Combined Intervention of Corporate Social Responsibility and Social work School in empowering women in selected Communities of Bangalore

Dr. Shashidhar Channappa, Head, Department of Social work, The Oxford College of Arts, Bangalore

Abstract
It is a parody of the capitalist system that big industrial corporations use the resources of the community to make huge private gains therefore depleting the resources and not giving back to the community or the resources. Initially, economic goals were directed only towards the stakeholders where profit making was the prime motive of any corporate. However with a considerable change in the society and a gradual drift towards a more Human Rights based approach, the concept of ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ has been introduced by the corporate sector to give back to the society what has been depleted. The practice of CSR initiatives is commonplace everywhere, including the corporate of India. This paper is an attempt to trace the development of CSR historically. The paper puts forward the combined intervention of CSR wing and social work department in reaching the communities of Bangalore.

Keywords:

Introduction
In a market oriented economic structure, corporate sector is the prime mover of economic growth and is usually the backbone of any society. Private Sector has come out in favour of social responsibility and demonstrated their support for the Government’s commitment to provide greater economic opportunities to the disadvantaged. They have also offered and undertaken initiatives for enhancing employability. These measures, however, need to be expanded manifold. New and more effective forms of interventions at grassroots level are required for the upliftment of the disadvantaged sections of the society.

As India rides the wave of economic boom and commercial success, corporate social responsibility is presenting itself both as an opportunity and an important requirement for corporate sector to be engaged in. This will help corporate sector in their brand building and also contribute towards faster and more balanced growth of our society. This paper provides a comprehensive understanding of how corporate social responsibility has evolved as a concept and the reasons that encourage companies in India to be socially responsible.

Background
The role of corporate sector by and large has been understood in terms of a commercial business paradigm of thinking that focuses purely on economic parameters of success. As corporate sector have been regarded as institutions that cater to the market demand by providing products and services, and have the onus for creating wealth and jobs, their market position has traditionally been a function of financial performance and profitability. However, over the past few years, as a consequence of rising globalisation and pressing ecological issues, the perception of the role of corporate sector in the broader societal context within which it operates, has been altered. Stakeholders (employees, community, suppliers and shareholders) today are redefining the role of corporate sector taking into account the corporate sector’s broader responsibility towards society and environment, beyond economic performance, and are evaluating whether they are conducting their role in an ethical and socially responsible manner. As a result of this shift (from purely economic to ‘economic with an added social dimension’), many forums, institutions and corporate sector are endorsing the term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). They use the term to define organisation’s commitment to the society and the environment within which it operates.

CSR: A Historical Perspective
The concept of CSR in India is not new, the term may be. The process though acclaimed recently, has been followed since ancient times albeit informally. Philosophers like Kautilya from India and pre-Christian era philosophers in the West preached and promoted ethical principles while doing business. The concept of helping the poor and disadvantaged was cited in much of the ancient literature. The idea was also supported by several religions where it has been intertwined with religious laws. “Zakaat”, followed by Muslims, is donation from one’s earnings which is specifically given to the poor and disadvantaged. Similarly Hindus follow the principle of “Dharamada” and Sikhs the “Daa-shaant”.

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The term CSR itself came into common use in the early 1970s although it was seldom abbreviated. By late 1990s, the concept was fully recognised; people and institutions across all sections of society started supporting it. This can be corroborated by the fact that while in 1977 less than half of the Fortune 500 firms even mentioned CSR in their annual reports, by the end of 1990, approximately 90 percent Fortune 500 firms embraced CSR as an essential element in their organisational goals, and actively promoted their CSR activities in annual reports (Boli and Hartsuiker, 2001).

**CSR: Definition**

The totality of CSR can be best understood by three words: ‘corporate,’ ‘social,’ and ‘responsibility.’ In broad terms, CSR relates to responsibilities corporations have towards society within which they are based and operate, not denying the fact that the purview of CSR goes much beyond this. CSR is comprehended differently by different people. Some perceive it to be a commitment of a company to manage its various roles in society, as producer, employer, customer and citizen in a responsible manner while for others it is synonymous to Corporate Responsibility (CR) or Corporate Citizenship or Social Action Programme (SAP). Of late, the term has also been started to link up with Triple Bottom Line Reporting (TBL) which essentially measures an enterprise’s performance against economic, social and environmental indicators.

Discourses on CSR suggest that many definitions of CSR exist within the business community, and CSR continues to be an evolving concept, with no single definition that is universally accepted. Given below are three key definitions that have garnered wide acceptance and favour amongst business circles:

**Definition # 1:** Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee (2005) define CSR as “a commitment to improve community well being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources” whereas Mallen Baker refers to CSR as “a way companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society.”

