

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS



A MODEL FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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STUDIES IN TRADE, INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION 88

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Preface

This monograph is prepared by the Investment and Enterprise Development Section of the Trade, Investment and Innovation Division at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It aims to foster more inclusive, sustainable business practices and assist public and private stakeholders in the development of socially responsible business (SRB) in Asia and the Pacific. SRB is a model where businesses operate according to the long-term economic, social and environmental objectives of the community, or the triple bottom line of business. SRB, therefore, means that businesses have social and environmental obligations in addition to the financial obligations traditionally expected by shareholders. The primary purpose of this publication is to introduce this emerging SRB model because business is vital to achieving development aspirations, promoting the well-being of society and protecting the environment.

The monograph combines two earlier publications of the ESCAP Business Advisory Council (EBAC) and a new study by ESCAP. It provides the range of developments in SRB practices and understanding. The first publication is *The 3Cs for Responsible Banking in Asia and the Pacific: Corporate Governance, Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability*.¹ It discusses the three principles of SRB (the 3Cs). The second publication, *Corporate Agenda of Sustainable Development: Toward Responsible Business 2.0*,² presents an extended SRB model called the Responsible Business 2.0, which is based on the interaction of the 3Cs with the four enablers of SRB (technology, innovation, interconnectivity and metrics). The present publication introduces stakeholder engagement and government support as the fifth and sixth enablers. It also draws on a new ESCAP study that investigates the historical and theoretical backgrounds of SRB and its three main practices: corporate philanthropy, socially responsible investment and social enterprise.³ The publication explores the dynamic interaction between the principles, practices and enablers of SRB. In addition, the sustainable business ecosystem that completes the entire SRB structure and drives the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is examined. Finally, a number of case studies on the implementation of SRB practices among the business communities are discussed.

The overall recommendation of this publication is that SRB is an effective development strategy. However, the lack of both government support and corporate capacity hampers the practice of SRB in Asia and the Pacific. Consequently, governments need to create effective governance structures and develop pro-SRB legal and policy frameworks. Business also needs to more actively support SRB but also be more accountable to external stakeholders. This need for greater multi-stakeholder collaboration is another crucial issue for effectively implementing SRB practices in the region. Overcoming these obstacles will present challenges, but SRBs are an effective model for helping the region achieve the SDGs.

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The present edition was prepared by Masato Abe at the ESCAP secretariat and Isabel B. Franco at the Institute for the Advance Study of Sustainability, United Nations University. Colin Mullins edited the manuscript and also provided substantive comments. Soo Hyun Kim assisted in the preparation of the manuscript. Administrative support was provided by Natthika Charoenphon, Kanda Rangsimawong, Charuwan Chongsathien, Yuvaree Apintanapong, Sharon Amir and Pranee Suriyan. Aqira Bhattachayutmaytri designed the cover of the publication.

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Contents

Preface	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Authors	vii
Abbreviations and Acronyms	x
Section 1: Introduction	2
Section 2: A Review of Socially Responsible Business	4
Aligning SRB with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	5
Section 3: The SRB Model for a Sustainable Future	12
What is the SRB Model for a Sustainable Future?	12
Why pursue the SRB Model for a Sustainable Future?	14
Section 4: Three SRB Principles or 3Cs	17
Corporate governance	17
Corporate social responsibility	21
Corporate sustainability	24
Section 5: SRB Practices	28
Corporate philanthropy	28
Socially responsible investment	29
Social enterprise	30
Section 6: SRB Enablers	33
Technology	33
Innovation	36

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