are starting to look at these aspects.

Until a few years ago, one could not determine the amount of calories or sugar in the edible product that they picked from a store; today everything is labelled. Interestingly, because of this labelling, even a person who has no idea about the calories or is not conscious about sugar content may start thinking why such information is being shared on the label.

Sustainability is not only about the process of creating. Stainless steel is reusable; carbon steel is not. That is one of the most important aspects of stainless steel, besides of course its tenacity and other things that are already built into the metal's properties. Hygienically and environmentally, it is better and lasts a lifetime.

*A physically challenged—
or a differently abled—
woman in a remote village
in Odisha is now a 'social
entrepreneur' who is also
empowering other women
in her community. This
is just one of the many
stories that have been
possible due to
our social interventions at
the grassroots.*

Isn't cost a deterrent?

...when the consumer understands the difference, the quality of the product, the real benefits to them and for the environment in the long run, sustainable products make much sense to them. When you are buying stainless steel, you are assured of the quality and you can also be assured that you will be paying just once for a product because it will be there for a lifetime.

Today, with more disposable incomes in the hands of younger middle-class families, they want to spend and invest more in quality products. That's the shift that is taking place.

Please tell us something about the social responsibility aspect of the company, the work that you do for communities around your areas of operation.

Manufacturing industry has got certain responsibilities towards the communities around whom they operate. The industry occupies land, opens huge factories, does mining, and a lot of people get displaced in the process. Many of them have to migrate because they aren't skilled adequately to work at the plant... For us, it took some years to build those requisite skills amongst the local community.

Let's pick up from there. When you started your first factory many years ago, there would've been some resentment among the communities whose land had been taken away. Can you share a case study or talk about a social project that was focused on supporting these communities?

I am not going to be talking about 50 years ago, because then the environment was different. About 15–16 years ago, we realised that there was a requirement for a separate department exclusively taking care of our corporate social responsibility. We took on education, healthcare and women empowerment projects, and we did a lot of work on environment sustainability. After all, you are using the rich resources that are close by. If it's water, you've not only got to evaporate it in your boilers, but must also come up with processes where you can reuse and restore the same.





We seriously looked at the human rights aspects as well. As a matter of fact, I was involved in carrying out a due diligence for business and human rights. How has business impacted the communities? What is the redressal mechanism? How are we addressing the mechanism? These are the main challenges, but the outcomes are very encouraging.

Can you share a story of a child or a woman who may have benefited from these initiatives?

In a remote village in Odisha, we had opened a tailoring centre – a simple, common activity that many of us engage in. However, we did it with a difference. We used the community space to start this centre, and there was this lady who covered about two kilometres on her wheelchair to come to the centre every day. This woman was determined to learn, and later she opened her own tailoring unit and employed about seven women.

As part of our CSR, we helped her market some of her products. Today she's earning almost Rs 30,000 a month and employs around eight to ten women from the community.

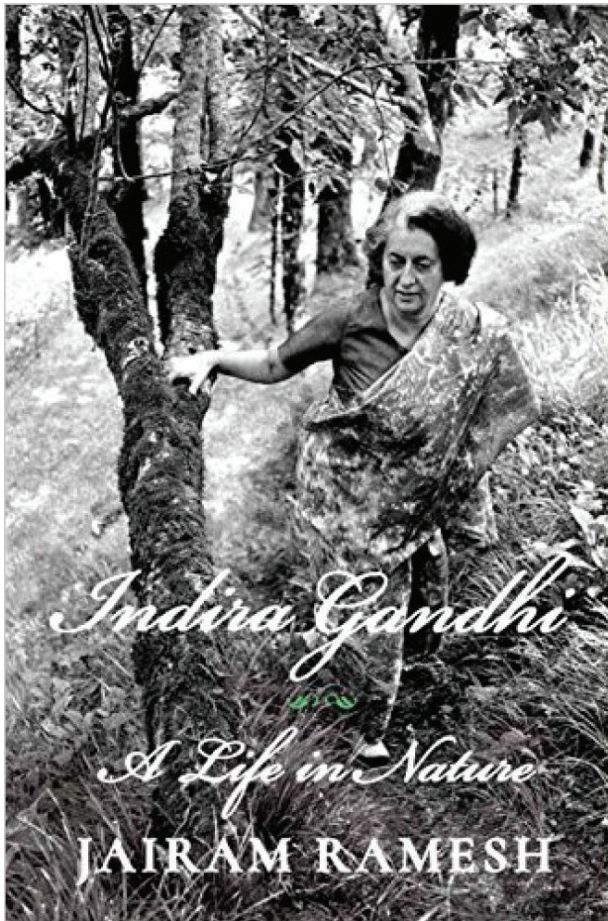
To cut a long story short, a physically challenged—or a differently abled—woman in a remote village in Odisha is now a 'social entrepreneur' who is also empowering other women in her community. This is just one of the many stories that have been possible due to our social interventions at the grassroots.

