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Arabia CSR Network®

CSR ARABIA

Arabia CSR Network

newsletter

June 2016 Issue 58



Arabia CSR Network organizes back-to-back GRI training



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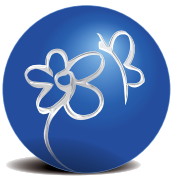
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Note from the President & CEO Arabia CSR Network

We were very busy in the month of May. We participated in conferences, delivered two trainings and were also completely occupied with the Arabia CSR Awards. So far we have received nearly eighty applications from twelve countries, and they represent well over twenty industry sectors. We would like to urge businesses and public entities to apply to the award and help us to acknowledge your achievements in advancing responsible, ethical and sustainable practices.

The award is under the auspices of the League of Arab States, the only CSR award to have this level of support from LAS for the third consecutive year. It is also supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and again it is the only CSR award that UNEP is supporting formally since past three years. Submitted applications will be evaluated and scored by an independent panel comprising of global and regional experts. The deadline for the submission of applications is June 30th, although for organisations that express an interest to apply any time after June 15th there may an extension of the deadline, upon request and at the discretion of Arabia CSR Network.

In a few days from now we will enter into the holy month of Ramadan. This is typically the time of the year when organisations organize a bunch of CSR initiatives. While this is the cultural trend in our Region, it should also be something that organisations should consider from the point of view of sustainability. There may be various causes that organisations may be inclined to support, the best cause would be the one that is linked to the interests, operations and activities of the business in one way or another. One-off charitable initiatives do not have a strategic value for the organisation that engages in it and does nothing to enrich the organisation's sustainability. Therefore it would always be preferable to engage in long term, impact oriented, meaningful initiatives. So while you identify Ramadan projects, select wisely, and select to create real and long term impact.

Ramadan Kareem to all and we look forward to knowing about your sustainability initiatives during Ramadan.



Upcoming Events

Under the Auspices of
H.E. Mohammed Al-Tajer, Ph.D.,
Assistant Secretary General of
Economic Affairs of
The League of Arab States

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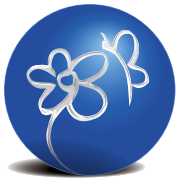
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9-11 AUG 2016 English

Certified Training on Sustainable
Reporting using the Global Reporting
Initiative's (GRI) G4 Framework

G4

YOUR G4 JOURNEY STARTS HERE.



Global Child Forum highlights the need for respect of children's rights in ASEAN countries

250 leaders from the ASEAN region met in Kuala Lumpur on the 5th of the May to discuss the role of business in protecting and furthering children's rights. The Global Child Forum on Southeast Asia was attended by 250 government officials and business leaders and others from 26 countries. The Global Child Forum is an independent, global multi-stakeholder platform for informed dialogue and thought leadership to advance children's rights in support of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was held under the aegis of the Honorary Chairman of Global Child Forum, HM King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, who gave the opening words.

"Global Child Forum is an independent Royal Foundation with special focus on children's rights and the business sector. Our vision is a world where children's rights for future generations are respected and supported by all actors in society, and where the business and financial sector can have a special role to play," said H.M King Carl XVI Gustaf. The Chairman of Global Child Forum Ulf Karlberg delivered an introductory speech. A high level session on Children's Rights and Sustainable Business in the ASEAN Region was held followed by breakout sessions and another high level session, on Perspectives for the Future – What Will It Take. The themes of the action labs were the following:

- Reframing challenges as opportunities: youth employment as a driver for change
- Children in the digital age: how the ICT sector can support and respect children's rights
- Into the light: safeguarding children's rights in the travel and tourism sector
- The Children's Rights and Business Atlas: A tool for responsible business

During the event a regional benchmark study was launched that analysed the reported practices of 289 companies operating in the ASEAN region including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Philippines spanning over 9 industry sectors reflecting how the companies promote children's rights in their business value chains. According to the findings of the report, most industries in the ASEAN region significantly underperform compared to the global average, but outperform Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Only 29% of the surveyed companies in the region have a child labour policy in their compliance, which is much less prominent than the global average of 62%. The closing presentation of the forum came from HM Queen Silvia of Sweden. In the evening there was a banquet in honour of the kings and queen of Sweden hosted by the mayor of Kuala Lumpur. ACSRN President & CEO Habiba Al Marashi was an invited guest in the Global Child Forum.

