Industrialisation in developing countries is a major source of environmental damage and pollution.

But even when developing countries fail to enact and enforce regulations to protect the environment, international linkages may motivate companies to be more environmentally responsive. Dr Sukhbir Sandhu (School of Management), Prof Clive Smallman (University of Western Sydney), Dr Lucie Ozanne (University of Canterbury, NZ) and Prof Ross Cullen (Lincoln University, NZ) have been studying environmental responsiveness in business organisations in India.

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Their research suggests that organisations whose customers and subsidiaries were based in countries with strict environmental regulations were motivated to engage in much higher levels of environmental responsiveness than required by local Indian regulations.

The researchers focused their investigation in India because its rapid economic growth is extremely resource intensive and heavily polluting. India is a major emitter of greenhouse gases. The research team wanted to understand why some Indian organisations, surrounded by non-environmentally responsive competitors, buck the trend and adopt strict environmental standards for themselves.

‘The academic literature has focused on companies in developed countries’, Dr Sandhu explained. ‘But understanding what’s happening in developing countries is vital, because these countries are rapidly becoming the developed world’s manufacturing workshop’.

The researchers studied 11 environmentally responsive Indian organisations operating across a wide range of industries. They interviewed corporate communication directors, managers responsible for environmental issues, environmental engineers, board level executives, and environmental experts.

All of the organisations displayed at least ‘level one’ corporate environmental responsiveness. ‘Level one organisations are starting to recognise the importance of the natural environment and are trying to decrease their environmental impact’, Dr Sandhu said. ‘They establish a division to look after environmental issues, set environmental policies, and comply with environmental regulations’.

The researchers’ analysis revealed that level one responsiveness was driven by pressures emerging from international linkages. The Indian companies were trading with multinational customers who demanded that their suppliers demonstrate environmental commitment. The Indian companies were also establishing international subsidiaries of their own, and their subsidiaries’ host countries had high environmental standards.

‘The Indian companies were being very pragmatic about their commitment to the environment’, Dr Sandhu elaborated. ‘When these organisations wanted to take advantage of global opportunities, they adopted strict environmental standards so that they would be accepted by their international partners’.

But three of the Indian companies went even further, displaying ‘level two’ environmental responsiveness. ‘Level two organisations make a significantly greater commitment to the environment by integrating environmental issues into their strategic decision-making’, Dr Sandhu said.

‘Stakeholders in developed countries should be aware of the positive impact they can exert’.

‘They do everything that level one organisations do, but they also develop green products and invest in sustainable technologies’.

What motivated these three organisations to raise their environmental standards to the next level? Research in developed countries suggests that employees or community members usually exert pressures on companies to increase their environmental responsiveness. But these drivers were not visible in the Indian sample. Instead, the level two companies’ environmental responsiveness reflected their companies’ unique histories and cultures.

One company, for example, had pioneered social auditing in India. A second company had established a strong reputation as a Thali company (a ‘mother’ company that looks out for society’s interests). And the third company had a history of social action including an entrepreneurial development initiative that saved many uneducated rural women from poverty. For these three companies, environmental responsiveness was a natural progression of their commitment to social action.

What can Australian organisations learn from this research? ‘Stakeholders in developed countries should be aware of the positive impact they can exert’, Dr Sandhu suggested. ‘Pressures from powerful supply chain customers in developed countries can force large business organisations in developing countries to adopt higher levels of environmental responsiveness than their local regulatory environment demands’.

The research team’s findings appeared in the Journal of Cleaner Production. If you would like to learn more about the project and its results, contact:

Dr Sukhbir Sandhu (sukhbir.sandhu@unisa.edu.au)
What is the Centre for Human Resource Management?

The Centre for Human Resource Management (CHRM) was established in 2008 and is housed in the School of Management on UniSA’s City West campus.

What’s new at CHRM?

CHRM is celebrating new Linkage Grants funded by the Australian Research Council. Two grants are collaborations between CHRM and two other UniSA research centres: the Centre for Applied Psychological Research and the Centre for Work + Life. CHRM researchers Prof Peter Chen, Prof Carol Kulik and Assoc Prof Sara Charlesworth are working with academic colleagues and industry partners on these projects:

- The dynamic interplay of physical and psychosocial safety in frontline healthcare workplaces in Australia and Malaysia
- Behind the scenes: Diversity management paradigm shifts and sticking points
- Work, care, retirement and health: Ageing agendas (see page 4 for details)

CHRM welcomes Mr Peter Ward (HASSELL) to its Advisory Group. The Advisory Group acts as a sounding board and provides guidance for CHRM’s research activities.