Are all JSL employees aware of the company's social and environmental initiatives?

Yes, most of them know these stories and the initiatives that are enabling these, mostly through our monthly magazines, through internal conversations, through social media and various audiovisual content which we keep projecting in our cafeterias and common areas. We also get people from outside to conduct sessions with the workforce to help them become conscious, aware, responsible... basically choose a sustainable way of life.

Moreover, there are certain days that are fixed solely for this. For example, on World Environment Day, Human Rights Day and other such days, we celebrate together with the employees and propagate the core message of the day. ■

Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature



In a unique biography on India's former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, author Jairam Ramesh describes her emergence as a staunch advocate of environment. The narrative in this biography is more of a memoir that underlines Gandhi's love for the environment. While reading the book, one also gets a sense of how decisions around environmental policies and projects are made at the highest offices in New Delhi, and how personal correspondences amongst a few intellectuals have helped in forming and shaping some of the much-needed environmental laws and projects in the country. The reader also gets a closer look at the challenges for a government when it comes to maintaining a balance between economic development and environment conservation.

As a former minister of environment and forests and known for his tough stance on giving environmental clearances for big-ticket 'development' projects (and often found himself on the wrong side of many on both sides in the environment-versus-development debate), Ramesh has experience, credentials and

the insider's perspective to take on the subject that he has in this book. Here he takes the reader deep into the life of the leader whose love for wildlife, forests, rivers, mountains and suchlike is not known to many. As Prime Minister, Gandhi was responsible for demarcation of numerous wildlife sanctuaries and forest reserves, and notwithstanding the challenges – well documented and known to many – her work and achievements in conservation are admirable and laid the foundation for some well-structured environmental policies.

Indira Gandhi had gained global attention with a speech she gave at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Her address is sort of an early treatise on global environmental history. Although her pithy statement that 'poverty is the worst form of pollution' grabbed the headlines, it was her critique of the hypocrisy of what were then referred to as the 'developed' nations that has had the greatest impact. Gandhi noted how so much of the industrialised world, which had made its wealth (and pollution) through the pillage of its colonies, now insisted that those newly independent nations be held equally responsible for cleaning up the world. Her argument that the smaller wealthy nations use far more resources than the larger, poorer ones, is, as the events surrounding the Paris Climate Accord show, as relevant as ever.

Excerpts from chapter III: The Companionship Years (1950–1964)

...For fourteen years, Indira Gandhi lived in Teen Murti House, the Prime Minister's official residence in a lush green 65-acre complex with peacocks and various other birds. This sprawling colonial-era bungalow was originally built for the British commander-in-chief who started living there in 1930. When Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on 30 January 1948, there was concern that Nehru might be the next target. A reluctant Nehru was persuaded by his cabinet to move into the bungalow, which he did on 2 August 1948. Indira Gandhi shuttled back and forth between Lucknow and New Delhi, before moving in full-time with her father in early 1950.

The Prime Minister's residence was a mini-zoo of sorts—as graphically described by Indira Gandhi herself seven years into her stay there:

We always had dogs, the good kind with long pedigrees and others rescued off the streets that were just as devoted—also parrots, pigeons, squirrels and practically every small creature common to the Indian scene. And we thought life was pretty full, looking after them on top of all the older [sic] chores. Then in Assam, we were presented with a baby cat-bear (or red

Book Reading ▶

Himalayan panda), although we did not know what it was until we reached Agartala and were able to study the book of Indian animals in the Commissioner's library [...] Much later we got him a mate [...] and now they have the most adorable little cubs—the first, I believe, to be bred in captivity. My father calls on the panda family morning and evening. They miss him when he is out of station [...]

Two years ago, we received our first tiger cubs—there were three named Bhim, Bhairav and Hidamba. A man came from Lucknow Zoo to teach us how to look after them [...] After a while we sent them off to the Lucknow Zoo where you can still meet Bhim and Hidimba; magnificent beasts, their muscles rippling with power and grace. Marshal Tito asked for one of them and Bhairav now resides in Belgrade.

...Of all the jungle's magnificent creatures, Indira was unarguably most committed to the tiger. She had read Jim Corbett, of course, but perhaps the first time she actually saw the beast in the wild was on 19 October 1955, on the way to Jog Falls in Karnataka. That day, she wrote to her father:

Here I am after all. And truly it's a sight worth seeing. The scenery all along the road was very lovely too, although the road itself was deplorable.

Just as I was being told that there is no likelihood of seeing any wild animal at that time of the forenoon and in this season when water is plentiful throughout the forest, a tiger, magnificent creature, sauntered across the road just in front of our car...

