

Working for a better future

Suzlon's CSR initiative, Suzlon Foundation, is based on the premise that business and its environment are inter-dependent, and the organic link between them should be strengthened

BY PUNITA JASROTIA PHUKAN



As Nobel Laureate and environment activist Wangri Maathai said, “The environment and the economy are really both sides of the same coin. If we cannot sustain the environment, we cannot sustain ourselves.” While there are many companies who are working towards this future, one name that stands out is Suzlon Group, a leading global renewable energy solution provider, which prides in championing the cause of sustainable energy. The company believes the only way to predict the future is to help shape it.

Guided by its philosophy of pursuing social, economic, ecological and sustainable development for the planet, Suzlon Group has as its vision “Powering a greener tomorrow”. The company has

formed Suzlon Foundation to ensure sustainability across all its business operations. Set up eight years ago, Suzlon Foundation is based on the premise that business and its environment are inter-dependent, and the organic link between them should be strengthened. A higher degree of sustainability can be achieved in business by balancing growth in all aspects of development.

The foundation primarily works on the framework of five capitals (resources) — financial, natural, social, human and physical — as these affect the business and are, in turn, affected by it. Hence, for overall sustainability, balanced growth of these five capitals is essential. The programmes not only contribute to sustainability but also to Millennium Development Goals as declared by United Nations.

Elaborating further, Dr Jasmine Sofia Gogia, general manager, Suzlon Foundation, says, “Suzlon strongly believes in connecting its core capabilities to provide optimum renewable energy solutions and create value for all stakeholders within the business operations value chain.” Stakeholders can vary from the local community, environment, employees, customer, vendor, suppliers, government, non-government organizations or civil society.

The first steps

While Suzlon’s earlier CSR activity was limited to contributing to different NGOs, the need for a more structured approach on CSR and sustainability was felt. This led to recruitment of subject matter specialists, which were given the task to evolve the process with the help of senior management, leading to articulation of Suzlon CSR goals, which are: Having minimal impact on the natural environment; enabling local communities to develop their potential; empowering employees to be responsible civil society members; and committing to ethical business practices that are fair to all stakeholders.

Due to Suzlon’s wide geographical spread and the broadness of the CSR goal, however, all programmes could not be implemented at all the places. So, three CSR programmes were formulated — transformative CSR, responsive CSR, and proactive CSR – and each targeted a different area, undertaking different proportions of work.

Breaking it up

Transformative CSR programme focuses on

FACTFILE

SUZLON FOUNDATION

Year of formation: 2008

Chief promoter of Suzlon:

Tulsi Tanti

Suzlon Foundation:

Dr Jasmine Sofia Gogia,
General Manager

Number of villages

covered by SF: 1,072

Number of families

benefiting: 1,83,308



“SUZLON STRONGLY BELIEVES IN CONNECTING ITS CORE CAPABILITIES TO PROVIDE OPTIMUM RENEWABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND CREATE VALUE FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THE BUSINESS OPERATIONS VALUE CHAIN.”

DR JASMINE SOFIA GOGIA, GENERAL
MANAGER, SUZLON FOUNDATION

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transforming business practices to be more responsible and ethical and create more awareness among the employees about sustainability issues. “We work with business units to integrate sustainability perspective in the way business is conducted. This requires changing policies and mindsets and setting operating guidelines. The purpose is to treat the root causes and also to demonstrate that transformation is possible,” Gogia elaborates. Changing the way the land at wind farms is used so as to reduce the impact on environment by



implementing initiatives such as rainwater harvesting, fodder development and so on are examples.

Responsive CSR programmes are implemented to offset impacts of the business. Any business, however green, would still have some negative impacts; the programme studies them and looks at offsetting them. This requires engaging various stakeholders in the process. Examples of responsive programs are livelihood, soil and water conservation, plantation, waste recycling, health and education, forming and strengthening community based organizations and civic amenities initiatives.

Proactive CSR programmes go beyond business boundaries. “We all are interconnected as an ecosystem and what we do in a particular geography affects what happens elsewhere,” she says. Initiatives such as flood relief and devastation relief work are a part of this programme, which also targets young minds by providing internship and giving them a better understanding about the environment, business and community connect.

Sensitising the staff

While it is mandatory for each Suzlon employee to give two days in a year for CSR activity, the foundation uses different methods and programmes for a higher participation. In case of village-level programmes implemented by NGO partners, Suzlon Foundation (SF) introduces the NGO partners to local business units. In turn, the NGO partners are given a target regarding the number of employees they should involve. A target is also given to state CSR managers to ensure the employees are involved.

For the company's different offices, there are monthly in-house activities where SF calls different NGOs to display their products employees can buy. For instance, rakhis are made by a blind girls' school; the Diwali diyas and candles are made by those with learning disabilities, while the colour for Holi is prepared by jail inmates using natural colors.

The past seven years have seen SF touching and impacting many lives. Looking back, Gogia points out that in terms of the quantum of activities and geographical reach, SF has expanded beyond their expectations. “Our depth in terms of programme quality has improved because of our experience. CSR managers and the NGO partners look at a programme not as an event, but as lifelong commitment,” she says. 🌱

FOR BETTER HEALTH

MAKING AN IMPACT IN JAISALMER AND SATARA DISTRICTS

Suzlon Foundation, with its implementing partner HLPFPT, is taking healthcare to the doorsteps of the people living in 57 villages of Jaisalmer using Mobile Medical Units (MMUs). Monthly thematic health screening camps are organised focusing on specific health issues such as seasonal diseases, diabetes, childhood illnesses, adolescent health, neonatal care and other locally prevalent diseases. The information about the camps is disseminated in advance in the target village by the volunteers to ensure good patient turnout. The three-year-old project started in December 2014. MMU also refers critical cases to the nearest government health facility and HLPFPT's-established Merrygold Health Network, which builds and strengthens the trust of the communities on the government health system.

Satara district (Ghotane village in Patan Block of Satara district)

The village was facing water scarcity for a long time. The villagers had to fetch drinking water from the forest area, which took several trips and one-and-a-half-hours daily. Villagers tried digging a well in 2000, but the exercise proved futile when the soil cascading from the hill filled up the well forcing them to return to the same routine of fetching water from afar. After 10 years, they tried again and opted for a bore-well. This worked well for a year, but ran into some maintenance problem. Unfortunately, they did not have the money for repairs. When the Suzlon's CSR team did the assessment exercise they were told about this major issue. Due to its in-house technical expertise, Suzlon could help restart the bore-well, making life easier for the villagers.