

# Cultural Diversity in Creating a Strong, Conducive, and Sustainable Environment for Skill Development



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Skills and knowledge are driving forces of economic growth and social development for any country. Given that developing skills requires huge investments, it is necessary to have availability of real time data on what constraints skill development in a region/area/district/state; identification of sectors where skill development is most needed; how well the skills of individuals match those required in the labour market, and the outcomes of various interventions undertaken.

In light of this Masterbuilder had one to one chat with Devendra Shangari, Chief of Human Resource and Industrial Relations, Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd., wherein he shared insights on skill development scenario in India and steps undertaken by the

company.

Here are the excerpts of the interview.

## Discuss about the requirement of Skill development in Infrastructure segment?

Nuvoco Vistas Corp. Ltd. (formerly Lafarge India Limited) has been a part of the Indian construction industry since 1999 through its cement business; and from 2007 via ready-mix concrete (RMX) and aggregates businesses. With a significant presence in all major Indian cities and towns, Nuvoco has always placed tremendous importance on sustainable development. As a result, Nuvoco's operational strategy utilises its vast industrial know-how to drive performance and ensure value creation, while promoting respect for employees, local cultures, and the envi-

ronment, through the conservation of natural resources and energy.

A firm believer in the role of cultural diversity in creating a strong, conducive, and sustainable environment, Nuvoco currently provides opportunities to over 2500 people in India. This primarily comprises skill enhancement and upgradation in three areas, namely employees, community, and professional institutes.

**Employees** - We believe that we are morally and socially responsible for the talent we hire, and that it is our duty to constantly hone, develop, and enhance their skills to make them better contributors. We have also been hiring apprentices (as per the government mandate) since 2010 and helping them gain valuable industry experience. In addition to that, we also recruit Graduate Engineering Trainees (GET) and Diploma Engineering Trainees (DET) from government-aided institutes especially from the National Institute of technologies (NITs) and Government Polytechnics in our states of operation to promote skill upgradation and potential employment of local human resources.

**Community** - One of the driving principles of our organisation is our commitment towards 'Care', as a result of which, our corporate social responsibility programmes focus on five primary areas. Among them, 'Saksham Bharat', meaning 'generating livelihood' is one of our most important areas of work, carried out through interventions and several pertinent courses. These include gardening, fishery, poultry farming, improved vegetable cultivation practices (including mush-



room cultivation), tailoring, beautician and mechanic courses, and masonry.

- To cite an example, we have taught improved vegetable cultivation practices to farmers in nearly 20 villages in Chhattisgarh, by helping them understand the use of best quality seeds for raising seedlings, creating raised bed nurseries and polythene tray nurseries using coco pits. We have also taught them the furrow method for using less water and better weed management, how to maintain proper spacing during transplanting, how to use the pit-and-trellis method for growing better tomatoes, along with how to build scaffoldings for creepers to grow, among others.
- In order to enhance the yield, we also educate farmers in paddy cultivation and integrated pest management, at our plants in Jharkhand and West Bengal. The implementation of these methods and processes, which are completely new to them, has, in fact, helped improve their lives significantly.
- Another classic example, Project 'Samridhi' engaged women from communities in West Bengal, in several sustainable sources of livelihood, to bring about their economic empowerment. For the initiative, Nuvoco was awarded the FICCI CSR Special Jury Commendation Award for 2016-17



for 'Women Empowerment'. Having initially been implemented in the Gangajalghati block of West Bengal's Bankura District, the project has now been extended to several villages in Chhattisgarh, as well. The goal of the project is to bring about equality in the contribution that women have towards their families. Till date, it has helped transform several households by forming self-help groups which help these women gain financial independence. As a result, not only have they been able to have a stronger voice in domestic decision-making, but their overall quality of life has also improve, aided by better access to education, nutrition intake and asset creation.

- A CSSDA registered computer centre was also set up by Nuvoco, Chhattisgarh, which provides courses in Tally and MS Office to students residing near Baloda Bazaar, Chhattisgarh. Several students who have cleared the exams have even managed to find employment opportunities nearby.
- At Nuvoco, we have always cared deeply for the safety of our people, and not only does this include our employees and business associates, but the members of communities around our plants as well. The driving principle of our organisation is to cause ZERO Harm, which defines all of the social work that we do, and we take this responsibility very seriously. One of our many safety programmes involves providing Defensive Driving Training (DDT) to the drivers transporting our products from our plants to the market. As per the National Safety Council, USA, DDT is much more than training in basic driving mechanics and road traffic rules. It is, in fact, designed to reduce the risk of collision by anticipating dangerous situations, despite adverse conditions or others' mistakes. This is made possible by adhering to a wide range of general guidelines and specific driving techniques. Not only is the training provided to all drivers working for Nuvoco, their performances are also tracked and evaluated regularly. Additionally, they also need to

maintain a 'report card' which tracks the number of refresher trainings they have received, and the dates for the upcoming one. These practices have played a major role in Nuvoco's commitment towards road safety and continue to reduce accidents on the road.

