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CSR ACTIVITIES BY LEADING CORPORATE & PUBLIC SECTOR ENTERPRISES IN INDIA IN POST COVID TIMES

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Executive Summary

The global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been profound, causing widespread devastation and upending the socioeconomic fabric worldwide. Beyond immediate health effects, the pandemic has prompted a fundamental shift in individual perceptions, leading to a reevaluation of lifestyle and work practices. Encouragingly, governments, corporations, and nonprofits globally have mobilized social responsibility initiatives to mitigate these challenges.

The inclination to contribute to societal well-being has surged, ushering in a notable shift in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) approaches. This study aims to map the transition of Indian CSR post-COVID, examining changes in legislation and the overall narrative embraced by the business community.

In 2014, India set a historic precedent by becoming the first country to enforce mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through amendments to the Companies Act 2013. The law stipulates that companies exceeding specified financial thresholds must allocate a minimum of 2% of the average net profits towards their CSR initiatives. The monitoring and implementation of CSR initiatives was further strengthened by the recent amendments in the CSR Rules which underscores commitment of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs towards ensuring a more comprehensive and accountable approach in fulfilling corporate social responsibility.

The regulatory structure governing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is outlined in Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, along with the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rule, 2014, and the amended Schedule VII of the same act. This framework encourages large companies to systematically contribute to necessary development activities in India, with a preference for the region of their establishment, through a compulsory CSR commitment. The Companies Act, 2013, aims to enhance transparency and disclosure by compelling companies to either disclose their CSR activities or provide an explanation for non-compliance. Notably, Schedule VII of the Act places communities at the center of CSR projects, emphasizing their significance in the corporate social responsibility endeavors.

While India sustains a robust economic growth, boasting a GDP growth rate of 7.2% in FY 2023, persistent multi-dimensional inequalities exist despite a burgeoning middle class and ambitious goals to reach a $5 trillion economy by FY 2025. As the nation recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is imperative for ecosystem stakeholders to prioritize investment in fortifying the philanthropic infrastructure to enhance community resilience.

Over the past five years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending has experienced an 11% average annual growth, reaching Rs 26,000 crore in 2021-22. Despite a slower pace in last two years , it is anticipated that CSR spending will maintain its historical growth trajectory and achieve Rs 50,000 crore by FY 2027-28. However, there is a strong geographical and sectoral bias in allocation of CSR funds raising need to broaden the allocation across states and sectors.

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has witnessed a notable shift towards addressing pressing societal needs. One prominent trend is the increased emphasis on Healthcare initiatives, with companies actively participating in efforts to enhance public health infrastructure, support medical research, and facilitate community health programs. Simultaneously, there is a growing commitment to the Acceleration of Digital Inclusion & Access to Technology, recognizing the pivotal role technology plays in fostering socio-economic development. Moreover, there is a concerted effort towards Improving the Carbon Footprint, as businesses are increasingly adopting sustainable practices to mitigate environmental impact. The CSR landscape in India is also marked by a commitment to Promoting Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship, fostering initiatives that contribute to inclusive growth.

Working towards transparency & accountability, businesses are embracing more rigorous reporting mechanisms and ethical business practices to build trust and credibility in their CSR endeavours. This shows a holistic commitment by Indian businesses towards creating a positive and sustainable impact on society.

1. Introduction

The global repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic have been profound, inflicting widespread devastation on communities worldwide. Beyond its immediate health impacts, the pandemic has upended the socioeconomic fabric, erasing years of economic progress. At an individual level, the pandemic has precipitated a fundamental shift in people's perceptions of the world, compelling a widespread reevaluation of lifestyle and work practices.

Encouragingly, governments, corporations, and nonprofit entities worldwide have mobilized to reassess their capacity to mitigate the impact of these challenges through social responsibility initiatives. The advent of COVID-19 acted as a catalyst, prompting organizations to proactively explore avenues for giving back to society while adhering to social distancing norms.

The inclination to contribute to societal well-being became palpable in numerous organizations and individuals. There was a noticeable surge in empathy, with people demonstrating a willingness to go above and beyond to assist those facing significant challenges. Collectively, these efforts have ushered in a shift in the approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The current study is an attempt to map the transition of the Indian CSR after COVID and how the landscape has changed in terms of the legislations the overall narrative of CSR as embraced by the business community.

I.I Origin of CSR

The roots of the social aspect in corporate conduct can be traced to ancient Roman Laws, evident in the establishment of institutions such as asylums, shelters for the impoverished and elderly, hospitals, and orphanages. This concept of corporations as social entities persisted through the Middle Ages under English Law, notably within academic, municipal, and religious institutions. Subsequently, it gained momentum in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, influenced by the English Crown, which viewed corporations as vehicles for fostering social development.

The initial instances of incorporating socially responsible practices can be traced back to the mid-1800s, coinciding with the onset of the Industrial Revolution. During this period, companies began recognizing the social ramifications of their daily business operations, particularly concerning minors, household spending by workers, female employment, and overall working conditions. Companies responded by introducing welfare policies for their internal stakeholders, and affluent entrepreneurs engaged in philanthropy to address the needs of external stakeholders. In subsequent centuries, as the English Empire expanded and new territories were acquired, the English Crown disseminated its corporate law to its American colonies. In these colonies, corporations assumed a social role to some extent.

Subsequently, as business expanded amid World War II and the 1940s, corporations started being regarded as entities with social obligations. A more extensive discourse on these responsibilities unfolded. However, it wasn't until the early 1950s that literature began specifically delineating these responsibilities, marking the inception of the modern conceptual framework of Corporate Social Responsibility.

One of the most notable instances reflecting the shift in perspective on corporate behavior can be attributed to Bowen in 1953. He asserted that the significant power concentrated within large corporations of that era had substantial implications for society. Consequently, he advocated for a transformation in their decision-making processes, emphasizing the necessity of considering their societal impact.

In line with this belief, Bowen proposed the formulation of a specific set of principles guiding corporations in fulfilling their social responsibilities. According to him, the decisions and actions undertaken by businessmen wielded a direct influence on stakeholders, employees, and customers, consequently shaping the overall quality of life within society. Bowen's conceptualization defined the social responsibilities of business as “the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society”.

I.II Indian Context

The ethos of contributing to society has been an integral facet of Indian culture, deeply ingrained in traditional businesses throughout history. This philosophy of promoting societal well-being is rooted in our holy scriptures, reflecting India's enduring wisdom that continues to inspire individuals to work towards the greater good of all stakeholders. Traditional Indian businesses have upheld a strong tradition of social responsibility, with some exemplary business houses showcasing commendable efforts in this regard.

Following the First World War, a new era of corporate philanthropy emerged, drawing business leaders into the political struggle for independence. Post-Independence, the role of the Indian State expanded significantly, relegating the corporate sector to a secondary role in development initiatives. However, over time, the State's shortcomings in poverty alleviation and fostering economic growth generated discontent. The liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991 ushered in a globalized economic landscape, characterized by rapid overall wealth growth but also an escalation in inequality.

The widening gap between the wealthiest individuals and those at the socio-economic periphery prompted innovative initiatives by the corporate sector to address social issues. Simultaneously, it compelled the State to explore ways of garnering more support from the burgeoning business sector. Against the backdrop of a contracting State, a more globalized economy, and profound disparities in economic and social realms, the landscape of Indian Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) becomes a captivating narrative.

I.III Broad classification CSR growth in India

I. Phase-I (1850-1914): Initially perceived predominantly as financial contributions from prominent industrialists rather than strategic initiatives, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) witnessed a transformative evolution. In a significant development, India formally acknowledged the existence of non-profit groups in 1860 through the enactment of the Societies Registration Act. This legal recognition catalyzed the emergence of a plethora of non-profit organizations and philanthropic foundations, marking a pivotal shift in the landscape of social responsibility initiatives. These entities played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of CSR in India, contributing to a broader and more organized approach toward societal well-being. The legal framework provided by the Societies Registration Act laid the foundation for a structured and institutionalized approach to CSR, reflecting a growing awareness of the need for concerted efforts beyond individual philanthropy.

II. Phase-II (1914-1960): Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) evolved into a catalyst for supporting social and cultural causes intricately linked with the nationalist movement. At the onset of the 20th century, there was a discernible shift in focus towards addressing pervasive poverty, particularly at the grassroots level in villages. This period witnessed the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's concept of trusteeship, which served as a guiding model. Inspired by Gandhi's philosophy, numerous affluent individuals and industrialists were prompted to extend their contributions to society in more expansive and impactful ways. The emphasis on trusteeship marked a significant paradigm shift, fostering a sense of shared responsibility among the privileged for the welfare of the broader community.

III. Phase-III (1960-80): With a growing atmosphere of mistrust, exacerbated by a few companies involved in questionable business practices, the contribution of the corporate sector witnessed a decline. In the post-independence era, there was a noticeable shift as the government assumed a more prominent role in spearheading development initiatives and social welfare programs. Consequently, the active participation of the corporate sector slowed down, reflecting a period marked by a recalibration of roles between the public and private sectors in the pursuit of socio-economic progress.

IV. Phase-IV (1980 onwards): The liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991, coupled with the rise of a robust civil society, marked a transformative phase for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). During this period, CSR evolved beyond its traditional form of mere donations, becoming a strategic undertaking by companies. This shift saw the establishment of numerous domestic and foreign charities and foundations, signifying a broader commitment to social impact initiatives that extended beyond routine philanthropy. The changing economic landscape and the growing influence of civil society played pivotal roles in reshaping CSR into a more comprehensive and strategic approach, aligning corporate efforts with sustainable and socially responsible objectives.

