

ADIL FIROZE, DIRECTOR – CSR CONSULTANCY SERVICES

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CHD Group speaks to Adil Firoze, Director – CSR Consultancy Services on how visionary corporate leaders can help the Government of India by investing in public health and building community healthcare

Q1) COVID-19 pandemic has forced India Inc to re-think the approach towards CSR. What are your initial observations?

You are right. The pandemic of this nature will surely change the priorities of spending on development projects. With the government priority to respond to COVID challenge, the corporate will have to extend full support by revisiting the CSR project selection and allocation.

Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has also notified that spending of funds for COVID-19 relief would be a permissible activity under CSR, including contribution to 'Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES)

The pattern of CSR spends in past few years was highly skewed towards education. It will change now. There will be more emphasis on CSR projects related to health care system, technology and products which prevent virus spreads, promote good behaviour, promote good sanitation, monitor health, promote immunity etc. Further CSR projects addressing issues of migrant labourers' health, accommodation livelihood etc will also figure in to make industrial activities sustainable.*

**The pattern of cumulative CSR spend Spend(in crores) on some major sectors listed in section 135 schedule VII of companies act during the last four years (2014-15 to current fiscal till June, 2019) was as under:*

Total	Rs 52,533
Education Sector	Rs 15742
Health Care over	Rs 9093
Rural Development over	Rs 5467
Environment sustainability over	Rs 3723
Swacch Bharat Kosh	Rs 837
Prime Minister's National Relief Fund	Rs 763
Safe drinking water	Rs 612
Senior citizens welfare	Rs 91
armed forces, veterans, war widows/depend.	Rs 81.5
technology incubators	Rs 69.71

Clean Ganga Fund

Rs 67.1

Q2) CSR in shaping community healthcare and promoting good health and well-being will reap rich benefits for the country in achieving ailing health indicators. What are some ideas that come to your mind which corporates must pursue?

Given the present situation, we have to learn to live with the virus. So life style changes may be required. Some of the ideas which come to my mind relate to system, products and infrastructure to arrest and control the outbreak of virus in any locality, and establishing a support system for infected individuals and their families. This will also contribute towards improving health indicators.

Q3) You have been championing CSR all these years, at CHD Group we consider CSR as Common Shared Responsibility. Would you agree with us?

I fully agree with the CHD's view. If each and every one of us share this responsibility, the impact will be tremendous and visible. We all must contribute towards a shared goal for the betterment of the society.

Q4) Can you name 5 priority areas which Corporate Companies must actively start pursuing in the CSR Space. Remember, there is no wealth, without health, and an unhappy community is always a burden to be borne, not a loyalty to cherish.

It may be

1. Preventive health programmes.
2. Affordable testing,
3. Building Community Hospitals,
4. Monitoring equipments,
5. Building cross sectoral themes for interventions

Q5) It has been a trend that many companies worry too much about commercials instead of quality. How do we change that mindset? It must be recognised that for good quality, adequate spending and good teams are crucial too.

The reason for this to me is more focus on creating immediate visibility and building a brand image. The intent behind showcasing a project should be to make others know about good practices followed in execution and long term impact it creates. Most of the companies remain focussed on immediate output, not on outcome and impact thereby ignoring quality.

There are many infrastructure projects which are inaugurated with great fanfare, but are not traceable after few years. Monitoring and measurement and third part assessments may be a good point to start. Verification of the operation of the project at planned intervals and its reporting will add quality to planning, design and execution of the project.

Q6) The Ministry of Corporate Affairs wanted to exclude Trusts and Societies from the CSR list, for which public comments were invited. The Working Group Report on Social Stock Exchange also heavily objected to such moves. Your thoughts?

Though the reason for changes proposed are not clear, I feel for any change the involvement of all the stakeholders may be a good idea .

Q7) What is the future of Sustainable Development Goals in the context of all resources getting diverted towards COVID-19?

SDG's and effect of COVID-19 are interlinked. Frankly speaking there will be tremendous impact on some of the SDG's. But it also provides an opportunity for course correction.

Some of the goals where impact will be more pronounced will:

1. Good health and well-being
2. *Hunger, due to impact on food supply chains & malnutrition*
3. *Poverty to lack of jobs, unemployment*
4. *Education due to digital divide and lack of infrastructure*
5. *Environment due to changes in lifestyle and climate change*

Thank you very much for your opinion and thoughts in this direction to re-imagine CSR and channelize visionary social impact in the direction that promotes, prevents and safeguards humanity and human well-being.

