



ارابيا سي اس آر نتورك

CSR  
Arabia CSR Network<sup>®</sup>



Arabia  
CSR  
Network

Annual Report 2011

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*“ We need to go wider... go deeper... aim higher... and invest over longer time-scales.”*

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## Chairperson's Note



This aspiration was stated by John Elkington, an authority on corporate responsibility and sustainable development, at the Arabia CSR Awards 2011 Forum.

The year 2011 has been a challenging time for the Arab region. As we pick ourselves up from months of socio-political protests and regime changes, it is becoming more and more important to ask who will be responsible for bringing about improvements in our society and how it will be done. There is no doubt that governments have the biggest role to play, but there is also immense room for the private economy to champion the cause for sustainable development. After all, the Arab region has been a model for capitalism for rapid development. What better a time for corporate social responsibility than now?

The Arabia CSR Network is an ambassador for corporate citizenship. Its aim is to build partnerships for a sustainable future, and we work

towards this mission statement by facilitating exchange of ideas and to forge lasting partnerships across sectors and regions for an improved society and environment. The Arabia CSR Network works with government departments, private companies, civil society organizations, individuals, and everyone else that is committed to an improvement in society and conservation of the environment through sustainable responsible business.

As always, we are very grateful for the dynamic partnerships and associations with the organizations and individuals that made 2011 a very memorable year for us. Through this report, we hope to recapture all the activities, events, workshops and partnerships that we have established over the past 12 months. We hope that the months and years to come will be a journey where we all work together for a better tomorrow.

**Habiba Al Marashi,**  
**President/CEO Arabia CSR Network**  
**Board Member UN Global Compact**

# Introduction

As we witness the political rebellion (Arab Spring) economic protests (for e.g. Occupy Wall Street), we are led to reflect on the role of good governance procedures amongst governments and multi-national corporations (MNCs). There is little doubt that large businesses have immense impact on economic development, social welfare and environmental conservation. This assertion becomes all the more important if we consider the increase in power of these businesses and corporations over the past decades. This leads to the far-reaching significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the value of the Arabia CSR Network for sustainable development in the Middle East, North Africa and Levant region.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines Corporate Social Responsibility as “the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large”. More simply, CSR refers to corporate commitment in relation to social justice and environmental sustainability.

Since 2004, the Arabia CSR Network (ACSRN) has been facilitating the process of strengthening the organizational commitment towards CSR through a range of value added products, services and platforms for private and public organizations operating in the Middle East, North

Africa and Levant region. The ACSRN is a multi-stakeholder platform that engages small and large businesses and corporations and continues to challenge businesses to go beyond the bottom-line approach and embed social, environmental and governance principles into their core operations.

The Arabia CSR Network has grown reasonably fast into a regional forum for exchange of values and ideas, sharing of knowledge and best practice. ACSRN works hard to keep companies cognizant about their power to make significant contributions in solving social and environmental problems while they internally generate profits and create economic value.

Through a region-wide awarding program, workshops, seminars and networking opportunities, members of the Arabia CSR Network and other corporate organizations are exposed to a unique platform where they can share CSR best practices and seek sustainable solutions in a rapidly changing world. In this regard, the ACSRN conducts a number of trainings with the objective to build the capacity of organizations to enhance and improve their impact on society and the environment.

The Arabia CSR Network, amidst the plentiful events in the region, has experienced significant growth and advancement in 2011. With a series of developments, such as the application of the Arabia CSR Awards, the introduction of the GRI trainings and the Best Practices publication, the launch of the newsletter etc., the Arabia CSR Network is building the

foundation for making a greater mark on the CSR agenda in the region. We hope that in the years to come, the Arabia CSR Network will be regarded as the one-stop organization that entities of all nature and sizes can connect with for improved CSR practices and sustainable development.

In 2012, the Arabia CSR Network will enhance its services manifold by providing a one-window operation for companies that are interested in establishing and/or enhancing their CSR and sustainability agenda. The ACSRN, in the month of December 2011, has already introduced its new membership package that will seek to encourage more companies and government departments to be a member of an exclusive group of organizations that are a driving force of the CSR and sustainability movement in the Arab world.

The Arabia CSR Network will also provide opportunities for its member companies to showcase their CSR strategies and initiatives through a more interactive website, its monthly newsletters and its research studies and case studies. Working towards building a credible information base on CSR through these publications will help towards greater understanding and better implementation of CSR in the region.

