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Results of Survey on the Current and Future CSR Landscape

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Background

Over the last decade or so, a large number of initiatives have emerged whose objective is to define or advance corporate social responsibility (CSR). They have a wide variety of scopes and approaches: some have a governmental status (e.g. OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises), some have been created at the initiative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)(e.g. Forest Stewardship Council), and some have been driven by the business sector (e.g. Sustainable Forestry Initiative). Some initiatives are multi-stakeholder in nature and involve NGOs (e.g. Global Reporting Initiative, ISO 26000, Ethical Trading Initiative) and others only involve the business sector (e.g. Responsible Care). Some focus on specific sectors or themes (e.g. Marine Stewardship Council, Social Accountability International, the AA1000 series, Diamond Development Initiative), while others address multiple sustainability issues (e.g. UN Global Compact).

The proliferation of these CSR standards and initiatives suggests a growing recognition – by civil society groups and businesses alike – that corporations can and should play an active role in advancing sustainability by improving their social and environmental performance. There also is a growing consensus that better and greater coordination is needed among these initiatives in order to strengthen their effectiveness and credibility. To provide a basis for developing such a coordination strategy, the Pacific Institute, in collaboration with the ISEAL Alliance, AccountAbility, Global Reporting Initiative, and International Institute for Sustainable Development, conducted a survey on the current and future desired landscape for the CSR movement. The overall purpose of the survey was to gather the views of civil society groups and other stakeholders on the current status and future of the various global voluntary CSR instruments and initiatives, and to use this information to lay out a foundation for further discussion on developing a common vision of the desired CSR landscape.

Methods

The nine-question survey (attached in Appendix A) was circulated to NGOs and other stakeholder groups through the networks of the Pacific Institute, ISEAL Alliance, AccountAbility, Global Reporting Initiative, and International Institute for Sustainable Development. Eighty-eight organizations and individuals submitted responses. To facilitate the analysis, the Pacific Institute categorized the respondents into seven stakeholder groups: NGO, standards developing organization, standards-related service provider or consultancy, industry, academia, government, and anonymous/other.¹ See

¹ **NGO:** non-governmental organizations, such as consumer organizations, environmental advocacy groups, and other civil society representatives; **Standards Developing Organization:** representatives from standard development organizations (national or otherwise), and accreditation bodies; **Service Provider and Consultancy:** firms that provide engineering/technical services, or support, auditing, or training relating to the standards and/or certification; **Industry:** individual firms and industry associations

Figure 1 for a breakdown of the stakeholder groups. Approximately three-quarters (73%) of the responses came from developed countries, 16% from developing countries, and the remainder (11%) were either from representatives of international agencies such as United Nations, or anonymous respondents whose location could not be specified. (Figure 2)

It should be noted that this survey was disseminated in large part through the existing networks of CSR tool developers, and thus its sample population has an unusually large number of individuals and organizations that are familiar with or engaged in CSR issues. Therefore, we wish to make clear the results of this survey are not intended to be a reflection of general public opinion, or even of the broader NGO community. Also, due to this respondent bias, as well as the relatively small sample size in some subcategories (e.g. developing country, industry, government, and academia), the analysis below should be considered an anecdotal description of the responses, and not statistically significant findings. The above said, we believe the survey results provide important information regarding the views of those who are somewhat familiar with CSR issues, and that it can also serve as a valuable starting point for discussions on where civil society groups might attempt to steer the CSR movement.

Summary of Findings

General Observations and Conclusions

There appears to be a high degree of consensus among the survey participants on the current and future picture of the CSR landscape, regardless of stakeholder group or geographical region represented. In particular, there is a high level of agreement regarding the challenges associated with the existing CSR initiatives (i.e., lack of funding and resources for effective participation and lack of clear definition of the CSR landscape), as well as the future direction of CSR landscape (i.e., more involvement of business and governments, greater role of voluntary CSR standards and initiatives.)

Awareness of Current CSR Landscape

- In total, more than half of the respondents believe they have either “excellent” or “good” awareness of the current range of global CSR initiatives. However, this was not the case for developing country respondents – 9 out of 14 developing country respondents (65%) assess their awareness as “fair” or “rather poor.” (Figure 3)
- Comparing CSR landscape awareness by stakeholder group, NGOs and standards developers/service providers deem themselves to have similar level of understanding, with more than 65% of both groups claiming to have excellent/good awareness. Other stakeholder groups have lower awareness levels – more than 25% within those groups said they have poor understanding of the current CSR initiatives. (Figure 4)

representing a specific industry or group of professionals; **Academia:** research and/or academic institutions; **Government:** representatives from governmental agencies/ministries; **Other:** stakeholder groups that do not fit into above categories, including financial institutions, media, and intergovernmental organizations such as OECD and UNCTAD.

Participation

- 65% of the respondents said their organizations are currently active in developing or supporting voluntary CSR tools/initiatives. (Table 1) The types of initiatives and the number of organizations involved in such initiatives are shown in Figure 5.
- For those not actively participating in CSR initiatives, the most frequently cited reason is limited time and/or financial resources, followed by not being invited to participate. Only three respondents cite no relevant experience or skills as a reason for not participating. (Figure 6)
- As would be expected, limited financial or human resources are more severely affecting the participation of developing country organizations than organizations in developed countries. No respondents from developing countries, however, cited lack of skills or experience as a reason for not participating. (Figure 7 A and B)

CSR Policy

- 57% of respondents said their organization has a policy on corporate accountability and/or the role of CSR.