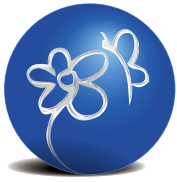


UNGC UAE Network anniversary event focuses on Sustainable Development Goals

The UAE Local Network of the UN Global Compact organized its first anniversary on May 11th, 2016 in The Address Hotel in Dubai. Over two hundred guests attended the anniversary event, representing a host of entities from the government, and from private businesses, academe and civil society. Themed 'Putting SDGs into Action for the Region', the event was organized under the auspices of the Director General of Dubai Land Department, HE Sultan Butti Bin Mejren. The keynote speaker was Mr. Frode Mauring, UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Development Coordinator, who gave an insightful talk on the title, 'SDGs and the role of Local Networks'. The first plenary session dealt with the important issue of women empowerment, focusing on the Women Empowerment Principles and SDG number 5 on Gender Equality. Each of the panelists spoke about initiatives, programs and projects that their organisations have promoted and advanced, giving a bunch of interesting perspectives on the empowerment of women through education, employment and entrepreneurship.

The next session highlighted the B4P initiative of the Global Compact, which was launched to engage business proactively in peace and development in areas of conflict. It addressed a spectrum of issues pertaining to their areas of work such as due diligence in conflict areas, role of employee unions and NGOs in conflict and resolution, MNCs engagement in conflict scenarios and the challenges of business activities in conflict zones. The last plenary session and panel discussion threw light on the highly contextual themes of education, talent and entrepreneurship. Panelists highlighted their achievements in the field of education and employment support and reflected on the potential of the SDGs to create a positive impact in this context. A case example was presented by the CEO of Chalhoub Group Mr. Patrick Chalhoub to elucidate the benefits of joining the UNGC and the engagement of CEOs in intensifying sustainability commitments. The last session of the day was dedicated to chief executives. The panelists offered rich perspectives and shared rare insights into their work.





Femina Middle East Woman Award for ACSRN President

ACSRN President and CEO was conferred an award at the first Femina Middle East Woman Awards held in Dubai on the 25th of May. The mission of the Femina Middle East Woman Awards is to recognise and felicitate women that are unstoppable and outstanding in their field of expertise. The objective of the awards is to recognise and honour real women of our time across fields. Every year, the most outstanding women achievers who have made a difference in art, education, business, social activism, sport, technology and various other fields are recognised for their worth.

The selection of winners was based on a database of powerful women at the national, regional and global levels. The finalists were selected by a jury of experts based on the recipients' achievements and accolades. Some of the other women honoured at the function were H.E.

Laila Faridoon, Director General & Chairman Board of Executive Director, Head of DIPMF, H.E. Shaima Al Zarooni, Office of HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, Sheikha Shaikha Al Qassimi, Emirati Fitness Ambassador, Sheikha Jawaher Al Qassimi, Director of the Funn, Zahra Lari, Youngest Emirati Figure Skater- On her way to the Winter Olympics 2018 and Fakhra Al Mansouri- Founder, Hybrid Humans.



Arabia CSR Network organizes back-to-back GRI training

Arabia CSR Network is the Certified Training Partner of GRI and delivers GRI developed certified content to the local market since 2011. It is currently the only partner to offer the training in Arabic. So far the Network has 29 GRI trainings to its credit and has successfully trained 252 professionals. 84 G4 reports have been published from organisations based in the Middle East; which reflects the steady growth of sustainability reporting in the Arab Region.

In the month of May, the Network delivered two trainings back to back, from the 22nd to the 26th, proving once again its expertise in the field. The first of the trainings was in English, followed by one in Arabic. Each training was conducted over three days and combined lectures, discussions and exercises. Participants got the opportunity to clarify doubts about CSR and sustainability, get practice tips, hone their skills and be prepared to initiate or improve reporting of environmental and social issues within their annual reporting. Delegates came from various countries in the Region and included professionals and leaders from business, academia and government.