Debates about CSR are moving across the Arab world, and it is apparent through ACSRN's workshops and seminars that this useful dialogue is not only the domain of the CEO's and Board of Directors. It is also gradually

being influenced by the implementers of CSR, i.e. the senior and middle management and the teams underneath them. Thus, in 2012, the Arabia CSR Network will aim towards engaging with professionals and decision makers at all levels in the corporate hierarchy. Networking events, seminar and even informative webinars are planned so that word reaches out to everyone involved. Corporate responsibility is everyone's responsibility!

The Arabia CSR Network is very proud to be one of the very first platforms that promote continuous improvement among companies in the Arab world. The ACSRN truly believes that companies that honestly and passionately practice CSR and sustainability can provide many services that can catalyze long-term and meaningful societal change and environmental preservation.

Before you begin reading this report, and the activities that have kept the Arabia CSR Network busy in 2011, we would like to leave you with a quote that ACSRN has begun many of its presentations in the past year:

“

“In a truly great company profits and cash flow become like blood and water to a healthy body: They are absolutely essential for life but they are not the very point of life.”

*James Collins, an author and lecturer on the subject of corporate sustainability*

”



# Trainings & Workshops

*With the influential role of both governments and businesses in the Arab world, and their significant use of resources – natural, financial, human etc. – there is a very big responsibility that corporate organizations and public departments have to play to enhance their strategies and functions to address the changes needed by the society and the environment.*

*The Arabia CSR Network aims to play a major role in promoting corporate ethics, governance and environmental stewardship among businesses, government, academic institutions and civil society organizations in the Arab world.*

*With the goal of capacitating companies to optimize the potential of*

*their CSR initiatives and nurture CSR leadership in the region, the Arabia CSR Network implements programs that help organizations to identify specific issues and enable them to spearhead cost-effective solutions and leverage their core competencies.*

## Measuring Social Return on Investment

The business actions and functions of every organization create, change or destroy value which most organizations today are only able to calculate in financial terms, i.e. in terms of cost and price. The weakness in this system is that it is unable to measure social or environmental value of business investments.

Change makers need to be able to ascertain qualitative returns - such as social, environmental or cultural values - to quantify how large was the impact created relative to the financial capital, grant or subsidy invested in a certain project or activity.

An innovative tool to assist companies to measure Social Return on Investment (SROI) was introduced by the Arabia CSR Network in a training program held between 15th and 16th March 2011 at the Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel in Dubai, UAE. This pioneering workshop was attended by a total of 21 participants, which included officials from Government departments (2), multinational corporations (5), local MENA-based companies (1) and civil society organizations (13).



*A total of 21 participants from various industries and sectors attended the SROI workshop organized by the Arabia CSR Network*

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“Decision-makers need to have a functional dashboard that is detailed enough to tell a story, yet handy enough to carry anywhere. Dashboards display green lights to indicate that the program is delivering the desired objective; red lights to call the whole team to analyze, put more time to control the trouble or stop the program when it is severely bleeding the resources of the organization; and, the yellow light to tell us to slow down or proceed with caution.”

*Mrs. Habiba Al Marashi, President Arabia CSR Network, explains the use of quantitative measurements of social and environmental impact using the metaphor of a dashboard.*

”

## TRAINER PROFILE:

Mr. Peter Scholten, a consultant and developer for organizations and enterprises with a double or triple bottom-line co-introduced the SROI-methodology in Europe and invented the 'ValueGame' Methodology. Mr. Scholten is also a consultant on Social and Cultural Entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and performance management. He studied at the Harvard Business School in the United States of America and worked as manager for different healthcare institutes and consultancies in the Netherlands, before he started his own consultancy firm in 2001. In 2008 he was chosen amongst the top 20 most influential people in the Dutch philanthropic sector. He is now the chairperson of the performance measurement department of the European Venture Philanthropy Association.

The objectives of the SROI training program were two-fold:

- i) to introduce the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology as a performance measurement tool that may be optimized by companies, government and civil society organizations; and
- ii) to enable the participants to use the SROI Analysis Framework as the basis for justifying their CSR initiatives as it is a tangible evidence of money well spent.

Based on these objectives, the training program assisted participants to optimize their investments on activities that will deliver the outcomes that are important to the stakeholders.

The concept of social return helps rights' holders and duty bearers understand that any grant or loan can be thought of as an investment rather than a subsidy. The investment mentality shifts the focus to the creation of value – considering the opportunity cost rather than spending money for the sake of “feeling good” or publishing “something good”. Further, through SROI, organizations may be able to evaluate their social development and environmental performance in an objective but faster and easier way.

