



# Our road to CSR

Like most large multinationals, DHL is aware of the increasing importance of what we are doing in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility. We have always worked in some areas covered by CSR – for example, fundraising for local communities and looking to minimise our environmental impact – but we never regarded it as something separate from normal working. We deliver humanitarian aid free to some of those affected by disaster, but this was just doing whatever we could to help, not part of an orchestrated corporate policy.

We became aware that we needed a global policy that covered all CSR areas, whereas what we had were a number of local policies in just some of them. A little DHL history helps explain how this arose.

## It was the summer of '69...

The company was launched in 1969, using just one route from San Francisco to Hawaii, taking out documentation in advance of cargo arriving to speed up customs clearance. From there business grew fast in the Far East before opening in Europe, and DHL was the first international air express company to go into the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe (while the Iron Curtain was still there) and China. Again, this was not part of an aggressive global strategy, but a response to opportunities that presented themselves. We went where our customers wanted to go. The strong DHL culture, which many customers and new employees still remark upon, arose from this pioneering spirit and 'can-do' attitude.

Part of a shipment delivered by DHL of over 13 tonnes of food, medicine, medical equipment and healthcare products destined for the Indira Gandhi Paediatric Hospital, Kabul, Afghanistan



Fast growth like this can only be achieved through local autonomy – no waiting for decisions to go up and down long lines of management. With local autonomy comes local work practices and policies, and a close affinity for the people in whose countries we operate. Our managers, like our staff, are mostly 'home-grown'.

So we must maintain local flexibility while providing global direction. The global policies give focus to our participation in the World Economic Forum and the UN Global Compact, and ensure that we are not just 'signed-up' but actively participate.

## Bridge over troubled water...

DHL is proud of the fact that it now operates in over 220 countries and territories worldwide, including 41 of the 42 most dangerous countries in the world (as listed by the US State Department). Our tradition of support in times of crisis developed from our experience of working in difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances. We understand that this brings with it special responsibilities. We now want to show that this is part of 'being DHL', to engage those of our staff and customers who have never been directly touched by local crises such as war, human rights violations, famine or natural disasters.

Our commitment to CSR means we will work towards contributing to sustainable development goals in the world, as well as our own economic well-being.

[www.dhl.com](http://www.dhl.com)

## The long and winding road...

Our road to CSR is built on a dual foundation of raising awareness and promoting social justice, internally (a simple example is showing all staff involved in our multi-site ISO 14001 accreditation that this contributes towards CSR) – while explaining externally our approach to contributing to sustainable development. Our CSR journey involves dialogue with our stakeholders – we participated in the IBLF workshop 'Exploring a Role for Business and Enterprise in Post-Conflict Reconstruction' and the UK House of Lords' enquiry into Globalisation – and we recognise that the process is as important as the outcome.

Listening takes time. But while our global CSR policy continues to evolve, we can show many practical examples of what we do for the environment and the diverse local communities in which we operate – we feel that in some ways these are more meaningful. Actions speak louder than words. We want to be judged on what we do, rather than what we say.

Our aim is to keep our feet firmly on the ground while developing this global view – DHL is above all a practical, non-nonsense kind of a company. We are working hard to develop a CSR management system and toolkit that covers principles, policies and guidelines, and we will ensure these are useful to our people, many of whom are passionate about CSR. After all, everyone sees the need for the planet to be a place in which future generations will want to live.