2. Critical Milestones Shaping the Evolution of Responsible Business Behaviour in India

I. Corporate Social Responsibility Voluntary Guidelines (2009)

In 2009, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs introduced CSR Voluntary Guidelines to address the prevailing challenges and opportunities faced by businesses, while also taking into consideration societal expectations. These guidelines were crafted with the fundamental principle that each business entity should formulate a CSR policy that aligns seamlessly with its overarching business goals.
Some core elements were outlined within these guidelines that a CSR policy shouldencompass, reflecting a comprehensive approach to corporate social responsibility. These elements include:

- Care for all Stakeholders
- Ethical Functioning
- Respect for Workers' Rights and Welfare
- Respect for Human Rights
- Respect for the Environment
- Activities for Social and Inclusive Development

These guidelines were voluntary and non-prescriptive in nature. The anticipation was that the corporate sector would willingly adopt and adhere to these guidelines, incorporating them into their CSR strategies to foster a holistic and socially responsible approach in alignment with societal expectations.

II. National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental and Economic Responsibilities of Businesses (NVGs) (2011)

Introduced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2011, the National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs) strive to promote ethical and responsible business behavior in India, fostering an environment conducive to inclusive growth. These guidelines constitute a comprehensive set of nine principles that address a spectrum of social, economic, environmental, and governance issues. The overarching objective was to guide businesses in incorporating responsible practices that extend beyond mere profitability, emphasizing a commitment to holistic development and societal well-being. The NVGs represent a concerted effort to instill a culture of corporate responsibility, urging businesses to integrate ethical considerations into their operations for the benefit of the larger community. The nine principles are:

1. Businesses should conduct and govern themselves with ethics, transparency and accountability
2. Businesses should provide goods and services that are safe and contribute to sustainability throughout their life cycle
3. Businesses should promote the wellbeing of all employees
4. Businesses should respect the interests of, and be responsive towards all stakeholders, especially those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized
5. Businesses should respect and promote human rights
6. Businesses should respect, protect, and make efforts to restore the environment
7. Businesses, when engaged in influencing public and regulatory policy, should do so in a responsible manner
8. Businesses should support inclusive growth and equitable development
9. Businesses should engage with and provide value to their customers and consumers in a responsible manner

III. Business Responsibility Reporting (BRR) (2012)

In a bid to further incentivize responsible business conduct with regard to society, the environment, and various stakeholders, SEBI issued a circular in 2011 mandating companies to disclose Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) information through Business Responsibility Reports (BRR). This directive was aligned with the principles laid out in the National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs) issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. The BRR was made an integral component of the company's annual report to be submitted to Indian stock exchanges.This initiative underscores the regulatory push for increased transparency and accountability in corporate practices.

IV. Section 135 on CSR in the Companies Act 2013 (2014)

In 2014, India set a historic precedent by becoming the first country to enforce mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) following amendments to the Companies Act 2013. The mandate specified that every company with a net worth exceeding INR 500 crore, a turnover of INR 1000 crore or more, or a net profit of INR 5 crore or more during any financial year must allocate a minimum of 2% of the average net profits from the three immediately preceding financial years towards implementing its CSR Policy in each subsequent financial year.

The law imposes fiduciary responsibilities on Company Directors, compelling them to advance the company's objectives for the collective benefit of its members. It mandates acting in the company's best interests, considering the welfare of its employees, shareholders, the community, and the preservation of the environment.

In accordance with the regulations, liable companies were required to establish a CSR Committee. This committee was tasked with developing and proposing a CSR Policy to the Board, outlining the planned activities, suggesting the allocated expenditure for CSR initiatives, and regularly overseeing the implementation of the company's CSR Policy.

V. First High Level Committee on CSR (2015)

In 2015, a High-Level Committee, chaired by Shri Anil Baijal, was established to evaluate the CSR regulatory framework and propose measures for enhanced monitoring of implementation. Although the committee presented valuable recommendations, it acknowledged limitations stemming from the lack of substantial 'learning experience,' especially considering the inaugural year of implementing the Companies Act, 2013 during the fiscal year 2014-15. In light of these constraints, the committee recommended the formation of a subsequent committee three years later to reassess the CSR framework.

VI. Second High-Level Committee on CSR (2018)

In line with the recommendations put forth by the first high-level committee, a second high-level committee on CSR was established in 2018, led by Shri Injeti Srinivas, Secretary of Corporate Affairs. This committee presented comprehensive recommendations, including key proposals such as allowing tax deductions for CSR expenditures, permitting the carry-forward of unspent balances for 3 to 5 years, aligning Schedule 7 with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through an SDG plus framework (encompassing areas like sports promotion, welfare of senior citizens and differently-abled persons, disaster management, and heritage protection).

Moreover, the committee advocated for balancing local area preferences with national priorities, introducing impact assessment studies for CSR obligations exceeding 5 crores, and the registration of implementation agencies on the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) portal. Additional recommendations covered the creation of a CSR exchange portal to connect contributors, beneficiaries, and agencies, endorsing CSR participation in social benefit bonds, supporting social impact companies, and facilitating third-party assessments for major CSR projects.

The committee underscored the importance of not viewing CSR as a means of resource gap funding for government schemes. It discouraged passive contributions to various funds outlined in Schedule VII of the Act. The committee emphasized that CSR spending should be a board-driven process, fostering innovative technology-based solutions for social issues. Furthermore, the committee suggested exempting companies with prescribed CSR amounts below Rs. 50 lakh from constituting a CSR Committee. To address compliance issues, it recommended classifying violations as civil offenses and incorporating them into the penalty regime.

VII. National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC) (2018)

The National Voluntary Guidelines (NVGs), introduced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, in 2011, aimed to offer guidance on responsible business conduct. Subsequent to the release of the NVGs, significant global developments unfolded, including the issuance of the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (2011), the establishment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015), the accord on the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015), and the enactment of the Companies Act 2013.

Recognizing the need to align the NVGs with these consequential global initiatives, the process of revision commenced in 2015. The result of this revision was the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct

(NGRBC), unveiled by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2018. The updated guidelines encompass a spectrum of issues, ranging from environmental safety and human rights to fair labor practices and business ethics. This revision underscores a commitment to ensuring that Indian corporate practices are in harmony with evolving international standards and expectations in the realm of responsible business conduct.

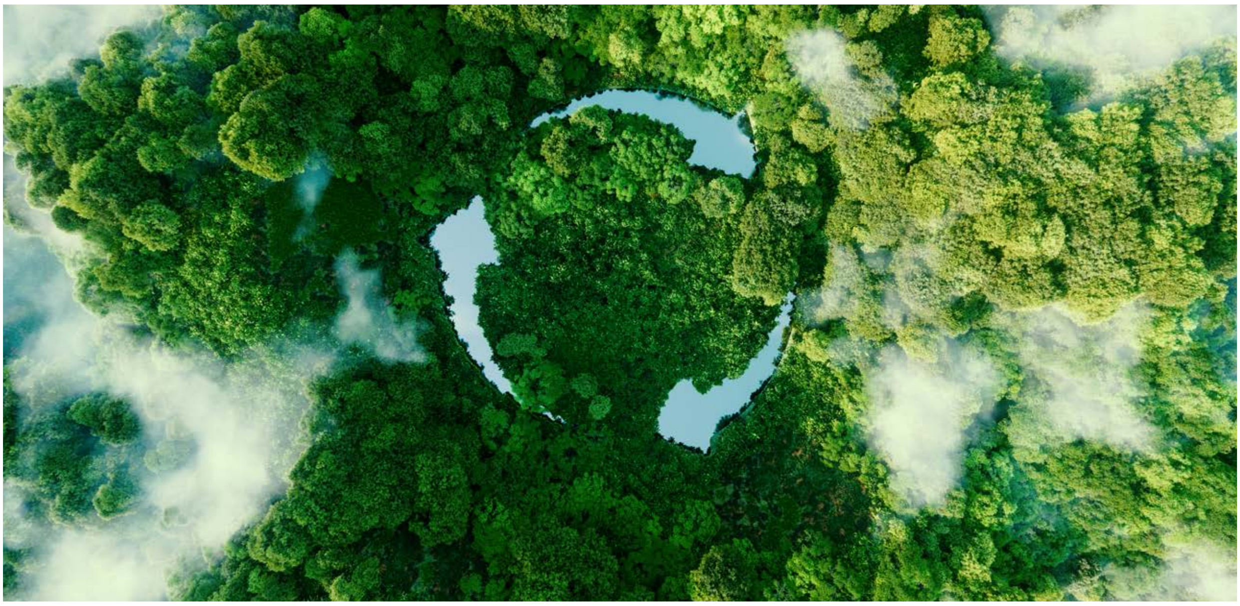
VIII. Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) (2021)

Following the introduction of the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC), the Ministry of Corporate Affairs established the Committee on Business Responsibility Reporting to revise the Business Responsibility Report (BRR) format, aligning it with the updated NGRBC guidelines. In May 2020, this committee formulated and endorsed the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) format, to replace the BRR framework. It has made it mandatory for top 1000 listed entities by market capitalization to make their disclosures as per the BRSR from financial year 2022-23. Going forward, it is proposed to be extended to all companies in a span of 5 years. Emphasizing the significance of the BRSR, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs characterizes it as a single comprehensive source of non-financial sustainability information relevant to all business stakeholders – investors, shareholders, regulators, and public at large.

IX. Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules (2021)

In a bid to gauge and assess the effectiveness and outcomes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, the Ministry introduced the Companies (CSR Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021 ('Rules') through a notification dated January 22, 2021. One noteworthy addition through these rules was the incorporation of Impact Assessment as a vital tool. As per this provision, specified companies are now obligated to conduct impact assessments, and this task is to be entrusted to an independent agency.

To fortify accountability and transparency, these impact assessment reports are not only required to be presented before the Board but are also mandated to be annexed to the annual CSR report. Furthermore, the rules dictate that companies with unspent CSR funds must establish a CSR committee, irrespective of the amount of their CSR obligation. This move underscores the Ministry's commitment to enhancing the evaluation and reporting mechanisms associated with CSR activities, ensuring a more comprehensive and accountable approach in fulfilling corporate social responsibility.