The SROI training program by the Arabia CSR Network aimed to cover all aspects of this investment methodology. The program included a number of sessions which relied on interactive group exercises and also use of the innovative Social E-Valuator web-tool. This tool gives initiators of a social enterprise or a charitable organization immediate insight into the social impact of their projects and investments by means of an SROI analysis. It is a user friendly, web-based tool that makes SROI analysis easy, consistent between project applications and cost-effective.

The first SROI training program was generally successful in terms of achieving expectations and objectives



*Mrs. Habiba Al Marashi presenting a token of appreciation to the SROI Trainer Mr. Peter Scholten*

of the participants. Majority of the participants stated that the training stimulated their learning and that they would be able to practically use what they have learned in the training session. The participants also suggested the need to provide better and more regional case studies and to also allot more time for trainings that cover such advanced content.

The training program also gave way to a number of ideas and suggestions that were put forward to the Arabia CSR Network to enhance social and environmental performance measurement in the region. Some of these included i) company-specific training programs, ii) preliminary analysis of the social and financial returns of CSR initiatives as compared to the investments allocated and/or obligated by the company in a specific activity, iii) online assistance through the SROI help desk and more.

The benefits of the SROI training were that it helped define activities with stronger synergies. SROI allowed the participants to think about whether their strategy is optimum for generating social returns, or whether there may be better means of using their resources.

## GRI training session: September 2011

Over the coming years, it will become imperative for all companies to measure and disclose their contributions/impact to sustainable development. As a result, sustainability reporting will become an essential component of any integrated strategy to sustainable business.

Over the years, GRI has emerged as the leading reporting framework designed specifically for companies that wish to report on the sustainability strategies and initiatives. Complementing the traditional business practice of developing financial reports, GRI addresses non-financial aspects of economic, environmental, and social performance of organizations.

By providing training on how to utilize GRI reporting guidelines – which serve as the world's most widely used sustainability reporting framework – the Arabia CSR Network plays a very valuable role in raising the quality and efficacy of CSR, sustainability, transparency and business ethics in the Arab world.

The first GRI training session was organized by the Arabia CSR Network from 25th to 27th September 2011. This workshop, which was held at ACSRN's own office premises, was attended by a total of 15 participants from 5 countries in the Middle East and Africa that represented a diverse mix of professionals from the government, private and civil society sector.

The Arabia CSR Network – with its vast experience of working with organizations to improve their CSR systems – was recently certified by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) headquarters in Netherlands to provide trainings to organizations that wish to use the GRI framework for their sustainability reporting requirements. With this certification, the Arabia CSR Network is the first, and currently the only, certified body that is able to offer its training services to organizations

and individuals in all Arabic speaking Middle East countries.

In addition to creating a transparent and effective sustainability report according to GRI standards, there are many more benefits to a company that uses the GRI framework; for e.g. the GRI reporting mechanism helps organizations establish measurable sustainability goals consistent with international best practices. Moreover, it assists an organization to collect meaningful data that can support future goal-setting.

There were two key objectives to the GRI training session conducted by ACSRN:

- i) To introduce the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Framework as sustainability reporting guidelines that can be utilized by companies of all sizes; and
- ii) To deliver an in depth understanding of the entire process of preparing a sustainability report based on the GRI Guidelines.

The participants, who were a mix of HR professionals, CSR consultants, lawyers and senior management, were provided with significant information to ponder upon. Mr. Thurm engaged the participants through a series of individual and group activities, most of which were focused upon asking the right questions to prepare an honest and complete sustainability report based on GRI's guidelines.

The training touched upon various reporting principles such as the Sustainability context, Stakeholder inclusiveness, Materiality and Completeness were discussed throughout the session. These principles are extremely important to ensure that the final output, i.e. the sustainability report is complete, has relevant information and includes the voices of all key stakeholders. Mr. Thurm also went into further details of how to conduct a materiality test, how to set boundaries for the report and also how to establish goals

### TRAINER PROFILE:

Mr. Ralph Thurm joined Deloitte-Netherlands in July 2008 as Director Sustainability Strategies. With 20 years of experience in sustainability he supports both Deloitte internally and its clients regarding the development of sustainability strategies and performance. Mr. Thurm is a well-known writer on the subject of sustainability and has given more than 250 presentations on sustainability strategies and transparency all over the world. He is a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Compact Netherlands, member of the Advisory Board of the Global Compact Yearbook and member of the Expert Panel of the Katerva Challenge. He has also served as Head of the Judges of the Arabia CSR Awards in 2010.

for the various indicators that are deemed important to report on.

