Corporate social responsibility towards women empowerment

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Abstract
Corporate social responsibility is operating a business in a manner which meets or excels the ethical, legal, commercial and public expectations that a society has from the business. Educational attainment and economic participation are the key constituents in ensuring the empowerment of women. Corporate Social Responsibility of multinational companies can provide education as well as information on political, legal and economic issues and awareness on health aspects too through their programmes. Women will then have access to well paid jobs, or enhance their ability to influence changes to create a better society. The present study is an attempt to find out the need for focus on Women Empowerment through corporate social responsibility and the role of various corporate organizations in empowerment of women. Empowerment of women needs the contribution of dedicated personals, committed people, generous funding agencies and strong political will. Therefore in order to draw the attention of these people and agencies, some empirical evidences and linkages between different factors related to women empowerment are needed to establish a strategic plan. The present study is an attempt to find the need for focus on Women Empowerment through corporate social responsibility and corporate social responsibility of selected Multinational companies towards women empowerment.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Women, Empowerment, MNC’s

1. Introduction
Corporate social responsibility is not a difficult concept and can be explained as Corporate – means organized business. Social - means everything dealing with the people. Responsibility - means accountability between the two. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities have started since 1990s now has become a medium for most of Indian corporate to contribute to inclusive growth of Indian society. Now the companies are participating actively in CSR initiatives by spending 2-5 per cent of their net profits. The new Companies Bill also made it compulsory to spend 2 per cent of net profit of the company towards CSR activities. Banks have the primary responsibility to promote women empowerment through CSR activities. Besides the private sector, the government is also ensuring that the public sector companies participate actively in CSR initiatives. Corporate social responsibility has gone through many phases in India. The ability to make a significant difference in the society and improve the overall quality of life has clearly been proven by some of the corporate. All the corporate should try and bring about a change in the current social situation in India in order to have an effective and lasting solution to the social woes. Partnerships between companies, NGO’s and the Government should be facilitated so that a combination of their skills such as expertise, strategic thinking, manpower and money to initiate extensive social change will put the socio-economic development of India on a fast track. Empowerment is now increasingly seen as a process by which the one’s without power gain greater control over their lives. 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 is very much required. Empowering women is all about encouraging Self-Empowerment, Self-Esteem, Personal Growth, Spiritual Growth, Reclaiming Authentic Power and the power Goddess within. The organizational aim to ignite women empowerment should be through inspiring women with the courage to break free from the chains of limiting belief patterns and societal or religious
conditioning that have traditionally kept women suppressed and unable to see their true inner power. This objective can be achieved through CSR in a systematic manner. The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) in India has come up with its latest comprehensive guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility in March, 2010 vide F.No.15 (3)/2007-DPE (GM) GL 99 dated: 9th April 2010 for the Central Public Sector Enterprises in India with respect to the concept, planning, research, documentation, advocacy, promotion, funding aspects, documentation and monitoring the CSR activities. The concept of CSR as per the latest guidelines emphasizes on Sustainable development and clearly states that CSR is a company’s commitment to operate in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner, while recognizing the interests of its stakeholders. This commitment is beyond statutory requirements. Corporate social responsibility is, therefore, closely linked with the practice of Sustainable Development. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development has described CSR as the business contribution to sustainable economic development. Building on a base of compliance with legislation and regulations, CSR typically includes ‘beyond law’ commitments and activities pertaining to:

- Women Empowerment.
- Health and safety.
- Environmental stewardship.
- Human rights (including core labor rights).
- Sustainable development.
- Conditions of work (including safety and health, hours of work, wages).
- Community involvement, development and investment.
- Involvement of and respect for diverse cultures and disadvantaged peoples.
- Corporate philanthropy and employee volunteering.
- Customer satisfaction and adherence to principles of fair competition.
- Anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures.
- Accountability, transparency and performance reporting.
- Supplier relations, for both domestic and international supply chains Industrial relations.

