

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL INSIGHTS

CSR | ESG | SUSTAINABILITY



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**An article by Mr. Ayush Bajpai,
Senior Consultant ESG**

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for the Social Sector**

ABOUT NATIONAL CSR NETWORK



Ms. Meena Raghunathan

Editor,
Sustainable Social Insights

Former Executive Director,
GMR Varalakshmi Foundation



Ms. Shivika Kanojia

Compiler & Designer,
Sustainable Social Insights

Executive Officer,
National CSR Network



KEY NEWS ON CSR, ESG & SUSTAINABILITY



[SEBI PROPOSES DILUTION OF ESG NORMS FOR VALUE CHAIN](#)

Sebi's consultation paper for facilitating ease of doing business with regard to the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) Core framework has relaxed norms for listed entities' value chain ESG disclosures.

[LESS CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY? INDIA INC'S CSR SPENDING SLOWED DOWN IN FY23](#)

India Inc's corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending in FY23 grew slower than the average net profit of companies for the same period, Mint reported citing data from capital market research firm Prime Infobase.

The companies listed on the National Stock Exchange's (NSE) main board spent Rs 15,524 crore on CSR in FY23 (the most recent year for which data is available), a 5 per cent increase from the Rs 14,816 crore spent the previous year.

[MINT EXPLAINER: WHAT ARE ESG RATING PROVIDERS AND WHY SHOULD INVESTORS CARE?](#)

About half a dozen entities have received Sebi's approval to become environmental, social, governance (ESG) rating providers in recent weeks. These include units of credit-rating agencies ICRA, CRISIL and CareEdge, and those of proxy advisory firms Stakeholders Empowerment Services (SES) and Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IiAS). A similar number of firms, including units of MSCI and London Stock Exchange Group, are awaiting Sebi's certification to become ESG rating providers (ERPs).

[HOW INDIA'S REALTY SECTOR IS EMBRACING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AMID RAPID URBANIZATION AND GROWING ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS](#)

Certifications such as Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) and Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) incentivize developers to embrace sustainable building practices.



CSR PROJECT BY DS GROUP- PROJECT PAHEL



INTRODUCTION

The DS Group (Dharampal Satyapal Group) is a Multi-Business Corporation and one of the leading FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) conglomerates with a strong Indian and International presence. Founded in the year 1929, it is an inspiring and successful business story that blends a remarkable history and legacy with visionary growth. The Group continues to build successful brands across diverse business categories to delight the consumers, while the undeterred pursuit of 'Quality & Innovation' ensures consumer loyalty and satisfaction.

Guided by a clear set of values and built on a strong foundation of collective good, Corporate Social Responsibility is integral to the Group's business objectives. The Group works on projects across the country to achieve this objective, focusing on critical areas such as Water, Livelihood, and Education. These initiatives have a transformational impact on communities. Active participation from stakeholders is sought, while creating awareness and during the implementation to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The tribal-dominated Dungarpur district of Rajasthan faced deep-rooted challenges of low agricultural productivity, inadequate irrigation, and socio-economic deprivation, leading to alarming rates of malnutrition among women and children. Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children under five years stands at a staggering 30%. Maternal health indicators also reflect significant deficiencies, highlighting broader development issues. These challenges exacerbate poverty and perpetuate a cycle of food insecurity and poor health outcomes. Addressing these interlinked issues necessitated innovative interventions that enhance agricultural productivity and improve nutritional diversity and economic opportunities for marginalized farmers.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

The Promotion of Agricultural and Horticulture for Advancement of Livelihoods (PAHAL) initiative of DS Group endeavors to transform the agricultural landscape of Dungarpur district by promoting sustainable farming practices and crop diversification through the WADI cultivation model.

By introducing a three-tier cropping pattern that maximizes land utilization and incorporates nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables, PAHAL aims to enhance agricultural productivity, increase household incomes, and improve dietary diversity. As farmers transition to the WADI model, they gain economic empowerment, enabling investment in irrigation facilities and crop diversification. This, in turn, leads to improved livelihoods, reduced malnutrition rates, and better health outcomes for women and children. PAHAL's multifaceted approach addresses systemic issues of poverty and malnutrition while fostering sustainable livelihoods and community well-being in Dungarpur district.



The project started in 2017 and continued till 2023 in Surata and the adjoining villages of Dungarpur district in Rajasthan. During the intervention, the project reached more than 800 marginal farmers' families from tribal communities.