Views on the Current Landscape

- When asked to name the CSR instruments that are currently affecting behavioral change in the business sector, GRI and other reporting/transparency initiatives, as well certification/ecolabelling schemes, received the most acknowledgement. Eight respondents (almost 10%), however, think voluntary CSR initiatives in general are not effective in improving businesses' social and environmental practices. (Figure 9)
- A substantial majority of the respondents validated each of the five issues/challenges with the current CSR landscape that the survey identified (no clear definition of landscape; too many standards/codes and guidelines; no clear guidance on criteria for selection; too much overlap; and too much incompatibility). In particular, 90% of respondents agree with the assertion that the CSR landscape lacks clear definition. (Figure 10)
- Regarding the five assertions, there is no notable difference of views among stakeholder groups. (Figure 11 A and B)
- 80% of standards developers/service providers agree there are too many standards, codes and guidelines, yet 40 percent of them do not believe incompatibility among the initiatives/tools was a problem. (Figure 11 A and B)

Views on the Future Landscape

- *Role of Business:* An overwhelming majority of the organizations think the role of businesses in environmental and social issues will become more important over the next decade. This view is supported equally among all stakeholder groups. (Figure 12)
- *Role of Government:* More than 80% of the respondents believe governments will play a larger role in advancing human rights and environmental issues over the next decade. As for the types of instruments, more than 95% predict that governments will utilize more policy "carrots" and voluntary approaches. At the

- same time, 85% of the respondents also think that more regulatory instruments will be used. (Figure 13A)
- Compared to the other stakeholder groups, NGOs particularly have a greater anticipation of government involvement in CSR issues. They also expect greater use of regulatory approaches – 60% of NGO respondents believe governments will use more regulation, whereas only 35% of the other stakeholders agree with that assertion. (Figure 13B)
 - Although the large majority of organizations expect greater government engagement in CSR issues, that view is more strongly held by developed country organizations. (Figure 13C)
 - *Role of CSR instruments:* Almost 80% of the survey respondents think the role of voluntary CSR standards and initiatives will become more important in advancing social and environmental issues. (Figure 14A) This view is equally shared by standards-related entities (i.e., standards developers and service providers) as well as other stakeholder groups.