The participants were also taken to the Jumeirah Emirates Towers to observe how the luxury hotel brand has been able to successfully create business value through effective CSR strategy and initiatives. It is expected that the participants of the GRI training will significantly assist their respective organizations, not only by generating sustainability reports, but also in the process of facilitating their teams to actively manage and measure their sustainability practices so that they are strongly ingrained in every activity of the organization.

In summation, the first GRI training program was very successful in terms of achieving expectations and objectives of the participants. All participants gave positive feedback on the training content and the training handouts. One of the trainees who had prior experience of working with GRI framework stated that 'the content contained all important aspects



including the trainer's theoretical introduction outside of the GRI's slides'.

## GRI training session: December 2011

This was the second GRI training – which was attended by 10 participants from 5 Arab countries - was conducted by the Arabia CSR Network's in-house training team led by Mr. Youshey Zakiuddin. During the three-day course, the trainer focused on GRI's process of writing a sustainability report, which includes investigating the wider sustainability context that a company operates in, reaching out to important stakeholders, prioritizing sustainability related issues to report on, monitoring and communicating the sustainability performance of the entity.

The training also focused on how the GRI reporting framework is strongly connected and compliments other corporate responsibility principles and guidelines, especially

those provided by the UN Global Compact (UNGC). The UNGC is one of the world's largest business initiatives that encourages them to adopt and report on 10 key sustainability principles related to the human and labor rights, environment, and corruption.

As part of the training, the participants were taken to the Pacific Controls headquarters in Dubai which is the first USGBC LEED certified platinum-rated green building in the Middle East and the 16th in the world. The training participants were also visited by the CSR manager of Dubai Customs who explained the sustainability related strategies taken by one of the oldest government departments in the UAE.

Both GRI trainings received very good feedback from the participants and based on the diverse suggestions and positive response, the Arabia CSR Network will encourage more organizations to adopt the GRI framework for its sustainability reporting purposes in the coming years.

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“I found the training very rewarding – the content and presentation was very rich. Moreover the vast experiences and knowledge that each of the participants brought to the table was very valuable and beneficial”.

*Lena Elsheikh Omer Mahgoub,  
Communications and Corporate  
Responsibility Manager at Sayga  
Investment Company Ltd, Sudan*

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“

“By far, this training is the best way to bridge companies to corporate sustainability based on GRI.”

*Mr. Hashim Hassan Hashim,  
Manager of Corporate Engineering  
& HSE Dept at Petrochemical  
Industries Co., Kuwait*

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*Arabia CSR Network's GRI certified training session in September 2011 was attended by participants from 5 countries from the Middle East and Africa*

# Arabia CSR Awards

## 2011

The Arabia CSR Awards, the most prestigious CSR related accolade in the region, honors and showcases those companies that best exhibit strong values and commitment towards sustainability, corporate responsibility, social accountability, stakeholder inclusiveness and other such aspects of responsible business.

The Arabia CSR Awards is organized under the patronage of **His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum – President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority; Chairman and CEO, Emirates Group; Chairman, Dubai Airports**. The Awards screens hundreds of applying companies, their sustainability reports and their applications, to make them part of the sustainability journey in the Arab region.

The Arabia CSR Awards program, established in 2008, offers the business community a unique and valuable chance to promote their efforts in CSR and gain recognition for best practices in the Arab world. In the past four Awards cycles, the Arabia CSR Network has been able to reach out to more than 310 organizations from 12 countries in the Arab world.

This is indicative of the value that the Arabia CSR Awards provides to businesses in the region; after all it is not just the award or the accolade, but also the process of self evaluation and assessment that helps companies understand how they can improve their performance to become more sustainable and have a positive impact on society and the environment.

ACSRA

2008 39 Participants from all 6 GCC countries

ACSRA

2009 47 Participants from 7 Arab countries

ACSRA

2010 62 Participants from 12 Arab countries

ACSRA

2011 42 Participants from 10 Arab countries

### Arabia CSR Awards 2011: Press Conference

As practiced, the Arabia CSR Network launched the 4th cycle of the Arabia CSR Awards with a press conference on 24th April 2011 at the Capital Club in Dubai, UAE. The panel consisted of Mrs. Al Marashi, Mr. Ralph Thurm (Member of jury) and representatives of last year's Award winners including Dubai Customs, RSA Insurance, First Select, Aldar Properties and Sayga.

During the press conference, the audience was given a brief of the submission process by Mrs. Al Marashi and Mr. Ralph Thurm, member of the Awards Jury. The participants were informed of the two-phase submission process that would allow them to improve their applications based on the feedback of the judges in the first review phase.

