



Prayas Approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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Among the fastest developing countries India has the fourth largest economy in the world, yet we are among the poorest countries with nearly 33 percent of world's poor i.e. 1.2 billion people. National Sample Survey (NSSO) 2009-10 also indicates that poverty in India has increased and the over-all percentage of the poor has gone up dramatically from 60% in 1973-74 to 73%, in 2009-10 among the urban population and from 56% in 1973-74 to 76% in 2009-10 among the rural population, albeit based on the out-moded 2100/2400 calories' calculations by the Planning Commission of India. Mr. Suresh Tendulkar (Member, Planning Commission) Committee claimed 37% of Indian population being Below Poverty Line (BPL). Mr. Arjun Sen Gupta (Unorganized Sector Commission) report had created a sensation when it stated that 77% of Indians lived on less than Rs.20 a day. Our economist - Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh has himself accepted that not less than 40-42% people in the country are below poverty line. There are huge disparities between the rich and the poor and these ever-widening schisms are causing major conflicts and a divided social order.

From 1950 till date, during the 12-Five Year Plan periods, while travelling our way from a fully planned to a mixed economy, now we are into the era of the private economy. Today, the planning process is being routinely influenced by the business and the corporate although our socialistic government has also taken up a large number of schemes, projects and programmes to eradicate, or atleast, curb the further growth of poverty. In every budget, the government is allocating increasing amounts for the social sector that constitute Poverty Alleviation, Health, Education, Environment, Children, Women, Elderly Disabled, Deviants etc. for whom hundreds of Central/State-sponsored Schemes have been formulated, implemented, even dropped. Yet, the situation remains abysmally poor in India – whose Human Development Indicators (HDIs) are at times worse off when compared to even its neighbouring Pakistan, Nepal & Bangladesh, who are among the poorest and the least developed countries. We don't cover ourselves with glory in the given socio-economic scenario.

Sixty-five years after India's Independence our democratic profile is clear and so is the respective roles to be played by the Government, Corporate, Market & Business and the Civil Society at large. The Indian government is all pervasive – from Panchayat to Parliament or from Patwari to Prime Minister, the economy has brought us to the global forefront, and the civil society is now on the streets demanding its legitimate share and playing its role in the socio-political churning of the country.

The voluntary organizations in the socio-cultural and development sector of India has always played a significant role, but the role of NGOs in country's economic change is yet to be defined. Over the years, however, the character of the social-sector and the voluntary organizations has changed significantly. As per some reports of the Planning Commission there are over 3.5 million NGOs (an expression that goes with the voluntary organizations, civil society or community-based organizations, as distinct from the private business) in India, who may legitimately be converted into the most powerful "change agents" for our socio economic transformation. These NGOs are required to play the role of the million bridges between the government and the people by helping in the implementation of the policies and schemes and also becoming the channels of communications for the masses' aspirations. The NGOs are indeed making people aware and empower them through their direct help, awareness programmes, community meetings etc about the various privileges provided by government which they cannot access on their own.

In order to add volume and strength to these programmes, the Corporate which are the visible driving force of our economy, can play a much bigger role than what they are doing right now. In the process of the on-going discussions on the Companies Bill, 2012 which has since been passed by the Lok Sabha, the CSR valuation is estimated to be nearly Rs. 18000 Crores annually, which means that so much of money may be pumped into the social-sector in addition to the government's allocated funds. Therefore, in order to add volume and strength to these programmes, Corporate can play the most important role while they truly join hands with the civil society organizations (NGOs) who are in the business of rendering their services in the social-sector, with or without the government.

NGOs of India working in the missionary mode have a long history even before the concept of CSR emerged in the way it is being perceived today. They've been working silently and selflessly for the reforms, social upliftment and development of the country. These NGOs are essentially service delivery organizations working amongst the poor and needy while employing the local people for the emancipation of their own areas, which automatically generate a sense of belongingness and responsibility while serving their own people.

NGOs are often playing a dual role when they become partners with the government amongst the deprived people in the rural areas and lend voice to the destitute in the government at the same time. Government is aware of the presence of NGOs in the remotest of areas and thus often depending on them for surveys, research, studies of its programs & policies. Today, the

NGOs are divided into multiple hues, types, ranges and varieties – from activists who are destabilizing the governments while playing a political or quasi-political role to the grass-root initiatives who are struggling for survival.

Prayas has a clear view of the amalgamation of the government, corporate and the democratic institutions in the social sector, as commonly understood, for the rapid development of the country and the socio-economic transformation, with each agency doing what it is best at. Government to make policies and allocate funds, NGOs to help the Government in implementing these policies & schemes while doing their work in the chosen areas, and the Corporate to provide additional resources to help the Government. In the given backdrop, Prayas would like to present a Triangular Model of Partnership amongst the Government, Corporate & NGOs for providing the much-needed support to the needy and for targeted interventions, for strategic development and poverty reduction.



Our views on the CSR as well as Government-Corporate-Civil Society partnership as the true model of Public Private Partnership (PPP) – are somewhat altered to the prevailing concept of PPP wherein the government is entirely relying upon the Corporate for their important collaborations, particularly in areas like skill development. In this process, the voluntary organizations are expected to become the fourth wing of the development, the other three being, the Government, Democratic Institutions and the Market Economy i.e. Corporate. In this suggested structure, CSR can become a very useful tool if it joins with the NGOs and channelize the resources and funds through them for the development and betterment of deprived and poor sections of the community, particularly the children in need, marginalized and unemployed youth, women in distress, elders uncared for, and the disabled, besides the deviants etc.

Prayas, over a time, has ably presented this model wherever the support has come to make it happen. Today, Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre Society as a national level humanitarian, gender sensitive and child focused development organization, operates **236 Centres** including **21 Homes/Shelters** for children, across the country in **8 States/UTs** directly serving about **50,000 marginalized children, youth and women** addressing multiple issues and initiating programs relating to child protection and juvenile justice, trafficking of children and women, vocational and life skills training, empowerment of women through Self-Help Groups and Income Generation Programmes, promotion of entrepreneurship, facilitating credit through bank linkages and also direct micro finance operations. For nearly 25 years, now, Prayas has been and continues to be involved in meaningful, development-driven initiatives that distinctly impact the quality of life of the weaker-sections of the society, in hundreds of slums/villages surrounding the National Capital Territory of Delhi, Bihar, Gujarat, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand and the Tsunami devastated Andaman & Nicobar Islands



Among these projects with multiple partners, Prayas is also implementing many government Schemes for the Children in need of care & Protection, Women, youth for skill and employment, and the community at large, such as, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), National Child Labour Project (NCLP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Swaranjayant Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) etc. Prayas is also presently associated with various Corporate like Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), TATA Power Delhi Distribution Limited (TPDDL), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IOCL), Reliance SEZ, Microsoft, XL India, Ernst & Young etc.

In order to undertake CSR activities, many Corporate have started operating through “CSR Foundations” which may be laudable but not so much in true CSR-spirit as provided under Section 135 of the Companies Bill, 2013 which lays down the guidelines for the CSR which will soon become mandatory legal provisions. They shall be required to support the civil society initiatives or the NGOs who are deep into service delivery in the need-felt areas.

The Corporate may invest 2% of the profit (minus taxes) for the NGOs like Prayas who work with them into the areas of the real deprivations among the Children, Youth, Women, Disabled, Elderly, Health, Education, Sanitation, Environment, Livelihood & Poverty Alleviations, which are part of the governments’ own accepted social-sector areas of CSR as well.

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