STEPS IN THE PROJECT

The success of the PAHAL project relied heavily on community involvement, which was achieved through extensive engagement via village meetings and home visits. This approach aimed to identify and mobilize farmers willing to participate in the WADI model. To facilitate their involvement, farmers were provided with essential support such as wire fencing, seeds, knowledge of best practices and other agricultural inputs. Importantly, the community contributed labor and infrastructure costs, fostering a sense of ownership in the project.

Further to this comprehensive sessions were conducted to equip farmers with the necessary skills for effective WADI development and management. These sessions covered various aspects including crop selection, irrigation techniques, pest management, WADI installation.

The project leveraged linkages with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra to enhance farmers' access to agricultural resources and continuous knowledge development. Crop selections were tailored to align with local consumption patterns and agro-suitability.

Further, monitoring mechanisms were established to track crop growth and productivity, ensuring accountability throughout the project. Efforts were also directed towards fostering market linkages, with active participation from female members in marketing activities in the local markets.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

The project is being implemented by the DS Foundation, an arm of the DS group. The three-tier project monitoring and evaluation system has been kept in place. The main purpose of the M & E system is to strengthen the internal control mechanism and map the outcome of the project so that the committed goal and objective can be achieved. To achieve the same Project Coordinator deployed at the field level provided the overall guidance and support during the entire project phase.

Apart from this village-level staff visited once in a week to the WADI farms individually and guided the progress of WADI installation, its health, and other technical support to the farmers.

This resource also records from the field every month and maintains data to keep track of progress and facilitate evidence-based decision-making at the field level. The program Team at the headquarters level provides timely technical support to the team and a specific Monitoring and Evaluation team at the headquarters level ensures planned monitoring and evaluation of the projects through external resource deployment. The outcomes are measured regularly and mapped tangibly to ensure goal achievement. On completion of the three years of the project, a mid-term evaluation by the third party was conducted in FY 2021-22 by the external agency (International Institute Of Health Management Research, Jaipur).



Outcomes and impacts

- Dramatic increase in family income, ranging from Rs. 5000-10000 per month, solely from WADI produce sales.



- Increased income facilitated further investment in WADI extension, irrigation facilities, and cash crop addition. Had requested some quantification. IN other words, how much did how many farmers invest in these measures?
- Reduced dependence on non-farm livelihood diversification and migration due to increased income from WADI. Again, some data/numbers. Eg., what was impact on migration and how was it measured?



Health and Nutrition:

- Diversified food options from varied fruits and vegetables led to better nutrition outcomes among women and children.
- Significant reduction in Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) among children under 5 years to 2%, compared to 30% prevalence in the locality.
- 73% of women achieved a corrected Body Mass Index (BMI), indicating improved health status.

Agricultural Expansion and Crop Diversity:

- 36% of farmers expanded their agricultural land covered under WADI (at their own cost?), reflecting willingness towards crop diversity and increased family income.
- Increased savings from higher income were utilized to expand agricultural areas under WADI.

Market Access and Sales:

- WADI produce sold through various marketplaces such as home shops, urban market shops, and mandis.
- The majority (69%) of respondents utilized home shops for selling produce, indicating localized marketing efforts.
- Higher production allowed farmers to diversify marketplaces for WADI produce sales.

Women's Empowerment and Decision-Making:

- Women actively involved in decision-making processes related to WADI, from installation to selling of produce. How was this measured?
- Joint decision-making with husbands or family members was observed in various aspects, indicating increased participation and empowerment.



- Women's participation in decision-making improved from production to revenue, enhancing their role and influence in WADI activities.
- Overall, the WADI cultivation intervention has led to multifaceted impacts, encompassing economic, health, agricultural, market access, and women's empowerment aspects, thereby improving livelihoods and well-being in the intervention areas.

Sustainability and exit strategy

The sustainability of the project was ensured through active community engagement, where input was sought at every stage.

Community members contributed labor and materials, fostering a sense of ownership at the outset of the project. The most suitable farmer's selection strategy ensured resources were efficiently allocated. In the final year, 68 model farmers were trained and model farmers were created to sustain the WADI model post-project. This comprehensive approach established community ownership, built local capacity, and created a network of trained individuals, ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of the project.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ESG DATA IN MODERN BUSINESS

Ayush Bajpai
Senior Consultant ESG



INTRODUCTION

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) data has become essential for strategic decision-making in today's business world. As stakeholders demand greater accountability in sustainability and ethical governance, the influence of ESG data on business practices and investment strategies has surged. This article highlights the key components of ESG data, its sources, and its impact on businesses and investors.