3. Analysis of CSR Expenditure

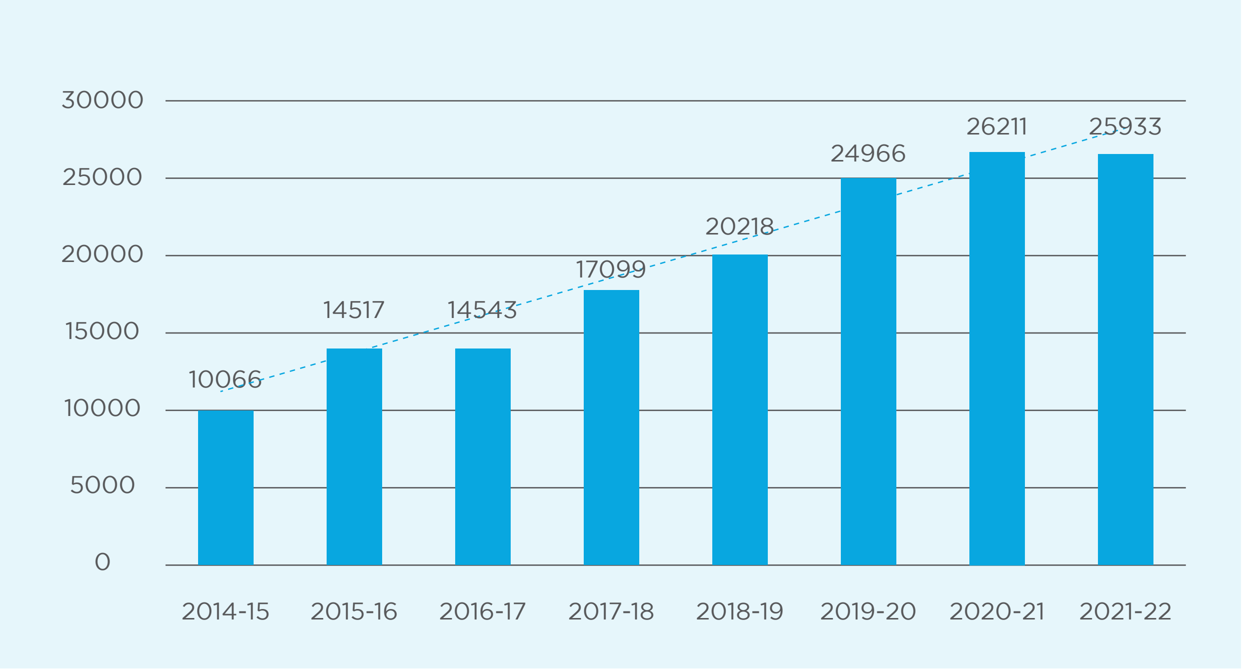
The Indian economy maintained its position as one of the world's fastest growing, displaying a robust real GDP growth rate of 7.2% in 2022-23. Despite this strong growth, persistent global uncertainties such as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine and Middle East crisis, slowing growth of major economies and other geopolitical tensions may introduce certain risks to India's economy in the coming years. Despite significant GDP growth, the country continues to grapple with inequalities, as evidenced by the top 10% to bottom 50% Income gap, which stands at 22 (compared to 17 in the US and 14 in China).

As India navigates the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the emerging geopolitical situation, it becomes imperative to proactively address potential negative impacts across economic, social, technological, and environmental dimensions. Effective collaboration among the philanthropic ecosystem and the public, private, and social sectors is crucial to building community resilience and realizing the long-term goals of sustainable and inclusive growth.

The social sector expenditure in Indian has increased from Rs 9.1 lakh crore in FY2016 to 21.3 lakh crore in FY2023, reflecting a commitment to various aspects of the social well-being of the citizens of the country. The proportion of expenditure allocated to social services within the government's overall spending has remained at approximately 25% from FY18 to FY20. Notably, it saw an increase to 26.6% in FY23 (BE). The Economic Survey highlights an 8.4% rise in social services expenditure in FY21 compared to FY20, followed by a substantial 31.4% increase in FY22 over FY21. These years, marked by the pandemic, necessitated heightened allocations, particularly in the health and education sectors. Even with the growth, India falls considerably below the projection of the total annual funds required, approximately to achieve UN SDG commitments by 2030.

It is important to address the existing funding gap in the social sector in the country. Like any developing nation, the government has borne the primary responsibility. However, with a growing budget deficit, and demand for better social infrastructure, government finances are expected to face constraints. The imperative remains on private philanthropy, especially CSR, to play a catalytic role in closing this funding gap.

Figure 1: Trend in CSR Spend from 2014-15 to 2021-22 (Rs Crore)

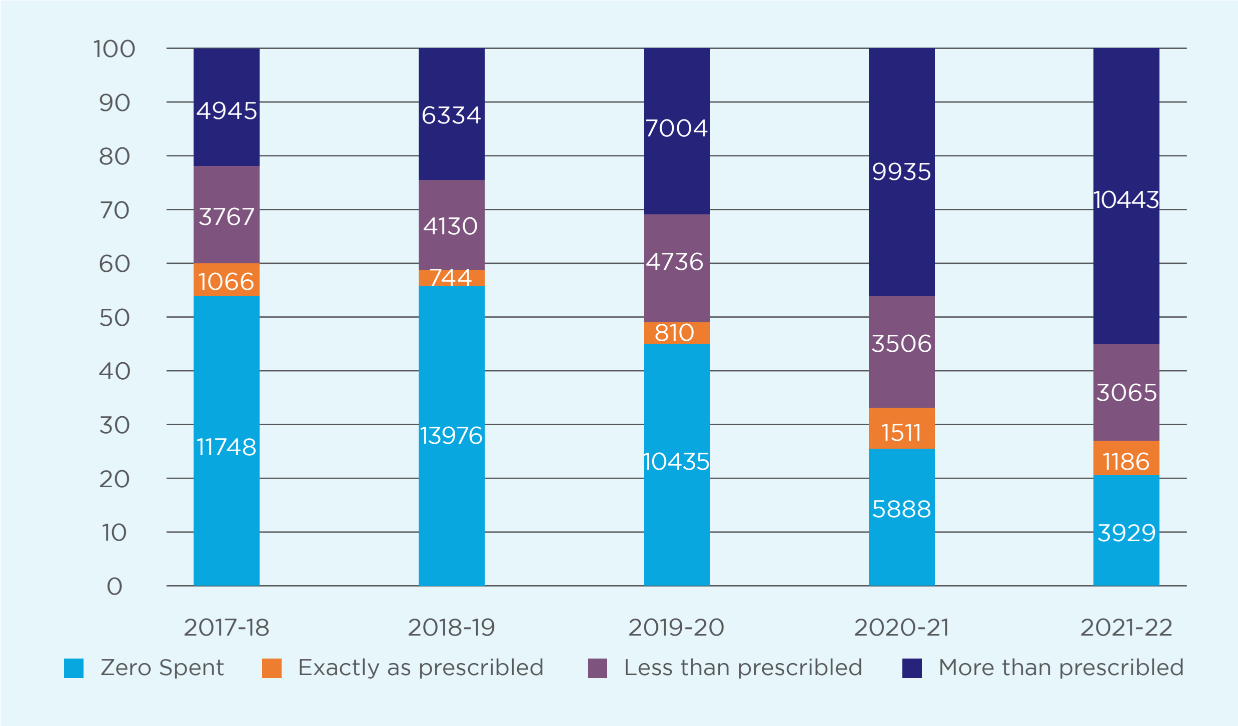


Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

CSR holds significant promise as corporate investment in the social sector has exhibited a robust annual growth rate of 13% over the past five years, reaching INR 26,000 crore in FY 2022. Its share of total domestic private contributions stands at around 30% in FY 2022, marking an increase from 25% in FY 2017. This surpasses the corresponding figure in the US, where corporate donations constitute less than 5% of all charitable giving. The noteworthy trend of many businesses exceeding the government-mandated 2% has further propelled this upswing.

There is also a significant decline in the number of companies with zero spent in the last five years.

Figure 2: Company-wise CSR Compliance from 2017-18 to 2021-22



Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

Upon further examination, it becomes evident that the count of companies with CSR expenditures below Rs 50 lakh has been consistently decreasing over the past three years. Concurrently, companies with expenditures falling within the range of 1-10 crores have exhibited a robust growth trend over the last five years. This dichotomy underscores the ongoing challenges faced by smaller players, particularly due to disruptions in the supply chain, while simultaneously indicating a trend of consolidation among medium and larger players.

The decline in the overall number of companies reporting CSR expenditures can primarily be ascribed to diminished profitability and economic uncertainty stemming from the pandemic and geopolitical tensions. However, the years marked by the pandemic also witnessed an increased display of corporate altruism.

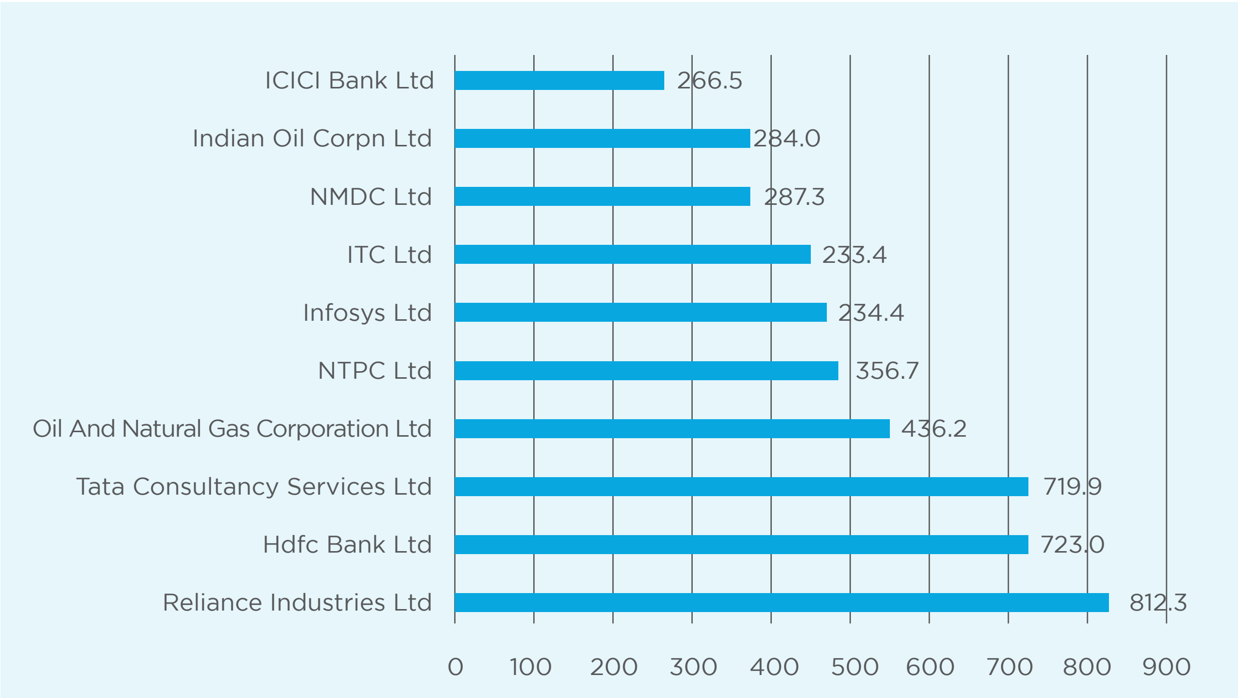
Table 1: Number of Companies in different range of CSR spending

