

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SOCIETY

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Abstract: A very simple understanding of the word corporate social responsibility is that it is a relationship between business organizations and the society with which they interact. Under CSR, business organizations voluntarily embark on various developmental activities for the welfare of the society. CSR has assumed a new meaning in today's world, given that it has extended the boundaries of the firm into the society. But it is a highly misunderstood & misinterpreted term in India. Some Indian companies believe that merely complying with laws & regulations fulfills their need for social responsibility. A responsible corporate recognizes that its activities have wider impact on the society in which it operates.

Corporate social responsibility is one such niche area of corporate behavior & governance that needs to get aggressively addressed & implemented tactfully in the organizations. At the same time CSR is one effective tool that synergizes the efforts of corporate & the social sector agencies towards sustainable growth & development of the societal objectives at large.

This paper emphasizes that how CSR has become the linchpin for development of any corporate organizations. This paper tries to bring out CSR initiatives taken by various organizations in India. It will help the readers to understand the current state of Indian CSR, its impact on the Indian society.

Keywords: Business, CSR, Corporate, India, Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

The concept of CSR in India started to gain the important place from the independence era. Till 1990 the scope of CSR was limited upto only charity. But after the economic reforms, post the decade of 90's i.e 1991, the boundary of CSR has changed its pattern.

CSR means to step ahead of charity and requires that a company or a group of entities take into full account its impact on all stakeholders and the environment while making corporate decisions. In a country like india CSR is a debated notion, easy to understand but hard to define. The task of defining CSR becomes more difficult with the mass disagreement about what counts as CSR. The concept of CSR needs to become consolidated, clear and universally agreed.

According to the indian organization for standardization ISO "CSR is a responsibility of an organization for the impact of its decisions and activities on society and the environment through transparent and ethical behavior. The perspective of CSR in indian scenario is different from the MNC's. While MNC's talk of CSR in relation to sustainable development indian companies focus on responsible business or Triple P (People, Planet, and Profit). It is important to note that Indian companies and stakeholders give a broader definition of CSR than MNC and stakeholders.

According to the Indian Corporate: "Sustainable development implies optimizing financial position while not depleting social and environmental aspects and CSR implies supporting issues related to children, women and environment"

The more the concepts of CSR are fostered and integrated into the business process, the easier it will be to benefit from alternative thinking and perhaps handle the occasional problems that for certain will occur. The more integrated the business process within the value chain, the more opportunity there will be for organizations to influence the approaches of others on whom they depend. The concept of CSR includes the openness or transparency of companies as well as taking into consideration the will and expectations of their stakeholders.

Social responsibility means a doctrine that claims that an entity whether it is government, Private

Corporation or public organization has a responsibility to society. CSR is a concept that reduces costs and risks, increases the brand value and reputation, effectiveness and the efficiency of employees, improves transparency, and clarity in the working environment of the business house.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Looking into requirements of the objectives of the study the research design employed for the study is of descriptive type. Keeping in view of the set objectives, this research design was adopted to have greater accuracy and in depth analysis of the research study. Available secondary data was extensively used for the study. The investigator procures the required data

through secondary survey method. Different news articles, Books and Web were used which were enumerated and recorded.

DISCUSSION

CSR – A Theoretical Perspective

Models of CSR

The Indian system of CSR is based on the following models namely: (a) **Mahatma Gandhi Model:** It is based on the voluntary agreement by the donor and the society based on its commitment to the public welfare base on ethical awareness of broad social needs. (b) **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Model:** It is the state driven policy as it takes over the industry and impose strict regulation on them. (c) **Milton Friedman Model:** The interaction is limited to investors objectives opposed to company's overall image and direct and indirect stakeholders interest.

Approaches to CSR

In practical manner the concept of CSR is also based on some approaches. The term approach means the certain grounds, principles. In regard CSR there are various approaches. Approaches to the CSR are becoming more widely accepted and some of the corporate are duly engaged in implementing it. They are discussed as follows:

Community development approach

This is the community development based approach. Here the business organization work with local communities for their benefits.

Philanthropy approach

This approach concentrates on the monetary and financial donation given to the local organizations and tries to improve the communities in developing countries.