**Definition # 2:** According to **World Business Council for Sustainable Development** “Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large”.

**Definition # 3:** Archie Carroll in 1991 describes CSR as a multi layered concept that can be differentiated into four interrelated aspects – economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities.

**CSR: Rationale**

The rationale for CSR has been articulated in a number of ways. In essence, it is about building sustainable businesses, which need healthy economies, markets and communities. The major reasons for CSR can be outlined as:

**Globalisation** As a consequence of cross-border trade, multinational enterprises and global supply chains, there is an increased awareness on CSR concerns related to human resource management practices, environmental protection, and health and safety, among other things. Reporting on the CSR activities by corporate sector is therefore increasingly becoming mandatory. In an increasingly fast-paced global economy, CSR initiatives enable corporate sector to engage in more meaningful and regular stakeholder dialogue and thus be in a better position to anticipate and respond to regulatory, economic, social and environmental changes that may occur. There is a drive to create a sustainable global economy where markets, labour and communities are able to function well together and companies have better access to capital and new markets. Financial investors are increasingly incorporating social and environmental criteria when making decisions about where to place their money, and are looking to maximise the social impact of the investment at local or regional levels.

**International Legal Instruments and Guidelines:** In the recent past, certain indicators and guidelines such as the SA8000, a social performance standard based on International Labour Organization Conventions have been developed. International agencies such as United Nations and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development have developed compacts, declarations, guidelines, principles and other instruments that set the tone for social norms for organisations, though these are advisory for organisations and not mandatory. One of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals calls for increased contribution of assistance from country states to help alleviate poverty and hunger, and states in turn are advising corporate sector to be more aware of their impact on society. In order to catalyze actions in support of the MDGs, initiatives such as Global Compact are being put in place to instrumentalyise CSR across all countries.

**Changing Public Expectations of Business:** Globally companies are expected to do more than merely provide jobs and contribute to the economy through taxes and employment. Consumers and society in general expect more from the companies whose products they buy. This is coherent with believing the idea that whatever profit is generated is because of society, and hence mandates contributing a part of business to the less privileged. This has led to an increasing expectation that companies will
be more open, more accountable and be prepared to report publicly on their performance in social and environmental arenas.

**Corporate Brand** In an economy where corporate sector strive for a unique selling proposition to differentiate themselves from their competitors, CSR initiatives enable corporate sector to build a stronger brand that resonates with key external stakeholders – customers, general public and the government. Businesses are recognising that adopting an effective approach to CSR can open up new opportunities, and increasingly contribute to the corporate sector’s ability to attract passionate and committed workforces.

Corporate sector in India are also realising that their reputation is intrinsically connected with how well they consider the effects of their activities on those with whom they interact. Wherever the corporate sector fails to involve partners, affected by their activities, it may put at risk their ability to create wealth for themselves and society. Therefore, in terms of business, CSR is essentially a strategic approach for firms to anticipate and address issues associated with their interactions with others and, through those interactions, to succeed in their business endeavors. The sense of fulfilling the social responsibility leaves them with a feeling of elation. Moreover it serves as a soothing diversion from the mundane workplace routine and gives one a feeling of satisfaction and a meaning to their lives.

**Trends in CSR: From Charity to Responsibility** An insight into the history of CSR reveals that till 1990s it was solely dominated by the idea of philanthropy. Considering CSR as an act of philanthropy, businesses often restricted themselves to one time financial grant and did not commit their resources for such projects. Moreover, businesses never kept the stakeholder in mind while planning for such initiatives, thereby reducing the efficacy and efficiency of CSR initiatives. However, over the last few years, the concept of CSR has been changing. There has been an apparent transition from giving as an obligation or charity to giving as a strategy or responsibility. Review of the case studies and work done on CSR by companies in India suggests that the CSR is slowly moving away from charity and dependence and starting to build on empowerment and partnership.

**Conceptualisation:** Nowadays corporate are treating CSR as a separate entity and devote attention to it. Most of the corporate have a vision and mission statements often at the corporate level or sometimes at the CSR level that drive their CSR initiative. Deliberations are made to choose specific issues and initiatives. It has been observed that the areas they choose somewhere relate to their core values. Companies today are increasingly sensitive about their social role. The companies not only concentrate on how they will position their product or how they will sell it but also they have a social strategy because they have started feeling that brands are built not only around good quality of the product; but also around emotions and values that people ascribe to those products. Today, CSR has been understood in terms of accountability where corporate sector are feeling that they are responsible for the impact their actions have on several stakeholders. They feel that the basic motive of CSR today is to increase the company’s overall impact on the society and stakeholders.