CHRM bids farewell to Dr Anthony McDonnell, who has moved to Queen’s University in Belfast. Anthony will be missed by his CHRM colleagues, and we wish him success in his new adventure.

We look forward to welcoming Prof Cheri Ostroff, who will be arriving in Australia next month (details on page 4).

You can learn more about CHRM, its people and its activities at our website www.unisa.edu.au/chrm.

Prof Carol T. Kulik
Director, CHRM

CHRM-ASHRR forums

The Australian Senior Human Resources Roundtable (ASHRR) is a network of senior HR executives whose aim is to facilitate a more effective dialogue between HR practice and research. The CHRM-ASHRR forums bring together local senior HR practitioners and HR academics to discuss emerging HR issues.

The 18 September forum will focus on developing employee innovation. Presenters include Dr Shruti Sardeshmukh (School of Management) and Ms Vanessa Petterson (Deloitte Australia).

If your organisation would like more information about the 2013 CHRM-ASHRR forums, contact Tina Morganella (tina.morganella@unisa.edu.au).

CHRM seminars

The CHRM Practitioner Seminars showcase industry best practice exemplars and forge links between practitioners and the CHRM community.

6 September Ms Nelli Noakes (International Association of Facilitators) will discuss HR practitioners’ role as facilitators of organisational decisions.

18 October Ms Adaire Palmer (Northern Volunteering SA) will describe new approaches to managing spontaneous volunteers during crises (e.g., bushfires and floods).

Visit our website for full details and updates: www.unisa.edu.au/chrm

CHRM snapshots

CHRM has developed a video library featuring research insights from CHRM researchers and our international and interstate visitors. Keep up with the latest CHRM research at:

www.unisa.edu.au/research/chrm/research-snapshots

This month we are featuring Prof Tricia Vilkinas discussing her research on leadership. New videos are regularly posted in the CHRM LinkedIn group.

You can learn more about CHRM, its people and its activities at our website www.unisa.edu.au/chrm.

Prof Carol T. Kulik
Director, CHRM

CHRM Newsletter
Issue 2, July 2013
Introducing our new researcher

The Centre for Human Resource Management welcomes a new staff member – Prof Cheri Ostroff.

Cheri is very excited to be joining UniSA! She is currently a Professor in the Psychology Department and an Affiliate Professor in the Management Department at the University of Maryland, USA.

Cheri loves conducting research on just about any topic related to organisational life. Her research interests include levels of analysis issues, organisational climate, person-environment fit, socialisation, diversity, and human resource management systems. She is currently engaged in research on organisational cynicism, big fish in little pond effects, diversity, pro-environmental behaviour at work, and the role of variance in attributes across people.

Cheri received the McCormick Award for Early Career Contributions from the Society of Industrial-Organizational Psychology (SIOP), the Distinguished Scientific Award for Early Career Contributions in Applied Research from the American Psychological Association (APA), the Scholarly Achievement Award from the Human Resources Division of the Academy of Management (AOM), and an Outstanding Teacher Award from Teachers College Columbia University. She is an elected fellow of both SIOP and APA and currently serves on the Editorial Boards of the Journal of Applied Psychology and Personnel Psychology.

In addition to these research activities, Cheri is the current Chair of the Organizational Behavior Division of AOM.

Prof Cheri Ostroff
(cheri.ostroff@unisa.edu.au)

Ageing agendas

A new frontier of inequality is visible in Australia: A gender gap in superannuation assets.

Nearly one in two Australian workers is a woman. However, women’s lifetime earnings lag far behind men’s, reflecting the costs women incur when they work part-time or temporarily step out of paid work to fulfill domestic and caring responsibilities. These income discrepancies mean that women save less for retirement. Men’s average superannuation balances in 2009/10 were $71,645 compared to $40,475 for women; 38.5% of women had no superannuation compared with 31.6% of men.

Researchers from UniSA’s Centre for Work + Life (Prof Barbara Pocock and Associate Prof Sara Charlesworth) and the Centre for Human Resource Management (Prof Carol Kulik) are partnering with colleagues from the Australian National University (Dr Lyndall Strazdins), the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (Dr Carla Harris), and Women in Super (Ms Catherine Wood) on a three-year project funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant.

The researchers will examine how Australian men and women are making work and retirement decisions in the context of their ageing, health, and caring responsibilities. The project will identify strategies to enhance Australia’s capacity to manage an aging population while improving gender equality.

If you’d like to learn more about the project, contact:

Prof Carol Kulik
(carol.kulik@unisa.edu.au)

Would you like to receive future copies of our newsletter and updates on CHRM’s activities? Please join our mailing list by emailing tina.morganella@unisa.edu.au.