Range of CSR Spent	Number of Companies				
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
0-50L	18706	21986	19394	16423	14089
1-10 Cr	2562	2899	3255	4083	4215
10-100 Cr	234	267	295	301	281
100-500 Cr	22	27	35	28	35
Above 500 Cr	1	2	6	5	3

Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

While examining the ranking of the top ten contributors to CSR over the past five years, minimal changes have been observed in their positions. This consistency in rankings suggests consistency in performance by the top players over the years.

Figure 3: Top 10 CSR Contributing Companies in 2021-22 (Rs Crore)



Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

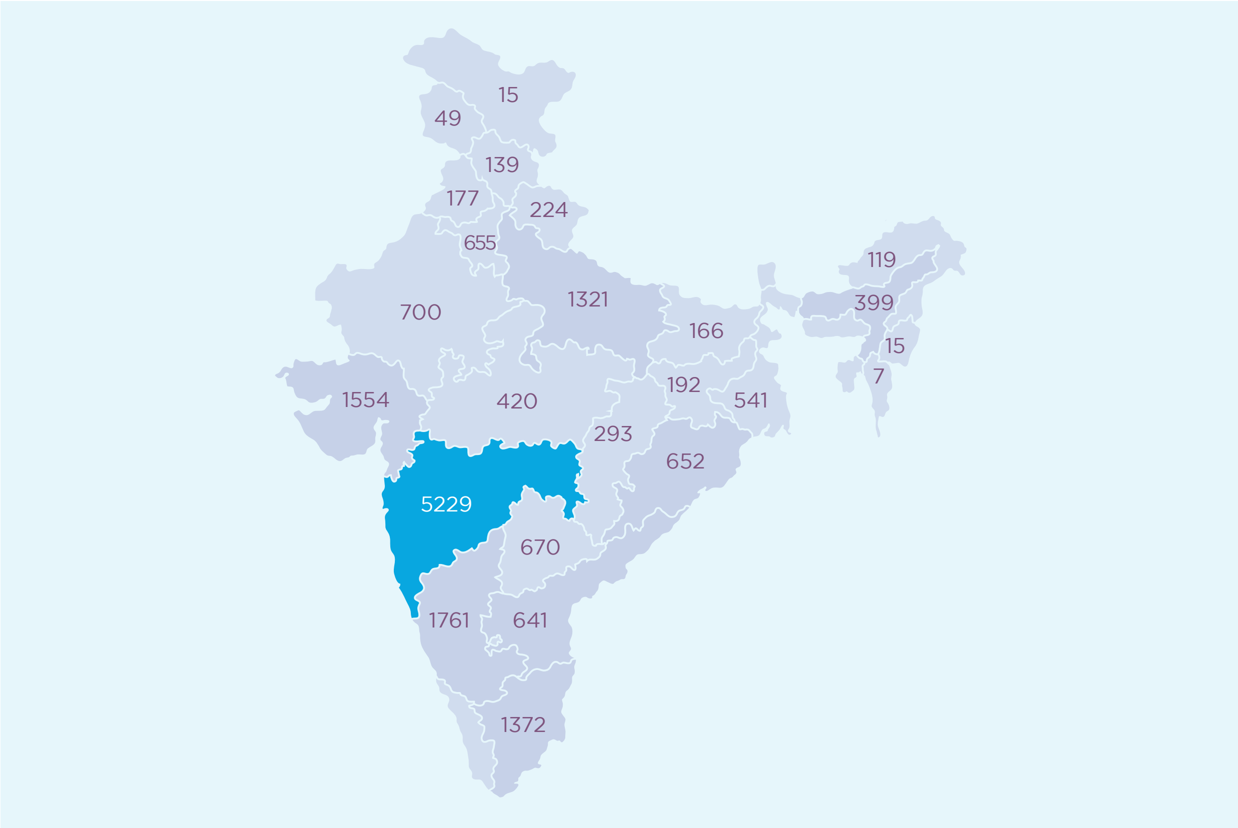
Table 2: Top 10 Companies' CSR change in last 5 years

Company Name	2021 - 2022		2017 - 2018	
	CSR Spend (Rs crore)	Rank	CSR Spend (Rs crore)	Rank
Reliance Industries Ltd	812.3	1	745.0	1
HDFC Bank Ltd	723.0	2	374.6	4
Tata Consultancy Services Ltd	719.9	3	400.0	3
ONGC Ltd	436.2	4	482.1	2
NTPC Ltd	356.7	5	241.5	9
Infosys Ltd	344.5	6	312.6	6
ITC Ltd	333.4	7	291.0	7
NMDC Ltd	287.3	8	168.1	14
Indian Oil Corporation Ltd	284.0	9	331.0	5
ICICI Bank Ltd	266.5	10	170.4	13

Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

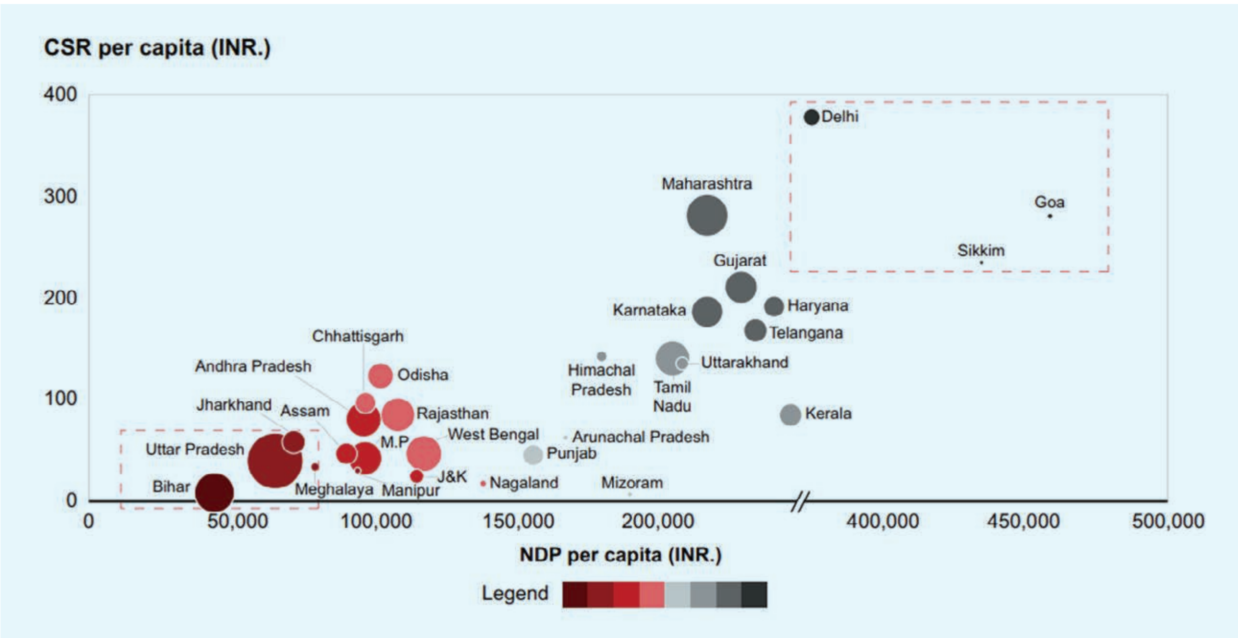
However, there is a discernible concentration of approximately 50% of state-specific CSR spending in a select few states, primarily Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. This suggests a geographical bias in allocation, highlighting the imperative to diversify the distribution of funds across states for a more equitable impact.

