

Towards a Culture of Collaboration

"Business cannot succeed in societies that fail."
The World Business Council for Sustainable Development

As I write this message I am conscious of the remarkable progress made as businesses around the world realize their future is inextricably linked to the future of the communities in which they operate and also to society at large. It is now widely understood that maximizing shareholder profits is no longer the benchmark by which companies are judged to be successful. To really succeed businesses must also act responsibly towards their wider range of stakeholders and ensure their long-term sustainability.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a fundamental foundation for business development which no company can grow or succeed without. CEOs are increasingly seeing the significance and benefits of engaging society in their daily operations but challenges also remain. CSR continues to evolve and we are only at the beginning that presents the opportunity for a new dawn in ethics and governance. The new mantra is "do well by doing good".

Our own company, CSR LEBANON is quickly gaining momentum in this part of the world founded as a national Lebanese company with an Arab vision. Our objective is to raise awareness about the importance of CSR as a de facto business culture. We are firmly committed to help companies by offering our consulting services, CSR strategies, and social reporting expertise to increase business efficiency and competitiveness as well as enhancing sustainable corporate involvement with society.

We are a young company but we have already passed several milestones. In 2010 we enrolled in the United Nations Global Compact, and by collaborating with the UNGC we promote the principles of the world's leading CSR authority in Lebanon and the region. CSR LEBANON also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to define ways to develop CSR in Lebanon and embed it in corporations' strategies and operations. In implementing these principles we remain mindful of the interests of companies as well as the environmental and social needs of society. Our objective is to foster collaboration amongst all sectors of the Lebanese community including public and private sectors as we move towards an integrated national CSR strategy.

Another milestone for our company was a first-of-its-kind CSR conference in Lebanon, held in May 2010, that gained an overwhelming response and was positively received by attendees (relevant information can be found on the website).

We believe that CSR is not about charity, nor is it a cost that companies have to absorb to avoid criticism. On the contrary, it is a profitable investment. CSR is not only a tool to solve issues of poverty, lack of work opportunities, exploitation, and environmental devastation, but also an essential instrument for corporations to help government by supporting and empowering communities. So let us usher in a new dawn and work together for a more responsible culture, inclusive environment, and a better future for the generations to come.

Khaled Kassar
Founder & CEO
CSR LEBANON