



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MADRAS
Office of Alumni and Corporate Relations

THE SOCIAL IMPACT CLUB

An IIT Madras Initiative

Topic: Net Zero through Circular Economy, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Value Creation

September 10th, 2024 | Mumbai Edition

THE SOCIAL IMPACT CLUB

The Social Impact Club is an IIT Madras initiative aimed at creating a forum for CSR professionals where key focus areas and challenges faced by the CSR community are discussed, shared and collaboratively addressed. This Club, a congregation of impact-driven CSR leaders, offers a unique opportunity to share insights, exchange ideas with industry experts, and contribute to shaping the future of CSR in our country.

The Social Impact Club also seeks to provide a platform for like-minded CSR leaders to connect, network, and build relationships that could lead to future collaborations and shared successes in the CSR domain.

OBJECTIVES

During the First Mumbai Edition of The Social Impact Club, the CSR leaders joined hands to address these objectives:

- Net Zero Roadmap - Exploring the strategies, Drivers and Challenges to navigate the complexities of corporate responsibility under Net-Zero and Circular Economy
- Participate in focussed group discussion on how we envision India on its journey of Net Zero 2070.
- Networking with like-minded professionals over Evening High Tea.

MODERATOR

Prof Abhijit Deshpande

Prof. Abhijit Deshpande, Professor at the Department of Chemical Engineering, IIT Madras and is also the Faculty in Charge of the Rural Technology Action Group (RuTAG) at IIT Madras. He has been working on the Net Zero Village Model, Circular Economy.

His research focus is on Polymeric Systems, more specifically their aggregation and gelation behaviour – Natural Polymers, Plant based polymers or other polymers and finding solution based on above. His teaching interests include specialized courses in polymers, fluid mechanics, rheology and continuum mechanics; and core chemical engineering courses such as mass transfer and thermodynamics.

PARTICIPANTS

1. Ms. Shilpashree Muniswamappa, Director, ESG & Communications, Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited
2. Ms. Archana Patil, Manager CSR, Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited
3. Ms. Deepika Singh, CSR & Communications Executive, Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited
4. Ms. Shraddha Naik, Executive CSR, Colgate-Palmolive (India) Limited
5. Mr. Ravi Rungta, Strategy & Special Projects - MD's Office, Hamilton Housewares P Ltd
6. Mr. Swapnil Bagul, Asst. Manager CSR, Hamilton Housewares P Ltd
7. Ms. Matilda Lobo, Head - CSR, IndusInd Bank Ltd
8. Ms. Sarah Gulrukhsar, Manager G&PS, KPMG
9. Mr. Chandrashekhar Gowda, AVP - CSR, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.
10. Mr. Rathin Surajit Lahiri, Head Corporate Communications CSR Branding & PR, SBI General Insurance
11. Ms. Jayita Naha, AVP CSR, NIIF Infrastructure Finance Limited
12. Mr. Anil Katewad, Manager CSR, NIIF Infrastructure Finance Limited
13. Dr. AS Prasad, General Manager-Product & Marketing, India, Vertiv Energy Private Limited

14. Mr. Mahabaleshwar Sheregar, Director Program & Business Transformation, Vertiv Energy Private Limited
15. Mr. Gopakumar Ambujakshan, Consultant CSR, Vertiv Energy Private Limited
16. Mr. Rohit Pandya, Manager CSR, Mazgaon Docks Limited,
17. Mr. Mayur Aggarwal, Manager-ESG & CSR, IG Petrochemicals Ltd
18. Mr. Bharath Valiveti, Development Officer, Icici Foundation

TEAM IIT MADRAS

1. Mr Kaviraj Nair, CEO, Office of Institutional Advancement, IIT Madras
2. Ms Vasudha Narasimhan, VP Corporate Relations, Office of Institutional Advancement, IIT Madras
3. Prof. Abhijit Deshpande, Faculty in Charge - Rural Action Technology Group (RuTAG) IIT Madras
4. Ms. Vibha Jain, Assistant Vice President - Corporate Relations, Office of Institutional Advancement, IIT Madras

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Prof. Abhijit Deshpande, Faculty in Charge - Rural Action Technology Group (RuTAG), IIT Madras opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of Net Zero initiatives and integrating rural technology solutions. Highlighting the role of IIT Madras in innovating and providing technical expertise, especially in rural districts, he stressed the need for scalable, sustainable models and advocated for long-term engagement with local communities, particularly focusing on plant-based polymers and circular economy practices.

Addressing the challenges in ESG and CSR, Mr. Mayur Aggarwal of IG Petrochemicals Ltd. pointed out issues such as project selection, impact analysis, and collaboration with local NGOs. He noted the difficulties in accessing reliable data for aspirational districts and emphasized the importance of long-term intervention.