Figure 4: State wise CSR spend in 2021-22 (INR Crore)



Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

Figure 5: State wise comparison of CSR expenditure and per capita income in 2020-21



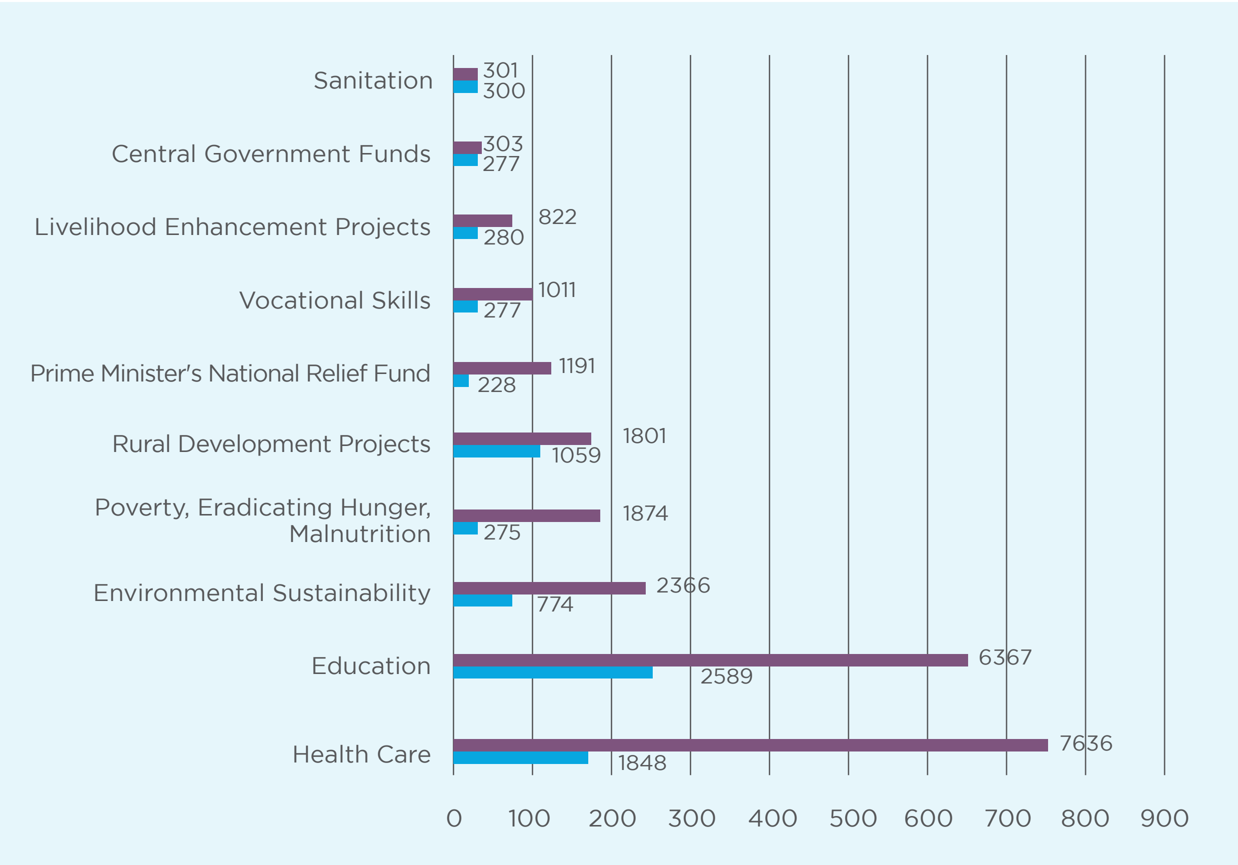
Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

Notes: Size of the bubble represents state's population; colour gradient score based on CSR spending per capita and National Domestic Product (NDP) per capita, with red indicating a greater need to fund those states. Source: India Philanthropy Report, 2023, Bain & Company

Analyzing the distribution of CSR funds in relation to the per capita income across states reveals a discernible geographical bias, potentially exacerbating prevailing disparities in regional development. This bias is particularly notable as a considerable portion of the funds is directed towards economically affluent regions, contributing to the widening gap in development across various regions. There is a pronounced necessity to allocate more funds to poorer states like Meghalaya, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand. This is evident as both CSR spending per capita and NDP per capita in these regions fall towards the lower end of the spectrum.

Sectoral distribution of CSR allocations shows that Health Care, Education, Environment Sustainability, Hunger and Poverty eradication, and Rural Development are major areas and were allocated around 75% of the total CSR spend in 2021-22. Figure 6 shows the top 10 sectors in CSR spending in 2021-22 and how this allocation has changed over 2014-15. Table 3 shows the sectoral allocation of CSR spending in detail and also how these allocations have changed before and after the COVID pandemic. As expected, there was significant increase towards Health Care and Prime Minister's National Relief Fund.

Figure 5: State wise comparison of CSR expenditure and per capita income in 2020-21



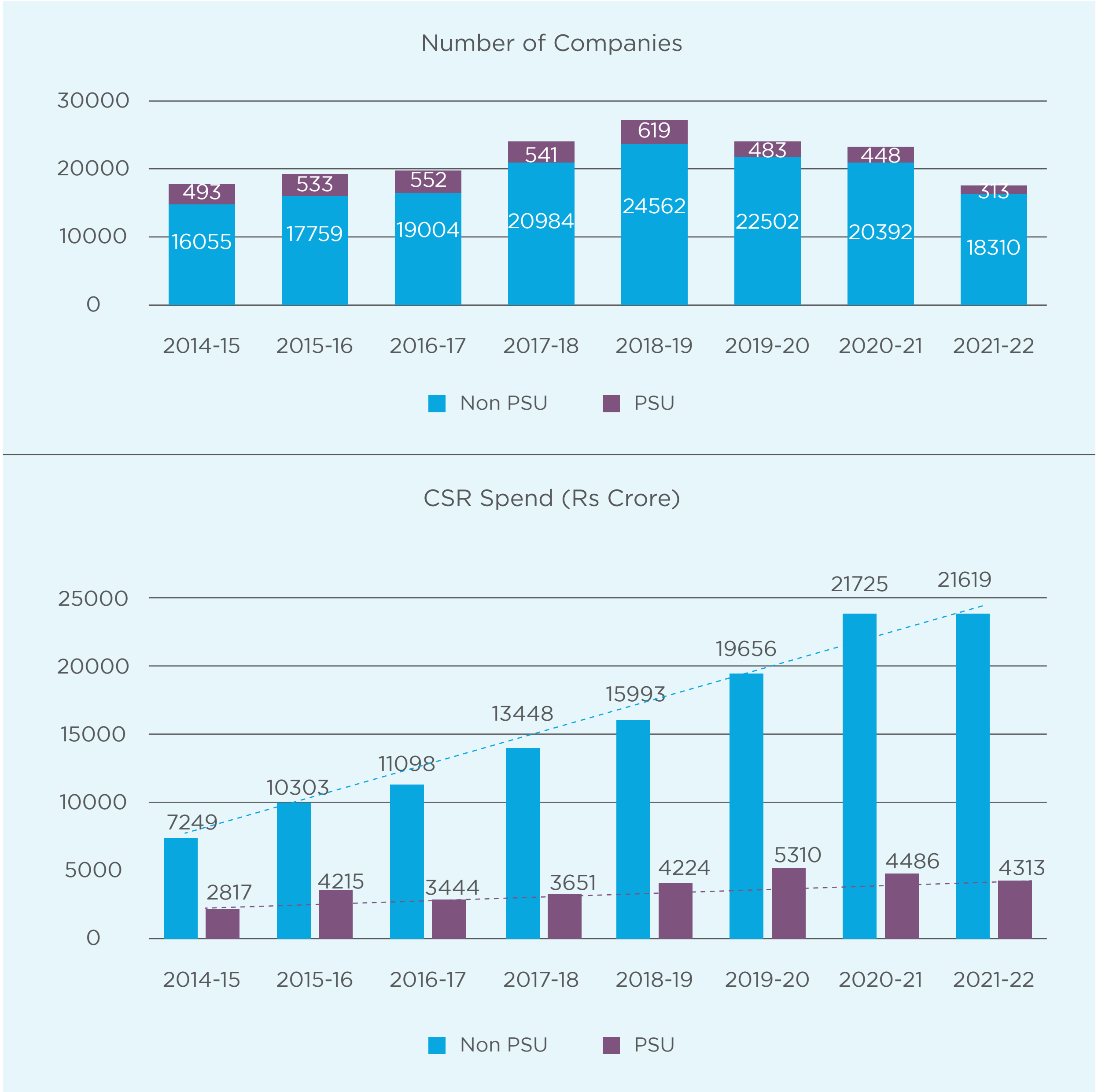
Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

Table 3: Development Sector-wise CSR Spent and growth during pre and post-COVID time period

Development Sector	CSR Spend (INR crore)					CAGR (%)		
	2014-15	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	FY15-F19	FY20-FY22	FY15-FY22
Health Care	1848	3617	4906	7326	7636	18%	25%	22%
Education	2589	6112	7180	6693	6367	24%	-6%	14%
Environmental Sustainability	774	1368	1471	1030	2366	15%	27%	17%
Poverty, Eradicating Hunger, Malnutrition	275	1196	1160	1408	1874	44%	27%	32%
Rural Development Projects	1059	2434	2301	1851	1801	23%	-12%	8%
Prime Minister's National Relief Fund	228	322	798	1698	1191	9%	22%	27%
Vocational Skills	277	798	1181	718	1011	30%	-7%	20%
Livelihood Enhancement Projects	280	908	1078	939	822	34%	-13%	17%
Other Central Government Funds	277	731	932	1618	303	27%	-43%	1%
Sanitation	300	507	522	339	301	14%	-24%	0%
Training To Promote Sports	58	310	304	243	287	52%	-3%	26%
Conservation of Natural Resources	45	174	161	92	272	40%	30%	29%
Women Empowerment	73	237	260	206	251	34%	-2%	19%
Art and Culture	117	226	934	493	241	18%	-49%	11%
Special Education	41	186	197	209	182	46%	-4%	24%
Safe Drinking Water	104	228	253	203	176	22%	-17%	8%
Animal Welfare	17	98	106	194	166	54%	25%	38%
Socio-Economic Inequalities	39	168	215	150	156	44%	-15%	22%
Homes And Hostels for Women	9	57	49	45	100	60%	44%	42%
Gender Equality	55	52	83	44	98	-2%	9%	8%
Senior Citizens Welfare	9	47	52	56	76	51%	21%	36%
Slum Area Development	101	51	43	89	58	-16%	16%	-8%
Clean Ganga Fund	5	8	7	13	54	10%	186%	39%
Armed Forces	5	90	62	84	43	109%	-17%	37%
Agro Forestry	18	65	67	21	33	37%	-30%	9%
Swachh Bharat Kosh	114	96	53	161	33	-4%	-22%	-16%
Setting Up Orphanage	5	13	37	22	26	26%	-16%	26%
Technology Incubators	5	32	54	63	7	61%	-63%	6%
Nec/ Not Mentioned	1338	88	503	203	1	-49%	-97%	-67%

Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

Number of Companies and CSR Spend: PSUs Vs Non-PSUs



Source: Based on data from National CSR Portal

4. Emerging Trends in Corporate Social Responsibility Post COVID-19

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has witnessed a transformative shift, marked by emerging trends that underscore a heightened sense of responsibility among businesses. Key trends captured below throw light on the evolving landscape, reflecting the dynamic changes in CSR practices post-COVID-19.

