Reviewing the Dynamics of Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions by Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business approach that contributes towards sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits for all stakeholders. Empowering women and achieving gender equality are the goals of the Women's Empowerment Principles which requires intentional actions and deliberate policies. The word woman empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day to day lives in the social, political and economic terms—a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the center stage. Women in Indian society still looks towards the society to grant them power or empower them in various ways. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. The study tries to give an overview of the reasons why companies should embrace CSR specifically towards women empowerment, which plays a key role in the development of society. The researcher has reviewed various aspects like the growing role of women in society, the need for women directors in Indian companies, and various Corporate Interventions towards Empowering Women in India. This is exploratory work which is based on past literature review, including research journals; business news-papers; research reports; published and unpublished studies and websites that had information related to corporate social responsibilities and women empowerment. The researcher has also attempted to explore the challenges faced by the corporate industry in the area of women empowerment in India and have also suggested certain measures for the corporate industry to empower women.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Women Empowerment

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Prologue

Corporate Social Responsibility is a preliminary point for understanding various firm-related and societal issues and responding to them in a business strategy. Companies in India have been positive in taking up CSR initiatives and integrating them into their business processes (Rajeev Prabhakar and Ms. Sonam Mishra, 2013). According to European Commission CSR is “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”. To completely meet their social responsibility, enterprises” should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders” The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines CSR as “the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large”(PWC Report, 2013). The term "Corporate Social Responsibility" can be referred to as a corporate initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and the impact on social welfare. It can also be referred to as "corporate citizenship" and can involve incurring short-term costs that do not provide an immediate financial benefit to the company, but instead promote positive social and environmental change (www.bih.nic.in). To achieve the aim of social development, commitments of sustained efforts and investment of economic resources not only by the government but other economic sectors are very much required. Thus partnerships between companies, NGO's and the Government should be facilitated so that a combination of their expertise, strategic thinking, manpower, and money should be used to initiate extensive social change that will put the socio-economic development of India on a fast track (Vinita Dave, 2013).

Figure No: 01 Broad Areas of CSR Activities

Source: Dimple Tresa Abraham (2013)
Empowerment’ may be explained as a process which helps people to declare their control over the factors which affect their lives. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are active politically, productive economically and independent and are able to make intellectual discussion in matters that affect them (Mamta Mokta, 2014). Women's empowerment can be viewed as a procedure of renegotiating acknowledged standards and assumptions about female and male roles, relations, and obligations, opening up new opportunities for women inside the family unit, the group, state organizations, and common society. In a nutshell from an individual perspective, it is a procedure that empowers women to analyze her situation, settle on her needs, create answers for her issues, and make a move towards improving her situation.

The word woman empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day to day lives in the social, political and economic terms -a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the center stage.

“Women Empowerment in true essence would bring about self-reliance in both financial and social levels.” Women in India face more hurdles compared to other countries like the obstacle to growing whether it is female infanticide, illiteracy, and women poverty, malnutrition of girl child, race, and death due to dowry and so on, in India issues are higher. Corporate Social Responsibility towards women empowerment may become a ray of hope in many ways right from changing attitude towards women in society to make women independent financially, physically and socially and enabling them to stand on their feet. Society can only develop when growth is equally enjoyed by every section of society (Ashish Kumar, Vijayendra Pratap Gautam, 2015).

Women Empowerment Some Facts

An attempt has been made in this part of the paper to offer a concise idea on the need for women empowerment in India.

Table No: 01 Vital Statistics about Women in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>The population of India in 2016</td>
<td>1,313,354,719 (1.31 billion) As of Feb 05, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Sex Ratio M/F 2016</td>
<td>943 females per 1,000 males</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Females Population in India 2016</td>
<td>635,138,342 (635 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Male Population in India 2016</td>
<td>678,216,376 (678 million)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.internetlivestats.com
Need for Women Empowerment

An attempt has been made by the researcher to provide a brief idea about the need for women empowerment in India as follows:

1. Under-employed and unemployed: Women population constitutes around 50 percent of the world population.

2. Equally competent and intelligent Women but lack of opportunity leads to underutilization of their intelligent

3. Talented: Women are as talented as men. Previously, women were not allowed higher education like men and hence their talents were wasted. But nowadays, they are also allowed to go for higher studies and it encourages women to show their talents which will not only benefit her individually but to the whole world at large.

4. Overall development of society: The main advantage of Women Empowerment is that there will be an overall development of the society. The money that women earn does not only help them and or their family, but it also helps develop the society.

