

الشبكة العربية للمسؤولية
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Arabia CSR Network

newsletter

May 2020

Volume 9 Issue 105



Upcoming Training & Events

22nd June, 2020

**ONLINE
GAP
ANALYSIS
WORKSHOP**

GRI Standards for Sustainability Reporting

Around the world, thousands of organisations report annually to disclose their performance in environmental, social and governance areas. The most commonly used framework for sustainability reporting has been the GRI guidelines.

Participants will be issued a certificate from GRI Headquarters in the Netherlands.

From Global Reporting Initiative comes, a new set of standards for Sustainability Reporting!

The GRI Standards include all the main concepts and disclosures from the G4 Guidelines, but feature a new modular structure and revised format with clear reporting requirements. The Standards were developed and released by the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), which is GRI's dedicated standard setting body.

Arabia CSR Network, a Certified Training Partner of GRI, since 2011 is conducting a **3 Day Training Course on the new GRI Standards**. The accredited course content will be delivered through lectures, discussions, exercises and case studies. It will include the following segments:

- Introduction and background
- Overview of the GRI Standards
- GRI Standards in detail
- Start your reporting process using the GRI Standards
- Additional resources

The training is of immense value to organisations currently using the GRI guidelines to report non-financial performance or those that are preparing their sustainability reports. It is particularly beneficial to report writing teams, sustainability professionals, consultants, researchers and so on.

50+ → GRI Trainings conducted till date
400+ → Professionals Trained from the Arab Region
150+ → Sustainability Reports issued

Cost of the training:

US\$ 2,000 including the 10% GRI Certification fee + 5% VAT

US\$ 1,800 Early-bird discount 200 days before the training

Group discount available: if you register more than three participants from the same organisation

DATE: 23rd – 25th June 2020

For more details or to register please contact admin@arabiaccsrnetwork.com or call us on +971 4 344 8120 / +971 4 344 8622

الجائزة
العربية
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للمؤسسات

ARABIA
CORPORATE
SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
AWARDS

2020
THIRTEENTH CYCLE

Arabia CSR Awards
30th June
Deadline for submission
of application

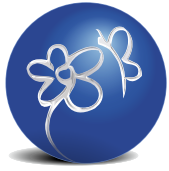
We are Social! Follow us on

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Building Partnerships for a
Sustainable Future ©

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Note from the President & CEO

History, it is said, repeats itself. In it there are lessons for those who are willing to learn from it and not repeat the same mistakes. The current global pandemic may be a novel situation for us but it is not the first time that a catastrophe has affected the world, nor will it be the last unless we come together and learn from the lessons of the past.

As the world is faced with a new pandemic that is similar in many ways to the Great Manchurian Plague of China which has been discussed in detail in this month's feature article because it shares many striking similarities with what we are facing right now.

The takeaway from it, is that a globally co-ordinated response and multilateral efforts on the part of political leaders in terms of collaborative actions is the need of the hour.

For it will be only through a conjunction of the right knowledge, the right resources, and the right people that we will be able to tackle this monster that does not discriminate on the basis of colour, creed or borders.

Not all countries are on equal level in terms of their response against the pandemic. This is the time to open knowledge sharing and strategy techniques so that what has worked in one country can be replicated in others as well. This is the time to leave no one behind.

We need measures such as specially constructed quarantine hospitals, mask wearing ordinances, enhanced sanitary practices, stop gatherings and practice social distancing, travel restrictions, grounded planes and dedicated teams of healthcare workers. Some other lessons that have emerged from the actions of States against the virus are that testing is crucial as is winning the trust of the public.

We are beginning to see the effect of the lockdown as the curve finally seems to be flattening through the social distancing that is being practiced. However, the fight is by no means over. In fact, now that we are starting to see the finish line we need to be even more vigilant and coordinated lest we spoil the hard work and commitment of our dedicated health workers.

Most experts agree that even under best case scenarios where the rate of infection does not spike back up, it will take an extended period and across the board commitment to restore the economy back to health. The most important lesson, is that the struggle to control the pandemic has to be a collaboration because only a joint effort is sustainable not only for the planet but for our coming generations.