Tables and Figures

Figure 1. Survey Participants' Organizational Association

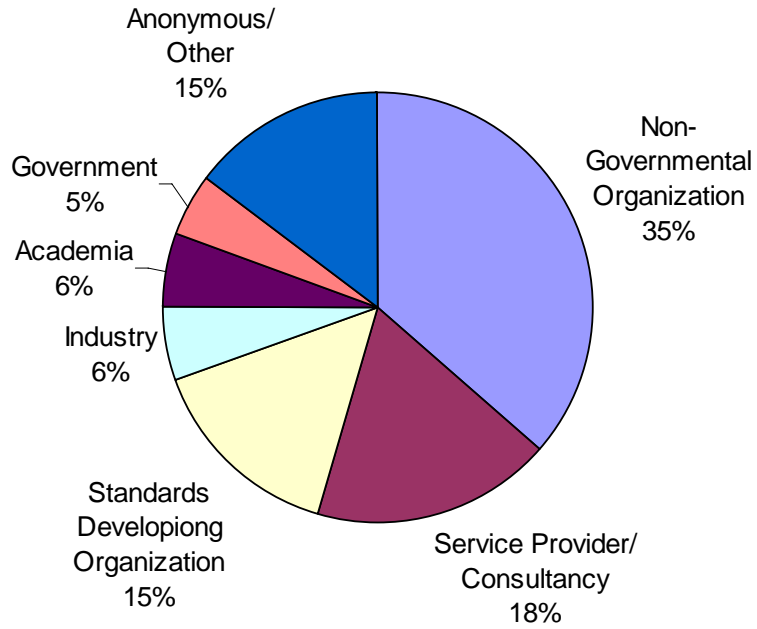


Figure 2. Survey Participants' Location

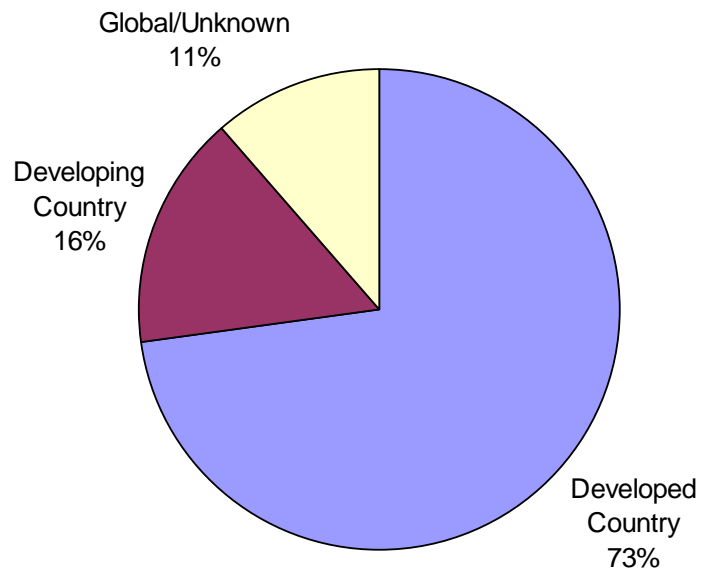


Figure 3. CSR Landscape Awareness

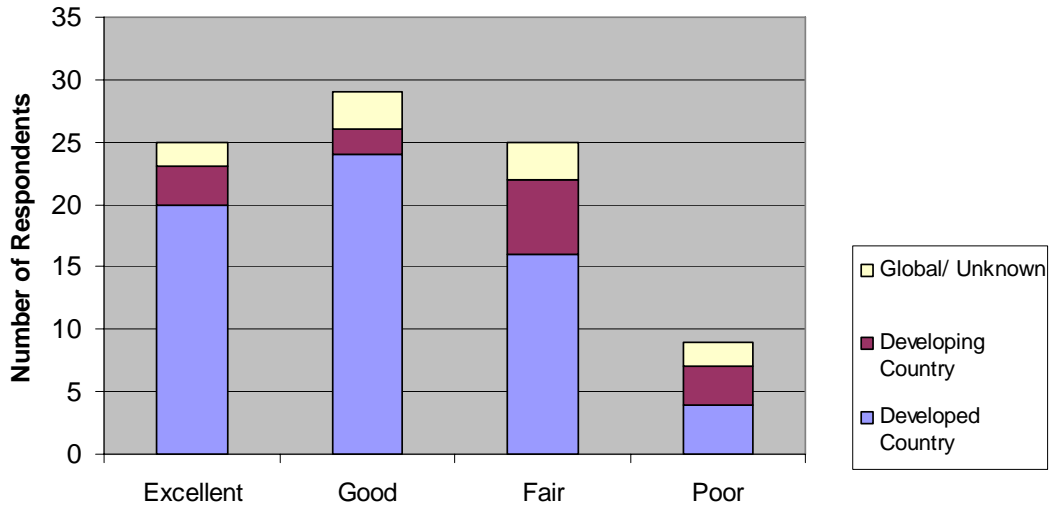


Figure 4. CSR Landscape Awareness by Stakeholder Category

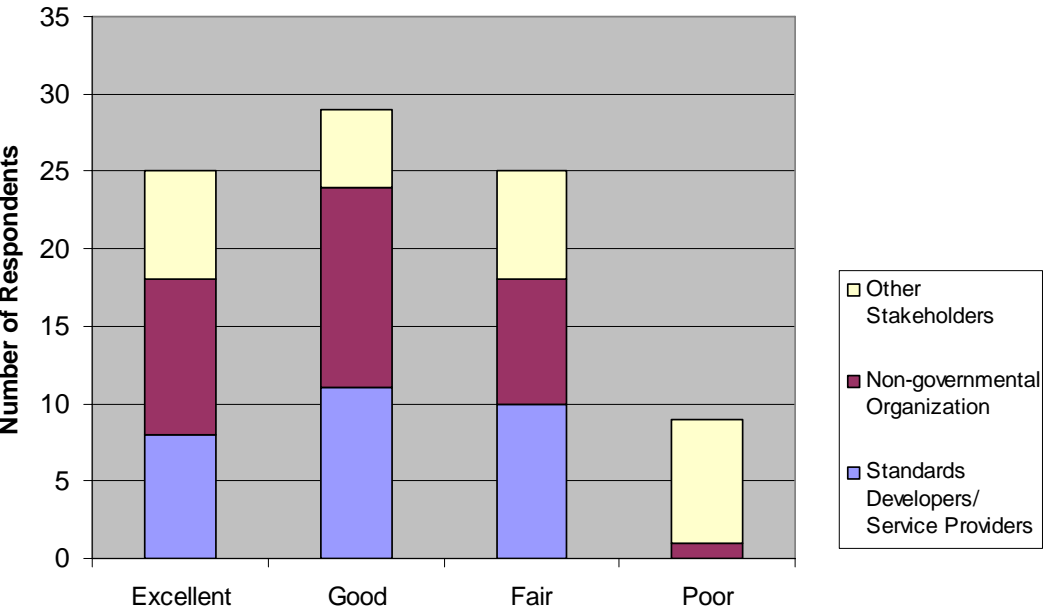


Table 1. Participation in CSR Initiatives

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	57	65
No	25	28
No Answer	6	7
Total	88	100