5. Economic Benefits: Women Empowerment also leads to more economic benefits not to individuals but to society as well

6. Reduction in domestic violence: Women Empowerment leads to a decrease in domestic violence. Uneducated women are at higher risk for domestic violence than educated women.

7. Reduction in corruption: Women Empowerment is also advantageous in the case of corruption. Women empowerment helps women to get educated and know their rights and duties and hence can stop corruption.

8. Reduce Poverty: Women Empowerment also reduces poverty. Sometimes, the money earned by the male member of the family is not sufficient to meet the demands of the family. The added earnings of women help the family to come out of the poverty trap.

9. National Development: Women are increasingly participating in the national development process. They are making the nation proud by their outstanding performances almost every sphere including medical science, social service, engineering, etc.

10. Irreplaceable in some sectors: Women are considered irreplaceable for certain jobs. (www.importantindia.com).
**Women Empowerment Principles**

An attempt has been made by the researcher to provide a brief idea about principles for women empowerment as follows:

2. Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child.
3. Building and strengthening partnership with civil society particularly women’s organizations.
4. Enforcement of constitutional and legal provisions and safeguarding rights of women.
5. Building a positive image of women in society and recognizing their contributions in the social, economic and political sphere.
6. Developing ability among women to think critically.
7. Fostering decision-making and collective action.
8. Enabling women to make informed choices.
9. Ensuring women’s participation in all walks of life.
10. Providing information, knowledge, skills for self-employment.
11. Elimination of discrimination against women’s participation in the areas of: Access to food, Equal wages, Property rights, Family resources, Freedom of movement and travel, Access to credit, Control over savings, earnings and resources, Guardianship and custody of children and their maintenance.
12. Gender sensitization training in schools, colleges and other professional institutions for bringing about institutional changes (Mamta Mokta, 2014).

**Review of Literature**

An attempt has been made in this part of the paper to offer a concise review on CSR and Corporate Social Responsibility towards empowering women in India as follows:

Rajeev Prabhakar and Ms. Sonam Mishra (2013) had provided an understanding that the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is not clear to many companies. The researchers had revealed that the Indian government had tried to make it mandatory for companies to spend at least 2 percent net profits on CSR. The study had also revealed that
CSR to some companies means providing lunch to their employees or tackling global warming issues. Nitin Kumar (2014) provided an understanding that the CSR regime in India is in a nascent stage and there will be hitches, and a lot of fine-tuning will be required before we hit the perfect balance. Richa Gautam and Anju Singh (2010) had explored the definitions and descriptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and had elaborated upon the development of CSR in India. The researchers found that CSR is presented as a comprehensive business strategy, arising mainly from performance considerations and stakeholder pressure. Companies consider their interaction with stakeholders and the impact of its business on society as significant issues. CSR policies vary with turnover and profit. The researchers also found that every company defines CSR in their own ways as per their needs. CSR is on an upward learning curve and is primarily driven by philanthropy. Nayak Subhakanta (2015) had attempted to study the development of CSR in the Indian corporate sector and contemporary approach in the corporate governance of the nation. The researcher had also examined the nature and process of various CSR initiatives undertaken by JSW Steel Ltd, India's largest steel manufacturing company in the private sector and its impact on the targeted beneficiaries. The researcher provided an understanding that the study was exploratory in nature and the data collection was made adopting qualitative research methodology i.e., through both primary and secondary source. The researcher had revealed that the contemporary CSR practices of JSW Steel were based on an integrated approach of legal and moral obligation towards social development which had created a positive socio-economic impact on the community/local populace only.

Parveen Maan (2014) provided an understanding that government alone will not be able to succeed in its endeavor to uplift the downtrodden society and it is also the responsibility of organizations. So compulsion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has filtered the myth that the ultimate goal is not profit making, rather trust building is viable and assertable with a societal relationship and only long-term survival mantra for any organization. The researcher had also provided an understanding about the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) status in India and it further provides an insight to what extent companies can follow the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

**Review of Literature on Corporate Social Responsibility towards Women Empowerment**

Vinita Dave (2013) provided an understanding that educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. It will lead
to well-paid jobs, or enhance their ability to influence changes to create a better society. Corporate Social Responsibility of multinational companies can provide education as well as information on political, legal and economic issues and awareness of health aspects too through their programmes. The researcher revealed that empowering women needs the contribution of dedicated personal, committed people, generous funding agencies and strong political will. The researcher attempted to provide empirical evidence and linkages between different factors related to women empowerment are needed to establish a strategic plan. Dimple Tresa Abraham (2013), had revealed that one area of involvement could be towards creating employment opportunities through enterprise formation, particularly for women. Support could be extended as part of CSR to women belonging to SHGs and also to those individuals desiring to enter into enterprise activities. The support could involve financial, training and marketing components. Enterprises could also be formed under the cooperative model with corporate handholding during initial stages.

