EARTH5R

FREE HANDBOOK

EARTH5R GUIDES · NO. 05

CSR Impact Assessment Handbook

How to know, and show, what your CSR changed. The rule, the methods, social return on investment, commissioning an independent study and reporting it to the Board. For CSR heads, CSR committees and boards in India.

Saurabh Gupta, Founder and CEO, Earth5R

earth5r.org · 2026 edition

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Spending the 2% is the easy part. Knowing what it changed is harder, and since 2021 large companies have had to find out.

Every company with an average CSR obligation of ₹10 crore or more must commission an independent impact assessment of each CSR project of ₹1 crore or more, and put it before the Board. Most do. Few use methods strong enough to prove what changed.

This handbook explains the rule in plain language and then shows how to run an assessment that is worth reading: good questions, a sound sample, honest limits, and findings that change next year's plan.

It draws on the rules and MCA's CSR FAQs, KPMG's 2024 review of how Nifty 250 companies report impact, the published impact assessments of eight companies in the Above Average band of TERRA, Earth5R's ESG intelligence platform, and Earth5R's own field measurement.

How to use it

Chapters 1 to 4 explain the rule. Chapters 5 to 11 show how to design, commission and run a study. Chapters 12 to 16 show what the best companies do, the common weaknesses, and how to report and act. Four free templates come with it: a workbook, terms of reference, a report and Board note, and field tools.

Contents

Not legal advice. This handbook summarises the Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014 as amended up to 27 May 2026 and MCA's CSR FAQs. Check the current text with your company secretary.

CHAPTER 1

Why impact assessment matters

01

A spend report says where the money went. An impact assessment says whether anything changed because of it.

Four reasons to do it well

- **It is the law.** For larger companies, independent assessment of big projects has been mandatory since 22 January 2021, with the report placed before the Board.
- **It protects the Board.** Directors approve CSR spending. An honest assessment is their evidence that the money was well used, or their warning that it was not.
- **It makes the next rupee work harder.** MCA's own FAQ describes the purpose as helping companies "plan and allocate resources better" and "deepen the impact of CSR".
- **It is public.** Reports go online and are read by investors, analysts, journalists and communities. Weak reports are visible too.

Reviewing household survey forms in a settlement. Good assessment starts with good questions asked of the right people.

> **The shift in one line.** CSR used to be judged on how much was spent. Since 2021, for large companies, it is also judged on what changed, by someone independent, in writing.

₹10 cr
average CSR obligation that brings a company under the rule

114 of 250
Nifty 250 companies eligible in KPMG's review

45%
of eligible companies gave access to full reports

2.0%
used a control group to test attribution

The companies that get most from impact assessment treat it as a learning tool, not a filing. They choose questions that matter to a decision, pay for methods that can answer them, publish the limits alongside the results, and change their programmes because of what they find. The rest of this handbook shows how.

CHAPTER 2

Impact assessment by numbers

What the rule requires, and how India's largest listed companies actually report impact.

EARTH5R · CSR IMPACT ASSESSMENT IN INDIA

Most companies assess. Few prove.

Four in five eligible companies disclose impact assessments. Only one in fifty uses a control group.

The rule, Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014, rule 8(3)

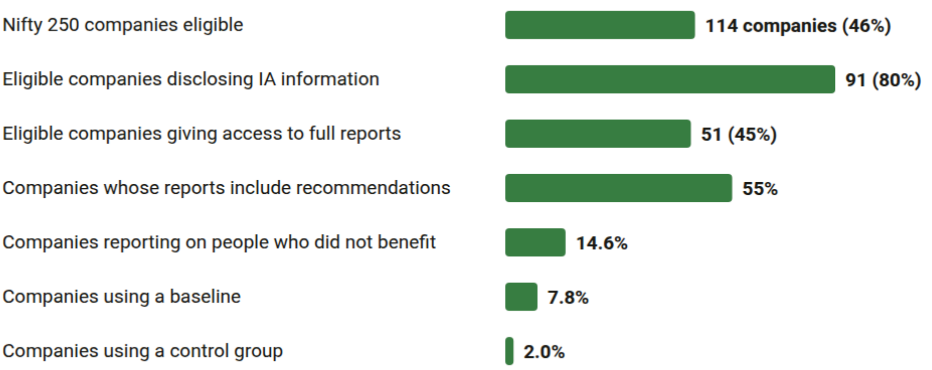
₹10 cr
average CSR obligation over 3 years that triggers mandatory assessment

₹1 cr
minimum project outlay covered

1 year
after completion, before the study can start

2% | ₹50 lakh
whichever is higher: what can be booked as CSR

How India's large companies report impact



KPMG in India, State of Impact Reporting in India (December 2024), analysis of Nifty 250 companies' impact assessment disclosures. Rules as amended on 20 September 2022; projects funded through Social Stock Exchange zero coupon zero principal instruments are exempt (27 May 2026).