Discussing data sources and sustained CSR efforts, Ms. Matilda Lobo from IndusInd Bank referenced tools like the Champion of Change dashboard and initiatives by organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Tata Trust. Also, Ms. Matilda Lobo, emphasized the role of IIT Madras in finding solutions for national issues like net zero, and carbon emissions. She highlighted Singapore's waste-to-energy model as an example to replicate in India, noting the need for standardized training for nonprofit partners to implement effective CSR practices.

Focusing on the FMCG sector, Ms. Shilpashree Muniswamappa from Colgate Palmolive (India) Limited addressed the challenges of implementing a circular economy, particularly with plant-based polymers. She expressed interest in exploring innovative materials for sustainable product packaging and emphasized the need for advancements in green technologies.

Proposing a practical approach, Mr. Mahabaleshwar Sheregar from Vertiv Energy Private Limited suggested implementing demonstration model villages to showcase net-zero concepts and accelerate the adoption of best practices.

Prof. Abhijit Deshpande emphasized the importance of combining data capture with technology projects for sustainable knowledge at IIT Madras. He suggested developing frameworks and models for net-zero impact assessment, collaborating with NGOs and regulatory bodies, and diversifying approaches by implementing projects across various agro-climatic zones for better results.

Mr. Chandrashekhar Gowda, AVP - CSR at Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd, noted that IIT Madras' focus on technology and data should result in a proof of concept. He stressed the importance of cost-effective, easily understandable, and scalable technologies that can be adopted by rural communities, urban populations, and government agencies.

Mr. Rohit Pandya, CSR Manager at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, suggests that many companies limit their CSR efforts in the environment domain to tree planting and solar panel installations. He believes that presenting scientific and commercially relevant data can make it easier to convince board members to support such initiatives. Mr. Rohit recommends exploring research projects and partnering with Institutes like IIT Madras will be a valuable avenue for CSR investment in environmental and net-zero goals.

Mr. Rathin Surajit Lahiri, Head of Corporate CSR Branding & PR at SBI General Insurance, emphasizes the need for CSR to focus on helping underprivileged segments of India's population. He advocates for collaboration between organizations to implement large-scale projects that leverage technology and expertise to address pressing issues like healthcare and nutrition. Mr. Rathin Lahiri suggests that companies should explore existing projects from institutions like IIT to identify potential areas for CSR involvement.

Mr. Bharath Valiveti from ICICI Foundation stated the importance of addressing rural perspectives in net-zero initiatives, noting villagers often prioritize immediate needs over sustainability. He highlighted the need for enabling organizations and technical expertise to complement funding and implementation efforts, suggesting collaboration with institutions like IIT Madras for impactful solutions.

Mr. Chandrashekhar Gowda questioned the focus on rural areas despite urban populations contributing significantly to carbon emissions. He suggested prioritizing urban CSR initiatives. In contrast, Mr. Rohit Pandya highlighted unsustainable agricultural practices in the Malwa region, where farmers burn crop residue for efficiency. He emphasized that solutions must be commercially viable to succeed.

Prof. Abhijit Deshpande emphasized the need for rural India-focused net-zero solutions, citing rural consumption growth and global relevance. He highlighted collaborative projects like community skill schooling, which trained village welders to innovate scalable products.

Technology, data capture, and community engagement were key to ensuring sustainability and widespread impact.

Mr. Mahabaleshwar Sheregar, Director Program & Business Transformation, Vertiv Energy Private Limited stated the challenges of implementing projects in rural areas. He suggested demonstrating successful models to inspire panchayats, which often have funds but lack expertise. By selecting eager leaders and showcasing results, the approach could scale nationally. Encouraging long-term development and reducing rural-to-urban migration.

Ms. Shilpashree emphasized corporate Net Zero targets as key performance indicators (KPIs), highlighting the importance of global mandates and SEBI guidelines in India. She suggested IITs could support corporates in achieving Net Zero goals by 2040, with successful models potentially extending to CSR initiatives for broader social impact.

Ms. Matilda Lobo, discussed collaborations via CSR with IIT Madras on climate, livelihood, and water research in Aspirational Districts in Bihar and Maharashtra. She emphasized IIT's role in net-zero and supply chain solutions. Mr. Kaviraj Nair, highlighted IIT's Energy Consortium as an advisory initiative in sustainability efforts.

Mr. Chandrashekhar Gowda emphasized the need for Net Zero efforts within companies and action research for CSR that leads to impactful policies, with IIT Madras playing a key role. Mr. Gopakumar Ambujakshan, CSR Consultant Ex-Vertiv, highlighted IIT's responsibility in nation-building through large-scale collaborations across IITs for significant impact.