Creating share value approach

This approach concentrates on governing the CSR interest. This is also termed as "CSV". This CSV model based on the ideas that corporate success in social welfare is interrelated. A business organization always needs the healthy, well educated workforce, sustainable resources to compete effectively. This model had received global attention in the Harvard Business Review Article Strategy and Society: The link between Competitive advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility by Micheael.E.Proter, A leading authority on competitive strategy and head of the institute for strategy and competitiveness at Harvard Business School, and Mr. Mark.R.Kramer, senior fellow at the Kennedy School at Harvard University.

Why CSR is Relevant Today?

CSR as a strategy is becoming increasingly important for businesses today because of three identifiable trends:

Changing social expectations

Consumers and society in general expect more from the companies whose products they buy. This sense has increased in the light of recent corporate scandals, which reduced public trust of corporations, and reduced public confidence in the ability of regulatory bodies and organizations to control corporate excess.

Increasing affluence

This is true within developed nations, but also in comparison to developing nations. Affluent consumers can afford to pick and choose the products they buy. A society in need of work and inward investment is less likely to enforce strict regulations and penalize organizations that might take their business and money elsewhere.

Globalization

Growing influence of the media sees any mistakes by companies brought immediately to the attention of the public. In addition, the Internet fuels communication among like-minded groups and consumers—empowering them to spread their message, while giving them the means to co-ordinate collective action

Potential Business Benefits of CSR

The scale and nature of the benefits of CSR for an organization can vary depending on the nature of enterprise, and are difficult to quantify, though there is large body of literature exhorting business to adopt measures beyond financial ones. The business case for CSR within a company will likely rest on one or more of these arguments.

Human resources

A CSR programme can be an aid to recruitment and retention, particularly within the competitive graduate student market. Potential recruits often ask about a firm's CSR policy during an interview, and having a comprehensive policy can give an advantage.

Risk management

Managing risk is a central part of many corporate strategies. Reputation as take decades to build up can be ruined in hours through incident such as corruption scandals or environmental accident. These can also draw unwanted attention from regulators, courts, governments & media. Building a genuine culture of _doing the right thing within a corporation can offset these risks.

Brand differentiation

Brand differentiation in crowded market places, company's striving for a unique selling proposition. That can separate them from the competition in the minds of consumers. CSR can play role in building customer loyalty based on distinctive ethical values.

License to operate

Corporation are keen to avoid interference in their business through taxation. By taking substantive voluntary steps, they can pursue governments that they are taking issues such as health & safety, diversity, or the environment seriously as good corporate citizen with respect to labor standards and impacts on the environment.

Current Operating Advantages of CSR

The corporate social responsibility always offers the two fold benefits i.e. internally and as well as externally to the companies involved in various projects. Externally it creates a positive image among the people for its company and earns a special respect among its peers. Also it place vital role in creating the short term employment opportunities by taking various works and the projects like construction of parks, schools, hospitals, roads etc. working with keeping in view the keen interest of the community always brings the wide range of business benefits. The businesses also have an impact on the environmental issues also. The project of tree plantation and cultivation activities are always taken up by the Intel India are a step towards the same. The recycling used products also act as step towards minimizing the wastage. Internally the CSR cultivate the sense of loyalty and the trust among the employees in the organizational ethics. It improves operational efficiency of the company and it is often accompanied by increasing in quality and productivity. Employees feels more motivated and in this way are more productive. Apart from this, CSR

helps ensure that the organization comply with regulatory requirements. For corporate world: The use of CSR as a tool for company's strategy and public relation brings an economical success. Moreover the CSR is an efficient instrument of how to bid your workers and to your companies. Last but not least the customer have also a big say, in international survey brought the results that the 70% of the customer always make their decision to award the product- i.e. whether to buy or to postpone the purchase of the goods and the services.

Current Status of CSR

Here we are going to discuss and focus the light on the current status of CSR in the context to Indian organizations. As the CSR refers to the obligation of the business towards the various government and social institutions there are many corporate who are playing the role towards the society directly and indirectly even some of the corporate personalities and the industrialist playing role for CSR by remaining behind the curtain and are very far away from media- publicity. Now let us see the role of various corporate and the various form of 'Helping Hands' for the society and the development of Nation as the basic motto of any corporate in these days so as to maximize the company's overall impact on the society and the stakeholders. The existing corporate are of opinion that the activity of CSR is not just form of unproductive expenditure but it is very much important and essential for the protecting the goodwill and the reputation and tool of the defending attacks and increasing the business competitiveness.

