

GREEN CENTRES

ACC GREEN BUILDING MATERIALS CENTRES EDUCATE THE RURAL POPULATION, PARTICULARLY LOW-COST BUILDERS IN CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES, USE OF ECO-FRIENDLY BUILDING MATERIALS AND CREATE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM.

ACC - India's leading cement company recently set up Green Building Material Centres in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan to provide affordable housing to the rural populace. The low-cost housing market in India is a significant opportunity as almost 70 percent of the population still lives in the countryside and a vast amount of residential, commercial, and infrastructure construction is needed there. It is estimated that if one million homes are built in a year for the next 10 years, this would only cover about a quarter of the need.

ACC Green Building Materials Centres educate the rural population, particularly low-cost builders in construction techniques, use of eco-friendly building materials and create business opportunities for them to network with local government and community. For the company, a new customer segment is also generated. These centres familiarise customers with rural construction techniques and function as one-stop shops with:

- ▶ locally produced, easy to use, reasonably priced construction products like bricks, tiles, pavers and similar items
- ▶ knowledge and training on how to produce and apply these products in the rural context
- ▶ well-equipped quality laboratory to monitor product quality
- ▶ industrial machines which enable end-users to manufacture products themselves and thus save costs
- ▶ display and explain application of rural construction elements ranging from fly ash bricks to roofing and housing solutions

Key benefits:

- ▶ Simple and complete solutions for low-cost construction segment
- ▶ Integrated construction solutions
- ▶ Strong partnerships with local community
- ▶ Sustainable business models and op-



portunities to network with local entrepreneurs and governments

The company plans to set up ten such centres in 2014 to reach out to a larger customer base. While the centres are conceived and supported by ACC, the company does not invest its own money in setting them up. Instead, each is financed by a local entrepreneur with good ties to the community. There are other stakeholders too. A group of NGOs supports the effort with equipment and training, and ACC works closely with local governments on the projects as well. These Centres encourage sustainable construction techniques (hence the "green" in the name). Materials are produced from local resources and incorporate waste material like fly ash which helps drastically reduce CO₂ emissions and further cut costs.

The popularity and effectiveness of these Centres can be judged by the fact that at the recently concluded Green Cities Forum, ACC's Green



Building Centres were acknowledged as the Smart Initiative and received a trophy and certificate. This concept is popular not just in India, but also in countries, like Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, or parts of Latin America – in fact, wherever rural development is required. Such an approach can help ACC Limited, now part of the worldwide Holcim Group, support its reputation as a solution provider and as an organisation, which cares about rural development. It has tremendous potential to create brand awareness in the minds of rural customers.