UNDERSTANDING ESG DATA

ESG data includes metrics assessing environmental impact, social responsibility, and governance practices. Environmental metrics examine carbon emissions and energy use, social metrics evaluate labor standards, diversity, and community involvement, while governance metrics focus on board diversity, executive pay, and shareholder rights, offering insights into companies' sustainability and compliance efforts.

SOURCES OF ESG DATA

ESG data is sourced from various channels:

Corporate Disclosures: Many companies publish sustainability reports aligned with frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB).

Third-Party Rating Agencies: Third-party agencies, such as MSCI, Sustainalytics, and Bloomberg, offer impartial ESG performance evaluations derived from public data, proprietary research, and engagement with companies.

Regulatory Filings: Some regions require mandatory ESG disclosures. For example, the European Union's Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD) mandates that large public-interest entities report on social and environmental issues.

Alternative Data Sources: Alternative data sources like satellite imagery, media reports, social media sentiment analysis, and employee reviews provide comprehensive ESG insights. These sources enable detailed assessments of environmental impacts, real-time social updates, public perception, and workplace culture, enhancing decision-making for businesses and investors.

IMPACT ON BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT

Integrating ESG data into business strategies and investment decisions offers significant benefits:

Risk Mitigation: Proactive ESG management helps avoid legal, financial, and reputational risks. For instance, good governance practices can prevent frauds, and sound environmental policies can mitigate climate-related risks.

Operational Efficiency: ESG initiatives often lead to cost savings through better resource efficiency and waste reduction, enhancing long-term viability.

Investor Attraction: ESG criteria are increasingly vital to institutional investors. Sustainable or socially responsible investments (SRI) have grown significantly, with investors favoring companies demonstrating strong ESG performance for their long-term prospects.

Enhanced Reputation: Companies committed to ESG principles can boost their brand reputation, foster customer loyalty, and engage their workforce, driving overall business success.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Integrating ESG data faces challenges such as inconsistent reporting standards and "greenwashing," leading to skepticism and backlash. Variability in ESG metric reporting reduces comparability and reliability. However, technological advancements like AI and big data analytics promise improved accuracy and insights. Evolving global regulations are pushing for standardized ESG disclosures, enhancing transparency and consistency. Despite current hurdles, these developments suggest a promising future for ESG data integration, with better accuracy and trustworthiness, leading to more impactful sustainability practices.

CONCLUSION

ESG data is crucial for modern strategic planning and investment. Businesses that embrace ESG principles not only contribute to sustainability but also achieve long-term success. As the importance of ESG data continues to grow, companies must integrate these considerations into their core operations to thrive in a changing world.

**UPCOMING
VIRTUAL WORKSHOP
ON
MONITORING &
EVALUATION**

19-20-21 JUNE'24 | WED- FRI | 3:00 - 5:30 PM IST

Theme:

**Achieve Desired SROI & Gain Appreciation
(Demonstrate Value)
From Fundraisers, Board Of Directors &
CEOs**

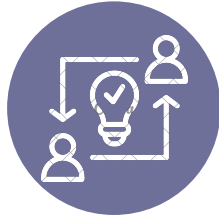
In the dynamic landscape of the social sector, effective Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) practices are pivotal for ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of programs and interventions. This comprehensive 9-hour workshop is designed to equip professionals and practitioners in the social sector with advanced techniques and methodologies in M&E, tailored to address the current needs and challenges faced by organizations working towards social change and development.

***For any Question & Query, write at:
shivika@nationalcsrnetwork.in***

NATIONAL CSR NETWORK



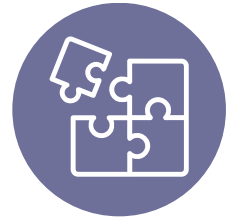
Section 8 Company



Industry led & managed organization governed by a strong Advisory Council



Interactive platform for CSR Stakeholders



Insights & Solutions to address pain points



4A APPROACH

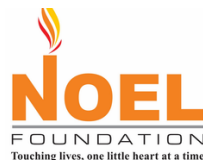
ADVISORY: Strategy, Need Assessment, Baseline Survey, Reporting

ALLIANCE: Corporates, NGOs, Academia & Government

ASSESSMENT: Impact & SROI

AMPLIFY: Best Practices, Brand Building, Showcasing Work

NCN'S NEW ONLINE MEMBER



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info@nationalcsrnetwork.in



www.nationalcsrnetwork.in



+91 9717314507