As we enter the blessed month of Ramadan, let us pray together that we may be strong and united to face this great test and come out victorious at the other end.

Ameen.



ACSRN News & Events

Webinar on Culture of Health for Business (COH4B)

On the **28th April**, Arabia CSR Network attended the webinar on 'Culture of Health for Business (COH4B)' which was convened by the Director, Corporate & Stakeholder Engagement of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). The webinar was a part of the GRI Community Online Programme. During the course of the event, the following topics were covered:



Introduction to
the Culture of
Health for
Business
Framework



The 16 Smart
Business Practices
in COH4B



Key aspects
covered
by COH4B



Examples of
mapping the GRI
Standards to the
COH4B Framework

Arabia CSR Awards online Clinic 2020

Arabia CSR Network organised the online Awards Clinic for the 13th cycle of the Arabia CSR Awards on **20th April 2020**. It was an informative platform to acquaint the applicants of the requirements of 13th Cycle of the Awards with the complete process of application and submissions.

The President & CEO of Arabia CSR Network spoke about the progressive journey of the Awards since its inception in 2008, wherein a total 1,164 applications from 1,116 organisations across 42 sectors in 14 Arab countries have applied for the awards. She expressed her sincere wishes to all the representatives of the respective companies who have applied for this cycle and those that are in the pipeline, she also answered the queries of the participants.

A Senior Researcher at ACSRN & GRI Trainer gave a complete overview of the key points that applicants should prioritise to make their applications strong. Some of the tips included, providing evidence based responses, avoiding duplications, emphasizing on the innovative strategy developed or adopted by the entity, stating in detail the partnerships/collaborations of entities within the Arab region and finding linkages with the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The growing competitiveness and credibility among the applicants every year are clear indicators of the strength of this PAN Arab Awards. Arabia CSR Network commended the government entities and private sector companies in various sectors in Arab Region who have demonstrated their CSR and sustainability commitments.

It was revealed during the clinic that even through these difficult times of COVID-19, there are high numbers of applications received by the Awards secretariat and this speaks volumes for the strong vision and leadership qualities of these organisations.

We hope we all transform from this ordeal soon and continue in our walk of sustainability in unity. The call for applications are still open till the **30th June 2020**. Please follow the link for more details:

<https://arabiacsrawards.com/>





ACSRN News & Events

2020 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Sustainable Development

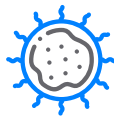
On 24th April, Arabia CSR Network President and CEO attended a virtual meeting where, ECOSOC made history as UN memberships came together by virtual means to negotiate unified messages of restoring global economy, reflect on the urgency for advance, bold and concerted global action towards immediate socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and finance a quick, inclusive and resilient recovery by conducting “The 5th ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development”. The ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development, is an intergovernmental process with universal participation mandated to review the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (Addis Agenda) and other financing for development outcomes and the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Forum was attended virtually by leaders from all over the world.

The President of ECOSOC convened the meeting and stated “Globally our commitment to achieving SDGs hasn’t changed but the urgency to act has”. Joint and coordinated responses through bold national actions, international cooperation and global solidarity are on priority to recover from COVID-19.

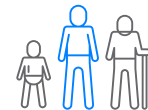
The Vice Chairman of Citi Group, who was the keynote speaker deliberated that though the developed world has been successful in radical and forceful societal response, the developing countries are still facing the devastating impacts of COVID-19. This is an opportunity to re-enforce, re-purpose and re-invigorate the multilateral cooperation mechanisms. Amid the uncertainties, the Vice Chairman highlighted the silver linings in the COVID-19 ESG momentum as follows,



ESG funds are outperforming their non-ESG market benchmarks



Witnessing lowered ESG scores for poor corporate behavior in response to COVID-19



Expression of social values absorbed into investor paradigms, underpinned by the Gen Z and Millennials’ view that is a defining moment for their generations



Risk models are being re-considered, supercharging concepts like ‘climate value at risk’



Move from ‘negative screening’ for ESG funds to a desire to see coronavirus-response ‘additionally objectives’

In the conclusion, the Vice Chairman said, “We have the potential to re-imagine capitalism in a post-COVID world, to embrace long-termism and multi-stakeholder corporate behavior and to use COVID-19 adversity to reinvigorate our commitment to addressing the greatest social, environmental and economic challenges of our time”.