Figure 5. Types of CSR Initiatives Participating

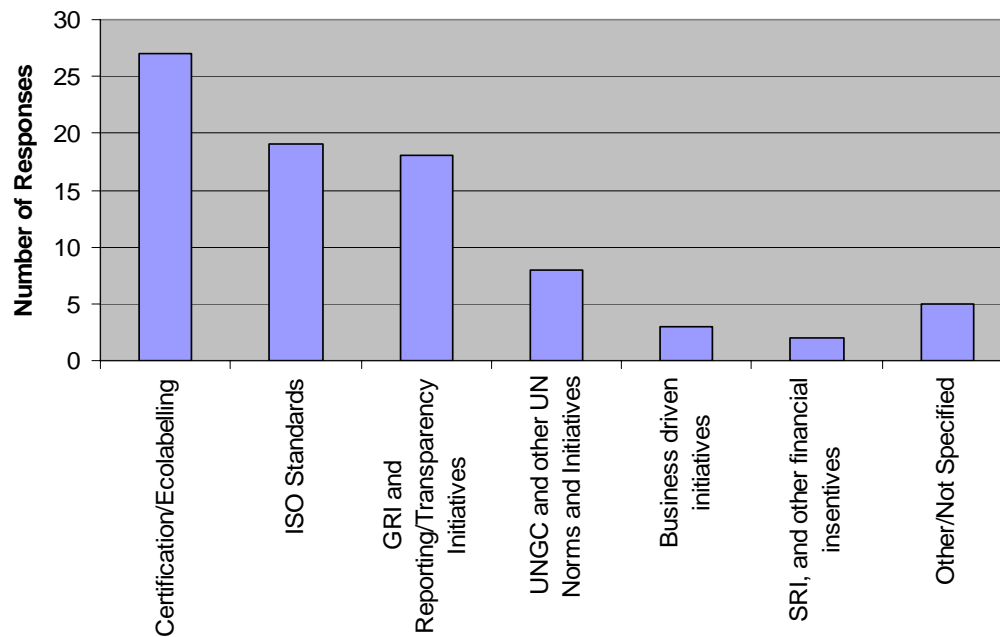


Figure 6. Reason for Not Participating in CSR Initiatives

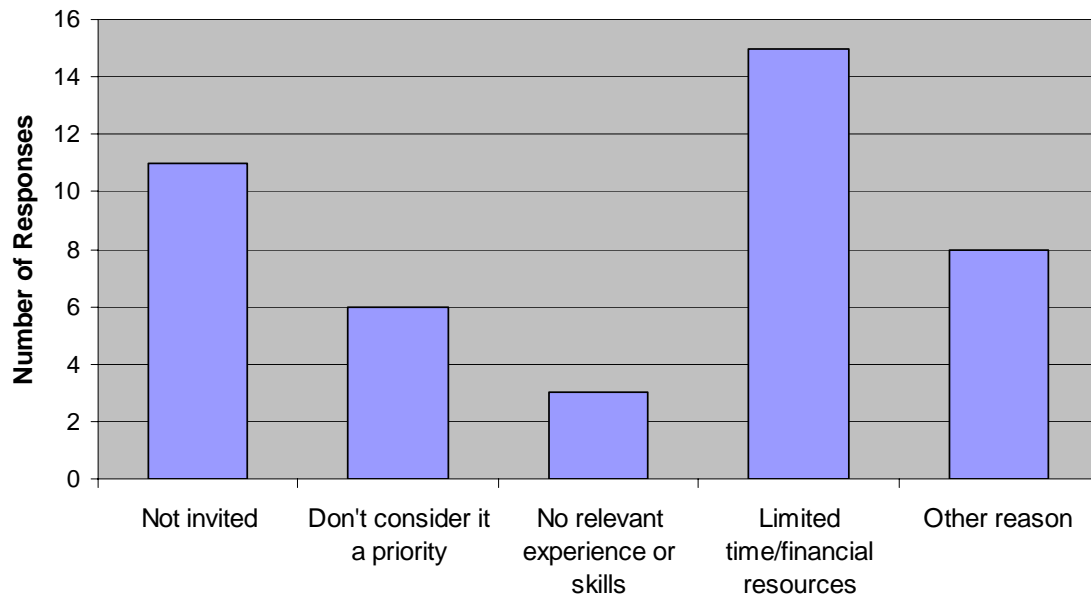


Figure 7A. Reason for Not Participating in CSR Initiatives

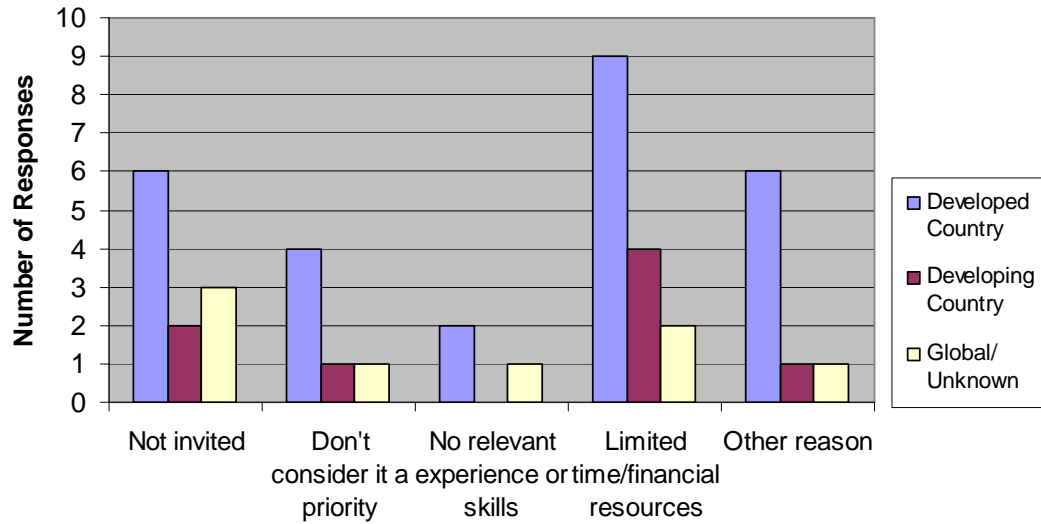
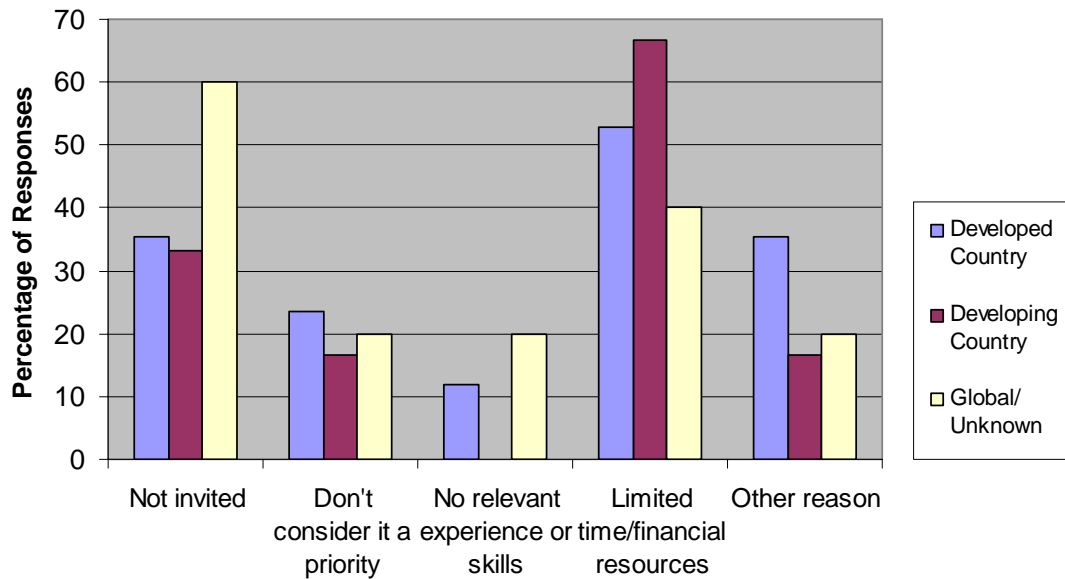
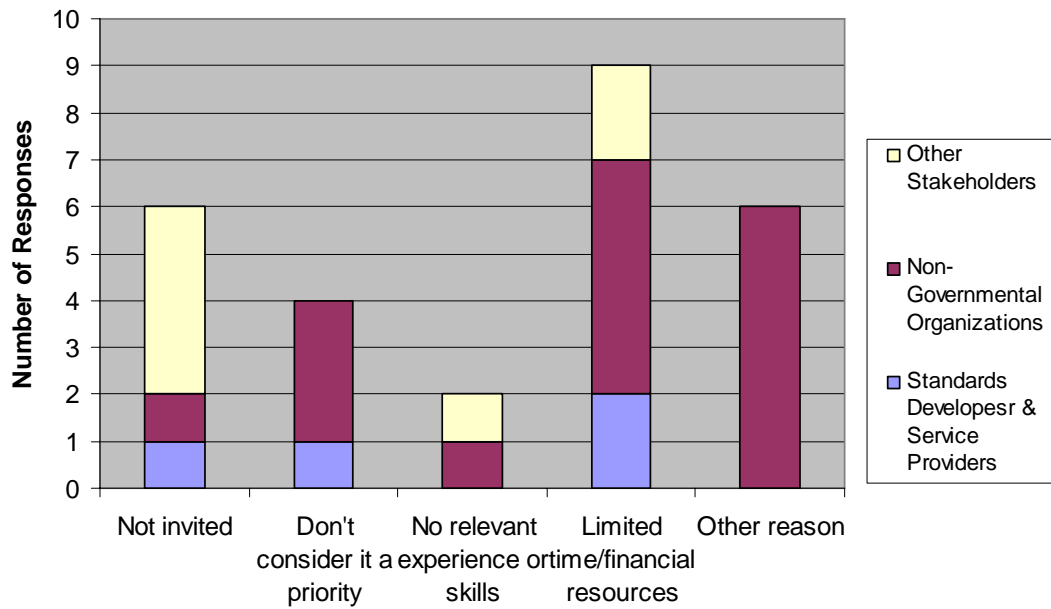