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Most eligible companies disclose. Of 114 Nifty 250 companies eligible for impact assessment, 91 (80%) disclosed impact assessment information in their annual reports.

Fewer publish in full. Only 51 (45%) of the eligible companies gave access to the detailed studies, according to KPMG's report.

Very few can prove attribution. Just 7.8% of companies used a baseline and 2.0% a control group. More than half did no benchmarking at all.

Source: KPMG in India, State of Impact Reporting in India, December 2024 (analysis of Nifty 250 companies). KPMG's web summary gives 91 for access to detailed reports; this handbook uses the figure in the full report.

CHAPTER 3

03

The rule in one page

Rule 8(3) of the Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014, inserted on 22 January 2021 and amended in 2022 and 2026.

Question	What the rules and MCA FAQs say
Which companies?	Companies with an average CSR obligation of ₹10 crore or more in the three immediately preceding financial years.
Which projects?	CSR projects with outlays of ₹1 crore or more, completed not less than one year before the impact study. Both conditions must be met; otherwise assessment is voluntary.
From when?	Projects completed on or after 22 January 2021. The Board may assess earlier projects as good practice.
Who does it?	An independent agency. The Board decides the eligibility criteria for choosing it.
Where does it go?	Reports are placed before the Board and annexed to the annual report on CSR. A web link to the full reports plus an executive summary in the annual report is sufficient.
What can it cost?	Impact assessment spend may be booked as CSR up to 2% of total CSR expenditure for the year or ₹50 lakh, whichever is higher. This is over and above the 5% cap on administrative overheads.
Shared projects	Where companies collaborate on a project, one company's assessment may be shared with the others, and the cost shared within each company's limit.
Exemption	Projects funded through zero coupon zero principal instruments listed on a Social Stock Exchange are exempt (Rule 4A, 27 May 2026).

Watch the old numbers. Many older guides still quote the original 2021 limit of "5% or ₹50 lakh, whichever is less". It was changed on 20 September 2022 to 2% or ₹50 lakh, whichever is higher, which usually allows more, not less.

Sources: Companies (CSR Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021 (22 January 2021), 2022 (20 September 2022) and 2026 (G.S.R. 415(E), 27 May 2026); MCA General Circular 14/2021, FAQs 9.1 to 9.7.

CHAPTER 4

Is it mandatory for you?

Three tests at the company level and the project level. Run them every April.

01 **Company test**

Average the CSR obligation (the 2% amount) for the three preceding financial years. ₹10 crore or more? You are in the mandatory regime.

02 **Project size test**

List every project with an outlay of ₹1 crore or more. Use the full project outlay, not one year's spend.

03 **Timing test**

Has the project been complete for at least a year when the study starts? If not, it becomes due later.

04 **Result**

Mandatory if all three are met. Everything else can be assessed voluntarily, and the best companies do.

Worked example

CSR obligation of ₹12.40, ₹11.10 and ₹9.75 crore in the last three years averages ₹11.08 crore, so the company is in the regime. Study start date: July 2025.

Project	Outlay	Completed	Result
Skilling centres	₹2.80 cr	Mar 2024	**Mandatory**
Mobile health units	₹1.35 cr	Mar 2025	Due in 2026
School WASH	₹0.85 cr	Mar 2024	Voluntary
River cleanup	₹1.45 cr	Nov 2024	Mandatory from Jan 2026

Free tool. Sheet 1 of Earth5R's Impact Assessment Workbook runs these tests for up to 30 projects, and sheet 2 calculates how much you can book as CSR.

A board meeting on a zero waste programme, Mumbai, 2018. Decisions about what to assess belong with the CSR Committee and the Board.

CHAPTER 5

Monitoring, audit or impact assessment?

Four different jobs that are often confused. An impact assessment cannot fix missing monitoring data.