The sight was permanently etched in her mind—and twenty-seven years later, she recalled it vividly in a foreword to a book of wildlife photographs by one of her senior colleagues from Karnataka.



Consequently, if there's one environmental cause Indira is forever associated with, it is tiger conservation. Intriguingly, throughout the 1950s, the Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL), set up in April 1952, never recommended a ban on shooting tigers. In fact, in its very first meeting in Mysore in November–December 1952, it identified fourteen animals that required urgent protection, but failed to mention the grand beast! A ban on hunting tigers came to be initiated only in 1970, four years after Indira became Prime Minister. But that Indira thoroughly disapproved of the practice is revealed by a letter dated 7 September 1956 that she wrote to her son Rajiv:

We have received a huge tiger's skin. The tiger was shot by the Maharaja of Rewa only two months ago. The skin is lying in the ballroom. Every time I pass it, I feel very sad that instead of lying here he might have been roaming and roaring in the jungle. Our tigers are such beautiful creatures, so graceful. You can see their muscles rippling under their skins. Such a short time ago he must have been King of the Jungle—striking terror in the hearts of other animals.

I am so glad that nowadays more and more people prefer to go into the jungles with their cameras instead of guns. It seems such a shame to deprive anything of the joy of living just for our pleasure.

Excerpts from Chapter VI: The Naturalist Prime Minister—II (1980–1984)

(...) Anne Wright and Indira Gandhi were in regular touch in 1983.



On 21 February, Anne Wright wrote to the Prime Minister for a message on the occasion of a ten-day exhibition, film festival and fun fair being organised to raise funds for WWF-India. Indira Gandhi responded quickly and positively on 2 March:

Our earth supports many forms of life. In the past century, thoughtless exploitation of its resources has decimated several species and threatens to extinguish more. We must bestir ourselves to prevent further damage. The extinction of our wildlife inevitably leads to the degeneration of the environment, which in turn affects humankind.

The World Wildlife Fund has done a great deal for the identification and preservation of endangered species.

(...) If ever incontrovertible proof were needed of Indira Gandhi's ecological credentials, what she did in March 1983 was it. On 5 March, even as she was busy with the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi, she wrote to Anne Wright:

I have written to the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of Afghanistan for the Non-Aligned Conference, conveying the points you have made about the Siberian crane and other migratory birds. However, I must confess that, preoccupied as they are with difficulties in their own countries and without any special interest in wildlife or its preservation, there may not be a very positive response.

Her fears proved unfounded. For on 7 May, she wrote again to Anne Wright in what must be a remarkable letter by any yardstick:

I have received good responses to my letters to the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of Afghanistan regarding Siberian cranes and other migratory birds.

The Afghans have decided that the Ab-i-Estoda lake and other lakes in and around the Ghazni province would be a protected area for Siberian cranes in their migratory flights. More wardens will be posted at the lake during the Siberian cranes' stopping periods. They have also strictly prohibited hunting or other interfering activities to ensure that these lakes remain a protected area.

The President of Pakistan has informed me that as a signatory to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Pakistan has designated 9 waterfowl habitats of international importance to promote the conservation of various types of flora and fauna on which these birds are dependent, and for the protection of the birds. Crane hunting and trapping is already banned in Pakistan and while there is no evidence of Siberian cranes actually stopping over in Pakistan, they will consider ways of protecting and conserving them if they do stopover in Pakistan before they fly to India.

An ecstatic Anne Wright replied to the Prime Minister on 13 May:

This letter is a letter of congratulations and thanks twice over—because I have just got the message from your office to say you would be taking in the matter of tapping the Teesta river for water for Kalimpong, thus saving the Neora Valley.

(...) It wasn't just Agra's pollution levels that concerned the Prime Minister in 1983. Kashmir, undoubtedly her favourite state for a quick holiday, had been getting increasingly polluted, and the Prime Minister mentioned this to her officials. The chief minister of the state was close to her personally—but at that point, he had been making common cause with her political rivals. Even so, she wrote a 'Dear Farooq' letter on 15 March:

The increasing air pollution in Srinagar has been worrying me for a long time. I understand that the problem is compounded by road transport vehicles which are not well maintained. There are some long-term measures [...] which would bring about significant improvement in lessening the emission of pollutants of these vehicles. But in the short run it would help if these vehicles are checked by road transport authorities [...]. At some stage you should also think of legislation in this regard which is suited to local conditions. I understand that army vehicles in Srinagar are well maintained and do not add to pollution.

Please let me know what action you propose in this regard.

(...) By September 1982, the Doon Valley Board set up by Indira Gandhi the previous August suggested

that no new mining leases should be granted in the Mussoorie—Dehra Dun area and that the renewal of leases should not be permitted. But it lacked legal authority to enforce these recommendations.

