

**Name of article:** Revisiting Social Accountability and your organization  
With “Added Focus on Economic downturns and Graduate Education”



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**With the return to work post lockdowns, the need will be for Sustainable & sensitized development, which** is termed as development that meets the needs of the present but does not compromise the abilities of future generations to meet their needs.

### **NEXT Steps sufficiency**

The HRD ministry and organizational models will need to relate to how 2020 economic downturns will affect Graduate Education.

Today, most students are known to pursue higher education like their offshore M.S or other post graduations due to the following reasons:

1. Dreams of working and earning to become rich or live comfortably in foreign countries
2. Dreams of working for organizations and businesses known to have created a visionary role
3. Dreams of acquiring more education to make up for any lacunae felt or experienced till date
4. Acting on inability to acquire a job of choice or a job of past expectation, by pursuing post graduation
5. Earning money to pay back for financial undertakings personally or at the home front

All these are real-world interests, but it is for the HRD ministry and organizational models to raise the sensitization for a problem-area.

The problem-area is that most countries will review their policies to offer work-permits or work-visas to foreign students or foreign employees. This means that though getting a visa for education abroad may not be affected, the system of permitting students who pass out, to pursue work as easily as before, may be a problem.

Work-permits or work-visas will be granted as most countries will expect to enable global employment opportunities, but with the impacted economy, people-of-the-land demands may affect policy makers.

Policy makers may need to revise jobs, employment schedules and opportunity windows, to ensure people of the land earn via jobs preferred by them. So, first preferential job options, may become a common expectation.

Again, Social Accountability will need to change to include Job systems that create jobs for people-of-the-land. The need to create jobs for the people-of-the- land may be more cause and effect based than what we see today (May 2020).

### **How could this affect foreign students?**

It may change their time period or scope of paying back for their future education or other financial undertakings. Can this stress our younger generations?

## What could be the newer planning needed by the HRD ministry and organizational models in India?

Sustainable & sensitized development is not a common practicable, so the need is to add Social Accountability for this problem area.

This means that as students pass out of their terminal semesters or graduate courses, the need will be to offer a Social Accountability Credit system that permits students who do not get jobs to enroll for project undertakings identified by the Governments and HRD ministry as important for the country, where sponsors (organizations and businesses) could be either via industry stake-holding “for sustainable & sensitized development” or via GOI identifiers for these projects. The new sensitized interest could be to help students work, to gain ability for NEXT steps.

This ability for NEXT steps could be earning Social Accountability stipends and Social Accountability credits, that permit them to either plan for the future or pay back for current financial undertakings without seeking to “work in alternate roles” or “to pursue foreign education to make a better living (at a higher financial risk)”.

A highlight could be that as graduates may not be bound to work as labor class employees, or as short term staff, it may be NEXT Steps sufficiency to prevent investments being made by the GOI, our HRD ministry and our Educational systems from seeming to be less influential for sustainable & sensitized development.

The need could be to add Social Accountability “stipends and credits” to graduate education, or post graduate education or research based education, where **stipends** help students earn and **credits** help them add leading indicators to their higher graduation. The leading indicators could be **risk-mitigator(s)** as (a) credits that are transferrable across Educational systems, or (b) they could be credits that earn them enrollment for specific fields of specialization or (c) they could even help in future employment in a foreign -and or back in India.

## **Revisiting what SA8000 means (with concern for the current fiscal condition and need for more accountability)**

It needs to be said that **Gap analysis for Social Accountability could be a** vision to be introspective and millennium based.

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### **A. About Social Accountability**

Intent: The intent of social accountability is to provide an auditable, voluntary standard, based on the UN Declaration of Human Rights, ILO and other international human rights and labor norms and national labor laws, to empower and protect all personnel within an organization's control and influence who provide products or services for that organization, including personnel employed by the organization itself and by its suppliers, sub-contractors, sub-suppliers and home workers.

Scope: It is universally applicable to every type of organization, regardless of e.g., its size, geographic location or industry sector.