I. Increased focus on Healthcare initiatives

A prominent trend is the increased focus on healthcare initiatives and training of caregivers, with a surge in CSR spending directed towards bolstering healthcare infrastructure and supporting pandemic-related relief efforts. In FY 2021, India's total CSR expenditure was estimated at Rs. 20,000 crores. The pandemic and the ensuing emergency led to more Indian corporates shifting the CSR focus towards healthcare over other sectors. This response saw approximately 26% of the overall CSR money spent, moving towards healthcare in 2021 (Healthcare Federation of India, 2022).

II. Acceleration of Digital Inclusion & Access to Technology

In an era dominated by technological advancements, digital inclusion has become a crucial factor in ensuring equitable access to opportunities. While urban areas thrive in the digital age, rural regions and underserved communities often grapple with a lack of basic technological infrastructure. This digital divide further widens disparities in crucial areas such as education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. However, the pandemic has accelerated digital inclusion efforts, with companies investing in technology-driven CSR projects to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by the shift towards remote work and online education.

Many CSR initiatives now focus on imparting digital literacy in rural and underserved areas. Programs are designed to train individuals, irrespective of age or background, on fundamental digital skills. Through workshops, training modules, and community engagement, these initiatives aim to equip individuals with the necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape, access information, and utilize online resources effectively.

Overcoming the obstacle of limited access to technology is a crucial aspect of achieving digital inclusion. CSR initiatives have actively addressed this challenge by establishing community digital centres, offering individuals access to computers, the internet, and various digital resources. These centres serve as focal points for learning, innovation, and communication within communities. Additionally, initiatives dedicated to providing affordable or subsidized devices have played a pivotal role in ensuring that marginalized communities possess the necessary tools to actively participate in the digital sphere.

III. Improving the Carbon Footprint

Climate change is starting to figure prominently in all strategic philanthropic conversations with CSR decision-makers. It is no longer a standalone cause with its hard-hitting, intersecting effects on business as well as all other social impact segments becoming more widely recognised. As the pandemic highlighted the interconnectedness of human health and the environment, companies are increasingly allocating CSR funds to eco-friendly initiatives. Many Indian companies have now integrated CSR initiatives that promote environmental conservation, renewable energy, and climate change mitigation.

IV. Promoting Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Furthermore, there is a noticeable shift towards promoting social innovation and entrepreneurship. Companies are actively exploring innovative approaches to tackle social issues while aligning their CSR initiatives with their core business values and objectives. This paradigm shift is ushering CSR from being a reactive endeavour to a proactive, forward-looking force. A pivotal driver of social innovation through CSR is collaboration. Companies are forging partnerships with non-profit organisations, research institutions, and social enterprises to harness their combined expertise and resources. These alliances cultivate a culture of co-creation and experimentation, enabling the birth of innovative solutions.

With the inclusion of technology incubators in Schedule VII of the Company's Act 2013 and Start-Up India, companies can now invest in innovation and develop innovative business models.

V. Increasing Transparency & Accountability

While India's statutory framework (the Companies Act, 2013) set the stage for increased CSR engagement, the emphasis on accountability and transparency came to the forefront with the introduction of CSR reporting. CSR reporting goes beyond mere compliance with legal obligations; it serves as a mechanism for companies to communicate their impact, sustainability initiatives, and adherence to ethical practices. Greater transparency in CSR reporting is being achieved through the detailed disclosure of various elements, including the CSR policy, implementation processes, and the impact assessment of undertaken initiatives.

Companies are required to outline their CSR policy, detailing the focus areas, the manner of implementation, and the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. This transparency in policy formulation allows stakeholders, including investors, employees, and the public, to gauge the company's commitment to addressing specific societal challenges.

A critical aspect of CSR reporting is the assessment of the impact of undertaken initiatives. Impact assessment measures the tangible and intangible outcomes of CSR activities, providing insights into their effectiveness and alignment with the overarching societal goals. The Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021, now mandate the Impact Assessment of CSR interventions, further emphasizing the importance of accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

5. Necessity and Significance of a Standardized Policy & Regulatory Framework for CSR in India in Post-COVID Era

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has taken on a more pivotal role in the business landscape. The pandemic has encouraged companies and policy makers to consider ways to develop a more enabling institutional environment, not only to tackle the ongoing crisis but also to prepare for similar future tests. Now, there is a compelling need for standardized CSR regulations in India to ensure transparency, accountability, and sustainable socio-economic development.

The evolution of CSR in the post-COVID era has seen a paradigm shift in priorities. Companies have reoriented their focus towards initiatives addressing immediate community needs, healthcare infrastructure, and digital inclusion. This evolution highlights the dynamic nature of CSR, necessitating a policy and regulatory framework that can adapt to the changing landscape. While India has witnessed a commendable surge in CSR activities, the absence of stringent regulations has resulted in disparities in the quality and impact of CSR initiatives. A robust, standardized framework becomes crucial to harness the full potential of CSR for societal betterment.

I. Transparency and Reporting

A lack of standardized regulations has led to inconsistent reporting practices. Recent statistics indicate disparities in the quality and transparency of CSR reporting among companies. This variability poses challenges in accurately assessing the societal and environmental impact of CSR initiatives. Various research studies indicate that companies operating under a standardized regulatory framework demonstrate a higher level of commitment to transparency. Standardized regulations necessitate transparent reporting mechanisms, providing stakeholders with clear insights into CSR activities. This transparency builds trust and confidence among investors, consumers, and the general public.

II. Accountability and Consistency

A robust framework on CSR regulations makes a compelling case by ensuring a consistent and widespread contribution to social and environmental causes. It enhances accountability, as companies are held responsible for the efficient utilization of CSR funds, which also leads to increased transparency in reporting and implementation. Data also reveals that companies operating under standardized frameworks exhibit a higher level of accountability in terms of fund allocation and project implementation.

III. Strategic Alignment

Standardized regulations enable companies to align their CSR strategies with broader national and global development goals, ensuring cohesive contributions to societal well-being and sustainable development. Such regulations facilitate long-term planning and sustainable impact assessment, allowing companies to address systemic issues and create lasting positive change in communities.

IV. Impact Measurement

Social and environmental transformations deeply rooted in society often require an extended period to visibly surface. Therefore, assessing the long-term impact of CSR initiatives may pose a challenge in the absence of a standardized framework. Standardized regulations facilitate long-term planning and sustainable impact assessment. Companies can strategize their CSR initiatives to address systemic issues, thereby creating lasting positive change in communities.

V. Risk Management

In times of unforeseen disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, a standardized framework proves invaluable for companies. It serves as a guiding tool for crafting plans and policies that effectively manage risks and uncertainties. This structured approach aids corporations in revisiting their corporate strategy, formulating revised business plans, and developing CSR spending proposals. The emphasis here is not only on short-term adaptations but on building long-term resilience and organizational strategic agility. Long-term resilience will empower companies to tackle systemic inequalities. By incorporating resilience-building measures into their strategies, businesses can ensure they are better equipped to handle unexpected challenges, contributing to more robust and equitable outcomes.

6. Need for Mandatory Impact Assessment

In January 2021, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) amended the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014 ("CSR Rules"). Under Rule 8(3) of the amended CSR Rules, impact assessment shall be applicable to companies:

- Having average CSR obligation of 10 crore rupees or more; and
- With CSR projects having outlays of one crore rupees or more, which have been completed not less than one year before undertaking the impact study

Companies that meet the above threshold shall be required to:

- Undertake impact assessment through an independent agency.
- Place the impact assessment report before the Board and annex the same to the Annual Report on CSR.
- Spend no more than 2 per cent of the total CSR expenditure for that financial year or INR 50 lakhs, whichever is higher, towards the impact assessment.

With the amendment, impact assessment will serve as a critical process for measuring both positive and negative effects of CSR initiatives. In recent years, this practice has become a cornerstone for evaluating the effectiveness and societal contributions of corporate entities. Despite the mandate and growing interest in Impact Assessment, numerous challenges persist in the CSR landscape in India.

Lack of Standardized Metrics

One major challenge lies in the absence of standardized metrics for assessing impact. Different companies adopt varied indicators, making it challenging to compare and analyze the overall societal contribution of CSR initiatives. In addition, the diversity in sectors, CSR initiatives, and geographical contexts makes it challenging to establish a one-size-fits-all metric for impact assessment.

Complexity in Quantifying Social Impact

Quantifying the social impact of CSR initiatives, especially in areas like skill development and community welfare, poses a significant challenge. The intangible nature of social outcomes often complicates the process of Impact Assessment.

Time Lag in Recognizing Impact

Social and environmental changes, especially transformative ones, take time to manifest. The time lag in recognizing and quantifying the impact of CSR initiatives can lead to a gap between investment and measurable outcomes.

Limited Resources for Rigorous Assessments

Many companies, especially smaller ones, face resource constraints in conducting rigorous Impact Assessments. This limitation often results in superficial evaluations, lacking the depth required for a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes.

Stakeholder Engagement and Participation

The effective engagement of stakeholders, including local communities, in the Impact Assessment process is crucial. However, achieving meaningful participation remains a challenge, affecting the accuracy and credibility of assessments.

Despite these challenges, many companies are carrying out the third-party impact assessment of CSR initiatives in line with the Amendment Rules, 2021. Below is a quick snapshot of leading firms, both in the public and private sector, that have been complying with this requirement:

1. Infosys

LEAD at Krea University (IFMR) was commissioned in the financial year 2022-23 to undertake programmatic evaluation of Infosys CSR projects completed in the financial year 2021-22. A team of researchers from LEAD independently carried out the assessments. The aim was to measure the impact created by CSR investments. To this end, the evaluation team assessed each of the 16 grantees located across the country, who had undertaken projects in the areas of healthcare, education, environmental preservation, disaster response (flood relief and Covid relief), and rural development.