Mr. Kaviraj highlighted national-level initiatives like AI for Bharat, the cancer tissue bank, and the brain center at IIT Madras, emphasizing scalable projects such as a supercomputer and quantum computer. Ms. Vasudha, VP-Corporate Relations OIA, IIT Madras, noted increasing collaboration among IITs through initiatives like Kotak IIT's Save Energy Mission, positioning IIT Madras as a nodal institution.

Dr. Prasad from Vertiv Energy highlights the importance of sustainable urbanization in India due to its growing population and urban-driven GDP growth. He discusses the need for greener refrigerants. To address this, a pioneering lab at IIT Madras, sponsored by Vertiv, is working on developing green refrigerants. He also emphasizes India's unique approach to sustainability, drawing from its long history of sustainable living practices. Dr. Prasad highlights research at IIT Bombay on traditional building materials and their potential for modern sustainable construction.

Ms. Sarah Gulrukhsar from KPMG emphasizes the need for collaboration between CSR organizations, NGOs, and private companies to effectively implement sustainability initiatives. She suggests that IITs can play a crucial role as technical experts, project monitors, and advocates with the government. Ms. Sarah highlights the importance of private funding for innovative and riskier sustainability projects, while also advocating for government policies that support green solutions.

Mr. Swapnil Bangur from Hamilton mentioned that community engagement and ownership is very important for any project for successful implementation.

It was been concluded by Prof. Abhijit Deshpande and Mr.Kaviraj Nair that long term and multi year partnership should be the strategic intent and for the scale of the outcome. Also Development of ideas must be in alignment to the Corporate Strategies and focus on CSR taking care of both ESG and CSR.

Wrapping up the event, Mr. Kaviraj Nair proposed that the series of such Cafe's should continue to facilitate valuable community discussions, encouraging connections with global experts to support ongoing growth and collaboration.

Overall, the discussion underscored strategic collaboration, community engagement, and long-term planning in CSR while focusing on leveraging technological innovation and multi-sector partnerships to address complex social and environmental challenges.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- » Developing a set of frameworks and models, which then can be used to look at different, aspects of net zero, circular economy in terms of the Implementation Model and demonstrate through Action Research and enabling proof through technology.
- » The Technology should be cost-effective, easy to adopt, easy to understand and can be adopted by rural masses, the urban masses, and the government and can be scaled up across geographies.
- » Net Zero is a cross-section, Corporate Strategies under ESG, Sustainability and CSR, technology and innovation plays a major role.
- » Need for more collaboration and all the ecosystem players to come together.
- » Capacity building at the grassroots level for baseline study, monitoring & evaluation, impact measurement and all of this can be achieved through Technology and Innovation.

CONCLUSION

The First Mumbai Edition of the “Social Impact Club, an IIT Madras initiative”, an exclusive conclave of CSR leaders, in Mumbai, who are making significant strides in the development of our nation brought discussions relevant to the Corporates today.

The Social Impact Club is aimed at creating a forum for CSR professionals where key focus areas and challenges faced by the CSR community are discussed, shared and collaboratively addressed. Key themes emerged from the dialogue:

- **Technology Innovation:**

Technological advancements are critical in solving CSR challenges, especially in rural tech, net-zero initiatives, circular economy and sustainability. IIT Madras plays a pivotal role in developing scalable tech solutions for various sectors, including energy, waste management, healthcare and many more.

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:**

Reliable data is crucial for tracking CSR impact and making informed decisions. Tools like dashboards and data analytics help measure outcomes and align CSR efforts with long-term goals.

- **Circular Economy and Green Technologies:**

Emphasis on shifting to sustainable materials, such as plant-based polymers, particularly in the FMCG sector. Green technologies are essential for achieving corporate net-zero targets and driving environmental responsibility.

- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:**

Partnerships between academic institutions, NGOs, government bodies, and private companies are vital for accelerating innovation. Collaborative efforts ensure CSR projects are scientifically grounded and aligned with social goals.

- **Scalability and Sustainability:**

CSR projects need to be designed for growth and long-term sustainability. Demonstration model villages were proposed as a scalable approach to introduce net-zero and best practices nationwide.

- **Government Advocacy:**

Engaging with policymakers and regulatory bodies is necessary for creating a supportive environment for scaling CSR initiatives. IIT Madras and other institutions can advise on policy and contribute to national-level projects, influencing systemic change.

- **Community Engagement:**

Long-term involvement with local communities is essential for CSR success. Building trust and participation from stakeholders, both rural and urban, is key to achieving sustainable impact.