Narender Kumar, Ms. Hitu (2014) provided an understanding that corporate social responsibility is an academic study of commerce and society relations. CSR stems from a commitment in India. CSR has a role to play in the empowerment of women in India. The researchers also revealed that additional services like training, awareness raising workshops, and other activities over and above microfinance programs that merely focus on financial services are also an important determinant for the impact on the empowerment process of women. They should be provided with political, legal, economic and health awareness. Dr. Pooja H. Ramchandani provided an understanding that women have been and will be an integral part of the Indian workforce. The researcher had revealed that women empowerment in rural areas symbolizes rural development. It can be looked at the best solution to overcome the twin problem of poverty and unemployment faced by the rural areas.

Lina Rani Pradhan, Dr. Swarnamayee Tripathy (2013), provided an understanding that empowerment is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional concept. Philosophically, it means giving or endowing power to somebody. Its main aim is to make the powerless capable of making their lives better. It is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

**Women in Society**

An attempt has been made by the researcher to put forward a birds-eye-view on the growing role of women in society, Women on Boards make more return.
Growing Role of Women in Society

Economically empowered women create healthier and more productive societies. Gains in health, nutrition, security, and safety help form the basis for improving women’s status in developing countries and emerging markets. But their economic empowerment creates a multiplier effect that rapidly benefits not just women themselves but also their entire societies (McKinsey & Company report, 2010).

Women who earn income are especially powerful catalysts for development because they tend to invest more of their income than men into the health, education, and well-being of their families. Economically empowered women also tend to have greater control over their income, reproductive health, and improvements in their children’s lives. Every paycheck to a woman is thus, in essence, also an investment in the human capital of the next generation (McKinsey & Company report, 2010).

If the gender gap is closed in employment in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and in the so-called N-11 countries (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Turkey, and Vietnam) could increase per capita incomes 14 percent higher than current projections by 2020 and 20 percent higher by 2030 (McKinsey & Company report, 2010).

Women on Boards Make More Return

According to Section 149(1) of Companies Act, 2013 which deals with women participation by including provisions for women to be a part of the board i.e. women director. More women on board do not only mean the mode to attract sales and production but also creates some public image. It does increase financial return as well rather than mere media attention. In terms, financial returns mean that the return on equity (ROE) increases. It was found that the board of a private sector company, run by a professional CEO with a mix of both men and women, helped ROE rise by 4.4 percent in 2014 over the last year. In contrast, a company with a men-only board saw its ROE rise by a mere 1.8 percent in the same period. All listed companies must have at least one woman director on their board, according to new corporate governance norms finalized by capital market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (www.legalservicesindia.com).

There are women, who committed themselves to the success and growth of organizations. They include Anne Mulcahy at Xerox, Sulajja Firodia Motwani of Kinetic Engineering Ltd.,

Of the 19 companies that have given details regarding direct spends and overhead expenditure towards CSR projects, education has the highest spend towards project overheads (43 per cent), followed by environment (22 per cent), health (13 per cent), rural development (7 per cent) and women empowerment (3 per cent). Projects that have multiple areas of intervention (combination of health, education, etc) account for 9 percent of project overheads against the actual spend (India’s CSR reporting survey KPMG, 2015).