Representatives of the winners of the Arabia CSR Awards 2010 were also present at the panel and gave an overview of what went into their award-winning entries and how the process had helped their organizations. It was also announced that the submission process for the 4th Cycle of the Awards was completely paperless as every aspect of the process – questionnaire, judging and interaction during the interim period was to be conducted online.

The Press Conference continues to be a useful strategy to engage businesses and inform them of the process and organizational value of applying to the Arabia CSR Awards. It also assists the Arabia CSR Network to connect with useful media officials and newspapers that can help spread the word so more companies are able to join the CSR journey taken by the Arabia CSR Network every year.



Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (Bahrain)



Canon Middle East (UAE)



Tiger Profiles & Insulation LLC (UAE)



Tristar Transport LLC (UAE)



Dubai Customs (UAE)



Al Futtaim Carillion (UAE)



Bank Sarasin-Alpen (ME) Ltd (UAE)



Bee'ah (UAE)

## RESULTS OF THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CYCLE OF THE ARABIA CSR AWARDS 2011

### *Large Category*

Winner	Al Futtain Carillion (UAE)
1 <sup>st</sup> Runner Up	ABB UAE (UAE)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner Up	Dubai Aluminium Company Limited (DUBAL) (UAE)

### *Medium Category*

Winner	Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (Bahrain)
1 <sup>st</sup> Runner Up	Vodafone Qatar (Qatar)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner Up	Canon Middle East (UAE)

### *Small Category*

Winner	Bank Sarasin-Alpen (ME) Ltd (UAE)
1 <sup>st</sup> Runner Up	Tiger Profiles & Insulation LLC (UAE)

### *Best Newcomer*

Tristar Transport LLC (UAE)
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### *Special Project*

Bee'ah (UAE)
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### *Public Sector \**

Winner	Dubai Customs (UAE)
1 <sup>st</sup> Runner Up	Health Authority – Abu Dhabi, and Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (UAE)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Runner Up	Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (UAE)

### *Best Civil Society Organization \**

Bahrain Women Association - For Human Development (Bahrain)
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### *A Special Mention Award*

Zain KSA
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Bahrain Women Association - For Human Development (Bahrain)

\* Due to the large number of applications, the high impact of their CSR strategies and in line with the ACSRN strategy to expand and increase the Award categories, the Arabia CSR Network instituted two new categories of Awards for the 2011 cycle.

# CSR Events & Outreach

With a mission to “build partnerships for a sustainable future”, the Arabia CSR Network strives hard to reach out to corporate organizations, government departments, civil society organizations and like-minded individuals with the objective to network, raise awareness, and synergize for a collective drive towards sustainable development.

In this regard, ACSRN organizes a number of events and seminars that provide a positive, supportive, and structured environment for sharing ideas and experiences for improved CSR implementation. ACSRN also attends a number of business events and meetings to help promote the adoption of sustainable policies and practices.

## CSR: Building Bridges for a Sustainable Future

With the objective of collectively raising the standard and commitment of CSR and sustainability in the Arab world, one of the key achievements of the Arabia CSR Network in 2011 was the active collaboration with the Swedish Trade Council and the Embassy of Sweden.

One of the outcomes of this partnership was an event held on 23rd October 2011 in Jumeirah Emirates Towers, Dubai, the focus of which was comparative learning within CSR where expertise and business cases were shared from both the UAE and Sweden.

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**“CSR is not a tool for protectionism. On the contrary it advances competitiveness and predictability. It is not exclusively a matter for big multinationals. I see responsible business practices as a complimentary tool for open and free trade, international investments, economic growth and sustainable development.”**  
*H.E. Dr. Ewa Helena Björling,  
 Swedish Minister for Trade*  
 ”

The event, titled ‘CSR: Building Bridges for a Sustainable Future’, hosted the Swedish Minister for Trade, H.E. Dr. Ewa Helena Björling who gave her views on Sweden’s initiatives within this area. Sweden was the first country to demand sustainability reports from state-owned companies and is regularly listed amongst the forerunners within the CSR field.

Dr. Björling is a Swedish politician of the Moderate Party, currently serving as Minister for Trade in the Swedish government. She was a member of the board of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency from 2003 to 2007. She was also chairman of the Swedish National Council for Coordination of



*Mr. Gary Foote of ABB UAE explaining his organization’s CSR initiatives to the audience at the seminar*

Efforts Against HIV/AIDS in 2007, and Europe's representative in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's working group on HIV/AIDS.