CSR Initiatives in India

Corporate social responsibility is necessarily an evolving term that does not have a standard definition or a fully recognized set of specific criteria. With the understanding that businesses play a key role on job and wealth creation in society, CSR is generally understood to be the way a company achieves a balance or integration of economic, environmental, and social imperatives while at the same time addressing shareholder and stakeholder expectations. CSR is generally accepted as applying to firms wherever they operate in the domestic and global economy. The way businesses engage/involve the shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and other stakeholders is usually a key feature of the concept. While business compliance with laws and regulations on social, environmental and economic objectives set the official level of CSR performance, CSR is often understood as involving the private sector commitments and activities that extend beyond this foundation of compliance with laws.

Industry Association Initiative

Leading Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India are traditionally active in social and environmental norms. Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), CII works closely in partnership with Government. CII in partnership with UNDP set up India Partnership Forum to promote multi stakeholders approach to CSR. Social Development Council (SDC) set up by CII, ensures corporate participation in social development and provides an institutional base for social activities of the corporate sector. Progress, Harmony and Development chambers of commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) has major interventions in family welfare and rural development. Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) through their members provided drinking water in 110 villages by 1996 on occasion of its platinum Jubilee. Bombay Chambers of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) have been consistently on issues of populations and civic conditions in Mumbai.

Company Initiatives

An internet-based survey was conducted to understand the philosophy & deployment of CSR as practiced (innovatively and in a sustained manner) for National and International organizations.

Roundtables and Networks in India

Corporate Roundtable on Development of Strategies for the Environment and Sustainable Development - Business Council for Sustainable Development of India is a grouping of Indian corporate trying collectively and individually to build in sustainable development concepts into their operations. The British Council's CSR Network: Towards promoting CSR and generating awareness and interest amongst young future business leaders.

CSR Surveys

In the context of India, CSR studies were few and limited. Singh and Ahuja 1983 conducted the first study in India on CSR of 40 Indian public sector companies for the years 1975-76 and found that 40 percent of the companies disclosed more than 30 percent of total disclosure items included in their survey. Raman (2006) used content analysis technique to examine the chairman's message section in the annual reports of the top 50 companies in India to identify the extent and nature of social reporting. This study concluded that the Indian companies placed emphasis on product improvements and development of human resources (Raman, 2006).

According to a survey done by Partners in Change 2000, which covered 600 companies and 20 CEOs for judging Corporate Involvement in Social

Development in India 85 percent agreed that companies need to be socially responsible; only 11 percent companies had a written policy; over 60 percent of the companies were making monetary donations; health, education and infrastructure were most supported issues. From 2000 onwards, 4 important surveys have been conducted, which give significant macro level conclusions about Indian corporate.

The first and second surveys were carried out in 2001 and 2002 by Business Community Foundation for TERI-Europe. The survey sought to explore the perception of workers, company executives and general public about social, economic and environmental responsibilities. It was found that all companies irrespective of size or sector have awareness of CSR and its potential benefits. Many companies were collaborating with NGOs, have labor and environmental policy guidelines in place.

A third survey was jointly conducted in 2002 by CII, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), British Council (BC) and Price Water Coopers (PWC). The most striking features of the responses to the survey is that the respondents are in near unanimity that CSR is very much a part of the domain of corporate action and the passive philanthropy is no longer sufficient. A significant proportion of respondents, recognize CSR as the mean to enhance long-term stake holder value.

The fourth survey, the Karmayog CSR rating 2007-08 is for the largest 500 companies. Karmayog is a platform for the Indian non-profit sector providing research on CSR activities of Indian companies. It rated the 500 largest Indian Companies based on their CSR activities. The companies were rated on 0 to 5 levels based on criteria's like products & services, reach of CSR activities, expenditure on CSR, harmful processes etc.

CSR Examples from Indian Corporates

Corporate companies like **ITC** have made farmer development a vital part of its business strategy, and made major efforts to improve the livelihood standards of rural communities.

IT companies like **TCS and Wipro** have developed software to help teachers and children in schools across India to further the cause of education.

Infosys Foundation, the philanthropic arm of **Infosys Technologies Ltd.**, came into existence on 4th December 1996 with the objective of fulfilling the social responsibility of the company by supporting and encouraging the underprivileged sections of society. The Foundation has undertaken various initiatives in providing medical facilities to remote rural areas, organizing novel pension schemes and in

aiding orphans and street children. It has undertaken a large rural education program titled "A library for every school" under which 5500 libraries have been set up in government schools spread across many villages.