**Implementation** Moving away from the traditional approach, corporate sector rather than following top to bottom mechanism are increasingly bearing stakeholders’ perspectives in mind, thereby considering CSR as a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programmes that are integrated throughout the business operations. It can thus be deduced that radical transformation is happening with CSR practices across India. The changes happened at conceptual level where charity oriented approach is now being seen as a stakeholder oriented approach and at implementation level where other important resources except finance are being dedicated. Several innovative programmes in thematic areas of public health, education, environment, microfinance and related areas are being developed. These programmes are developed bearing in mind the local cultural context and the needs of people. Apart from devoting funds, expertise in terms of knowledge and human resource is also allocated for successful implementation of these programmes. In a growing number of companies these processes are encouraged and rewarded by top management. The implementation of programmes through a trained resource makes a real difference in the community that has been chosen for implementation. The following are key focus areas being incorporated into business practices:

**Partnership with NGOs and Government:** There has been an increase in the number of corporate sector partnering with NGOs and the Government to ensure successful execution of initiatives. Since the NGOs have a better understanding of communities and the intricacies of working with the people of the community, NGOs have been very successful in carrying out CSR activities with the help of volunteers who understand the needs of the community and best strategies to intervene into communities.

**Community development:** CSR is most commonly associated with community development. It has been noticed that as a part of CSR projects, corporations adopt villages or communities and use the funds allocated for CSR activities towards developmental activities in these communities on the basis of need assessment done in these communities. Most large companies either have
their own foundations or contribute to other initiatives that directly support the community upliftment, notably in health, education, and agriculture.

**Workplace**
Employee welfare has become one of the major areas of focus for the corporate sector in recent times. According to CSR many of the corporate holds development activities for their employees or give benefits to the employees since employees determine the productivity. Growing out of a long-standing commitment to training and safety is a more recent emphasis on knowledge and employee well-being.

**Evaluation**
Along with innovation at conceptualisation and implementation, corporate sector are now undertaking greater evaluation and stricter accountability and transparency norms. Evaluating the programme essentially answers the question “what good did we do?” Evaluating programmes, based on internationally accepted formats provide feedback for correction and based on that public disclosure is done.

**Reporting**
A very important aspect of CSR is the reporting practices that corporate sector adhere to inform their key internal and external stakeholders of social responsibility practices. In the recent past, several indicators such as the Global Reporting Initiatives guidelines and sustainability reporting have been developed. Sustainability Reporting (SR) frameworks help the companies conform to the global standards of disclosures for maintaining transparency with regard to its operations and value chain and ensuring accountability towards its internal and external stakeholders.

**CSR Intervention and Social work combined Intervention:**
CSR is an upcoming area where the expertise and knowledge of social workers are being recognized. Since the nature of social work is such that working with communities, assessing the needs and priorities of the communities, capacity building, training and development is the comfort zone for social workers, it is essential for CSR projects to include social workers especially while working with communities.

In Bangalore, GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, the CSR wing of GMR Group has taken up this noble initiative since 1991. The foundation works with deprived sections of the society. It focuses on four specific areas: 1.) Education, 2.) Health, Hygiene and Sanitation, 3.) Education Livelihood and 4.) Community based programmes.

LIFE TRUST is another CSR wing of the apparel brand LIFESTYLE. It was started in the year 2000. The basic aim of Life Trust is to create employment, increase the aspiration and provide visual learning. It operates in the three cities of Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. The main programmes are Skill development and women empowerment, Integrated child development scheme, school development programme and Life centre for learning disabilities. It follows the basic motto “school-chalo”.