Corporate Interventions towards Women Empowerment in India

An attempt has been made the researcher provide a brief idea about the glimpse of CSR activities performed by corporate towards women empowerment in India as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Corporate</th>
<th>Model of Empowerment</th>
<th>Approx. number of women involved</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan Unilever</td>
<td>Project Shakti, Hindustan Unilever's rural direct-to-consumer retail distribution initiative Rural women became distributors of HUL. Popularly known as 'Shakti Ammas'</td>
<td>48,000 Shakti Ammas HUL reaches over three million households in 100,000 villages in 15 states. (<a href="http://www.businesstoday.in">www.businesstoday.in</a>).</td>
<td>All these women make profits of Rs 700 to Rs 3,000 per month,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Steel</td>
<td>(1) Project Tejaswini was conceived and launched in 2002 to provide women employees at Tata Steel with a platform to unleash their potential. Tejaswini project is a remarkable empowerment initiative that has seen 23 ordinary women become operators and drivers of heavy-duty machinery and vehicles</td>
<td>23 ordinary women become operators and drivers of heavy-duty machinery and vehicles (<a href="http://www.tata.com">www.tata.com</a>)</td>
<td>Rs 10,000 a month as junior operators, well move up the ladder, become senior operators and take home as much as Rs 23,000 a month before they retire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tata Power</td>
<td>Tata Power launches Project Vartika for women</td>
<td>The first SHG was formed in Tunda Vandh village in 2008.</td>
<td>The objective of this project is to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The number has reached to 38 SHGs across seven villages of Mundra and Mandvi taluka of Kutch. 480 women are a part of the SHGs and are community representatives in their villages. Offering social and economic benefits, SHGs enable women to increase their savings and gain access to credit which banks are increasingly willing to lend. They act as community platforms on which women can become active in village affairs, stand for local elections or take action to address social or community issues like the abuse of women, alcohol, the dowry system, etc. SHGs have also helped to promote savings and yield economic benefits, reduce the dependence on moneylenders and have resulted in the empowerment of women.

(www.indiaeducationdiarys.in)

Reliance Foundation launches a project to raise financial literacy for women in Mumbai’s slums

To make 500,000 women living in Mumbai’s slums, financial literate. In the first phase, a pool of fifty Master Trainers from among these marginalized women will be trained using technical assistance from CRISIL Foundation. These Master Trainers will in turn train 2,400 trainers by March 2016, who will carry the programme forward. (www.firstpost.com).

To help them avail government initiatives like the Jan Dhan Yojna, Rashtriya Swastha Bhima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bhima Yojana. Reliance Foundation will also help every
| Aditya Birla Group in collaboration with NABARD. | ANYA Women empowerment project embarked by the Aditya Birla Group in collaboration with NABARD. | In ANYA Women empowerment project, over 150 women from seven villages in Gummidi poondi in Chennai have converged to become economically empowered. The project aims at creating income-generation opportunities on a sustainable basis through training and skill development, spanning tailoring, garments stitching, embroidery, floriculture, phenol, and detergent-making. Five production centers are already working into it. (www.adityabirla.com). | The project is being implemented in phases. The first phase, involving the training aspect, has been completed. Currently, the Group has helped set up 4,500 self-help groups with a membership of 45,000 women. |
| Volkswagen India | Woman empowerment initiative aimed at rolling out best practices that promote gender diversity and inclusivity across all departments. Sakhi Group, Kompass Programme, and Mentor Programme - focused mainly on developing already existing potentials with excellent professional accomplishments and departmental performance. | More than 120 female employees working at the Pune Plant in Chakan and Regional Competence Centre (RCC) in Hinjewadi were informed about the key action plan of this additional and skill development-oriented initiative specially designed for women. (www.timesofindia.indiatimes.com). | The target of a company is to reach from 12 percent of women staff to 30 percent by the year 2025 by training them and providing them with excellent professional accomplishments and departmental performance. |
‘Vedanta Sakhi Project’ BALCO, has gifted goats to two self-help groups in Mainpat in District Sarguja. Each group has been gifted 11 goats at an investment of Rs. 1, 55, 000. Self-help groups have borne 25 percent of the investment. Balco has also provided for the insurance of the goats worth Rs16,500. In the event of the expected reproduction, each group will make an annual income of Approx. Rs 2,40,000. The local women will be able to get a permanent livelihood and the needy women from the Self-Help Groups would be able to financially support their families by joining the goat rearing business.

Source: Compiled by the author from various websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.R. No.</th>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>CSR Activities On Women Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>ICICI Bank</td>
<td>Work from home for a long period of time up to a year. To pay for a child and caregiver's travel if a woman with a child under three years has to travel out of the city for work. (<a href="http://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com">www.economictimes.indiatimes.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Yes Bank</td>
<td>To set up a branch to be operated exclusively by women in the northwestern suburb of Vile Parle (<a href="http://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com">www.economictimes.indiatimes.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>RBL Bank</td>
<td>It is working on various women welfare and gender equality initiative Women empowerment through education, skill building, and training. Promotion of women-based micro enterprises. (<a href="http://www.rblbank.com">www.rblbank.com</a>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>State Bank of India</td>
<td>It will conduct 100 free health check-up camps for women which will focus on curative, corrective and preventive health care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issues and Challenges in Empowering Women in India

An attempt has been made in this part of the paper to offer a concise view on issues and challenges faced by corporate in empowering women in India as follows:

1. Enabling women to develop marketable skills
   - Safe, affordable access to primary, as well as secondary and tertiary education
   - Ability to acquire vocational, technical, and/or entrepreneurial skills

2. Helping women find and retain employment
   - Access to employment opportunities free from discrimination, harassment, and violence
   - Ability to travel to and from work safely
   - Access to quality childcare
   - Support for career and leadership development (McKinsey & Company report, 2010).