The courses provided a detailed overview of the GRI reporting guidelines and reporting process, including the various stages and key activities related to the process. Incidentally, the GRI reporting process is geared to revealing an organisation's impacts on society and the environment, and where the impacts emanate from, - within or beyond the organisation (supply chain, distribution networks). It is focused on the concept of 'Materiality' in order to allow reports to cover only the most critical impacts of the organisation and how the organisation deals with the impacts. In this way the report serves as a great tool to communicate an organisation's performance in social areas and helps in building credibility and reputation.



Speaking the training lead trainer and President & CEO of the Network Habiba Al Marashi said, "The GRI trainings have been a great source of learning on CSR and sustainability, and not just reporting. Organisations have gained tremendous insights into sustainability principles and good practices from these trainings, and have been able to design much better aligned sustainability strategies. Organisations already practicing CSR have been able to assess their performance, identify gaps or errors, undertake course correction and develop more integrated and mature policies and systems benchmarking the GRI guidelines."

"It was my first exposure to GRI reporting. It opened up a huge opportunity for aligning the performance of our organisation to the sustainability framework." – Manoj Sivasankara Pillai, QHSE Manager, Dubai Cable Company Private Limited (Ducab)

"An excellent training which really sheds ample light into the basics as well as details of GRI." – Vijayalakshmi R, Quality Systems Engineer – Certifications & Compliance, Dubai Cable Company Private Limited (Ducab)



Members Update

wasl Asset Management Group collaborates with Dubai Cares in support of 'Volunteer Emirates'

As part of its ongoing commitment to CSR programs, wasl Asset Management Group has signed an agreement with Dubai Cares to support its 'Volunteer Emirates' initiative which aims to enrich the learning environment for students across non-profit schools in the United Arab Emirates. Volunteer Emirates includes four editions organized on an annual basis and wasl Asset Management Group is the sponsor of one of these editions planned for 2016. This initiative provides members of the community, individuals and corporations alike, the opportunity to donate their effort and time to support non-profit schools. To read the full article please click on: <https://www.wasl.ae/press-releases/wasl-asset-management-group-sponsors-dubai-cares-volunteer-emirates-initiative>



Securitas becomes certified fire safety training company

Fire & Safety is an integral part of Security. Securitas Country President, Gaetan Desclee and Board Member and Business Partner, Ahmed Alansari have proudly received the official certificate from Ministry of Civil Defense as an authorized and certified Fire & Safety Training Company. The company's first Fire Simulator is soon ready to perform live training for companies, schools and corporate bodies in the UAE, where Fire training is mandatory.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/securitas.uae/?ref=hl>



EGA announces enhancements to Emiratization strategy

The region's largest primary aluminium producer, Emirates Global Aluminium ("EGA"), has announced a series of enhancements to strengthen its Emiratization Strategy as the business continues to fulfil a corporate mandate to recruit, retain and develop UAE National talent across the organisation. EGA's dedicated Emiratization division has identified a number of roles, both within EGA's local and global operations, as a priority for Emiratization. This will facilitate matching the skills, talents and ambitions of recruits with the most suitable job functions within the aluminium giant's vast operations – thereby promoting retention and sustained career progression.

To read the full article click on <http://www.ega.ae/en/media/newsdetail/?id=5896>



General News

Starbucks' support to sustainable projects

Starbucks Corp. mulled plans to raise \$500 million to pay for sustainable projects, including support programs for farmers in coffee-growing regions. The coffee chain said it would sell 10-year bonds to go toward projects with greater focus on environmental and social issues in corporate business practices. "Sustainability is not just an add-on, but an integral part of Starbucks, including our strategy and finances," their Chief Financial Officer said in a news release. Starbucks said it would update every year how the money is being used. The company already operates an agronomy center in a Costa Rica farm along with a network of eight farmer support centers around the world, and it had committed to invest \$50 million in short- and long-term loans to farmers.

Source: <http://www.wsj.com/>





Feature Article

Transition to Standards: Your Questions Answered



There is growing global demand for a common reporting language as the next era of corporate disclosure will be more digital, responsible and interactive. Sustainability information will be used to understand an organization's risks and opportunities and to inform strategic decision making.