Job	Question it answers	Who does it	When
Monitoring	Are we doing what we planned?	Implementing agency	Continuously, monthly or quarterly
Financial audit	Was the money spent as approved and recorded properly?	Auditors	Every year
Mid-term review	Is the project on track, and what should change now?	Company or third party	During the project
Impact assessment	What changed for people, how much is due to the project, and will it last?	Independent agency	At least a year after completion (for the rule)

Start with a theory of change

Write down how the project is supposed to work: **activities** (training, equipment), lead to **outputs** (people trained), lead to **outcomes** (jobs, income, behaviour), lead to **impact** (lasting change in lives), with the **assumptions** that link each step. The assessment then tests each link.

Most weak assessments measure outputs and call them impact. "5,000 women trained" is an output. "3,100 of them earning at least ₹5,000 more a month a year later" is an outcome.

Volunteers submitting geotagged plantation data on the Earth5R app, Mumbai, 2023. Monitoring data like this is what an impact study builds on.

Build it in at the start. Collect baseline data before a project begins and track a few outcome indicators throughout. It costs little and makes the final assessment far stronger.

CHAPTER 6

Choosing a framework

The framework decides which questions get asked. Most Indian CSR studies use one of four.

Framework	What it covers	Best for
OECD-DAC criteria	Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (revised 2019)	Most projects; the common language of evaluation worldwide
REECIS / IRECS	Indian variants used by large agencies: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, convergence, impact, sustainability; or inclusiveness, relevance, effectiveness, convergence, sustainability	Adds convergence with government schemes and inclusion
SROI	Values outcomes in money and compares them with the investment, after removing what would have happened anyway	Livelihood, health and skilling projects with clear, valuable outcomes
KAB / KAP	Changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour or practice	Awareness, sanitation, waste segregation and health behaviour projects

EARTH5R · EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Six questions every CSR impact assessment should answer

The OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, the framework most used in Indian CSR impact studies.

01
Relevance
Is the intervention doing the right things?

02
Coherence
How well does the intervention fit?

03
Effectiveness
Is the intervention achieving its objectives?

04
Efficiency
How well are resources being used?

05
Impact
What difference does the intervention make?

06
Sustainability
Will the benefits last?

Score each criterion on evidence, not impressions. For impact, ask what would have happened anyway, who else contributed, and whether anything changed for the worse.

OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation (adopted December 2019). Indian variants such as REECIS and IRECS use similar criteria.

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In practice. KPMG found that 41.2% of the companies it reviewed used OECD-DAC and 5.9% SROI, while 43.1% described their approach as social impact assessment. HCLTech's FY2025-26 report used OECD-DAC REECIS, IRECS and KAB across 117 projects, with SROI for most. Choose the framework that fits the project, and say why.

Sources: OECD DAC, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation (2019); KPMG in India, State of Impact Reporting in India (2024); HCLTech Annual Report 2025-26.

CHAPTER 7

Designing the study

Five decisions made before any fieldwork decide whether the findings can be trusted.

07

1 **Ask questions someone will act on.**
"Should we expand to two more districts?" is a better starting point than "What was the impact?". Write five to eight evaluation questions tied to a decision.

2 **Decide how you will know what would have happened anyway.**
Options, from strongest to weakest: a randomised or matched comparison group; a waitlist or neighbouring area; a baseline and endline; recall of "before" by beneficiaries. Say which you used and what it cannot rule out.

3 **Size the sample properly.**
At 95% confidence and a 10% margin of error, 93 students need 48 interviews; 1,020 patients at ±7% need 165. Earth5R's workbook calculates this, including clustering and non-response.

4 **Mix numbers with voices.**
A survey says how much changed; focus groups and interviews say why, for whom, and what went wrong. Most good Indian studies combine both: KPMG found 95% used mixed methods.

5 **Include the people it did not work for.**
Sample dropouts and non-beneficiaries, not just success stories. Only 14.6% of companies in KPMG's review reported on people who were not impacted.

Completed interviews needed (p = 0.5)	100	300	1,000	3,000	10,000
95% confidence, ±5%	80	169	278	341	370
95% confidence, ±7%	67	119	165	185	193
95% confidence, ±10%	50	73	88	94	96

Simple random sampling with finite population correction. Multiply by 1.5 to 2 for cluster samples, and allow for non-response. Examples from HCLTech (PwC, 2024) and Persistent Systems (Chhaaya, 2025) impact reports.

