

Corporate Responsibility at Sita

Sita is India's leading Destination Management Company. In existence for over 50 years, the company has become the preferred choice for international tour operators sending their clients to India, Nepal and Bhutan. It is backed by dedicated market teams with 400 experienced professionals in 16 offices across India, Nepal and Bhutan. Sita bases the core of its travel experience on principles of Responsible Tourism, Social Consciousness, Environmental Concerns and Unique Cultural Experiences that bring diverse communities together and increase understanding.

Sita is committed to showing travellers a deeper meaning to what they do and how they explore the many facets of India. The Company focuses on Leisure Groups, Individual Traveller, Special, Interest Groups, Charters and Cruises.

To us, Corporate Responsibility is all those issues of fairness, ethics and social commitment that have grown so prominent in public debate on the production of consumer goods over the past years. Corporate Responsibility is the moral attitude a company brings to its activities. Which, for us, also means addressing the more critical voices and the more controversial side effects of our core travel business.

The Company feels very strongly regarding its CSR standing and initiatives, especially as it caters to the largest segment of incoming tourists and clients. Be it the royal palaces of Rajasthan, the serene backwaters of Kerala or the exciting beaches of Goa, Sita tries to implement its initiative in a way to bring about awareness and also provide an edge over its competitors.

To enhance the positive impact of tourism in people, destinations and economies and to eliminate its negative effects. We aim to do so by being part of the solutions, developing innovative projects and keeping our finger on the current pulse. To us, Corporate Responsibility means innovation and product development, looking at how we treat our staff, and maintaining clear communications and fair dealings with all our travel partners.

The Company not only appreciates the many benefits that tourism brings. It also acknowledges the problems it can cause; and it views these as challenges and actively tackles them, too. In doing so, Sita aims to strengthen the positive aspects of travel, such as the cultural exchange it permits and the economic benefits it can bring to the destinations concerned, and to fight against its darker sides, such as the child sex industry.

Corporate Responsibility is part and parcel of our core business activities. It means not just considering financial concerns in our products, processes and decisions, but looking further and asking ourselves how we can be as fair and eco-friendly as possible—and thus as appealing, efficient and innovative as possible – in our activities, by paying due regard to environmental issues in our work processes or by insisting on certain social and ecological standards among our service providers such as hotels, agents, transport companies and cruise vessels.

INITIATIVES

CSR CERTIFICATION

Sita is the first Indian Destination Management Company to have received a CSR certification for Incoming Operator issued by TourCert, a private German, non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation which awards tourism businesses on basis of Corporate Social Responsibility principles with the “CSR Tourism certified” logo. 72 tour operators have been awarded with the label for responsibility and sustainability in tourism so far.

CHILD PROTECTION

Sita supports an initiative of Child Protection in the tourism industry and is a signatory to The Code for Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The company is the first DMC to conduct Child Protection Workshops in Goa and Cochin for its suppliers. The core objective of these workshops was to sensitise and to enhance awareness amongst the various stakeholders of the tourism industry in Kerala and Goa about the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation.

THE CODE

Sita has signed up to The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The Code is an instrument of self-regulation and corporate social responsibility that provides increased protection to children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism. The Code of Conduct is a comprehensive prevention tool, which operates simultaneously at different levels within and outside the company. To achieve the most efficient, effective and sustainable implementation of the Code of Conduct by a signatory company, a six criteria plan is to be implemented every year.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Sita works with Literacy India, a non-profit organisation, with the objective of empowering underprivileged children and women by making them self-sufficient. They focus on bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of underprivileged children and women, by giving a different meaning to education and a skill for survival. The Company supports Literacy India's noble cause and has tied up with them by giving them a project to help empower women. Through this project, underprivileged women are given an opportunity to gain employment and develop their skill further to sustain their livelihood. These women create handmade bags from recycled paper with the Sita branding. Each bag has a small note attached to it that highlights the concept behind the bag which reflects on the Companies CSR initiative. The bags are handed out to clients who come to India with their travel documentation.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Sita is committed to respect human rights and seeks to avoid direct responsibility for and complicity in human rights abuses.

Sita conducted a Human Rights Impact Assessment Project in October, 2013 in India. The project was carried out in New Delhi, Jaipur, Trivandrum and Cochin. The project aimed at providing a more precise understanding of the human rights context of Sita's operations and business relationships in India and the actual or potential human rights impacts it may cause, contribute to, or be linked to, as well as existing measures being taken to address them.

A report was published regarding the assessment, transparently explaining the assessment process that was adopted, the outcomes of the project and a plan with improvement and mitigation measures identified. The report contains statements on the process from the following five advisory stakeholders: the Working Group on Tourism and Development (AKTE), the Swiss Centre for Expertise in Human Rights, Equality in Tourism, Uravu Eco Links and UNICEF.

SUPPLIER CODE OF CONDUCT

The Supplier Code of Conduct specifies minimum ethical requirements for all our suppliers, who sign the Supplier Code of Conduct at the time of commencing a relationship with Sita. The requirements are based on:

- Compliance with applicable law in general
- Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents
- Human rights and labour conditions
- Environment
- Local sourcing and benefiting communities
- Monitoring and enforcement

ESOI

Sita has recently become a member of ESOI – Ecotourism Society of India. ESOI was formed by a group of eminent professionals from the tourism industry as well as Environmentalists, to promote environmentally responsible and sustainable practices in the tourism industry across the country. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has officially declared ESOI as their partner in helping them develop policy guidelines, code of conduct and ethical practices for Sustainable Tourism, to position India as a Global eco-tourism destination.

Corporate Responsibility is an active element in Sita's differentiation strategy. We strive to promote and support responsible tourism through these projects and initiatives that are all directly linked to our core travel business.

NEPAL INITIATIVE

Sita has tied up with Abari, a socially oriented research, design and construction firm based in Nepal to work on a CSR Project using the Nepal Relief Fund that was generously donated by our colleagues, partners and family to support the people affected by the devastating earthquake on April 25, 2015. Sita and Abari are working together to rebuild the theoretical class room and avocational workshop which are used for training the children in Sanjiwani Vocational School located in Dhulikhel – 30kms east of Kathmandu which was damaged during the earthquake.