With the future in mind, this year, the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) is transitioning the GRI G4 Guidelines into a new set of modular, interrelated GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards (GRI Standards). Here we answer some of the main questions you've been asking about the transition to GRI Standards: the new format, the public comment process, and ultimately how the transition will benefit reporting organizations and report users.

What are the intended benefits of the transition to GRI Standards?

Establishing GRI Standards as formal standards will allow them to be referenced even more broadly in policy initiatives around the world, supporting greater uptake of credible sustainability reporting. The new modular structure will enable individual standards to be updated independently, which will:

- Ensure that the standards remain consistent with authoritative intergovernmental instruments and developments in specific content areas
- Allow for focused, timely and continuous maintenance of contents rather than at one specific point in time
- Give organizations continued confidence that through using GRI Standards, they are reporting in line with global best-practice

I've just transitioned to G4 in the last year. What does the transition to GRI Standards mean for my reporting?

The content of the G4 Guidelines and Implementation Manual will form the basis of the new set of GRI Standards. It will include the main concepts and all relevant disclosures from G4 enhanced with a more flexible structure, clearer requirements and simplified language. G4 reporters will therefore be in a good place to transition to GRI Standards.

How will GRI Standards be used?

Organizations will be able to use GRI Standards in two ways:

1) GRI Standards are primarily intended to be used together as a set. It will allow preparation of a sustainability report 'in accordance' with the GRI Standards based on the Reporting Principles and focused on material topics. This ensures that the organization provides a complete picture of its impacts, along with enough contextual information to understand these impacts and

how they are managed. As in G4, there are two options for preparing a report in accordance with the GRI Standards: 'core' and 'comprehensive', depending on the extent to which the standards have been applied.

2) Organizations can also use individual GRI Standards or their contents to disclose specific sustainability information. If using GRI Standards in this way, organizations are required to include a reference in any published materials specifying which GRI Standards have been used.

What are the notable changes compared to G4?

There will be three 'universal' standards applicable to all organizations, and approximately 35 'topic-specific' standards based on the Aspects within G4. Organizations preparing a sustainability report in accordance with GRI Standards will use all three universal standards and will be able to select only the relevant topic-specific standards, based on the topics that are material for their organization. GRI Standards feature clearer distinctions between requirements (denoted by 'shall'), recommendations (denoted by 'should') and guidance sections. Content from G4 has been edited to improve clarity and simplify language, which will make the standards more user-friendly. Some content has been relocated to accommodate the new structure. Additional clarifications have been provided for elements of G4 that were commonly misunderstood, such as how to define the topic 'Boundary' and how to report on topics not covered by GRI Standards. Read more about the new format on the GRI website.

For how long can I continue using the GRI G4 Guidelines?

GRI Standards are expected to be available for use in autumn 2016 (depending on the outcome of the public comment). It is expected that the new GRI Standards will be required for all reports published on or after 1st January 2018, and earlier adoption is encouraged. Until this point, the G4 Guidelines will still be available for use. View the Transition to Standards timeline link below

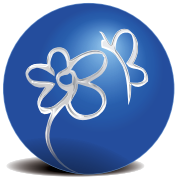
<https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/transition-to-standards/Pages/default.aspx>

What is the Public Comment Process and who should provide feedback?

Obtaining public input in an inclusive way is essential to uphold the multi-stakeholder principle in the development of GRI Standards. The Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB) welcomes public opinion on the revised format and structure of the draft GRI Standards during the public comment period. In line with due process, the first set of six draft standards are exposed for a 90-day Public Comment Period from 19 April to 17 July. The remaining topic-specific standards will follow the same format and structure as the first set of exposure drafts. These standards are still under development and are scheduled to be exposed for public comment for a period of 45 days from 3 June to 17 July, following GSSB review.

Consultation is carried out primarily via an online consultation platform, which can be accessed via the GRI website.