The **Tata Memorial Centre** is not just India's best cancer hospital. It is a global centre of excellence where 70 per cent of patients get free primary care. About 10 to 12 million people the world over suffer from cancer. Almost 52 per cent of them are from developing countries. In India 800,000 are diagnosed with this dreaded disease every day.

IBM - Japan's 'e-elder' initiative is a national program using training materials and other support from IBM Japan which will hire and train seniors as instructors for other seniors in an effort to help elder citizens more fully participate in a Web-based society.

Microsoft works closely with international organizations such as the World Food Programme, Save the Children, and Mercy Corps to provide technology-based development assistance through the HEART (Humanitarian Empowerment and Response through Technology) program. More and more, global organizations rely on technology to improve the effectiveness of their humanitarian efforts around the world.

Lupin India Ltd, India's third largest manufacturer of pharmaceuticals has started a project for providing sustainable development in 154 villages across Rajasthan. The scheme instead of providing for piece-meal assistance that does not lead to effective alleviation of poverty or adequate development is designed as a holistic action plan that includes an Agricultural Income Generation Scheme, land cultivation and fruit plantation programs, fodder preservation schemes, sericulture and water-recycling programs, establishment of medical and educational centers, adult literacy programs and credit schemes.

Cipla, another Indian pharma major has found a novel approach to fulfill its corporate social responsibility obligations by offering to sell a cocktail of three anti-HIV drugs, Stavudine, Lamivudine and Nevirapine, to the Nobel Prize-winning voluntary agency Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) at a rate of \$350, and at \$600 per patient per year to other NGOs over the world. This offer has led to a significant decrease in the prices of these drugs worldwide increasing the accessibility of these drugs especially in the developing countries.

Ranbaxy, one of India's major pharmaceutical firms operates seven mobile healthcare vans and two urban welfare centers that reach over a lakh people in various parts of northern and central India as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has set up a fully-equipped computer training laboratory for children from the Society for the Welfare of the Physically Handicapped and Research Centre, in Pune for imparting basic computer knowledge. NIIT has launched a highly popular 'hole-in-the-wall' scheme where it places a computer on a public wall in urban and rural areas so that neighborhood children can learn computer basics using the play-way method.

Bharat Electronics Ltd built cyclone proof houses for the victims of the super cyclone in with the help of the victims themselves so that the houses are built according to their needs.

Issues and Challenges in CSR

Many companies think that corporate social responsibility is a peripheral issue for their business and customer satisfaction more important for them. They imagine that customer satisfaction is now only about price and service, but they fail to point out on important changes that are taking place worldwide that could blow the business out of the water. The change is named as social responsibility which is an opportunity for the business.

Some of the drivers pushing business towards CSR include: (a) **The Shrinking Role of Government:** In the past, governments have relied on legislation and regulation to deliver social and environmental objectives in the business sector. Shrinking government resources, coupled with a distrust of regulations, has led to the exploration of voluntary and non-regulatory initiatives instead. (b) **Demands for Greater Disclosure:** There is a growing demand for corporate disclosure from stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, employees, communities, investors, and activist organizations.

Increased Customer Interest

There is evidence that the ethical conduct of companies exerts a growing influence on the purchasing decisions of customers. In a recent survey by Environics International, more than one in five consumers reported having either rewarded or punished companies based on their perceived social performance.

Growing Investor Pressure

Investors are changing the way they assess companies' performance, and are making decisions based on criteria that include ethical concerns. The Social Investment Forum reports that in the US in 1999, there was more than \$2 trillion worth of assets invested in portfolios that used screens linked to the environment and social responsibility. Employees are increasingly looking beyond pay checks and benefits, and seeking out employers whose philosophies and operating practices match their own

principles. In order to hire and retain skilled employees, companies are being forced to improve working conditions.

Supplier Relations

As stakeholders are becoming increasingly interested in business affairs, many companies are taking steps to ensure that their partners conduct themselves in a socially responsible manner. Some are introducing codes of conduct for their suppliers, to ensure that other companies' policies or practices do not tarnish their reputation.