Though women in today’s modern society has been able to climb the ladder for equal status yet many regions do not approve equality for women. However, discrimination against women manifests in itself in most traditional as well as modern societies as a structural feature. Nowhere in the world are women treated as good as men, and all countries slip on the scale of human development when inequality between sexes is measured. As CSR deals with corporate responsibility towards society, talking about women workforce becomes equally important. Corporate world now recognizes women in every possible area in which it functions. Society’s development without development of women is unimaginable. A representation is given in figure1:

2. Objectives
The sole objective of this presentation is to talk about the significant role of corporate to build society, society and corporate are interdependent, growth of both highly effect each other and also to throw light on women’s remarkable role. Corporate plays yet another role they boost economy by making available employment to every section of society.
1. To provide promising platform to women in corporate sector
2. To undertake campaigns for weaker section of women (poor, illiterate, handicap, etc)
3. To provide employment at different levels in corporate
4. To stress on overall development of women
5. To provide financial assistance to needy women.
6. To motivate deserving women in sports, defense, education, politics and so on.
7. To protect the right and interest of women.
8. To battle against gender discrimination
9. To provide promising platform to women in corporate sector
10. To undertake campaigns for weaker section of women (poor, illiterate, handicap, etc)

3. Corporate social responsibility and women empowerment
Empowerment of women is one of the crucial concerns of the millennium development goals. Women in the Indian
society still looks towards the society to grant them power or empower them in various ways. Women empowerment talks much about empowering women in various ways (financial, social, cultural, legal & political). 21st century women are now have become vital part & parcel of society. Women made up more than half the world’s population, produced 80% of its food, labored for two-thirds of its working hours, were paid 10 percent of its income and owned one per of its property. These figures manifold forms of the disadvantaging and discrimination of women. Such as
- Unjust division of burdens of families.
- The economic exploitation of women.
- The loss of their control over resources
- The unequal rating of paid and unpaid work.

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Growing role of women in corporate
- Women as employees
- Women in management
- Women as owners/shareholders
- Women as professionals
- Women as suppliers
- Women as customers
- Women as dealers
- Women in local communities

4. Need for focus on women empowerment through CSR
CSR initiatives can address issues at the ground level and one such area at the base level is empowering women. Companies are initiating numerous CSR activities focused to encourage women empowerment. Yet, it has been observed that the companies do not reflect the activities with proper gender related information like education, health, and women rights etc. Companies should not only encourage women empowerment as a part of CSR in rural area but also should initiate empowerment of women at organizational level too. They must ensure that they have the following practices as a part of the organization.
- The companies are required to have distinct and well defined women empowerment policy.
- Gender based reporting needs to be incorporated in corporate report. Hence, the engendering policies are clear and understandable.
- The reporting system should reflect the gender employment ratio.
- Reporting practices have failed to reflect the unethical practices against women within the workplaces of the companies.

5. Potential benefits of implementing CSR
1. Better anticipation and management of an ever expanding spectrum of risk
2. Improved reputation management
3. Enhanced ability to recruit, develop and retain staff
4. Improved innovation competitiveness and market positioning.
5. Enhanced operational efficiencies and cost savings
6. Improved ability to attract and build effective and efficient supply chain relationships.
7. Enhanced ability to address change
8. More robust “social license”.
9. Access to capital
10. Improved relations with regulators.
11. A catalyst for responsible consumption.

6. Women empowerment initiatives of companies as a part of CSR
SCCL
Singareni Seva Samithi has taken up massive literacy campaign for women and illiterate employees through which more than 50000 persons were made literate. The literacy campaign was concentrated on reading, writing, signing etc., but to sustain the literacy levels and also to make improvements it is suggested to adopt continuing education modules by mass media programmers using the services of community radio/TV channels.

ITC
ITC believes that economic empowerment of women transforms them into powerful agents of social change. ITC has forged an empowering partnership with rural women – the most effective development workers. ITC’s intervention leverages micro-credit and skills training to generate alternate employment opportunities. Increased income in the hands of rural women means better nutrition, health care and education for their children. Working with NGOs, ITC has organized village women into micro-credit groups.

SAIL
SAIL has initiated Mahila Samaj Performance of community welfare programmes which includes manufacture of products and services for SAIL employees. The Mahila Samiti in SAIL plants has 4000 members and 15 affiliated to national level organization for community development.

Tata
More than 60% of the women members of Tata Parivar have launched income generation programmes with an objective of making their families economically sustainable. At the
moment there are 22 all-women Tata Parivar SHGs. In order to achieve better levels of income, the rehabilitation and resettlement team of Tata Steel is continuously imparting Capacity Building Training in the sectors Soura Painting, Stitching, Poultry & Goat Rearing and Computer based literacy programmes.

**Hul’s shakti**

SHAKTI means ‘Strength’. Project SHAKTI is HUL’s initiative to upliftment of standard of living in rural India by creating income-generating capabilities for underprivileged rural women by providing a small-scale enterprise opportunity, and to improving rural lives through health and hygiene awareness. Project SHAKTI is taken up in rural areas only whereby women are the Distributors for HUL products and are called “Shakti Ammas”. This identity is ushering prosperity in their lives and most importantly self-respect.