Today, the United Arab Emirates is Sweden's second largest trading partner in the Middle East. More than 150 Swedish companies are represented in this region. Dr. Björling spoke at length about how she would like to see Swedish businesses in the UAE take on a more responsible role towards ensuring sustainable development, especially in aspects such as human rights, gender equity and environmental preservation.

The Swedish Trade Council in the United Arab Emirates assists Swedish companies wanting to establish themselves, or grow, in the market of the UAE and in other markets in the Middle East. In cooperation with the Swedish Trade Councils in Cairo (Egypt) and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), via the office in Dubai, the Swedish Trade Council in the UAE is also covering the markets of Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Syria and Yemen.

The highlights of the day were the presentations by ABB UAE (represented by Mr. Gary Foote), the Jumeirah Emirates Towers (represented by Mr. Andy King) and Dubai Customs (represented by Ms. Fatma Al Khaja) on how they have been able to integrate sustainability for creating organizational value while also contributing to various social issues and environmental challenges. These companies have been recipients of the Arabia CSR Awards in the past. Their presentations served as excellent examples for other participants present at the seminar.

### *Integrated sustainability at ABB UAE*

Although ABB has a Swedish and Swiss background, the company is known for its diversity in employees. At ABB, corporate citizenship extends to many different areas of work, such as energy-efficiency, emissions reduction, health and safety, stakeholder engagement, product innovation and sustainability in the supply chain. ABB's work in these aspects

has not only reduced the company's environmental and social impact but has also created bottom-line value in terms of profitability.

### *Aligning corporate responsibility with five-star luxury at Jumeirah Emirates Towers*

JET's vision is to become a leader in the country with respect to CSR and sustainability through achievements in areas such as reducing its water and energy consumption, contributing to the community and its social causes such as capacity-building and employment for disabled/special people. The Arabia CSR Network and the Awards have helped JET understand its role in sustainability as a five-star luxury hotel – something which does not necessarily go hand in hand.

### *CSR at the workplace with Dubai Customs*

The CSR policy at Dubai Customs, another recipient of the Arabia CSR Awards, focuses on improving the workplace. Dubai Customs established its CSR department and policy in 2008-9, which was a very difficult time to hire new resources for a department that would not directly translate into a return on investment. The fact that Dubai Customs went ahead with establishing its CSR department has been a major achievement for the organization as well as for government departments across the UAE.

The event also aimed to build capacity of participating organizations by providing them a quick primer on what were the essentials of an effective strategy for sustainability within any organization. This highly instructive presentation was led by Dr. Gracia Ugut, Associate Dean at the Asian Institute of Management, a leading expert within corporate social responsibility in the Middle East.

The Seminar's key objective was to showcase the role of Swedish businesses in CSR and also provide networking opportunities amongst local businesses and Swedish companies so that they could learn more about each other's sustainable

business strategies and CSR initiatives. The informative seminar was appreciated by all participants and speakers and paves the way for similar sessions by the Arabia CSR Network in the future.

## Sustainability Network CEO CSR Seminar

The Arabia CSR Network attended the Sustainability Network CEO CSR Seminar organized by the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Top executives from two major banks – HSBC and Bank Alpen-Sarasin - lead the discussion at this seminar. HSBC is one of the corporate members of the Arabia CSR Network while Bank Sarasin-Alpen is one of the winners of the Arabia CSR Awards 2011.

Dr. Belaid Rettab, Senior Director, Economic Research and Sustainable Business Development Sector, Dubai Chamber, also spoke at the event. He emphasized on the importance of strong leadership which he said distinguishes world-class companies from their peers and has got to come from the top. The Sustainability Network brings together UAE's top business leaders and aims to engage business and community, initiate programs to raise awareness, promote CSR best practices; and engage with the media and government for buy in and regulatory support.

“

“We invest in educational projects around the world for disadvantaged youngsters, believing that access to education offers the best opportunity for prosperity in the years ahead. And we support the mitigation of environmental challenges by working with local organizations, providing financial assistance and staff volunteering time in tackling climate change.”

Mr. Nabeel Abdul Rahim, Acting  
CEO, HSBC Middle East Securities

”

# Achievements

**2011** has been an extremely eventful year for the Arabia CSR Network, one that has witnessed significant change for the entire organization and its services. One of the most significant accomplishments this year has been the introduction of a research component to the ACSRN's areas of focus. The organization has also strengthened its training credentials and expertise in the past few months. It is expected that with these diverse range of services, the Arabia CSR Network will be able to reach out to many companies that can play a positive role in CSR and sustainability.