2. ITC Ltd

ITC, under its flagship program, Mission Sunehra Kal, commissioned CRISIL to undertake the impact assessment of 19 pan-India projects covering diverse themes such as water stewardship, social forestry, primary education, vocational training, climate smart agriculture, solid waste management, health and sanitation and women empowerment in 2022-23. The impact assessment covered key economic, social, and environmental dimensions, effectively engaging stakeholders, including employees, NGOs, and local communities for implementation.

3. TATA Consultancy Services

TCS has been conducting internal impact assessments to monitor and evaluate its strategic CSR programs and initiated the impact assessment of Bridge IT - Development Focus project through an independent agency, Nous Consultants. The assessment was carried out by Nous Consultants in April 2023. The process for the impact assessment included the review of activity reports, stakeholder interviews, and the review of qualitative and quantitative changes brought about by the funds provided.

4. TATA Steel

The Company voluntarily carries out impact assessment of key CSR Projects. In 2022-23, TATA Steel commissioned the impact evaluations of 4 key projects through independent agencies. The projects under evaluation encompassed diverse areas including relief efforts during COVID-19 pandemic, skill development, and healthcare. The evaluations were based on interviews with relevant stakeholders and documentary reviews.

5. HDFC Bank

HDFC Bank is carrying out multiple social initiatives under the umbrella of ‘Parivartan’ and they aim to contribute towards the economic and social development of the country by sustainably empowering its communities. The Bank carried out 36 mandatory impact assessment studies in FY 2022-23, covering areas including COVID-19 relief efforts, financial inclusion, education, rural development, technology, skill development, and renewable energy.

6. WIPRO

In FY23, WIPRO commissioned the impact assessment of 6 CSR projects covering areas such as community healthcare, education for the underprivileged, education for children with disability, higher education for skills building, engineering education, and renewable energy to independent evaluation agencies. The impact assessment studies aimed to assess WIPRO’s efforts at making the interventions sustainable and reaching out to our target populations of the most vulnerable communities, families, and students, effectively.

7. ICICI Bank

The Bank conducted impact assessment through external agencies of eight projects undertaken in fiscal 2022. Of these, six projects were implemented through ICICI Foundation, and two projects were directly implemented by the Bank. The CSR projects under evaluation covered themes such as healthcare, livelihoods, education, financial inclusion, and social awareness.

8. Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd

In FY 23, the company appointed independent evaluators to carry out the third-party assessment of 16 CSR projects. The CSR projects under evaluation covered themes such as COVID-19 relief efforts, healthcare, livelihoods, infrastructure, education, agriculture, and sustainability.

9. Asian Paints Ltd

The company had appointed independent agencies to undertake impact assessment of 3 CSR projects undertaken during the financial year 2021-22. The three projects covered COVID relief, vocational skills, health, and hygiene. The evaluation covered different dimensions and measured intrapersonal, interpersonal, professional, social, and economic impact of the projects.

10. HCL Technologies

An independent Impact Assessment was undertaken for two projects “Aflatoun”- Social and Financial Inclusion (Implementing Agency – MelJol); and “iCARE” - Informed and Collaborative Action for Resilience of Ecosystems (Implementing Agency - Foundation for Ecological Security) in 2022-23. Both the projects underwent rigorous impact evaluations on key social, economic and environmental dimensions.

11. GAIL

GAIL has been monitoring and evaluating its strategic CSR programs and initiated the impact assessment of 22 eligible CSR Projects of FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 through KPMG. The CSR projects covered diverse themes such as healthcare, education, disaster relief, skill development, hygiene, infrastructure, and sustainability. Along with stakeholder consultations, data and documentation review was undertaken to understand the objective and coverage of each project, after which a comprehensive program evaluation was carried out.

12. BHEL

BHEL commissioned the impact assessment of its eligible CSR project valued at more than one crore rupees from an external agency in FY 2021-22. The project under evaluation focused on infrastructure development in three villages in Karnataka. The impact evaluation utilized household surveys and secondary data from Government offices to evaluate the impact on the quality of life of villages considered post intervention.

13. Bharat Petroleum

BPCL has been conducting impact assessment of CSR projects to monitor and evaluate the actual impact created on the ground through its CSR Projects. Evaluation of 10 CSR projects was conducted in FY 2022-23 through external agencies in areas such as healthcare, sanitation, skill development & vocational training, and infrastructure.

14. ONGC

ONGC Limited carried out comprehensive social impact assessments of 6 of its CSR projects through an independent agency, M/s Price Waterhouse Coopers International Ltd in FY 2022-23. This impact assessment study was conducted using a mixed-method approach involving one of or both the quantitative and qualitative research tools (as relevant for the individual project) for primary data collection along with the desk review of project documents which was available at the time of the study. The team also conducted quantitative and qualitative interactions (virtual and on-field) with the project beneficiaries and other relevant stakeholders based on the customized research tools prepared for each project.

15. Indian Oil Corporation

Indian Oil has been working with the communities and geographies where it operates by supporting numerous initiatives connected with health, family welfare, education, environment protection, potable water, sanitation, empowerment of women and other marginalised groups. Six CSR projects implemented by Indian Oil were picked for an impact evaluation in FY 2022-23 to understand and evaluate the direct and indirect impacts created across beneficiary and stakeholder groups. The study of these 6 projects were conducted by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP on behalf of Indian Oil. The studies included interactions with beneficiaries that were selected using random sampling strategy with a probability proportionate to size method. The data collection process was executed by physical visits to the relevant project sites to interact with relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries based on the nature of the projects.

16. Coal India Ltd

Six CSR projects were identified for impact assessment in FY 2022-23. The work of impact assessment was allotted to Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. The projects covered areas like healthcare, infrastructure, and skill development.

17. Power Grid Corporation

In 2023, the company commissioned the impact evaluation of 19 CSR projects in areas like sports, healthcare, rural development, education, skill development, and sanitation. The third party assessments were carried out by independent evaluation agencies and captured the on-ground impact of the interventions.

18. Bharat Electronics

The company carried out the impact assessment study of Infrastructure/Facilities created in Government Schools by BEL under CSR, through an independent agency in FY 2022-23. The assessment study examined the utility, effectiveness, sustenance, and impact of the intervention in tangible and intangible terms.

19. Southeastern Coalfields Ltd

The company carried out the impact assessment study of 2 CSR projects through an independent agency, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur (Central University) in FY 2022-23. The 2 projects focused on technology and infrastructure. Both projects were based on a demand-driven approach meeting the contemporary needs of the community people and the young generation contributing to social responsibility. SECL is working for social welfare, and infrastructure development as well as promoting community-based innovations through CSR practices.

20. Container Corporation

Under CONCOR's CSR policy a robust monitoring system is in place to ensure transparency and effectiveness of CSR programs. Periodic monitoring is conducted through various modes such as site visits, regular project reporting, documentary evidence, impact assessment of projects, etc. In FY 2022-23, impact assessment of four CSR projects was carried out by an independent agency to understand the actual impact of the project interventions. These four projects covered areas like environment sustainability, cultural preservation, health, and sanitation.

7. Case Studies: CSR-Backed Social Innovations in the post-COVID Era

I. Bridge IT – a TATA Consultancy Services Initiative

Bridge IT, TCS' youth entrepreneurship program, promotes an inclusive approach to economic growth by making rural entrepreneurship a key enabler in overcoming discrimination. A digital-driven effort to support rural youth in India, it helps them start small yet flourishing businesses. Bridge IT trainees take up digital entrepreneurship in their villages, becoming agents of socio-economic change.

Bridge IT attempts to address prevailing social inequities in India by proactively reaching out to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities. The total budget outlay of the initiative was ₹26,900,000.

The key objectives of the project are to:

- Provide supplementary academic inputs to primary school children (grade one to five) through Pratham's Computer Aided Learning (CAL) module.
- Facilitate digital literacy for middle school children (grade six to eight).
- Improve adult literacy in village communities through TCS Computer Based Functional Literacy (CBFL) software.
- Provide, facilitate, improve and groom young men and women from socially and economically disadvantaged communities to be successful rural e-entrepreneurs.

Bridge IT's work has been successfully implemented in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Karnataka, Mizoram, Rajasthan, and Haryana with NGO partners. As of 31 March 2022, the Bridge IT initiative benefited 321 entrepreneurs across 9 states.

A young BridgeIT female entrepreneur with her pupils

Young Bridge IT entrepreneurs in Mizoram

II. STEM Education for Next Gen Empowerment – an Infosys Initiative

Infosys Foundation partnered with Ramakrishna Mission to offer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education scholarships for underprivileged children and establish 100 state of-the-art STEM labs in Ramakrishna Mission schools across India, in Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Tripura, Chhattisgarh and Kerala. The project is an ambitious step towards expanding the Foundation's ambit and support for marginalized communities.

The Infosys Foundation-Ramakrishna Mission scholarships and STEM education program, a three-year-long initiative, began in August 2022. The program helps the Foundation increase equity in education and help the less privileged, yet academically promising students access quality education and skill development, reach a high level of competence, and build equitable societies. The objective is to provide scholarships, STEM labs, online and offline STEM training for teachers and access to educational material and resources for students across various states in India. In three years (2022-2025), Infosys Foundation, through Ramakrishna Mission, will award scholarships to 34,500 students from the chosen schools to develop STEM skills that will help them become resilient to challenges and solve real-world problems with STEM-based solutions.

Ramakrishna Mission schools in 15 states, and more than 200 teachers in these schools, will benefit from the training program. A total of 3,783 students benefited from the program this year. With the incorporation of Infosys Springboard, Infosys' cloudfirst and mobile-first skill training platform, more students will benefit from the STEM education program. The grant from Infosys Foundation will help more than four lakh students by providing them with the right educational infrastructure. The project also includes setting up 100 STEM labs in Ramakrishna Mission schools and colleges. Two teachers will be available in each lab. Each STEM lab will be equipped with 25 computers to provide handson learning opportunities in emerging and digital technologies, such as the Internet of Things, robotics, augmented / virtual / mixed reality, 3D printing, digital manufacturing of drones, etc. Ramakrishna Mission has begun setting up the STEM labs, and three labs were inaugurated in March 2023.