The SA8000 is a voluntary standard for auditable third-party verification, setting out the requirements to be met by organizations, including the establishment or improvement of workers' rights, workplace conditions and an effective management system.

It is intended that an organization shall comply with this Standard through an appropriate and effective Management System. This self-assessment helps bring in awareness, sensitization, preparedness and accountability by putting across questions framed that need to be answered in the affirmative (Yes) in order for the organization to be socially accountable in its human resource management policies.

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## **B. What does Social Accountability focus on?**

1. Child Labor
2. Forced or Compulsory Labor
3. Health and Safety
4. Freedom of Association & Right to Collective Bargaining
5. Discrimination
6. Disciplinary Practices
7. Working Hours
8. Remuneration
9. Management System
10. Focus on Economic downturns and Graduate/Post Graduate/  
Research Education
11. What's NEXT?

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This article does delve into specific self-assessments for each of these focal areas. The purpose is to bring Social Accountability (based on the SA8000 standard) to the forefront, where it becomes easy for all organizations to know more about the standard and its expectations.

## C, Gap Analysis for Child Labor

1.1 Does the organization not engage in nor support the use of child labor as defined by the SA8000 standard? Yes/No/Partially

1.2 Does the organization establish, document, maintain and effectively communicate to personnel and other interested parties, written policies and procedures for remediation of child laborers? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization provide adequate financial and other support to enable such children to attend and remain in school until no longer a child as defined above? Yes/No/Partially

1.3 Does the organization employ young workers, but only where such young workers are subject to compulsory education laws, added to this is that they *shall* work only outside of school hours? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization adhere to the requirement that under no circumstances *shall* any young worker's school, work and transportation time exceed a combined total of 10 hours per day, and in no case *shall* young workers work more than 8 hours a day. Young workers may not work during night hours? Yes/No/Partially

1.4 Does the organization adhere to the requirement to not expose children or young workers to any situations – in or outside of the workplace – that are hazardous or unsafe to their physical and mental health and development? Yes/No/Partially

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## **D. Gap Analysis for Forced or Compulsory Labor**

2.1 Does the organization not engage in nor support the use of forced or compulsory labor, including prison labor, as defined in Convention 29?

Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization adhere to the policy to not retain original identification papers and not require personnel to pay 'deposits' to the organization upon commencing employment? Yes/No/Partially

2.2 Does the organization ensure that itself nor any entity supplying labor to the organization not withhold any part of any personnel's salary, benefits, property or documents in order to force such personnel to continue working for the organization? Yes/No/Partially

2.3 Does the organization ensure that no employment fees or costs are borne in whole or in part by workers? Yes/No/Partially

2.4 Do the personnel have the right to leave the workplace premises after completing the standard workday and are they free to terminate their employment provided that they give reasonable notice to their organization? Yes/No/Partially

2.5 Does the organization ensure that neither itself nor any entity supplying labor to the organization engages in or supports human trafficking? Yes/No/Partially

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## **E. Gap Analysis for Health and Safety**

3.1 Does the organization provide a safe and healthy workplace environment and also take effective steps to prevent potential health and safety incidents and occupational injury or illness arising out of, associated with or occurring in the course of work? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization minimize or eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of all hazards in the workplace environment, based upon the prevailing safety and health knowledge of the industry sector and of any specific hazards? Yes/No/Partially

3.2 Does the organization assess all the workplace risks to new, expectant and nursing mothers including those arising out of their work activity, to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to remove or reduce any risks to their health and safety? Yes/No/Partially

3.3 Where hazards remain after effective minimization or elimination of the causes of all hazards in the workplace environment, does the organization provide personnel with appropriate personal protective equipment as needed at its own expense? Yes/No/Partially

In the event of a work-related injury, does the organization provide first aid and assist the worker in obtaining follow-up medical treatment?  
Yes/No/Partially

3.4 Does the organization appoint a senior management representative to be responsible for ensuring a safe and healthy workplace environment for all personnel and for implementing this Standard's Health and Safety requirements? Yes/No/Partially

3.5 Has a Health and Safety Committee, comprised of a well-balanced group of management representatives and workers, been established and maintained? Yes/No/Partially

Unless otherwise specified by law, at least one worker member(s) on the Committee *shall* be by recognized trade union(s) representative(s), *if they choose to serve*. In cases where the union(s) does not appoint a representative or the organization is not unionized, workers *shall* appoint a representative(s) as they deem appropriate. Its decisions *shall* be effectively communicated to all personnel.