CHAPTER 8

Commissioning an independent agency

The terms of reference you write decide the quality of the report you get.

Eight parts of a good terms of reference

01 **Background**

The project, outlay, dates, places and implementing agency.

02 **Why and for whom**

Rule 8(3) or voluntary; the decisions the study will inform.

03 **Evaluation questions**

By criterion, tied to decisions.

04 **Method expectations**

Mixed methods, sample size logic, comparison, SROI if needed.

05 **Ethics and data protection**

Consent, safeguarding, anonymised data.

06 **Independence**

No role in design or delivery; conflicts declared.

07 **Deliverables**

Inception report, tools, draft, final, two-page summary, data set.

08 **Selection criteria and budget**

Within the Rule 8(3)(c) limit.

Score proposals, not brands

Criterion	Weight
Quality of proposed method	25%
Relevant assessment experience	20%
Team and field capacity	15%
Cost	15%
Ethics and data protection	10%
Local reach and languages	10%
Timeline	5%

Make independence a pass or fail gate before scoring. Ask for two sample reports and read the limitations sections: agencies that state limits honestly usually do better work.

What companies spend. ABB India reported ₹14.40 lakh on impact assessment within CSR spend of ₹36.34 crore (2025). HCLTech reported ₹1.82 crore in FY2025-26 for 117 projects. Several large companies report nil for the year, often because studies fall in other years or are paid outside CSR.

Sources: ABB India Annual Report 2025; HCLTech Annual Report 2025-26. Earth5R's free Terms of Reference template and agency scorecard (workbook sheet 7) follow this structure.

CHAPTER 9

Fieldwork and ethics

The people you interview are giving their time and trust. Treat both with care, and the data will be better too.

Ethics, non-negotiable

- **Informed consent** in a language people understand; the right to skip or stop; no effect on future support.
- **Children:** parent or guardian consent plus the child's own agreement.
- **Privacy:** collect only what you need, keep identifiers separate, anonymise reports, and follow the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.
- **Independence in the room:** implementing agency staff do not sit in on interviews or focus groups.
- **Safeguarding:** a named contact and a route for any complaint or harm raised during fieldwork.

Quality, built in

- Translate, back-translate and pilot every tool with 10 to 15 people.
- Train enumerators on neutral questioning.
- Back-check at least 10% of surveys.
- Log refusals, replacements and incidents every day.

Recording citizen responses on a tablet during public training, Delhi, 2018.

Meeting a family at their doorstep. Household visits reach people who never come to a community meeting.

> **Free tools.** Earth5R's Field Tools template has a consent script, a beneficiary survey with before-and-now questions, a focus group guide, a key informant guide and a quality checklist.

CHAPTER 10

Social return on investment, done honestly

An SROI ratio is only as good as its assumptions. Show them, and test them.

How it works

01 **Map outcomes**

With stakeholders, using the theory of change.

02 **Measure and value them**

Quantity × a financial proxy, with the source stated.

03 **Remove what is not yours**

Deadweight (would have happened anyway), attribution (others' share), displacement, and drop-off over time.

04 **Discount future years**

At a stated rate.

05 **Divide by the investment**

And run a sensitivity test.

The eight principles

Social Value International's principles: involve stakeholders; understand what changes; value the things that matter; only include what is material; do not overclaim; be transparent; verify the result; be responsive.

Case: a skilling programme's SROI

In March 2024, KPMG assessed Dalmia Bharat Foundation's DIKSHa skilling programme using evaluative SROI: 627 trainees surveyed across 7 states and 10 centres (95% confidence, ±7%), plus interviews with 25 employers, trainers, staff and officials.

7.76 : 1
base-case SROI

4.26 : 1
with attribution increased by 50%

The report called the difference "significant", and also noted drop-off after placement despite placement rates above 70 to 75%. That candour is what makes the headline credible.

> **Never compare ratios across companies.** ABB India's 2025 study reported SROIs of 4.70, 13 and 18.41 for three projects; HCLTech's range ran from 1.1:1 to 15.9:1. Proxies and assumptions differ, so the ratios are not comparable. Compare a project with itself over time.

Sources: KPMG, DIKSHa impact assessment for Dalmia Bharat Foundation (March 2024); ABB India impact assessment (April 2025); HCLTech Annual Report 2025-26; Social Value International, Principles of Social Value. Earth5R's workbook (sheet 6) builds the SROI with a sensitivity test.