A classroom at Ramakrishna Mission in the town of Aalo, one of the smallest towns in Arunachal Pradesh, where the literacy rate is just about 67% and connectivity is one of the major concerns

III. Renewable Energy Project (Solar Energy) - an Indiabulls Housing Finance Initiative

Indiabulls Foundation installed Solar Energy Plants in tribal schools across Maharashtra to keep the schools functioning during periods of blackouts, load shedding and heavy electricity crunch, which used to regularly cripple their daily operations. These schools now enjoy complete electrification, and the solar energy installations will provide seamless electricity to these schools for approximately 25 years, free of cost. The company has installed 25 such solar plants in various tribal ashram schools and have been able to help more than 32,000 students. In FY 2022-23, the amount allocated and spent on the initiative was Rs 7.5 crore.

A village in Maharashtra where IBF installed Solar Energy Plants in tribal schools

A village school with solar energy plants installed by IBF

IV. Digital Equaliser and Inclusive Learning programme - a Sterlite Technologies Ltd (STL) Initiative

With the pandemic-induced lockdown, while children in urban India quickly transitioned to online classes, the glaring digital divide prevented this for many children in rural and marginalized families. STL wanted to ensure that these children do not fall out the education ecosystem and hence initiated its ed-tech Digital Equaliser and Inclusive Learning (DEIL) program that can operate irrespective of the pandemic situation.

By working closely with the local administration and government schools, the programme has benefitted over 200,000 students across 400 educational institutions in Aurangabad, Nandurbar and Silvassa (India) by improving their learning outcomes. The program ensures access to digital content in vernacular medium and makes learning fun for them. To facilitate better delivery and optimize digital teaching techniques, teachers, and school management, in addition to community volunteers are trained on these aspects.

Program in association with the American India Foundation (AIF). This is a first-of-its-kind partnership where a not-for-profit organisation and a corporate come together to create impactful life for millions through a unique model that can continue despite social and ecological disruptions.

Through this program, STL will create access to quality education for over 300,000 beneficiaries across 300 schools in Silvassa, Aurangabad, and Nandurbar. The program is in line with SDG 4 standards and commits to quality education and capacity building for teachers and community enablers over the next 3 years. Keeping this in view, STL partnered with AIF to launch the DEIL program by leveraging BYJU's school learning app.

"Through this program, we are bridging the digital divide by providing quality digital content in vernacular mediums led by community participation. This unique model will guarantee last-mile access to education and new-age learning techniques in remote rural areas across Aurangabad, Silvassa, and Nandurbar. We are confident that with this program a 2X improvement in learning outcomes of students and teachers' instruction delivery will be visible over the next few years. This particular initiative in the Aspiration Districts flagged by Niti Aayog is a significant endeavour to accelerate India's progress on SDG 4."

V. Mission Oxygen a Reliance Initiative

Providing crucial support to the nation to meet a sudden shortage of medical oxygen for COVID-19 patients, especially during the second wave, Reliance repurposed its factory in Jamnagar in record time to produce liquid medical oxygen. This was ramped up to meet the life-saving needs of 1,00,000 patients on a daily basis, delivered free of cost to various states. The facility contributed to 11% of India's total production of medical grade liquid oxygen.

Though Reliance was not a manufacturer of medical-grade liquid oxygen, it became India's largest producer of this life-saving resource from a single location in order to stand with the country in its hour of need. Under the personal supervision of Mr. Mukesh D. Ambani, Chairman and Managing Director, the manufacturing facility at Jamnagar in Gujarat was repurposed to produce over 1,000 MT medical grade liquid oxygen and increase transportation capacities. This two-pronged approach helped ensure swift and safe supply to various states and Union Territories across India.

Medical grade liquid oxygen has to be produced in liquid form at -183°C with almost 99.5% purity, which poses extraordinary challenges and risks in production and maximising tonnage. Reliance engineers worked tirelessly and through process optimisation and modifications of Cryogenic Air Separation Units, were able to maximise production of medical grade liquid oxygen in a very short span of time.

To ensure swift transportation, Reliance engineers made logistical modifications to rail and road transport, such as laying parallel lines, using hoses, and loading up liquid tankers through pressure differential, since liquid oxygen pumps cannot be installed at short notice.

Another crucial need was transportation capacity. Reliance airlifted 32 ISO containers and additionally augmented transportation capacity for the country. This was done in partnership with the Indian Air Force, Aramco and bp for sourcing and transportation. This helped fulfil a critical need in assured availability of medical grade liquid oxygen for the treatment of severely ill patients across the country. As part of Mission Oxygen, Reliance came together to help save lives, pulling all its facilities together for the nation.

VI. Swasthya Sakhi Program – a Procter & Gamble Initiative

Access to affordable screening, diagnostics & epidemiological data continues to be a major hurdle in India. With the objective of initiating a Maternal & Child Health Community Project that can contribute to Employment, Entrepreneurship and access to affordable screening, diagnostics & digital health, P&G in partnership with Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) instituted the 'Swasthya Sakhi' (Health companions) project across Uttar Pradesh, Goa, and Madhya Pradesh.

Under this project, Swasthya Sakhis, selected by PHFI from the District Communities and empowered with PHFI's Technological Innovation 'Swasthya Sahayak' (SS) - a portable/backpack sized point-of-care information gathering & diagnostic tool - have been deployed to seek & digitize health information of families including conducting diagnostics of pregnant women & to refer high-risk cases to Public Health Centres.

PHFI's Swasthya Sahayak, represents a paradigm shift in the approach to providing care for our most vulnerable of populations. It is an affordable system that integrates patient registration, on the spot digitization, multiple point of care diagnostics and decision support system in a single device. It allows users to deliver care in the domiciliary settings, in clinics, and just about anywhere. The system stores electronic medical records both locally on the tablet and pushes the data onto a cloud thus enabling offline/online operations. The tests which can be conducted using Swasthya Sahayak include Blood Pressure, Body Temperature, Pulse Oximeter, Urine Protein and Sugar, Blood Hemoglobin, Blood Sugar, Malaria test, Pregnancy test. SS also contains decision support tools to enable users to deliver quality recommendations for achieving better health.

128 Swasthya Sakhis have reached out to 15 lakh beneficiaries across Uttar Pradesh, Goa, and Madhya Pradesh. Nearly 10,000 pregnant women have been identified including 5000 high risk pregnancies.

Sakhis trained as part of the Initiative.

8. Way Forward

In the forthcoming years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is anticipated to assume a progressively significant role in shaping business environment, as companies look to tackle the contemporary challenges posed by social, environmental, and economic factors. Various trends and challenges will influence the trajectory and importance of CSR initiatives in the future.

Integration of technology and innovation will play a key role in shaping the future of CSR. Innovative technologies provide effective solutions for addressing environmental and social issues, creating shared value for businesses and society. Advanced analytics tools offer valuable insights into the social and environmental impact of interventions, facilitating data-driven decision-making. Additionally, technology streamlines the execution of CSR projects, addressing complexities in collaboration among stakeholders. Disruptive technologies offer diverse solutions to enhance efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring the successful implementation of CSR initiatives.

Collaborative efforts will increase the scale and effectiveness of CSR initiative Successful CSR implementation hinges on effective collaboration and partnerships across diverse organizations and sectors. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, entities can achieve common goals more efficiently. Collaborative efforts involving government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, and private sector companies can amplify the impact of CSR initiatives, creating a collective force for positive change.

Inclusion is equally vital, ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice and equal opportunity for input. Engaging with diverse groups, including marginalized communities, provides unique perspectives for approaching CSR initiatives. Additionally, inclusion helps businesses build trust and credibility in the communities they serve, fostering sustainable relationships and long-term partnerships.

Social impact and stakeholder engagement are fundamental aspects of CSR. Actively seeking feedback from stakeholders on sustainability performance and social impact initiatives allows businesses to understand diverse needs and expectations. With the rise of social media and digital platforms, companies have unprecedented opportunities to engage stakeholders through compelling storytelling, multimedia content, and interactive campaigns. Leveraging these channels fosters transparency, accountability, and trust, enabling direct connections between businesses and stakeholders.

In summary, the future of CSR in a changing world is characterized by promise and responsibility. Technology, innovation, collaboration, and stakeholder engagement will drive the direction and impact of CSR initiatives. Aligning with global sustainability goals, businesses can create a responsible and sustainable future, contributing meaningfully to the well-being of all stakeholders and the planet. CSR acts as a transformative force, guiding businesses to generate value for society and the planet, not just profits, ushering in a brighter future for generations to come.

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Confederation of Indian Industry

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering Industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.

For more than 125 years, CII has been engaged in shaping India's development journey and works proactively on transforming Indian Industry's engagement in national development. With its extensive network across the country and the world, CII serves as a reference point for Indian industry and the international business community.

As India strategizes for the next 25 years to India@100, Indian industry must scale the competitiveness ladder to drive growth. CII, with the Theme for 2023-24 as 'Towards a Competitive and Sustainable India@100: Growth, Inclusiveness, Globalisation, Building Trust' has prioritized 6 action themes that will catalyze the journey of the country towards the vision of India@100.

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NFCG National Foundation for Corporate Governance

In 2003, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) led a unique PPP model to set up the National Foundation for Corporate Governance in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry, the Institute of Company Secretaries of India, and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. Subsequently, the Institute of Cost Accountants of India, National Stock Exchange and the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs also joined with an objective to promote good Corporate Governance practices both at the level of individual corporates and Industry as a whole.

NFCG endeavours to create a business environment that promotes voluntary adoption of good corporate governance practices.

Vision

Be the Key Facilitator and Reference Point for highest standards of Corporate Governance in India

Mission

- To foster a culture of good Corporate Governance
- To create a framework of best practices, structure, processes and Ethics
- To reduce the existing gap between Corporate Governance framework & actual compliance by corporates
- To facilitate effective participation of different stakeholders
- To catalyse capacity building in emerging areas of Corporate Governance