The participation of UN Secretary-General, President of the UN General Assembly and Board Chair of Global Alliance for Vaccines & Immunisation (GAVI) and Action Aid International made the discussions more effective. The outcome document that was agreed upon, would be the first universal agreement to finance the immediate responses to curb COVID-19 and longer term recovery. The President of ECOSOC also commended the Secretary-General for issuing policy brief on COVID-19.

Refer https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_policy_brief_on_human_rights_and_covid_23_april_2020.pdf

Watch the full video in the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWvLd_5bIFY&feature=youtu.be



ACSRN News & Events

Legal Impacts of COVID-19 on Business and Employment

On 21st April, Dubai Chamber co-organised the webinar with Clyde & Co on “The Legal Impact of COVID -19 on employment in the UAE” to help the businesses with the latest policy developments governing the relationship between employers and employees for a healthy work system. The session was attended by 278 participants representing a diverse spectrum from, legal professionals, business owners, human resource managers and contract experts, to members of business groups and councils, and economic and professional bodies. It was moderated by Partner-Employment, Clyde & Co.

The Director of Legal Services in Dubai Chamber talked about the importance of transparency in employers-workers’ relationship in times of crisis and how to align contractual relationship to meet the rights and duties of all parties. The Partner-Employment, Clyde & Co. covered the latest policy developments and advised the participants on topics such as, how to manage remote working and to implement emergency measures during such uncertain times. “Webinar, such as these, are a platform for various stakeholders to come together and discuss the impact and solutions that situations like these require. We hope we were able to answer the concerns of the businesses in relation to the best way to proceed forward and the various issues they need to keep in mind while dealing with a fundamentally changed employee-employer relationship,” said the Partner-Employment. Dubai Chamber regularly organises workshops that are of interest to the business sector in the emirate and that contribute to enhancing their awareness of the latest legal and policy developments that regulate the business environment and contribute to making it dynamic. Please click on the link to watch full webinar:

https://dubaichamber.zoom.us/rec/play/tcUkdb_6_W83GdKdswSDBPR-W47uL_-sgyAc_aAMyBnhUncHNwCiZbdBZfl0BvWKTnw87HUH60nLPc

Member News

Chalhoub Group hosts livestream with CEO

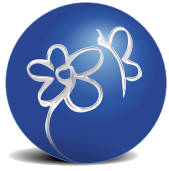
In an exemplary performance of addressing the concerns of its employees during the current uncertainty, Chalhoub Group hosted a livestream with its CEO in which the concerns of all employees of the organisation with regards to COVID-19 situation and tackling it together, as one team were addressed. Speaking about the responsibility of leadership during a crisis, the CEO was of the view that it was imperative for the organisation to lead the way by putting their people first. He assured the employees that the entity was agile and more empowered and would come out of the situation stronger than ever. To find out more, please visit:



https://www.linkedin.com/posts/chalhoub-group_stayhome-staysafe-wearechalhoub-activity-6648164991000240128-_Ekl/

Emirates Global Aluminium- Covid19 testing

It is a well-known fact that social distancing, frequent handwashing, wearing masks and gloves, and other basic preventive measures are vital to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, socially responsible organisations, like the Emirates Global Aluminium (EGA) has gone a step further. Testing is another of the most effective weapons we have against COVID-19, because people infected with the virus can take several days to show symptoms and some never show symptoms at all. All the while, they can be passing the virus on to others. In order to protect its employees on-site employees and contractors - EGA is one of very few organisations that has established the administration of COVID-19 swab test on-site. Teams from Mediclinic are administering COVID-19 swab tests at both Jebel Ali and Al Taweelah locations. The testing programme is very extensive and the organisation is planning to test all the employees whether or not they have symptoms, such as high temperature.