CHAPTER 11 · CASE STUDY

Measuring from day one: the Mithi River

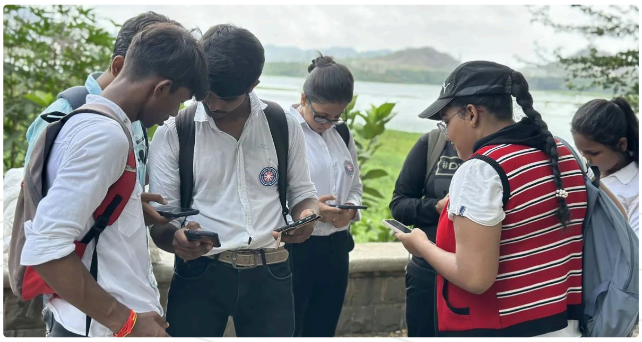
A CSR project designed so that its results could be counted, not reconstructed years later. Funded by Huhtamäki and delivered by Earth5R with United Nations Technology Innovation Labs, RiverRecycle and the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, October 2020 to November 2024.

11,100 t waste removed from the river	**4,440 t** plastic recovered for recycling or pyrolysis	**10,000** families and 500 businesses trained	**6,660 t** CO_2e avoided (estimate; no credits claimed)

What made it measurable

- **Outcomes recorded as they happened.** Data systems monitored recovery volumes throughout, so tonnage did not depend on anyone's memory years later.
- **A visual baseline.** Drone mapping before and during the project recorded waste hotspots and tracked change along the channel.
- **Every fraction had a destination.** Recycling for high-value plastic, pyrolysis for low-value plastic, so "recovered" meant something specific.
- **Prevention counted separately.** Families and businesses trained in the catchment were reported as a separate outcome from river recovery.
- **Claims kept honest.** Avoided emissions were reported as an estimate with no credits claimed.

Recovered material sorted by type on the bank of the Mithi, Mumbai.



Volunteers setting up the Earth5R app to log cleanup data, Mumbai, 2023.

> **The lesson for assessment.** Recall bias was flagged as a limitation by three of the eight companies' studies in this handbook. Projects that log data as they go avoid it.

Source: Earth5R Mithi River case study. UNESCO India featured the project as a Technology for Impact case study.

CHAPTER 12

Best cases from TERRA

How eight companies in the Above Average band of TERRA, Earth5R's ESG intelligence platform, assess and publish the impact of their CSR.

Company	What their impact reports show	Worth copying
HCLTech	Independent assessment of 117 projects in FY2025-26 by several agencies, using OECD-DAC REECIS, IRECS and KAB, with SROI for most. Findings are given with sample sizes, e.g. dairy incomes rising from about ₹7,000 to ₹21,500 a month (n = 155). ₹1.82 crore spent on assessment.	Assessing the whole portfolio, not only mandatory projects
Infosys	PwC assessed 26 projects in one report (April 2025) using the IRECS framework and mixed methods; 575 beneficiaries surveyed for Springboard alone.	One consolidated, public report
ABB India	Seven projects reviewed on OECD-DAC criteria, three also on SROI (4.70, 13 and 18.41). Flags risks, such as scholarship dropouts if fee waivers expand. ₹14.40 lakh spent on assessment in 2025.	Stating the assessment cost in the annual report
Dalmia Bharat	KPMG's evaluative SROI of the DIKSHa skilling programme: 7.76:1, falling to 4.26:1 under a sensitivity test; post-placement drop-off reported. A multi-year assessment framework for DIKSHa and Gram Parivartan from April 2026.	Publishing the sensitivity test
Persistent Systems	Chhaaya Strategic Advisors scored cleft and cochlear surgery projects on 30 aspects of relevance, adequacy, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability (26 and 23.5 out of 30). Limitations from monsoon access and language stated.	A transparent scoring rubric
Hindustan Unilever	Assessments by PwC and EY, with executive summaries annexed. Reports an SROI of ₹8.30 per ₹1 for its Prabhat livelihoods work (EY) and ₹2.49 crore on assessment in FY2024-25, including voluntary studies.	Voluntary assessments alongside mandatory ones
Tata Steel	"Voluntarily carries out impact assessment of key CSR Projects." Studies by Athena Infonomics, Thinkthrough Consulting and others on OECD-DAC criteria, published online.	Assessing by choice, not only by rule
Ashok Leyland	A qualitative study of the Hinduja Foundation's type 1 diabetes programme across three cities, reporting gaps in psycho-social support and follow-up alongside satisfaction.	Reporting what did not work

Sources: each company's annual report on CSR activities, impact assessment reports and executive summaries (2024 to 2026). Figures as published. Inclusion implies no partnership or endorsement. TERRA bands reflect overall ESG assessment, not CSR alone.