Figure 7B. Reason for Not Participating in CSR Initiatives



**Figure 8A. Reason for Not Participating in CSR Initiatives-
Developed Country**



**Figure 8B. Reason for Not Participating in CSR Initiatives-
Developing Country**

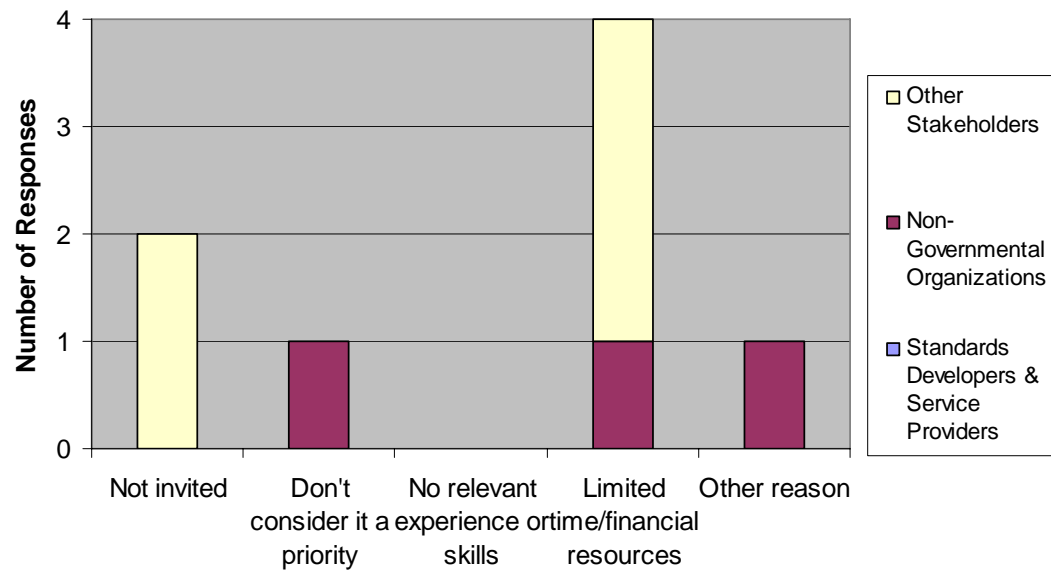


Figure 9. Indication of Which CSR Initiatives Are Leading to Behavioral Changes in Business

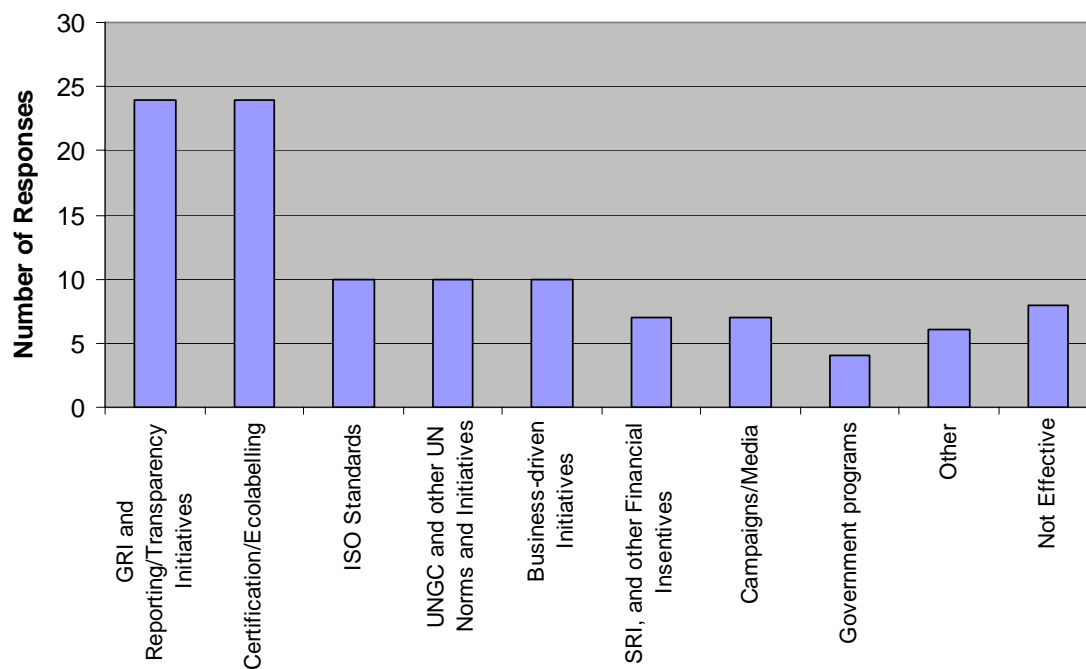
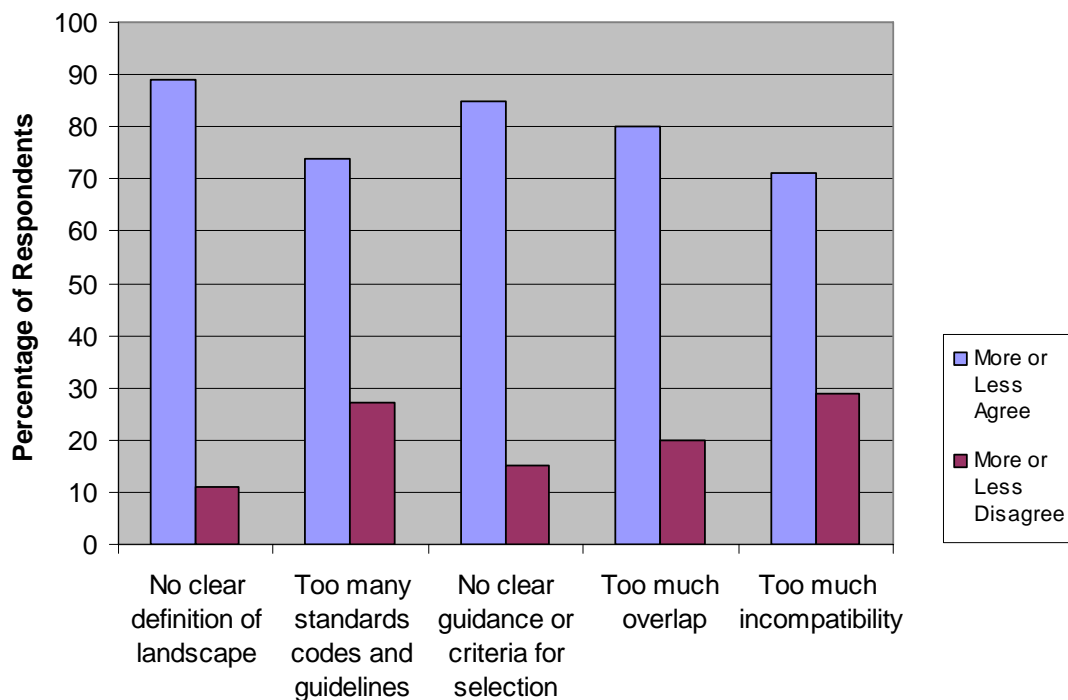
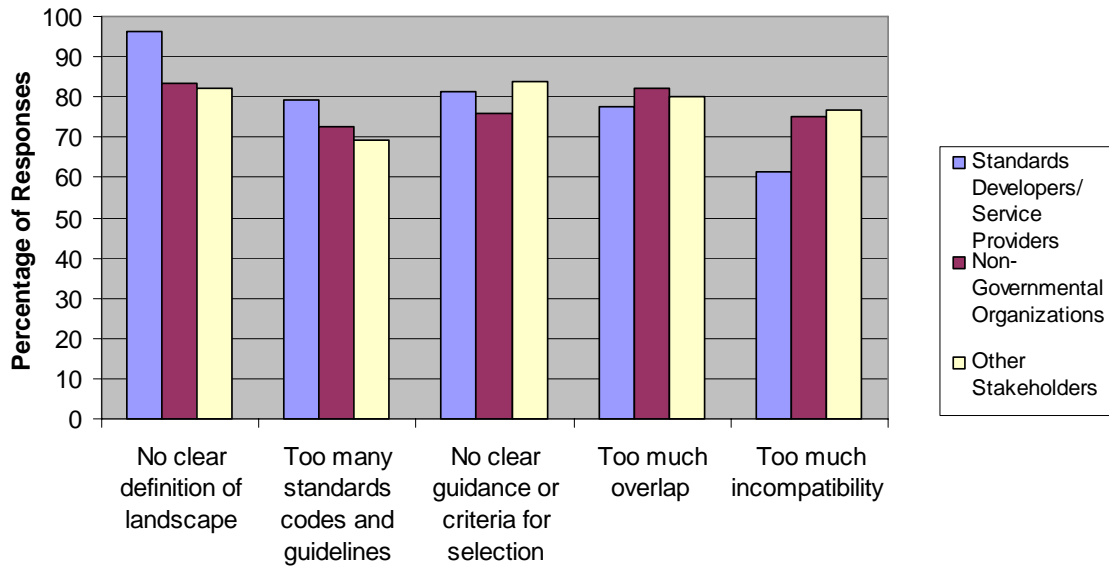