With an objective of widespread implementation of the CSR activities being done by the respective organizations, social work students/volunteers were involved by the respective organizations and the volunteers visited the adopted communities of these two organizations namely-Pai Layout and MangalammaPalya in Bangalore. Both the communities have migrant labourers as inhabitants who have come to Bangalore from various parts of the country in search of employment and have been engaged in various kinds of construction work in Bangalore. There are around fifty tents at Pai Layout, where in the total population is 373, out of which the Male population is 160, the Female population is 123 and there are around 90 children. In MangalammaPalya, there are around 47 tents and the total population is 237, of which the Male population is 80, the Female population is 68 and the total number of children is 89. The volunteers were placed for field work and summer placement in the respective communities, where in the students interacted with the community people and conducted a socioeconomic survey to understand the demographic profile of the community and the problems existing in the community. The social work volunteers conducted PRA(Participatory Rural Appraisal) in the respective communities and organised focused group discussions for the purpose of need assessment. Thereafter, the volunteers strategized and understood the need of awareness programmes in those communities. Awareness was imparted to the communities with the help of street plays in order to sensitize the community on various social issues like HIV/AIDS, SarvaShikshanaAbhiyana and the importance of Self-Help Groups for women empowerment. On the basis of the need assessment, priority was given to education, electrification of the ad-hoc settlements, health and women empowerment by the community. The volunteers engaged in liaisoning with the government officials along with the CSR project to help meet the needs of the communities like the Deputy Director of Public Instruction, SarvaShikshanaAbhiyana Coordinator, Block Education Officer and Cluster Education Officer and initiated the process of Tent School in the communities. A general body meeting was also held with the help of the volunteers and the CSR officials including the community members and the land owner for dealing with the multiple problems present in the communities. The Tent school was initiated with the assistance of Philanthropists who supported the initiative with drinking water and stationary for the school child-
The other planned intervention was directed towards the electrification of the community. A dialogue was initiated along with SELCO for providing individual house solar lights, with a nominal charge of Rs 5/- per day and this would also enable the community people to charge their mobile phones for regular usage through the power supply. The implementation and planning is in process. Electrification is the basic necessity of the community.

Vocational Training was also provided for the women and youth in various sectors like fitter, electricians, tailoring etc. Discussions were initiated with the family members and job placements were offered through the help of the initiative of the CSR Wings. It was on the basis of a period for three months training and now most of the youths are working in companies like Honeywell, N mart etc and earning an average income of Rs 6,500 per month.

Self- Help Groups were also formed for the women of the community, who were trained by the social work volunteers on the concept of “Saving” their hard earned daily wages. The concept of being a part of a Self help group was explained to the women and the economic empowerment that can be brought about by the SHG was also informed. Training was provided by the volunteers for accounts management, contribution of each member and the concept of taking loan during the time of crisis and the benefit of forming a SHG. Each member was asked to pay a sum of Rs 10/- per week as saving.

The volunteers also conducted health camps for the children and the aged in the community. Most of the children and women were malnourished and required immediate attention. Eye check up camps was conducted for the aged and referrals were made for cataract operations. Also, dental camps were conducted for oral health and hygiene among the people of the community with the help of the CSR wings.

In the Tent School the volunteers organized children’s day programme, celebrated Christmas and School Day. Both the parents and the children were involved in the process. This acted as a motivation for the children as well as the parents and as a result nine more children were enrolled in the school. The total strength of the tent schools at Pai Layout at present is 45 and 38 at MangalammaPalya.

The volunteers also organized a training program for the community people to sensitize them on the issues of Fire and emergency services. The CSR wings helped and motivated the students to organize the program by involving the local fire brigade stations for training the community for crisis intervention and fire fighting.

An Inter-slum Competition was organized for both the communities. Sports and other cultural events were organized for the purpose of slum integrity. Activities were organized for the youths and different age group people for their entertainment. It was based on the concept of “Infotainment”, i.e, providing information and awareness through entertainment. It was a unique activity and was of the first kind organized by the Department.

The aim of the intervention was that working in the community using the conventional approach towards development would not make the efforts sustainable in the long run. Hence, involving the community, providing them integration and knowledge, would make the effort more sustainable, based on indigenous knowledge and resources.

Conclusion
Corporate Social Responsibility has been seen in different lights in the present times. Many a times CSR has been seen as a convenient way of evading tax payments but however it is CSR is not a fad or a passing trend, it is a business imperative that many Indian companies are either beginning to think about or are engaging with in one way or another. Whether for tax evasion or otherwise, CSR helps in development of communities and the downtrodden sections of the society. While some of these initiatives may be labelled as corporate citizenship by some organisations, there basic message and purpose is the same. A successfully implemented CSR strategy calls for aligning these initiatives with business objectives and corporate values thereby integrating corporate responsibility across the business functions and enhancing business reputation. The challenge for us is to apply fundamental business principles to make CSR sharper, smarter, and focused on what really matters. This can be done by:

a. Focusing on priorities
b. Allocating finance for treating CSR as an investment from which returns are expected
c. Optimising available resources by ensuring that efforts are not duplicated and existing services are strengthened and supplemented
d. Monitoring activities and liaising closely with implementation partners such as NGOs to ensure that initiatives really deliver the desired outcomes
e. Reporting performance in an open and transparent way so that all can celebrate progress and identify areas for further action.

A long term perspective by organisations, which encompasses their commitment to both internal and external stake-holders, will be critical to the success of CSR and the ability of companies to deliver on the goals of their CSR strategy. Corporate Social Responsibility: The journey has begun!

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