Five lessons from the leaders

1 **Assess more than the law requires.**
HCLTech assessed 117 projects in one year; Tata Steel and HUL commission voluntary studies. The mandatory list is a floor. The projects you are about to scale deserve assessment most.

2 **Publish the method with the result.**
The strongest reports state the framework, sample size, confidence level and respondent groups next to each finding. A number without its "n" is a claim, not evidence.

3 **Show the stress test.**
Dalmia Bharat's report shows its SROI falling from 7.76 to 4.26 when attribution rises by half. Publishing that makes the base case more believable, not less.

4 **Say what did not work.**
Ashok Leyland's diabetes study reports gaps in counselling and follow-up; ABB flags dropout risk; Persistent states the limits of monsoon fieldwork. Honest gaps lead to better programmes.

5 **Plan assessment across years.**
Dalmia Bharat has moved to a multi-year framework for its flagship programmes from April 2026. Baselines and tracking built in from the start avoid the recall problem later.

Speaking with residents during a community survey. The leaders' reports all rest on fieldwork like this.

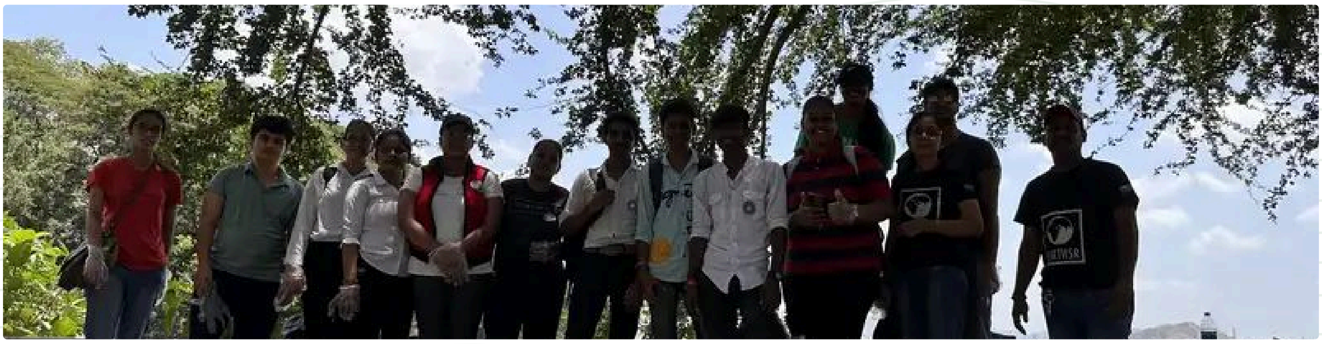
CHAPTER 13

Six common weaknesses

What goes wrong most often in Indian CSR impact reports, and how to avoid it.

Weakness	What it looks like	Fix
1. Recall bias	Studies run two or three years after the project ask people to remember "before". HCLTech's, Tata Steel's and Persistent's reports all flag it.	Collect a baseline at the start; track a few outcomes during the project
2. No counterfactual	All change is credited to the project. Only 2.0% of companies in KPMG's review used a control group and 7.8% a baseline.	Use a comparison group, waitlist or neighbouring area; at least ask about other influences
3. Outputs called impact	"12,000 beneficiaries reached" presented as the result.	Report outcomes with the share of people who changed and by how much
4. Only the successes	Samples drawn from people the partner can easily find. Only 14.6% of companies reported on people not impacted.	Random samples from full lists, including dropouts
5. SROI without stress tests	A single large ratio with hidden assumptions.	Publish proxies, deadweight and attribution, and a sensitivity test
6. Reports that go nowhere	No recommendations in 45% of companies' reports, no way forward in 39%.	Require recommendations and a management response (Chapter 15)

> **Narrative-data divergence.** TERRA, Earth5R's ESG intelligence platform, measures the gap between what listed companies say and what their data shows. In CSR, the widest gaps appear where impact claims rest on outputs, small samples or undisclosed assumptions.