Does the organization ensure the Committee *is* trained and retrained periodically in order to be competently committed to continually improving the health and safety conditions in the workplace? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization conduct formal, periodic occupational health and safety risk assessments to identify and then address current and potential health and safety hazards? Are records of these assessments and corrective and preventive actions taken systematically preserved? Yes/No/Partially

3.6 Does the organization provide to personnel, on a regular basis, effective health and safety training, including on-site training and, where needed, job-specific training? Yes/No/Partially

Is such training also repeated for new and reassigned personnel, where incidents have occurred, and when changes in technology and/or the introduction of new machinery present new risks to the health and safety of personnel? Yes/No/Partially

3.7 Does the organization establish documented procedures to detect, prevent, minimize, eliminate or otherwise respond to potential risks to the health and safety of personnel? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization maintain written records of all health and safety incidents that occur in the workplace and in all residences and property provided by the organization, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider? Yes/No/Partially

3.8 Does the organization provide, for use by all personnel, free **(but socially distanced)** access to: clean toilet facilities, potable water, suitable spaces for meal breaks, and, where applicable, sanitary facilities for food storage? Yes/No/Partially

3.9 Does the organization ensure that any dormitory facilities provided for personnel are clean, safe **(for social distancing)** and meet their basic needs, whether it owns, leases or contracts the dormitories from a service provider? Yes/No/Partially

3.10 Do all personnel have the right to remove themselves from imminent serious danger without seeking permission from the organization? Yes/No/Partially

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## **F. Gap Analysis for Freedom of Association & Right to Collective Bargaining**

4.1 Do all personnel have the right to form, join and organize trade union(s) of their choice and to bargain collectively on their behalf with the organization? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization respect this right and effectively inform personnel that they are free to join a worker organization of their choosing without any negative consequences or retaliation from the organization? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization not interfere in any way with the establishment, functioning or administration of workers' organization(s) or collective bargaining? Yes/No/Partially

4.2 In situations where the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining are restricted under law, does the organization allow workers to freely elect their own representatives? Yes/No/Partially

4.3 Does the organization ensure that union members, representatives of workers and any personnel engaged in organizing workers are not subjected to discrimination, harassment, intimidation or retaliation for being union members, representative(s) of workers or engaged in organizing workers, and that such representatives have access to their members in the workplace? Yes/No/Partially

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## **G. Gap Analysis for Discrimination**

5.1 Does the organization adhere to a policy to not engage in nor support discrimination in hiring, remuneration, access to training, promotion, termination or retirement based on race, national or territorial or social origin, caste, birth, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, marital status, union membership, political opinions, age or any other condition that could give rise to discrimination?  
Yes/No/Partially

5.2 Does the organization *adhere to a policy to* not interfere with the exercise of personnel's rights to observe tenets or practices or to meet needs relating to race, national or social origin, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, union membership, political opinions or any other condition that could give rise to discrimination?  
Yes/No/Partially

5.3 Does the organization adhere to the requirement to not allow any behavior that is threatening, abusive, exploitative or sexually coercive, including gestures, language and physical contact, in the workplace and in all residences and property provided by the organization, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider?  
Yes/No/Partially

5.4 Does the organization adhere to the requirement to not subject personnel to pregnancy or virginity tests under any circumstances?  
Yes/No/Partially

## H. Gap Analysis for Disciplinary Practices

6.1 Does the organization treat all personnel with dignity and respect?  
Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization adhere to the requirement to not engage in nor tolerate the use of corporal punishment, mental or physical coercion or verbal abuse of personnel? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization ensure that no harsh nor inhumane treatment is allowed? Yes/No/Partially