SUGGESTION

In developing countries like India, it is being clearly seen that the ground realities like unemployment, availability of basic amenities, corruption, poverty, education, etc... are not being looked into "Practically". The viability of the Government schemes and Projects are under the scanner. The question that arises at this juncture – Is it the Responsibility only of the Government? From the viewpoint of renowned academicians, both the Public and the Private Sector has to play a major Role. To create an increasing database of customer the concept of an all round CSR need to be put in place. CSR may have become a hot topic in some management circles for the past few years, but for a significant proportion of ordinary employees it is completely irrelevant. This is because CSR has not been made to understand down the line.

THE WAY FORWARD

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development has noted that a coherent CSR strategy based on integrity, sound values and a long term approach offers clear business benefits to companies and contributes to the well being of society.

The originally defined concept of CSR needs to be interpreted in the broader conceptual framework of how the corporate embed their corporate values as a new strategic asset, to build a basis for trust and cooperation within the wider stakeholder community.

Though there have been evidences that record a paradigm shift from charity to a long term strategy, yet the concept still is believed to be strongly linked to philanthropy. There is a need to bring about an attitudinal change in people about the concept. By having more coherent and ethically driven discourses on CSR, it has to be understood that CSR is about how corporate place their business ethics and behaviors to balance business growth and commercial success with a positive change in the stakeholder community .

Several corporate today have specific departments to operationalize CSR. There are either foundations or

trusts or a separate departments within an organization that looks into implementation of practices.

Being treated as a separate entity, there is always a flexibility and independence to carry out the tasks. But often these entities work in isolation without creating a synergy with the other department of the corporate. There is a need to understand that CSR is not only a pure management directive but it is something that is central to the company and has to be embedded in the core values and principles of the corporate.

Whatever corporate do within the purview of CSR has to be related to core business. It has to utilize things at which corporate are good: it has to be something that takes advantage of the core skills and competencies of the companies. It has to be a mandate of the entire organization and its scope does not simply begin and end with one department in the organization.

While conceptualization and implementation seem firmly underway, evaluation is still taking a back seat. There is a need to incorporate an evaluation plan, which along with presenting a scope of improvement in terms of fund utilization and methodology adopted for the project, measure the short and long term impact of the practices.

While there have been success stories of short term interventions, their impact has been limited and have faded over a period of time. It is essential for corporate to adopt a long term approach rather than sticking to short term interventions, involving the companies and employees in the long term process of positive social transition.

A clearly defined mission and a vision statement combined with a sound implementation strategy and a plan of action firmly rooted in ground realities and developed in close collaboration with implementation partners, is what it takes for a successful execution of CSR.

An area that can be looked upon is the sharing of best practices by corporate. A plausible framework for this could be benchmarking. While benchmarking will help corporate evaluate their initiatives and rank them, it will also provide an impetus to others to develop similar kind practices. Credibility Alliance, a consortium of voluntary organization follows a mechanism of accreditation for voluntary sector. Efforts have to be directed towards building a similar kind of mechanism for CSR as well.

Sustainable development. Like building a successful business, requires taking the long term view. The KPMG International Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2005 showed that voluntary

reporting on sustainability is on the increase across all the countries. Sustainability Reporting is emerging as a key vehicle to implement CSR and measure its progress in organizations.

As we move forward, increasing numbers of companies are expected to issue Sustainability Reports, with the scope of issues broadening from purely environmental reporting to a more comprehensive coverage of the environmental, social and economic dimensions.

CONCLUSION

The concept of corporate social responsibility has gained prominence from all avenues. Organizations must realize that government alone will not be able to get success in its endeavor to uplift the downtrodden of society. The present societal marketing concept of companies is constantly evolving and has given rise to a new concept-Corporate Social Responsibility. Many of the leading corporations across the world had realized the importance of being associated with socially relevant causes as a means of promoting their brands. It stems from the desire to do well and get self-satisfaction in return as well as societal obligation of business. The Indian corporate sector are planning to introduce CSR in the small and medium enterprises (SME) sector to increase its reach in remote areas. Most of the companies throughout the world had accepted that business is not just for making money and this is evident through their involvement in various community developmental activities. Many Business firms had realized the importance of using business ethics as a tool for retaining customers and increasing its market share by highlighting the initiatives it has taken for providing a clean environment for the society. Also some companies started using the CSR as a strategy, which aims at mutual development of company and the community simultaneously

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