Figure 10. Views on the Current CSR Landscape



**Figure 11A. Views on the Current CSR Landscape -
More or Less Agree**



**Figure 11B. Views on the Current CSR Landscape -
More or Less Disagree**

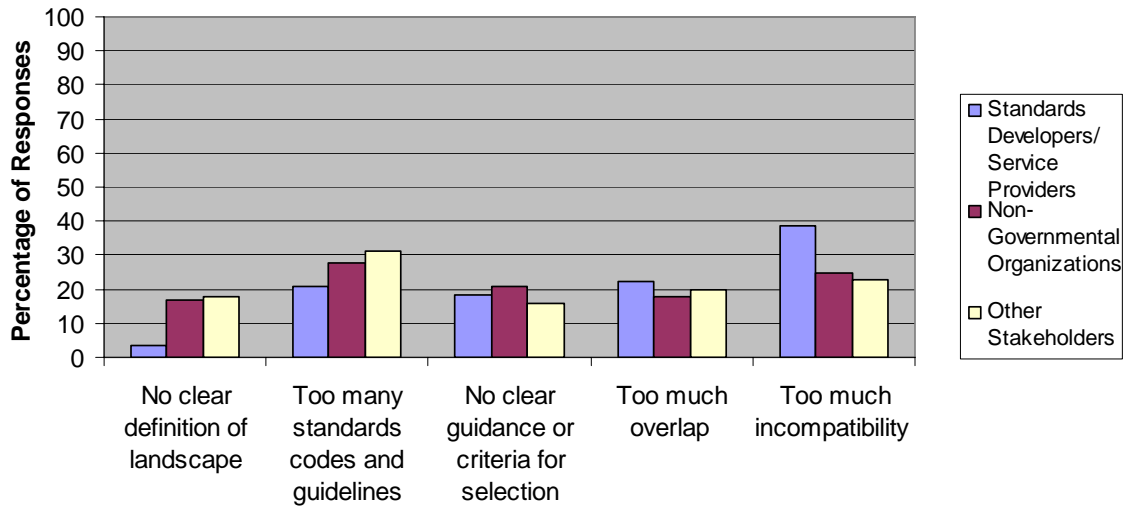


Figure 12. Views on the Role of Business in Advancing Social and Environmental Issues Over the Next Decade

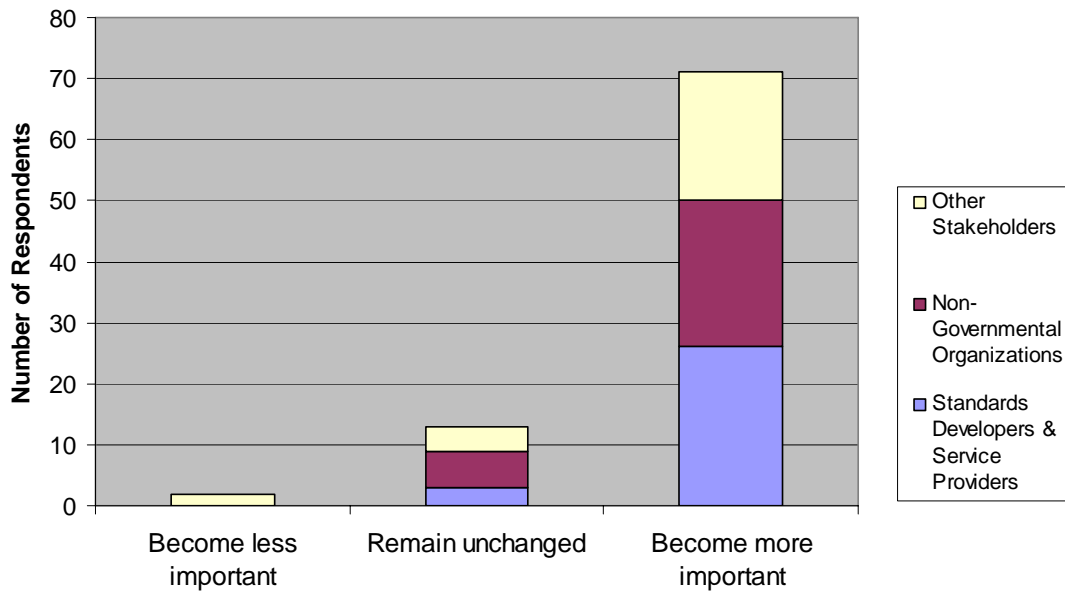


Figure 13A. Role of Governments in Advancing Social and Environmental Issues Over the Next Decade