3. Supporting women in obtaining equal social and economic rights and achieving leadership positions
   - Equal legal, social, and economic rights (e.g., in the workplace, property and land ownership, inheritance)
   - Ability to manage and control income
   - Opportunities to advance within organizations and serve in leadership positions (e.g., in corporate management, on management boards) (McKinsey & Company report, 2010).
   - Working women with children have difficulties finding adequate child care in their area.
   - Time off and absenteeism are big issues for working mothers.
Even though women are highly qualified and competent but they still have to depend on the family decision to take up any career before marriage as well as after marriage.

Gaining co-worker acceptance of women in our executives is uncertain how to manage women.

We have more women managers, but few women officers, and few on the board of directors (Uday Kumar Kalva, A. Arun Kumar, 2013)

Low risk-taking ability

Limited financial capacity

The requirement of Entrepreneurial training (Manisha Raj, 2014)

Lack of female role models

Lack of qualified incoming talents

Lack of work-life balance

Unconscious bias amongst managers

Women’s confidence aspirations (www.reports.weforum.org).

4. Negligence and poor health: Indian women are the most exploited in the world. Socially, psychologically, politically and economically she is always in second place. Improper hemoglobin, different medical problems, malnutrition, and high death rate are the feathers of Indian women (Narendra Madankar, 2014)

Education Right to Women: “Girls’ Education in Developing Countries: Mind the Gap” explains the lack of educational opportunities as a major disability since "they miss out on opportunities to socialize, acquire knowledge, and gain the skills and sense of autonomy needed to improve their personal well-being and their lot in life." They lack basic socializing skill, knowledge and interpersonal skills to survive in society—women will better assist their children only if they are educated. Educated mothers ensure an educated atmosphere in the family. In developing economy the major concern is that women are discouraged for education, lacking them to join a major workforce. Initiatives like “Promoting Employment for Women as Strategy for Poverty Alleviation”, fails to work with its full capacity as education in women are less than compared to men hence employment opportunity and a question of skilled labor disqualifies them (www.csrtimes.com).
Suggestions

- Improved school enrolment
- Frequent and regular women training and development programmes for self-confidence and personality development
- To provide a promising platform to women in the corporate sector
- To provide employment at different levels incorporate
- To motivate deserving women in sports, defense, education, politics and so on.
- To open more child care centers for working women.
- Women related issues need important attention from government, society and especially from the corporate sector.
- The government can encourage the larger corporate industries to specifically adopt women empowerment activities as the only activity for the development of society.
- To organize educational and empowerment programmes for girls and women.
- To conduct and promote experimentations and innovations and research in the problems and programmes of empowerment of rural women.
- Establish placement services and job counseling to help women find employment opportunities
- Provide women with management training and skill development programs
- Provide educational grants for continuing education of women employees or children of women employees
- Establish maternal leave policies that allow women employee to take paid leave for infant care and family emergencies

Concluding Remarks

The CSR regime in India is in a nascent stage and there will be hitches, and a lot of fine-tuning will be required before we hit the perfect balance. Corporate Social Responsibility towards women empowerment may become a ray of hope in many ways right from changing attitude towards women in society to make women independent financially, physically and socially and enabling them to stand on their feet. Growing role of women in society as an employee, entrepreneur, and a customer had made the need for CSR very
strong. Corporate social responsibility can definitely empower women right from encouraging them to get education till getting respectable livelihood to become productive citizens. Empowering women is one of the most effective and positive forces for improving conditions around the globe. Indeed, no country can prosper if half its people are left behind”. Economically empowered women create healthier and more productive societies as economic empowerment creates a multiplier effect that rapidly benefits not just women themselves but also their entire societies. It has also been found that to growing degree companies that pay genuine attention to the principles of socially responsible behavior are also favored by the public and preferred for their goods and services. It is suggested that there is a need for creation of awareness about CSR amongst the general public to make CSR initiatives more effective.

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