Sorted waste laid out for an audit at Powai Lake, Mumbai, 2023: every item counted by type. Evidence starts with counting.

Source: KPMG in India, State of Impact Reporting in India (2024); company impact reports as cited in Chapter 12.

CHAPTER 14

Reporting and disclosure

Where an impact assessment has to appear, and what readers look for.

Where	What goes there	Rule or source
Board meeting	Full reports placed before the Board, with the CSR Committee's review and management response	Rule 8(3)(b)
Annual report on CSR	Executive summaries and web links to the full reports; "amount spent in impact assessment, if applicable"	Rule 8(3)(b); Annexure II; MCA FAQ 9.6
Company website	Full reports, alongside the CSR policy, committee and approved projects	Rule 9; good practice
BRSR	Social impact assessments of projects and CSR beneficiaries, where applicable	BRSR Principle 8
Implementing partner and community	Findings in plain language and the local language	Good practice

A two-page executive summary

- Project, outlay, places, implementing and assessing agencies
- Method in one line: framework, sample, comparison
- Three to five findings with numbers and sources
- What did not work, stated plainly
- Recommendations with the management response
- Limitations

Free template. Earth5R's Report and Executive Summary template has a full report outline, a two-page summary for the annual report on CSR, and a ready note to the Board.

Make it findable. Put every report on one web page with the project name, year and agency, in a stable location. Readers, analysts and ESG raters look for it.

Sources: Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014, rules 8 and 9 and Annexure II, as amended; MCA General Circular 14/2021; SEBI BRSR format.

CHAPTER 15

From findings to decisions

An assessment that does not change anything was an expense, not an investment.

Write a management response

For every recommendation, the company says whether it accepts it fully, partly or not at all, what it will do, who owns it and by when. The CSR Committee reviews progress at each meeting.

Four decisions to take

01 Continue

It works and still fits the need.

02 Change

It works for some people or parts; redesign the rest.

03 Scale

Strong evidence and a clear model; expand with the same measurement.

04 Exit responsibly

Weak results or no fit; hand over or close with the community informed.

Explaining a rooftop plantation and buyback programme to women in an informal settlement, Mumbai. Findings should go back to the community too.

> **Close the loop in the calendar.** Findings reviewed in December and taken to the Board in January can shape the Annual Action Plan that the CSR Committee recommends for the next year.

EARTH5R · PLANNING CALENDAR

A 12-month impact assessment cycle

For an April to March financial year, from choosing projects to the annual report on CSR.

April	List projects due: outlay ≥ ₹1 crore, completed a year ago
May	Set evaluation questions and budget; issue terms of reference
June	Score proposals, confirm independence, appoint agency
July	Inception report: method, sample, tools, ethics
August	Translate and pilot tools; fieldwork begins
September	Survey, focus groups, interviews, records review
October	Analysis and draft report, with limitations
November	Review with partner; write the management response
December	Final report; CSR Committee review
January	Reports placed before the Board
February	Findings feed next year’s Annual Action Plan
Annual report	Full reports online; summaries annexed to the annual report on CSR

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CHAPTER 16

Checklist for CSR committees

Twelve questions to ask before you approve an impact assessment report.

- [ ] Do we have a list of every project that meets Rule 8(3), and when each one falls due?
- [ ] Is our impact assessment spend within 2% of CSR expenditure or ₹50 lakh, whichever is higher?
- [ ] Is the agency independent of the implementing agency, with conflicts declared?
- [ ] Were the evaluation questions linked to decisions we actually need to take?
- [ ] Is there a baseline, comparison group or other way of knowing what would have happened anyway?
- [ ] Is the sample size stated and justified, with confidence level and margin of error?
- [ ] Were dropouts and people who did not benefit included?
- [ ] Were consent, safeguarding and data protection handled properly?
- [ ] Are outcomes reported, not just outputs, with sources for every number?
- [ ] If there is an SROI, are the assumptions shown and a sensitivity test run?
- [ ] Are limitations and what did not work stated plainly?
- [ ] Is there a management response with owners and dates, and will it shape next year's plan?

Need help? Earth5R designs CSR programmes with measurement built in, delivered with partner NGOs in 144 Indian cities, and tracks narrative-data divergence in listed companies through TERRA. See Earth5R's ESG services.

REFERENCE

Glossary of impact assessment terms

Attribution. The share of an observed change that is due to the project rather than to others, such as government, family or other organisations.