**Technical Institutes** - We have helped many institutes design and improve their curriculum, as well as helping them with programme management.

- Nuvoco has had a long standing association with ITI Kharod, Janjgir, Chhattisgarh, and we have recently been assisting the institute in implementing effective programme management. We have also helped update and fine-tune its curriculum, besides providing on-the-job (OTJ) training experience to under graduate students from the institute, at our manufacturing facilities. Additionally, we also adopted ITI Kharod three years ago, and since then, our efforts have been towards developing the infrastructure and capabilities of the students.
- For over 10 years, Nuvoco has been associated with the National Council of Cement and Building Materials, Ballabgarh (NCBM), for developing specialised programmes on cement quality and also recruiting Control Room Operators (CROs).
- Nuvoco recently launched a three-semester Diploma programme in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM) in association with Jadavpur University (JU), Kolkata, West Bengal. The programme has been designed to address the growing need for skilled professional in the industrial development sector of India, and bringing it on par with international standards. Besides in-depth knowledge of industrial safety and environmental management, students will also gain professional skills which are paramount for dealing with practical, real-world challenges. This will help equip them for executive positions in Multinational Corporations, Government organisations, Consulting firms, and NGOs, to name a few. To further assist the students in

their endeavours, the faculty will be formed of a number of experienced professionals, which includes distinguished engineers and technologists from several government and private organisations.

### Suggest some ways for improving industry standards with Health, safety and environment?

- We take our principle of ZERO Harm very seriously and care deeply for the safety of our employees. We equip all our employees with essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and enforce its use, to ensure safety in the workplace. Employees at Nuvoco have to take part in a number of high-risk activities, including using heavy machinery, working at heights, entering confined spaces, and handling electrical equipment, among others. Thus, we work tirelessly to ensure that not only our employees but contract workers, associates, and other personnel connected directly or indirectly with Nuvoco are armed with the knowledge and skills necessary along with best tools for the job. We have well-designed standards and advisories to ensure a safe work environment.
- We conduct several programmes on

safety precautions and safe practices at work sites, for our RMX customers. We also hold a number of DDT sessions for drivers in our manufacturing units and offices, with their progress monitored closely, and refresher courses provided to bring about awareness and compliance.

- One of our most recent initiatives was a particularly ambitious one, where we worked with Jadavpur University (JU), Kolkata, West Bengal, in launching a three-semester Diploma in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM) at the institute. Through the course, we aim to help individuals develop the kind of skills that will help them to address safety issues at work place.
- It is one of the most balanced, overarching programmes involving business management and sustainability, boasting of state-of-the-art learning facilities, labs, extensive industry interaction, and several student initiatives, along with eminent full-time and visiting faculty.

### What is Nuvoco's vision to enhance government's skill India mission?

- Nuvoco has always endeavoured to spot key talent and develop it further. Our recent association with Jadavpur

University (JU), Kolkata, West Bengal, in launching a three-semester Diploma in Industrial Safety and Environmental Management (DISEM) at the institute will further help us nurture individuals and prepare them for a profession in the industrial development segment of India.

- Having been closely associated with ITI Kharod, Janjgir, Chhattisgarh, for a long time, we have played a major role in helping bring about effective programme management at the institute, besides updating and fine-tuning its curriculum. Besides providing on the job experience to students of the institute as well, we had also entered into an association with ITI Kharod, three years ago, to help improve its infrastructure, and the capabilities of its students.
- We have also been working with the National Council of Cement and Building Materials, for over 10 years, to create highly specialised programmes on cement quality.
- Yet another aspect of our work involves providing training to masons in several parts of the country, since no formal training is available for masonry in India, despite it playing a crucial role in construction. As a result, Nuvoco had launched a certified mason training programme a number of years ago, to address this major challenge.
- Recently, we have also entered into an association with IIM-Lucknow, to develop a customised Executive MBA Programme, and partnered with talent assessment and capability building firm Jombay, to devise a specialised talent management programme for employees of Nuvoco.
- When it comes to the cement industry, most of Nuvoco's products are used by individual home builders, with our RMX products having been utilised for several projects in Delhi, Jaipur, and the Mumbai Metro. In addition to that, a wide range of high-profile projects like Lodha World One in Mumbai have also used exclusive Nuvoco products, as they required specialised concrete of a particular strength and properties, in order to the customer requirements. ■

