

STL: Leading ESG efforts from the front

What are STL's fundamental ESG drivers? Please highlight some ESG achievements.

Our approach to ESG is proactive and an essential enabler across our value chain, both within and beyond institutional boundaries. We believe that risk to business operations can be mitigated only by addressing environmental, social, and governance issues. Our efforts are, therefore, driven not just by national priorities, but also by global goals. In a physically diverse and climatically demanding region, our low-carbon strategy has preserved shareholder interests while simultaneously delivering a healing touch to the subcontinent's teeming millions.

These include comprehensive environmental stewardship converging verticals like climate action, water positivity, building circular economies, and greener business operations. On the social front, STL is dedicated to creating a workplace that is equitable, safe, and respectful of universal human rights and fair labour practises. We focus on issues such as women's empowerment, access to quality healthcare and education, and the development of climate-resilient communities. On the governance front, board-level committees and policies ensure we adhere to responsible, transparent business practices, best-in-class processes and necessary grievance redressal mechanisms.

change, leverage tech to bridge the digital divide, are agile to operate irrespective of socio-ecological disruptions and are sustainable.

What sustainability challenges does STL face, and how are you overcoming those challenges?

STL has set aggressive ESG goals for 2025 and 2030, with the goal of ensuring the global sustainability of its operations while also promoting a more inclusive future. Continuing to pursue such high sustainability goals might provide a few challenges for any company.

With our operations located in areas that come under Marathwada – a drought-prone region, India's water scarcity is a challenge for the sustainability of STL's business interests in the long term. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented odds not only for the business, but also for our social transformation initiatives, stretching our on-ground infrastructure to its limits. We had to come to terms with the realities of the New Normal, molding our corporate culture and workflows accordingly to meet its demands.

However, STL's response to such challenges has always been driven by technical innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and policy leadership. Energy efficiency efforts, creative use of technology, process innovation, and industry linkages have helped us in the precise management of emissions, water and waste minimization, and building a greener supply chain. For our social efforts, we leveraged tech and partnerships to design programs that have not only ensured anytime, anywhere access to quality healthcare, but also make quality digital education accessible to the masses and are building water-resilient villages.

Supporting India's green growth is a shared priority. What is STL's contribution to the same?

Several of our ESG Goals for 2025 and 2030 are aligned with the aspirations of green growth. But we believe that achieving net-zero, optimal use of energy is also essential. Therefore, we use proven technology such as variable frequency motors, motion sensors, advanced effluent treatment, and monitoring systems, demonstrating the viability of economic growth through environmentally friendly operations. Over **14,000 tCO2 emissions** and significant energy costs have been avoided through such initiatives



Akanksha tells how STL is creating a greener, more digitally inclusive world by building sustainable digital networks for the future.

Akanksha Sharma
Global ESG Head, STL

We are actively working to ensure that we can meet the targets we've set for 2025 and 2030. Within our operations, we've diverted 97% of our waste from landfills in FY22. All our Indian manufacturing units have been **Zero Liquid Discharge certified** and over **2.72 lakh cubic meters of water** has been recycled. In 2020, STL became the world's first integrated optic fibre and cables manufacturer to be **Zero Waste to Landfill certified**. We've extended this to our Italy plants as well. We've reinforced these efforts by replenishing **1.4+** cubic meters of water in communities and undertaking **1.79 lakh** plantations in communities. Over **1,000** villages have been covered and **1.47+** lives transformed through our social impact programs. Through collective action with state governments, district authorities, NGOs and community involvement, we've been able to ensure our community interventions drive holistic



packaging materials. Further, STL follows the highest sourcing standards adhering to stringent international requirements such as Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) and Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) regulations for its products.

The world is increasingly recognizing the challenges caused by our “take-make-dispose” approach. How is STL working towards a circular economy?

STL’s Zero Waste to Landfill started with a vision to **recycle at least 99% of the waste** into the value chain. In 2020, we became the world’s first optical fiber and cable manufacturer to be ZWL certified by Intertek for our manufacturing locations at Rakholi, Dadra (Silvassa), and Shendra, Waluj (Aurangabad). As a continuation of the policy and in line with our aspirations to have ZWL certification coverage for 100% of our global manufacturing facilities by 2030, we have currently launched an assessment for our Indian and Italy plants.

STL’s ZWL philosophy pivots around the concept of a circular economy. This includes co-processing industrial waste in partnership with other players like cement companies to convert waste to energy. Safe disposal of official fiber cable and glass wastes was before this a persistent challenge for us. While this is one success story, there are many others. Segregation of waste to increase its recyclability and investments to reduce scrap are some other efforts that have helped us achieve Zero Waste to Landfills. These have helped us **divert over 180,000 MT of waste from landfills** over the last five years.

STL also drives a conscious attempt to promote the value of waste reduction and reuse among its employees as well. Waste buyers, too, are rigorously screened as per global standards to ensure responsible operations and waste traceability.

over the last two years. We have also included ESG parameters as part of our supplier due-diligence and will be extending this to the selection process as well. While optic fibres already have a lower carbon footprint than copper cables, we are looking to further reduce the plastic and carbon footprint of the products. Further, we prioritize circularity by ensuring diversion of waste from landfills, thereby also reducing harmful methane emissions.

In addition to this, we are undertaking afforestation, reforestation and biodiversity restoration programs in Pune and Aurangabad. Over the last two years, we have done **179,000 plantations**. Through our water program and convergence funding, we have covered 79 hectares of land with sustainable agricultural practices. Here, too, circularity forms an important component where plant and other organic waste is composted and utilized as manure. We strive to look at these programs holistically so that along with climate action, several other national and global concern areas like increasing poverty, decent work opportunities, gender equality and others are also addressed.

Having manufacturing facilities in the country, what measures is STL taking to ensure responsible operations?

Building business operations that are profitable and sustainable are at the heart of STL’s corporate philosophy. We have high ESG goals for 2030 that include achieving net-zero emissions, water positivity, sustainable sourcing, **100% products covered under life-cycle assessments** and zero waste to landfill certification for 100% of manufacturing facilities.

Accordingly, we have put into place several measures over the years to ensure responsible operations. We have taken decisive steps to save energy, rationalize usage, explore alternative sources, and are working on reducing our Scope 1 (direct emissions from owned or controlled sources) and Scope 2 (indirect

emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating and cooling consumed by a company) emissions. As we aim to become water positive across all our locations globally by 2030, we are ensuring sustainable management of the precious water resources through Reduction, Recycling, Reuse, and Replenishment. Several proactive initiatives have been taken over and above regulatory requirements. For example, we recycle and reuse waste water, thus ensuring zero liquid discharge outside our operational boundaries. In fact, in India all our plants are Zero Liquid Discharge certified.

Similarly, we have taken efforts to drive **‘Zero Waste to Landfill’** across our Indian and Italian manufacturing units. This has helped us drive circularity of resources as waste which was earlier sent to landfills are now revenue generating streams. A comprehensive Quality, Environment, Health, and Safety framework in place ensures minimal to no accidents, spillage and reduces any negative environmental impact of our operations. We also train professionals in network deployment best practices to ensure infrastructure durability and minimize wear and tear, reducing replacement needs. We even work with industry partners to develop eco-friendly