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## I. Gap Analysis for Working Hours

7.1 Does the organization comply with applicable laws, collective bargaining agreements (where applicable) and industry standards on working hours, breaks and public holidays (where the normal work week, not including overtime, is as defined by law but *shall* not exceed 48 hours)? Yes/No/Partially

7.2 Are personnel provided with at least one day off following every six consecutive days of working? Yes/No/Partially. Exceptions to this rule apply only where both of the following conditions exist:  
a) National law allows work time exceeding this limit; and  
b) A freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement is in force that allows work time averaging, including adequate rest periods.

7.3 Is all overtime work voluntary, except as provided in 7.4 below, where it does not exceed 12 hours per week and is not requested on a regular basis? Yes/No/Partially

7.4 In cases where overtime work is needed in order to meet short-term business demand and the organization is party to a freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement representing a significant portion of its

workforce, the organization *may* require such overtime work in accordance with such agreement. Does the organization ensure that any such agreement does comply with the other requirements of this Working Hours element? Yes/No/Partially

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## **J. Gap Analysis for Remuneration**

8.1 Does the organization respect the right of personnel to a living wage and ensure that wages for a normal work week, not including overtime, *shall* always meet at least legal or industry minimum standards, or collective bargaining agreements (where applicable)? Yes/No/Partially

Are the wages sufficient to meet the basic needs of personnel and to provide some discretionary income? Yes/No/Partially

8.2 Does the organization adhere to a requirement to not make deductions from wages for disciplinary purposes? Yes/No/Partially

Exception to this rule applies only when both of the following conditions exist:

- a) Deductions from wages for disciplinary purposes are permitted by national law; and
- b) A freely negotiated collective bargaining agreement is in force that permits this practice.

8.3 Does the organization ensure that personnel's wages and benefits composition are detailed clearly and regularly to them in writing for each pay period? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization lawfully render all wages and benefits due in a manner convenient to workers, but in no circumstances in delayed or restricted forms, such as vouchers, coupons or promissory notes? Yes/No/Partially

[Does the organization need the help of and/or the a-prior sanctioning by the government or governing bodies for any specific arrangement to accountably disburse wages by cash to daily workers during interim periods of monetary policy changes? Yes/No/Not applicable]

OR

[A. Does the organization lawfully have a strategic alternative to make its payments to daily workers (by cash) in case of any enforcement of a demonetization policy by the government or in unusual cases of shortage of currency of particular denominations? Yes/No/Partially]

B. Does the organization maintain a designated current account in a bank or in banks to help disburse cash to daily wage workers, via such a (sort of perennial for interim periods) cash pool, in case of any enforcement of a demonetization policy by the government or in other unusual cases of shortage of currency? Yes/No/Partially]

8.4 Is all overtime reimbursed at a premium rate as defined by national law or established by a collective bargaining agreement? Yes/No/Partially

In countries where a premium rate for overtime is not regulated by law or there is no collective bargaining agreement, are personnel compensated for overtime at the organization's premium rate or at a premium rate equal to prevailing industry standards, whichever is higher? Yes/No/Partially

8.5 Does the organization adhere to the requirement to not use labor-only contracting arrangements, consecutive short-term contracts and/or false apprenticeship or other schemes to avoid meeting its obligations to personnel under applicable laws and regulations pertaining to labor and social security? Yes/No/Partially

## **K. Gap Analysis for Management System**

### **9.1 Policies, Procedures and Records**

9.1.1 Has the senior management written a policy statement to inform personnel, in all appropriate languages, that it has chosen to comply with SA8000? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.2 Does this policy statement include the organization's commitment to conform to all requirements of the SA8000 Standard and to respect the international instruments as listed in the previous section on Normative Elements and Their Interpretation? Does the statement also commit the organization to comply with: national laws, other applicable laws and other requirements to which the organization subscribes? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.3 Is this policy statement and the SA8000 Standard prominently and conspicuously displayed, in appropriate and comprehensible form, in the workplace and in residences and property provided by the organization, whether it owns, leases or contracts the residences or property from a service provider? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.4 Does the organization develop policies and procedures to implement the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.5 Are these policies and procedures effectively communicated and made accessible to personnel in all appropriate languages?  
Yes/No/Partially