International News

GRI Open call for applicants

As the world's leading sustainability reporting framework, GRI has constantly raised the bar when it comes to governance and standard setting. In pursuance of its multi stakeholder ethos, GRI is looking for new members to join its governance bodies through an open call to strengthen its different organisations. The call is for everyone based on their interests and is not limited to any specific sector or geographic boundary. Four of GRI's decision making and advisory bodies are seeking applications from individuals of high integrity with relevant experience. The positions for which nominations are sought are the following:

- **Board of Directors**
- **Global Sustainability Standards Board**
- **Stakeholder Council**
- **Independent Appointments Committee**

The last date for submission of nominations is 10th of May. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman of the Board said that the strength and legitimacy of GRI came from its independent and multi-stakeholder foundations as it set it apart and enabled GRI to deliver world-leading sustainability standards, which were helping thousands of organisations to disclose their impacts and demonstrate their accountability to people and the planet. He further added that the organisation valued diversity of experience, backgrounds and roles which was reflected through its governance structure.

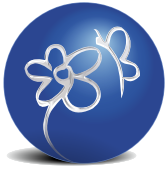
Debt and COVID-19: A Global Response in Solidarity

The UN has published a policy brief on repercussions of the COVID-19 virus in light of the pre-existing debt burden on developing countries. In the ensuing decade of the global financial crisis of 2008, as developing countries continued to spend, the debt burden grew proportionately so that by January 2020, the debt of 44% of least developed and other low-income developing countries were already at high risk or in distress. The current global pandemic as the global COVID-19 Corona Virus has resulted in an unexpected contraction in economic activity that is having disastrous consequences, including debt sustainability. As poorer countries redirect their resources towards fighting the virus, they are still legally bound through contracts with different maturities, creditors, interest rates and financial structures that could have been easily honoured in the absence of the current situation. However, now global financial markets are coming to a standstill as investors race to pull funds out of emerging-markets and other high-risk sectors, and into safe havens.

Low and Middle-income countries, home to 75% of the world's population and 62% of the world's poor, are highly vulnerable to a debt crisis, lost market access and capital outflows as well. Beyond the pandemic, additional resources will also be needed to stimulate demand, regenerate jobs and restore supply capacity to pre-crisis levels, let alone to achieve the SDGs. The brief concludes by recommending that forbearance should give way to Debt relief and restructurings such as private creditors joining this debt moratorium on comparable terms in order to avoid the public sector bailing out private creditors. The brief accedes that a new international debt architecture is required that ensures sustainability whilst also providing incentives to institutional and large financial markets to invest.

World's largest sovereign wealth fund backs GRI Reporting

A report from Norges Bank Investment Management that manages the one trillion Euro Government Pension Fund of Norway – has urged businesses to improve metrics to ensure they disclose what has been termed as 'relevant, quantitative and comparable information on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues'. Norges has called on companies to 'base broader social and environmental disclosures on the GRI Standards'. In addition, they stressed that reporting on climate change mitigation efforts should include both direct and indirect carbon emissions disclosures, inclusive of all emissions in a company's value chain.



In 1911, another epidemic swept through China. That time, the world came together



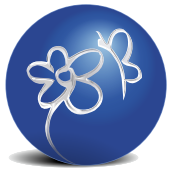
More than a century ago, a deadly epidemic spread through China that had similarities with the current global pandemic. The Manchurian Plague in 1911 originated from a market which was practicing trade in wild animals. As the epidemic swept across China, it threatened to turn into a global pandemic. With more than 60,000 deaths in China, it was one of the largest epidemics of the time. And had it not been for the global scientific community and world leaders coming together, the numbers could have been much higher and the spread could also have been more expansive. The solutions that were put in place to stop the rate of infection included lockdowns, quarantine measures, the wearing of masks, travel restrictions, the mass cremation of victims, and border controls, much like what is being practiced today.