Indira Gandhi, therefore, continued putting pressure on the state government. One letter to her from Shripati Misra, the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, on 21 January began by recalling: 'While recently in Dehra Dun, you had expressed your concern about the ill-effects of limestone-quarrying operations on the environment and ecology of the Doon Valley [...]

This concern got reflected in the constitution of a working group on 21 February to 'examine the question of whether the existing leases need to be terminated and also suggest steps for scientific exploitations of mines causing minimum ecological imbalances.' This group was given three months to submit its report.

The local environmental community, in the meantime, was getting frustrated by the wait. The Save Mussoorie Society told her on 20 June that the 'damage to the entrance of Mussoorie is much worse than the previous year. The quarrying is most indiscriminate and wanton [...].'

The Prime Minister replied to Sita Devi on 14 July:

I am terribly worried by the continued quarrying operations in the Doon area. I know of the extensive damage caused. The Uttar Pradesh Government tried to prevent this by cancelling 4 leases prematurely and also not renewing 18 leases which were ending in December 1982. The lessees, however, appealed to the Courts and have obtained stay orders from the District/High Courts, Uttar Pradesh. I have asked the C.M. of U.P. to look into the matter and ensure urgent action to have the stay vacated [...] On longer term measures for the area, we are awaiting the recommendations of the Working Group [...]

I hope you are well.

On the same day, she wrote to Shripati Misra:

I am told that the damage continues to be caused by quarrying operations in the Dehra Dun area [...] Could you not take urgent action to have stay orders vacated and immediately suspend quarrying operations in the mines which are not conforming to mining laws?

Two days later, she asked one of her aides, Arvind Pande, to send a note to the cabinet secretary (dictating parts of it herself) showing her deep concern on the subject:

A committee of secretaries has discussed the whole question of mining leases in the Dun area in December 1982, and also considered necessary changes in the MMRD (Mines and Minerals Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, which would permit cancellation of mining leases on environmental considerations and make it obligatory for the lessees to restore mined area after exploitation of mineral resources. A Study Group has been formed with the Controller-General Indian Bureau of Mines as Convenor to look into several aspects of the problem.

Cabinet Secretary is requested to expedite consideration of this report and take an overall view in the matter. Basically, the approach has to be one of limiting and controlling the mining effort to the minimum required and also ensure simultaneously that either the mine-owners themselves or the State Government can get the mine area fully rehabilitated and restored to as much of its original condition as possible through appropriate measures, by mud-filling, tree plantations, etc.

If this requires legislative changes, they should be considered. ■



Jairam Ramesh is an economist, historian and politician. He is a Member of Parliament representing Karnataka state in the Rajya Sabha. Ramesh held several ministerial portfolios during the United

Progressive Alliance's (UPA) government, leading the ministries for Rural Development, Drinking Water and Sanitation, and Environment and Forests.

Ramesh was chief negotiator for India at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, and has been a leading figure in international climate diplomacy for years. He has authored several books including: Making Sense

of Chindia: Reflections on China and India (2005), Mobilising Technology for World Development (co-editor, 1979), To the Brink and Back: India's 1991 Story (2015), Green Signals: Ecology, Growth and Democracy in India (2015), Old History, New Geography: Bifurcating Andhra Pradesh (2016), Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature (2017), and The Light of Asia: The Poem that Defined The Buddha (2021).

Associated with various education institutions in India and abroad, Ramesh has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from IIT, Bombay, where he completed his B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering. Ramesh has been a founding member of the Indian School of Business in Hyderabad.



Aditya Birla Group: Making a life changing difference

We work in 7000 villages. Reach out to 9 million people. A glimpse:

HEALTHCARE

Over 100 million Polio vaccinations

5,000 Medical camps / 20 Hospitals: 1 million patients treated

Over 50 deaf and mute children moved from the world of silence to the sound of music through the cochlear implant

Reach out to over 4,000 children. Extending financial support for the chemotherapy sessions.

Encouraging them in a holistic manner to get back quickly on the road to recovery.

Engaged in prevention of cervical cancer through the administration of the HR-HPV vaccines in Maharashtra.

Over 1800 girls have been vaccinated.

More than 6,600 persons had their vision restored through the Vision Foundation of India

100,000 persons tested on 32 health parameters through HealthCubed

EDUCATION

Our 56 schools accord quality education to 46,500 students

Mid-day meals provided to 74,000 children

Solar lamps given to 4.5 lakh children in the hinterland

Foster the cause of the girl child through 40 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

100,000 people trained in skill sets

45,000 women empowered through 4500 SHGs

200,000 farmers on board our agro-based training projects

And much more is being done through the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, spearheaded by Mrs. Rajashree Birla. Because we care.

**NUMBERS MEAN A LOT
BUT A SMILE MEANS EVERYTHING!**



ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

Engage. Uplift. Empower