Are these communications also clearly shared with customers, suppliers, sub-contractors and sub-suppliers? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.6 Does the organization maintain appropriate records to demonstrate conformance to and implementation of the SA8000 standard, including the Management System requirements contained in this element?  
Yes/No/Partially



Are associated records kept and written or oral summaries given to the SA8000 worker representative(s)? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.7 Does the organization regularly conduct a management review of its policy statement, policies, procedures implementing this Standard and performance results, in order to continually improve? Yes/No/Partially

9.1.8 Does the organization make its policy statement publicly available in an effective form and manner to interested parties, upon request? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.2 Social Performance Team**

9.2.1 Has a Social Performance Team (SPT) been established to implement all elements of SA8000? Yes/No, where the Team *shall* include a balanced representation of:

- a) SA8000 worker representative(s); and
- b) management.

NOTE: Compliance accountability for the Standard *shall* solely rest with Senior Management.

9.2.2 In unionized facilities, can the worker representation on the SPT be by recognized trade union(s) representative(s), if they choose to serve? Yes/No

In cases where the union(s) does not appoint a representative or the organization is not unionized, can the workers freely elect one or more SA8000 worker representative(s) from among themselves for this purpose? Yes/No

In no circumstances can the SA8000 worker representative(s) be seen as a substitute for trade union representation? Yes/No

## **9.3 Identification and Assessment of Risks**

9.3.1 Does the SPT conduct periodic written risk assessments to identify and prioritize the areas of actual or potential non-conformance to this Standard? Yes/No/Partially

Does the SPT also recommend actions to Senior Management that address these risks? Yes/No/Partially

Are actions to address these risks prioritized according to their severity or where a delay in responding would make it impossible to address? Yes/No/Partially

9.3.2 Does the SPT conduct these assessments based on their recommended data and data collection techniques and in meaningful consultation with interested parties? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.4 Monitoring**

9.4.1 Does the SPT effectively monitor workplace activities for:  
a) compliance with this Standard? Yes/No/Partially  
b) implementation of actions to effectively address the risks identified by the SPT? Yes/No/Partially; and  
c) for the effectiveness of systems implemented to meet the organization's policies and the requirements of this Standard? Yes/No/Partially

Does the SPT have the authority to collect information from or include interested parties (stakeholders) in its monitoring activities? Yes/No/Partially

Does the SPT also liaise with other departments to study, define, analyze and/or address any possible non-conformance(s) to the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

9.4.2 Does the SPT also facilitate routine internal audits and produce reports for senior management on the performance and benefits of actions taken to meet the SA8000 Standard, including a record of corrective and preventive actions identified? Yes/No/Partially

9.4.3 Does the SPT also hold periodic meetings to review progress and identify potential actions to strengthen implementation of the Standard? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.5 Internal Involvement and Communication**

9.5.1 Does the organization demonstrate that personnel effectively understand the requirements of SA8000? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization regularly communicate the requirements of SA8000 through routine communications? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.6 Complaint Management and Resolution**

9.6.1 Does the organization establish a written grievance procedure that is confidential, unbiased, non-retaliatory and accessible and available to personnel and interested parties to make comments, recommendations, reports or complaints concerning the workplace and/or non-conformances to the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

9.6.2 Does the organization have procedures for investigating, following up on and communicating the outcome of complaints concerning the workplace and/or non-conformances to this Standard or of its implementing policies and procedures? Yes/No/Partially

Are these results freely available to all personnel and, upon request, to interested parties? Yes/No/Partially

9.6.3 Does the organization adhere to a policy to not discipline, not dismiss nor otherwise discriminate against any personnel or interested party for providing information on SA8000 compliance or for making other workplace complaints? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.7 External Verification and Stakeholder Engagement**