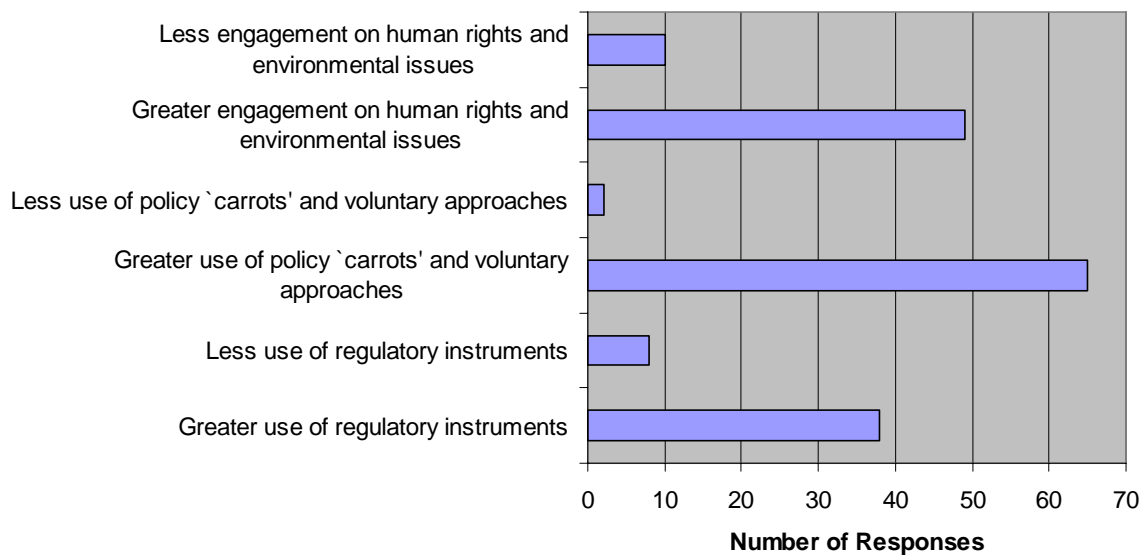


Figure 13B. Role of Governments in Advancing Social and Environmental Issues Over the Next Decade

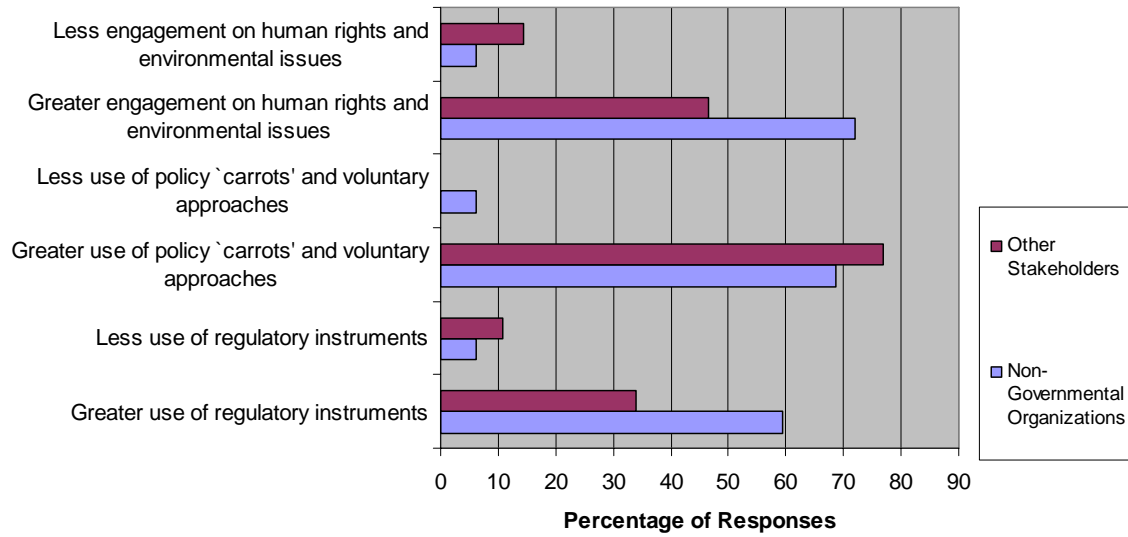


Figure 13C. Role of Governments in Advancing Social and Environmental Issues Over the Next Decade