## Arabia CSR Network receives GRI trainer's certification

In July 2011, the Arabia CSR Network was certified by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) headquarters in Netherlands to provide trainings to organizations that wish to use the GRI framework for their sustainability reporting requirements. With this certification, the Arabia CSR Network is the first, and currently the only body, that will be able to offer GRI training services to organizations and individuals in all Arabic speaking countries of the Middle East.

The Arabia CSR Network is very well placed to provide these trainings

to build the capacity of organizations and businesses in the region, mainly because the ACSRN Network is a regionally rooted organization that has access to in depth CSR information of hundreds of companies in the region. This valuable source of information has also helped the Network build a strong research base for CSR in the Arab world. Moreover, one of the ACSRN Network's most important products – the Arabia CSR Awards - is supported by the UN Global Compact.

GRI's guidelines are the most widely used sustainability reporting guidance in the world. Over the coming years, it will become imperative for all companies to measure and disclose their contributions/impact to sustainable development. As a result, GRI will become an essential component of any integrated strategy to sustainable business. According to a recent survey by KPMG, "the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Guidelines are used by 80% of the G250 and 69% of N100 companies and is gaining widespread adoption as the de facto reporting standard in the world".

To date, the Arabia CSR Network has been able to organize two training sessions focusing on the GRI framework. These trainings, organized in Dubai, UAE, were attended by a mix of participants, which included HR professionals, CSR consultants, lawyers and senior management from various organizations around the Arab region.

## Arabia CSR Network published CSR Best Practices publication

One of the most exciting outcomes of the Arabia CSR Awards has been the wealth of information that has been collected regarding CSR in the Arab region. This year, the Arabia CSR Network put this information to good use to develop case studies that can help others understand what has been the strategy and process behind some innovative and exceptional CSR work being done by companies in the region. This is, perhaps, the first such publication for the entire Middle East, North Africa and Levant region.



The Arabia CSR Network, in association with the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), published a 70 page book featuring best practices and case studies of 14 organizations that were winners of the Arabia CSR Awards between 2008 and 2010. The case studies play a definitive role in setting the benchmark for the Middle East, a region that is not prominently known for its sustainability practices. The companies represent key industries in the region such as the Oil & Gas sector, the Finance industry and the Construction sector. There are also cases from a recruiting agency, a leading government department, a five star hotel, and a major food company that operates at the national level.

In the coming years, ACSRN will make these case studies a regular feature of their research publications. It is expected that these best practices will provide substantial academic and practical value to educational institutions, corporate organizations, government departments and civil society organizations throughout the Arab region.



## Launch of CSR Arabia

2011 also marked the launch of CSR Arabia – a monthly newsletter published by the Arabia CSR Network. This online newsletter, which is sent via e-mail to thousands of contacts and subscribers, covers key activities that are keeping the Arabia CSR Network team busy. It also showcases the various CSR initiatives being implemented by businesses and other organizations all over the Arab region; this includes ACSRN's corporate members, the Global Reporting Initiative and more.

The CSR Arabia is an excellent means through which the Arabia CSR Network aims to reach out to more individuals and help raise awareness of CSR related issues, events and updates. The issues so far have included sections on ACSRN's activities, member updates, general CSR related news, abstracts from the Best Practices publication and other general information articles. In the coming issues, the newsletter will also focus on opinion pieces by CSR experts, interviews of CEOs practicing CSR and much more.

## Greater opportunities for membership

The Arabia CSR Network invites all responsible businesses and government organizations to strengthen their commitment to CSR and sustainability by partnering with the Arabia CSR Network. The Arabia CSR Network is a pioneering multi-stakeholder platform that engages small and large businesses and government institutions to strengthen their commitment to sustainable development across the Arab world.

Member companies of the Arabia CSR Network, in addition to being part of an exclusive group of organizations that are a driving force of the CSR and sustainability movement in the region, will also receive a number of benefits such as positive press coverage through ACSRN's events and activities, discounted access to ACSRN's capacity building workshops and trainings, opportunity to share CSR experience at the ACSRN seminars and more.

For more information, please visit the Arabia CSR Network at [www.arabiacsrnnetwork.com](http://www.arabiacsrnnetwork.com) or contact us at [admin@arabiacsrnnetwork.com](mailto:admin@arabiacsrnnetwork.com) and +971-4-3448622



# Conclusion

**2011** has been an eventful year for the entire region. Countries emerging from economic crises were fully involved with pro-democracy riots and movements resulting in a series of regime changes. This regional turmoil kept governments, corporate organizations and even non-profit organizations, such as the Arabia CSR Network, on its toes. What implications would this socio-political tsunami bring to the region? How will governments and businesses realign themselves to address society's demands? And how will these social changes result in a more sustainable future?