Source: www.globalreporting.org



Case Study from the Archive (The Green Design)

Abstract

The Green Design is a unique social enterprise that successfully addresses an un-served market. In the United Arab Emirates, rapid urban growth has led to a proliferation of buildings, built within a relatively short span of time and without much consideration for sustainability. A result of this trend is the Sick Building Syndrome, which The Green Design seeks to rectify through its unique product and service offerings. The mainstay of their philosophy is to create interiors that advance a sustainable life style, along with physical and mental wellbeing. Such sustainable spaces are also eco-friendly and support rather than compromise the environment through lower emissions, ethical and rationalized use of materials and resources, and so on. The Green Design is unique from several other angles. They involve the community in the design and implementation of products that are instrumental to the sustainability of designed interiors. Additionally, they engage students and fresh graduates in their operations, providing an excellent opportunity to the youth to build their capacity for sustainable design. The Green Design also focuses on sourcing materials locally and regionally, giving a big boost to the development of sustainable industries in the region. Their collaboration project, The Green Home, has set a great example as the UAE's first eco-friendly home fashion brand. The Green Design collaborates with a range of academic, industry, government and charity entities to take forward their message of low carbon, sustainable life styles in the United Arab Emirates. Although a start-up business, The Green Design has already made its presence felt as a social enterprise and won the Arabia CSR Awards 2015 in not one, but two categories.

Conclusion

The Green Design excels as a great example innovative business models. The structure of its operations is collaborative and inclusive, and is founded upon a belief in the power of partnership in moving towards a better future. Instead of just offering pre-designed solutions, it involves the community in developing these solutions and instills a sense of ownership in the process. This is instrumental for the long term success of the designed space and the desired sustainable life style of the occupants. Integrating the elements of sustainability not only in the design of a space but also in the development of materials and products, and the skills and workforce needed to create that space is a certain way of ensuring that sustainable interior design becomes feasible and tenable in the long run. While the guiding objective of the company is reduction of carbon footprints of its stakeholders, it is also strongly committed to the health and wellbeing of the community.



The Green Design, therefore, demonstrates a great degree of sensitivity towards natural resources, energy efficiency and low impact built environments, - all of which are pre-requisites for sustainable interior design. By opting for non-polluting, organic and recycled materials to create indoor spaces, the company reflects on future trends where the built industry's success would depend on how sustainable it becomes in the long run. It is said that urban populations will continue to grow in the decades to come, and urban centers are key to lowering the environmental footprint of humanity. The fact that the selection of design and products is still guided more by cost than principles of sustainability makes the role of companies like The Green Design more salient and far reaching. The Green Design is also making a visible effort to close the sustainability gap between theory and practice by making sustainable materials and products available in the market for discernible end-users. The knowledge and awareness that the company is trying to build will ultimately be critical for the success of the sustainable interior design practice, and The Green Design is exhibiting great intuitiveness and farsightedness in this respect. It is reflective of the paradigm shift that both designers and end-users will need to make in order for urban development to become a contributor and not deterrent to sustainable development.

There is great potential for The Green Design to become a sustainable company. By further embedding sustainability into its corporate strategy, policies and practices and by taking up reporting to composite stakeholders on a consistent basis, the company will achieve great results in the internalization of CSR and sustainability. So far the company concentrates heavily on making its business a successful social enterprise. In the future it should also direct focus on governance, labour practices and social performance of the supply chain, audit and risk management, as well as on measuring the social impact of its business on the industry itself. By doing this, The Green Design will close the gaps that remain in its sustainability practice and truly become an overall and well-rounded leader in the interior design sector.

Arabia CSR Best Practices: 2015

This abstract has been taken from the ACSRN publication titled 'Arabia CSR Best Practices: 2015'. For more details on The Green Design and other companies that have been recognized for their innovative and effective CSR strategies write to us at admin@arabiacsrnnetwork.com and book your copy now! Please mention "Arabia CSR Best Practices" in the subject.

The Arabia CSR Network welcomes new members to be a part of its CSR journey. To learn how to be a member, and how your organization will benefit from it, call us at +971-4-3448120 or write to us at admin@arabiacsrnnetwork.com For more information on the Arabia CSR Network visit www.arabiacsrnnetwork.com