**Project drishti**

Where Whisper helped to restore eyesight to 250 blind girls through corneal transplant operations in which P&G contributed Re 1 for every pack of whisper sold Project open minds to support and educate children across the Australia, ASEAN and the India (AAI) region. For every large size pack of Vicks Vaporub, Whisper, Ariel Power Compact, Head & Shoulders and Pantene purchased by consumers during November 1999 to January 2000.

**Avon**

Avon Cosmetics’ commitment to women runs deeper than the boundaries of business. Women are the heart of Avon's success and Avon continues to support and understand their needs through Avon's Breast Cancer Crusade. The goal of the Avon Foundation Breast Cancer Crusade is to improve access to quality breast health care for underserved, uninsured and low income populations, and to support biomedical research focused on prevention and improved methods of Diagnosis and treatment to Cure and prevent breast cancer. There is a need of such valuable Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns from prominent companies which can surely change fate and face of women in Indian society in the significant areas of education, health, sports, cultural, political, employment and neglected as well as untouched areas of women empowerment which will boost them to live independent and dignified life which they deserve as they are vital and inseparable part of society. Development of corporate and society is unattainable without an active support of women. The government, media, NGOs should collectively join hands with corporate in common interest of upliftment of women.

| Table 1: Organizational Initiatives for Women Empowerment |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Area**                        | **Initiatives**                                  |
| **Gender Discrimination**       | • Conducting awareness campaigns for preventing exploitation at Workplace |
|                                 | • Providing equal employment opportunity and fair positions to women at all levels |
|                                 | • Encouraging basic literacy and encouraging school enrolment for girl Child |
|                                 | • Motivate deserving women in sports, defense, education and politics. |
|                                 | • Providing training for self-defense |
|                                 | • Awareness to human rights, property rights and various related acts, social inequalities and domestic violence |
|                                 | • Encouraging girl child education |
| **Education**                   | • Health and hygiene campaigns for weaker section of women poor, Illiterate, handicap, etc. |
|                                 | • Child development |
|                                 | • Maternity care education |
|                                 | • Prevention of infant mortality |
| **Health**                      | • Provide opportunity for economic independence through small scale |
|                                 | • Processing or service enterprises; |
|                                 | • Encouraging women’s savings and credit groups |
|                                 | • Support to Self Help groups |
| **Financial Assistance**        |                                                  |

The above table gives a clear indication of the organizational initiatives taken up by any organization in all the aspects related to the improvement of the social, economic, political, educational and health aspects of women.

| Table 2: Women’s Empowerment initiatives of ITC commenced in 2001 - At a Glance |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| **Milestones**                  | **Achieved till 2010**                    |
| • Micro-credit groups established: 93 | • Micro-credit groups : 2,000 |
| • Number of members: 13,807 | • Members added : 60,000 |
| • Women entrepreneurs created: 7,297 | • Women entrepreneurs created: 18,000 |

Source: Adapted from ITC’s Published Source: Transforming Lives and Landscapes

7. Suggestions

1. Corporate social responsibility is more than a topic to discuss about it is changing fate and face of society but it should be adopted by all the business houses voluntarily

2. Country like India should specially advocate for corporate social responsibility as it can be possible remedies for many issues like illiteracy, poverty, child labour, unemployment and rural development.

3. Women related issues need important attention from government, society and especially from corporate sector.

4. Corporate can provide finance to overcome some unsolved issues if properly utilized.

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5. India is developing in all possible areas but there are certain areas where development is almost stagnant gender discrimination is one of them
6. Corporate can definitely empower women right from encouraging them to get education till getting respectable livelihood to become productive citizens.
7. Women related issues at work like sexual harassment though comes under legal framework but it can be stopped by corporate if internal control within organization gives due importance to women related rules.

8. Conclusions
Corporate responsibility involves a commitment by a company to manage its role in society – as producer, employer, marketer, customer and citizen – in a responsible and sustainable manner.
The objective of CSR activities is not only to have brand recognition but to mark an impact in the society. The success of any strategy of women empowerment depends upon the various factors: Education, Upgrading social custom, Family planning, Health and sanitation, Initiating livelihood, Environment, tree growing, kitchen gardening etc. Collective strategies by the organizations and various NGO’s at the ground level is required to be build which is beyond micro-credit to increase the endowments of the women, enhance their exchange outcomes vis-à-vis the family, markets, state and community, and socio-cultural and political spaces that are required for both poverty reduction and women empowerment.

9. References