On the whole, the Arabia CSR Network views these changes as an excellent opportunity to showcase and highlight the values of CSR, such as those of economic sustainability, environmental conservation, corporate governance, labour rights, anti-corruption, transparency, and more. Upholding these values has become much more important for businesses and governments in the region as it is experiencing both in the current economic and socio-political complexities.

In 2011, the Arabia CSR Network strived to reach out to private companies and other organizations through its various activities, the forefront of which was the Arabia CSR Awards program. The categories of this prestigious award scheme included companies of large, medium and small sizes, government institutions, civil society organizations, best newcomer company, best project and also a special mention award. These awards combined covered almost

all important stakeholders that play a role in improving our society and the environment. The Awards also brought together a number of global sustainability experts, influential CSR professionals from diverse industries and other like-minded individuals that helped create a vibrant network of positive engagement, learning and sharing of best practices.

In this year's award cycle 30% were those that had participated in the previous cycles of the Arabia CSR Awards, thus showing a genuine interest in sharing their valuable CSR and sustainability experiences with a wider audience. This year, the Arabia CSR Awards received applications from over 15 different sectors. These included Government Departments, Construction, Non-Profit, Telecom, Finance, Hotels, Logistics, Power & Energy and many more. This wide-scale representation is indicative of the fact that CSR and sustainability are growing to play an important role across the entire economy and in all sectors – a very good sign for the Arab world.

One of the challenges this year was in the number of corporate members of the Arabia CSR Network. The ACSRN relies on the financial and organizational support of its corporate members, which range from various sectors such as construction, energy, luxury retail, finance & banking, fast-food, hospitalities, oil & gas etc. These members, after joining the ACSRN, receive a number of benefits, such as discounted access to training sessions and events, publicity through various seminars and more. In 2011, the number of corporate members decreased by almost 40%. Most of the

companies that did not renew their memberships in 2011 cited lack of budget as the prominent cause, which may be understandable given that the economy is only just reviving from the recent recession. In response to this decrease in corporate membership, the Arabia CSR Network, for 2012, has revised its strategy and has delivered different categories of membership so that companies of different sizes and budgets can benefit from ACSRN's services. ACSRN will also work towards greater engagement with its members through facilities such as dedicated pages on its website, company-specific articles in its newsletter and best practices publication and more.

2011 has also been a formative year for the Arabia CSR Network's training portfolio. With the GRI certification in hand, ACSRN has implemented two successful training sessions in 2011. For 2012, ACSRN has planned at least one GRI training every quarter or as per popular demand. The GRI trainings provide an excellent opportunity for ACSRN to raise regional awareness and capacity for improved sustainability reporting as per a universally accepted framework. It also helps build strong relationships with various stakeholders in the CSR landscape. During the year, the Arabia CSR Network was also fortunate to benefit from GRI's Training of Trainer's session in Netherlands. This session helped build ACSRN's own capacity to deliver training of GRI's sustainability reporting framework.

One of the most exciting advancements to Arabia CSR Networks' wide range of services has been the development of a CSR Best

Practices publication for the Arab region. This publication features interesting case studies focusing on CSR and sustainability initiatives taken by companies and government departments in the Middle East, North Africa and Levant region. The publication developed in 2011 has received significant appreciation by the companies whose case studies have been featured. It has also been purchased by other interested individuals and organizations. Adding a research component will significantly add value to the organization's expertise in CSR analysis, management and consultancy. It is planned that every year, ACSRN will publish a collection of these case studies for the benefit of management schools, private companies and other organizations and individuals.

A key addition to Arabia CSR Network's outreach tools has been the CSR Arabia newsletter. This monthly publication, which is distributed via e-mail to almost 2000 contacts and subscribers, is gradually growing in scope and size. It features articles on ACSRN's activities and events, updates on corporate members, general information articles, opinion pieces and more. In 2012, there will be more segments planned for this newsletter.

Concluding 2011, the Arabia CSR Network has strengthened its commitment to good CSR implementation in the Arab world. Its collaboration with international institutions such as the UN Global Compact and the Global Reporting Initiative are indicative of the organization's emphasis of connecting to global stakeholders for regional development in sustainability. Much of the plans for 2012 will focus on the Arabia CSR Network's objective to rise from the economic and socio-political turbulence that has taken place in the recent past and encourage companies to seek opportunity amidst the various social issues and business challenges. This will mean greater emphasis on increasing membership, introducing new strategies for corporate engagement and building eminence as the principal professional organization for CSR and sustainability in the Arab world.





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