Baseline. Data on the situation before a project starts, used to measure change.

Comparison or control group. Similar people who did not take part, used to estimate what would have happened without the project.

Counterfactual. What would have happened without the project.

Deadweight. Change that would have happened anyway.

Design effect. The factor by which a cluster sample must be larger than a simple random sample for the same precision.

Displacement. Benefits that simply moved from one group to another.

Drop-off. How much an outcome fades each year after the first.

FGD. Focus group discussion: a guided conversation with 8 to 12 people from one group.

Independent agency. An assessor with no role in designing or delivering the project.

KII. Key informant interview with someone who knows the project or area well, such as an official or teacher.

Margin of error. How far a survey result may be from the true value, at a given confidence level.

OECD-DAC criteria. Relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Outcome. A change in people's lives or behaviour that results from outputs.

Output. The direct product of activities, such as people trained or units installed.

Recall bias. Error when people are asked to remember conditions from years earlier.

SROI. Social return on investment: the value of outcomes, net of deadweight, attribution, displacement and drop-off, divided by the investment.

Theory of change. How activities are expected to lead to outputs, outcomes and impact, and the assumptions behind each step.

FREE RESOURCES

Templates, infographics and how to share this handbook

Everything below is free to use, adapt and republish on your own website or intranet, with credit and a link to this handbook.

Resource	What it is	Download
Impact Assessment Workbook (Excel)	Applicability test, cost cap, sample size calculator, OECD-DAC evaluation matrix, scoring, SROI with sensitivity test, agency scorecard, action tracker, calendar	earth5r.org/guides/csr-impact-assessment-handbook
Terms of Reference (Word)	A 15-section model for commissioning an independent assessment	Same page
Report and Executive Summary (Word)	Full report outline, two-page summary for the annual report on CSR, and a note to the Board	Same page
Field Tools (Word)	Consent script, beneficiary survey, focus group and key informant guides, quality checklist	Same page
Three infographics	Impact assessment by numbers; the six OECD-DAC questions; a 12-month cycle	Same page, with embed code

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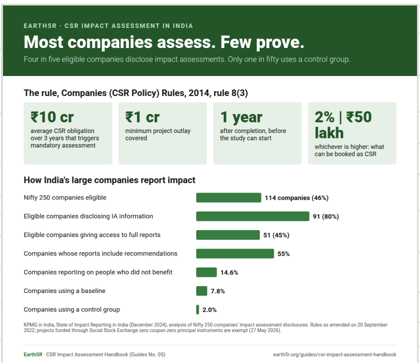

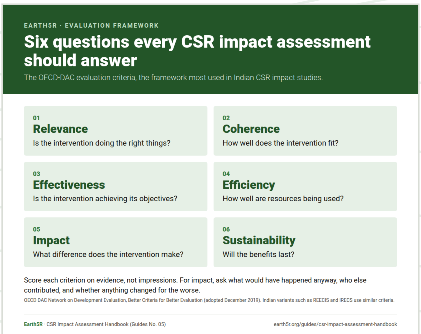

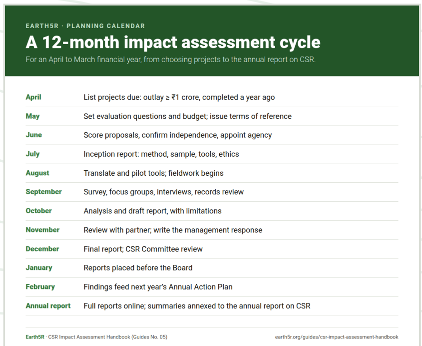

FROM THE FIELD

Where evidence is gathered


A community survey with residents and children.


Surveying residents in a residential community, 2017.


Talking with children during an outreach visit.


A trainer with women and children in an informal settlement, Mumbai, 2018.


Student volunteers meeting residents in a settlement lane, Mumbai, 2016.


Geotagging newly planted trees on the Earth5R app, Mumbai, 2023.

More photographs of Earth5R's CSR work with partner NGOs: earth5r.org/csr-ngo-work-gallery.

WORK WITH EARTH5R

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Earth5R is a Mumbai-based environmental organisation working across 144 Indian cities and internationally. We design CSR programmes with measurement built in, deliver them with partner NGOs, and track narrative-data divergence in listed companies through TERRA, our ESG intelligence platform.

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