

Shortlisted finalist - Public Affairs Asia Gold Standard Awards for the creation of ICRISAT Development Center (IDC)

Summary

This is the story of the creation of a new center set up to diversify funding and tap into Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India. It has been highly successful in a very short time (started April 2014) through its unique approach of deploying science-backed initiatives for CSR projects.

Planning

ICRISAT currently undertakes research for development purposes – providing pilot studies and scientific backing to development solutions. Development agencies, private industry and governments use these science-backed solutions for various community development projects.

In 2013, ICRISAT started looking for alternative funding sources to diversify and grow its current funding. With significant analysis a final proposal was presented to and approved by the ICRISAT Board of Trustees in April 2014 for the creation of *ICRISAT Development Center* (IDC). This was a bold move to:

- **Focus on development**, to bring about **more impact** from research.
- By focusing on development, new and **diversified funding sources** could be tapped. A key source identified was **CSR**.
- This was also prioritized in India to make an **early market entry into the new 2% CSR spending** made mandatory by the Government of India.
- While the core focus is development, **scientific research is applied while undertaking the implementation** which is important to ensure sustainable solutions. This builds on the scientific strength and knowledge ICRISAT already has and provides a strong **competitive advantage** over other development agencies.

IDC takes ICRISAT's research results to more communities, scaling up and out. The development work encompasses:

- Community level adoption particularly as part of companies' corporate social responsibility; and
- Large-scale adoption mainly with financial support from governments and development institutions.

Also the science of scaling-up is analyzed as part of the development process and lessons learnt are captured.

IDC's role is that of a catalyst to make things happen and provide the required technical backstopping.

IDC will help ensure the ICRISAT's scientific research *achieves major impact in reducing poverty, hunger, malnutrition and environmental degradation across Asia and Africa.*

Execution

A full marketing and operational plan was developed to set up IDC. Some key elements included the following:

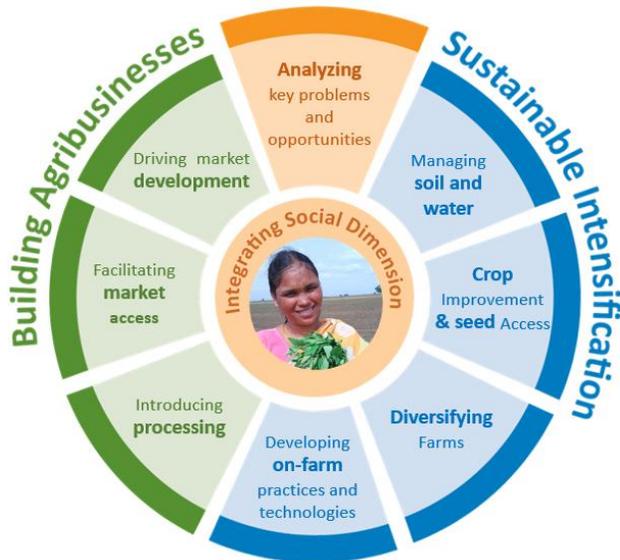
- IDC was marketed building on its experience with and learnings from the ‘Bhoochetana Project’ in Karnataka that reached 3million farmers in the first three years. IDC used this model and reputation earned to build the credibility of IDC and successfully bring CSR funders on board with an impressive success rate.
- A full analysis of the largest government corporates were undertaken and prioritized for personal visits pitching ICRISAT’s unique science-backed approach.
- Private companies with whom prior contacts were maintained were also prioritized and approached.
- Core marketing materials were created including:
 - website presence; and
 - CSR ‘Packages’ were conceptualized and prepared building further on the ‘Bhoochetana’ approach offering options for science-backed CSR. See <http://www.icrisat.org/icrisat-development-center.htm>

The approach currently being used for **CSR is based on rural development** that can build profitable livelihood options while still protecting and improving the environment. A science-backed approach is taken where all interventions have scientific experts advising and are monitored and analyzed.

It is a **win-win** for both the funding company who sees natural resources like water necessary for their operations being more plentiful and sustainably used, which the communities develop with sustainable livelihood options.

The approach includes:

- Selecting a village or group of villages
- Analyzing the opportunities and challenges
- Identifying the low hanging fruit to make quick gains
- Building a community based leadership to oversee the development. This is a particularly critical component for success so the community has ownership and makes the decisions. The ICRISAT Development Center is the catalyst and technical advisor.
- By introducing the unique holistic approach the whole agricultural development value chain is reviewed – from identifying land and water management interventions all the way through to linking with markets. This includes:



Outcome

In the 18 months IDC has now been operating, US\$ 12,241,000 has successfully been pledged through CSR and another US\$ 5,440,867 of CSR proposals are in the pipeline. Other funding has been sourced through foundations and government with a current budget of US\$ 41,332,000. Some impacts from these current CSR projects include:

Parasai-Sindh Watershed, Jhansi: The Coca-Cola funded CSR project in Jhansi made a huge impact on rural livelihood. As a participatory approach for soil and water conservation, the village and the watershed committees identified potential locations where different soil and water conservation practices such as check dams and gully control structures (9 check dams; 3 gully plugs, 1 haveli renovation, 1 community pond, 1 farm pond) were constructed. *Ex-situ* water harvesting structures together developed 125,000 m³ of storage capacity by the end of June 2015. Watershed interventions enhanced average annual family income from ₹50,000 (830 US\$) to ₹125,000 (2,080 US\$) in a short span clearly indicating potential of science-led interventions to address food security and rural livelihood issues in drylands.

ICRISAT-SABMiller initiative: This initiative aims to develop strategies for sustainable management of water resources in Medak district of Telangana state by adopting integrated water resources management (IWRM) at the watershed level. The ICRISAT consortium with a local NGO, Rural Education and Agriculture Development (READ), government agencies, District Water Management Agency (DWMA), and farmers implemented science-led interventions for enhancing water resources availability and its efficient use.

ICRISAT-JSW initiative: On the request of JSW foundation, ICRISAT is implementing a watershed project in four villages covering 7,000 ha. Science-led interventions started with soil and water conservation practices, productivity enhancement activities, crop diversification and intensification, integrated nutrient and pest management and other livelihood based activities. Water harvesting structures all together developed 7,000 m³ of storage capacity. In addition,

various income generating activities such as vermicomposting and nursery plantation were promoted. Farmers' capacity was enhanced by conducting training programs, exposure visits and field days.

CSR investors/partners in IDC currently include:



Other IDC investors/partners