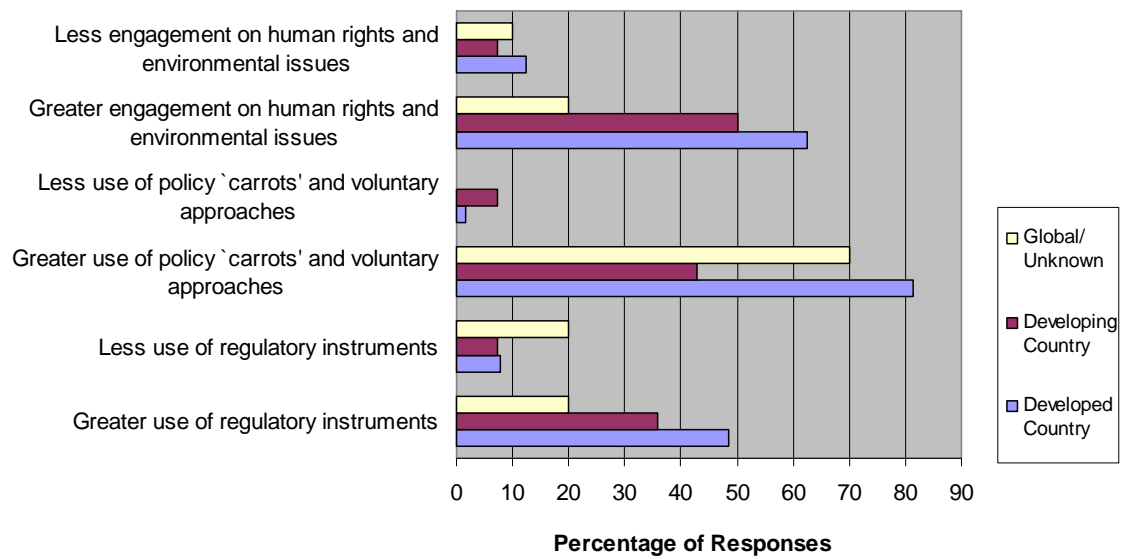


Figure 14A. Role of Voluntary CSR Instruments Over the Next Decades

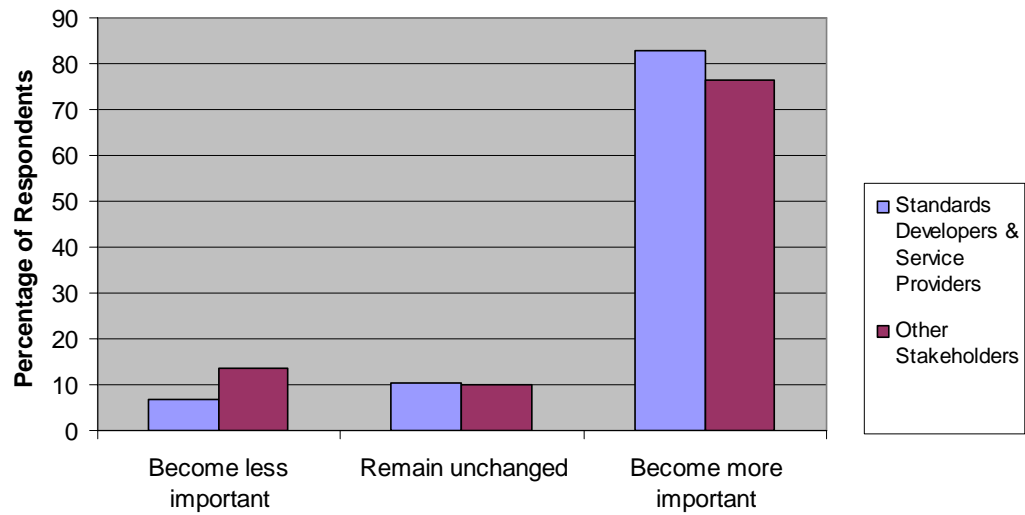
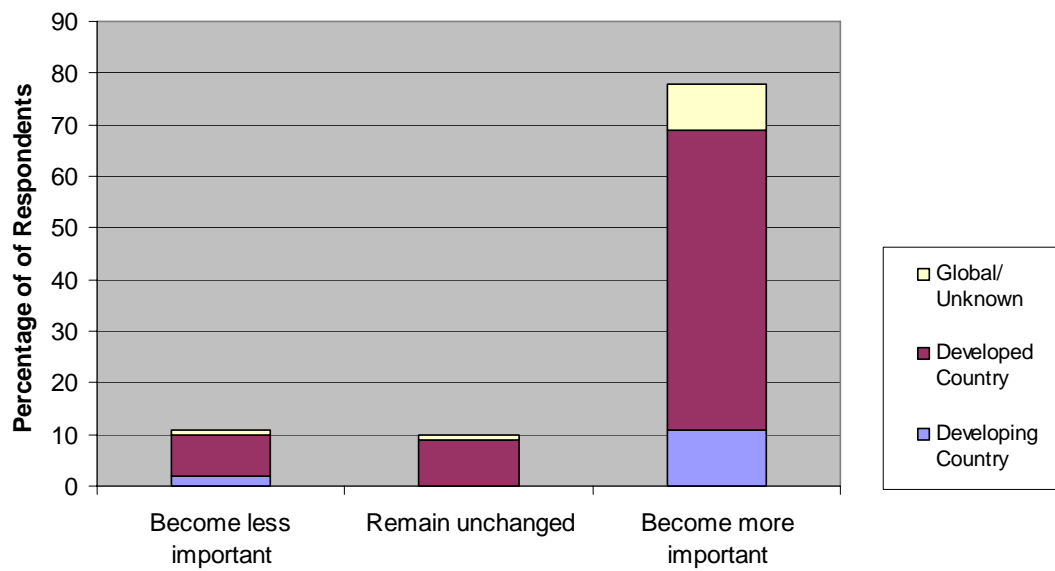


Figure 14B. Role of Voluntary CSR Instruments Over the Next Decade



Appendix A. Questionnaire on the Current and Future CSR Landscape

Awareness of Current CSR Landscape

1. How would you assess your organisation's awareness of the current range of global CSR initiatives (Check one)?
 - Excellent
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor

NOTE: 'Good' might mean you know what the Global Compact's 10 principles are; 'Fair' that it is a UN initiative that encourages business to be more responsible; 'Poor' that you haven't heard of the Global Compact.

Participation

2. Is your organization currently active in developing or supporting voluntary CSR instruments/initiatives? If so which? (e.g. Global Compact? GRI? ISO? FSC?)
3. If you have not been involved in any such initiatives, what are the main reasons? (Check all that apply)
 - Not invited
 - Don't consider it a priority
 - No relevant experience or skills
 - Limited financial resources
 - Other _____

Policy

4. Does your organization have a policy on corporate accountability and/or the role of CSR? If so, how could this be best summarized?

Views on current landscape

5. What CSR initiatives and instruments do you believe are currently affecting behavioural change in the business sector? Why?
6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree
 - No clear definition of landscape
 - Too many standards, codes and guidelines
 - No clear guidance on/ criteria for selection
 - Too much overlap
 - Too much incompatibility

Views on future landscape

7. Looking at environmental and social issues over the next decade, do you think the role of business will (Check one):

- Become less important
- Remain unchanged
- Become more important

Please explain your reasons.

8. Looking at environmental and social issues over the next decade, how do you believe the role of government will evolve as regards the business sector? (Check all that apply)

- Greater use of regulatory instruments
- Less use of regulatory instruments
- Greater use of policy 'carrots' and voluntary approaches
- Less use of policy 'carrots' and voluntary approaches
- Greater engagement on human rights and environmental issues
- Less engagement on human rights and environmental issues

And how do you think it SHOULD evolve?

9. Looking at environmental and social issues over the next decade, do you think the role of voluntary CSR instruments and initiatives will (Check one):

- Become less important
- Remain unchanged
- Become more important

Please explain your reasons, and/or which specific CSR instruments will be more or less important