After the disease had been brought under control, the Chinese government convened the International Plague Conference in the northern city of Shenyang -- close to the epicentre of the outbreak in order to bring the best minds in the field of virology, bacteriology, epidemiology and disease research from many of the world's major powers -- the United States, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and France. The aim of the conference was to pinpoint the cause of the outbreak, to learn which suppression techniques were most effective and to find out why the disease had spread so rapidly. It was hoped that in finding out the answer to those questions, the world would find a way to prevent a second wave and also to be aware of the warning signs for any future epidemics. It was a genuine case of the world coming together to learn.

There are lessons to be learnt from a century ago as in the face of a global pandemic, our responses seem haphazard and ill-coordinated. A multilateral effort on the part of medical experts and political leaders is much needed. As the World Health Organisation (WHO) is appearing to be increasingly compromised, the virus seems to have become racialised with some nations pointing the finger at others and competing for resources and control of the narrative. This has left poorer countries ill-equipped to deal with the spread on their own. This is where the lessons of the past should be of help now. In the Manchurian Plague of 1911, the world's scientists and health experts found a way to circumvent the political landmines and to overlook their differences as they came together to find a way to meet, share and discuss a common enemy. The questions that pegs itself is, will the world be able to do that now?

To find out more, please visit:

<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/18/04/china/great-manchurian-plague-china-hnk-intl/index.html>



Best Practices From The Archives DAL Food

Arabia CSR Awards 2018 - Winner - Partnership & Collaboration Category

Profile

DAL Food (DF) is a division of DAL Group; Sudan's largest and most diversified conglomerate. Operating in a market environment where food is mostly produced, packaged and marketed traditionally- DAL Food has been a real game-changer, revolutionising the food industry. The company is a pioneer on multiple levels being the first to adhere to international quality standards, invest seriously in state-of-the-art technologies and facilities and adopt a progressive business approach. DAL Food produces a range of staple foods and beverages including flour, water, dairy, sugar and pasta. In an extremely complex operating environment DAL Food has always kept its promise to deliver good food for everyone. The "good" in DAL Food's mission statement refers to the responsible business practices that DF enacts in every aspect of its business while the "everyone" represents inclusion, diversity and collaboration. DAL Food was born from a merger of 3 DAL Food divisions: Sayga Flour Mills, DAL Dairy Factory and DAL Food Industries. Sayga Flour Mills is foremost flour milling and packaging company in Sudan, with a leading position in the supply of flour to bakeries and a dominant position in supplying packaged flour, sorghum and pasta to consumers. DAL Dairy Factory pioneered in the provision of pasteurised fresh milk and UHT (Ultra Heat Treated) milk in Sudan, eventually becoming the leading dairy company in the country. DAL Food Industries was set up in 2002 to produce, pack and distribute Coca-Cola products. It also incorporates the leading water brand Safia, and an array of fruit juices. The merging of these companies created an agri-business giant with a unified vision to make simple, nutritious, accessible, affordable and high quality food and beverages for Sudan and the region. This has made DF Sudan's largest provider of staple food in the industry but the company's strengths go way beyond its size. Today, DAL Food runs an impressive operation with an astounding production capacity. It has evolved to become one of Sudan's prided assets.



Summary

There are many lessons to be learned from DAL Food. The most prominent message that comes across from all of DF's successful endeavors is that CSR is an investment and not a cost. The company has carved a responsible identity for itself at a time when few people had heard of the concept and when some even ridiculed it. This unwavering belief coupled with a strong responsible business model has yielded long-term benefits for DF and its stakeholders. A responsible value chain has helped the company overcome many of the challenges resulting from operating in a developing context and has in fact been the essence of its competitive edge. Looking beyond its immediate scope, DF has slowly but surely made itself the partner of choice for foreign investors that are seeking worldclass standards. This credibility has opened new potentials for expansion and diversification- securing the company's ability to continue creating impacts for generations to come. DAL Food is not just another traditional profit-making business -it is a key national player and trusted community partner that has changed the landscape of business and society in Sudan. Over the course of its long history, DF has influenced positive change all across its sphere of influence.