9.7.1 In the case of announced and unannounced audits for the purpose of certifying its compliance with the requirements of this Standard, does the organization fully cooperate with external auditors to determine the severity and frequency of any problems that arise in meeting the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

9.7.2 Does the organization participate in stakeholder engagement in order to attain sustainable compliance with the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.8 Corrective and Preventive Actions**

9.8.1 Does the organization formulate policies and procedures for the prompt implementation of corrective and preventive actions and also provide adequate resources for them? Yes/No/Partially

Does the SPT ensure that these actions are effectively implemented? Yes/No/Partially

9.8.2 Does the SPT maintain records, including timelines, that list, at minimum, non-conformances related to SA8000, their root causes, the corrective and preventive actions taken and implementation results? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.9 Training and Capacity Building**

9.9.1 Does the organization implement a training plan for all personnel to effectively implement the SA8000 Standard as informed by the results of risk assessments? Yes/No/Partially

Does the organization periodically measure the effectiveness of training and record their nature and frequency? Yes/No/Partially

## **9.10 Management of Suppliers and Contractors**

9.10.1 Does the organization conduct due diligence on its suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers' compliance with the SA8000 Standard? Yes/No/Partially

Is the same due diligence approach applied when selecting new suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers? Yes/No/Partially

Are the minimum activities for the organization to fulfill this requirement recorded and do they include:

a) effectively communicating the requirements of this Standard to senior leadership of suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers? Yes/No/Partially

b) assessing significant risks of non-conformance by suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers. [Note: an explanation of "significant risk" is found in the guidance document]? Yes/No/Partially

c) making reasonable efforts to ensure that these significant risks are adequately addressed by suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers and by the organization where and when appropriate, and prioritized according to the organization's ability and

resources to influence these entities; [Note: an explanation of “reasonable effort” is found in the guidance document]? Yes/No/Partially

d) establishing monitoring activities and tracking performance of suppliers/subcontractors, private employment agencies and sub-suppliers to ensure that these significant risks are effectively addressed?  
Yes/No/Partially

9.10.2 Where the organization receives, handles or promotes goods and/or services from suppliers /subcontractors or sub-suppliers who are classified as home workers, does the organization take effective actions to ensure that such home workers are afforded a level of protection substantially equivalent to that afforded to the organization’s other workers under the requirements of this Standard? Yes/No/Partially

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## **10. Focus on Economic downturns and Graduate/Post Graduate/ Research Education**

Please refer to the NEXT Steps sufficiency note (Page 2) on what could affect students in their terminal semesters or graduations.

The interest is to question what is more a possibility today, due to the downturn in the economy with valuable predictions by different economists for the periods to come and to stay ahead in this millennium..

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## **L. What is NEXT?**

The next step to ensure your responses are correct is to review the information in the SA8000 Consolidated Guidance document (included in the toolkit). To be socially accountable in your business model, your responses should have been relevant (a Yes or a No as needed) for all pre-requisites of the SA 8000 standard.

### **About the toolkit**

The different documents that are part of the toolkit help an interested organization understand the need for sustainable development, thereon prepare for and implement a policy for SMART Convergence, where the organization focuses on triple bottom line benefits rather than today's profitability and total cost of ownership.

The documents bundled in the Sustainable Policies folder are reckoners for what is needed in certain management systems for sustainable development and delivery. These reckoners can act as a baseline for further planning and inference.

If your organization is interested in sustainability, take the NEXT step by beginning your reading of the rest of the toolkit. The consultant has hosted a proof of concept website [www.venkataoec.wixsite.com/mir2020](http://www.venkataoec.wixsite.com/mir2020)



## **M. Implementing all this and more**

The author's "**Gap analysis toolkit**" can help a management team prioritize what an organization must take as most relevant steps to plan for, implement and achieve Social Accountability for sustainable development, growth and to stay ahead in this millennium.

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## **References**

**SA 8000** - The SA8000 is a voluntary standard for auditable third-party verification, setting out the requirements to be met by organizations, including the establishment or improvement of workers' rights, workplace conditions and an effective management system.

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