

CHOLA-IN PURSUIT OF SOCIAL EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT-Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited have a strong legacy of being a responsible corporate citizen. At Cholamandalam, it is believed that social responsibility is not just a corporate obligation that has to be carried out but an intrinsic part of the ethos and hence they have engaged in CSR activities for several years. They endeavor to positively impact the lives of the disadvantaged sections of society by supporting and engaging in activities that aim at improving their well-being. Cholamandalam is dedicated to the cause of empowering people, educating them, improving their quality of life thereby helping them enter a better life. They endeavor to protect the interest of their stakeholders and contribute to society by making a measurable and positive difference, by supporting several causes. The vision of Chola is to enable customers enter a better life. Chola has a growing clientele of over 8 lakh happy customers across the nation. Ever since its inception and all through its growth, the company has kept a clear sight of its values. The basic tenet of these values is a strict adherence to ethics and a responsibility to all those who come within its corporate ambit - customers, shareholders, employees and society.

KEYWORDS: CSR, Corporate Citizen, Corporate Ethics

1.1. CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED-A PRELUDE

Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited have a strong legacy of being a responsible corporate citizen. At Cholamandalam, it is believed that social responsibility is not just a corporate obligation that has to be carried out but an intrinsic part of the ethos and hence they have engaged in CSR activities for several years. They endeavor to positively impact the lives of the disadvantaged sections of society by supporting and engaging in activities that aim at improving their well-being. Cholamandalam is dedicated to the cause of empowering people, educating them, improving their quality of life thereby helping them enter a better life. The vision of Chola is to enable customers enter a better life. Chola has a growing clientele of over 8 lakh happy customers across the nation. Ever since its inception and all through its growth, the company has kept a clear sight of its values. The basic tenet of these values is a strict adherence to ethics and a responsibility to all those who come within its corporate ambit - customers, shareholders, employees and society.

1.2. CHOLA AND ITS COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Chola endeavors to protect the interest of their stakeholders and contribute to society by making a measurable and positive difference, by supporting several causes viz.,

- Providing basic health care facilities to economically backward societies across geographical areas
- Improving access to education
- Provision of skill development / vocational training
- Rural development
- Environmental sustainability
- Promoting arts, culture and sports
- Sustainable livelihoods
- Entrepreneurship development / through incubators
- Research

2.1. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An attempt has been made to review case studies and the work of individual researchers, magazines, journals, articles pertaining to CSR activities of various corporate giants and their contribution towards fostering the societal development.

Brendan (2003) Furnishes a narrative reflecting an in-depth examination of managerial conceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the Irish context. The narrative locates itself within the debate surrounding the extent to which corporate management may capture social accountants' efforts to promote a broad society-centred conception of CSR. Three key findings emerge from the narrative. First, there is evidence of a tendency for managers to interpret CSR in a constricted fashion consistent with corporate goals of shareholder wealth maximisation. Second, pockets of robust resistance to and defences of this narrow conception do, however, also emerge in the narrative. Third, the complexity of conceiving of a clear meaning for CSR, particularly for those exposed to the structural pressures encountered by these managers, is apparent. This is evident in the initial, somewhat contradictory, nature of many of the conceptions analysed. Reflects on these findings and considers their broad implications for social accountants' attempts to promote greater society centred corporate accountability in Ireland.

Peter (2007) attempts to offer a preliminary case study exploration of the corporate social responsibility issues being addressed and reported by the top ten global retailers. The paper begins with a short discussion of the characteristics and origins of CSR and this is followed by an illustrative examination of the CSR issue publicly reported by the top ten global retailers. The paper draws its empirical material from the CSR reports and information posted on the worldwide web by these retailers. The findings reveal that each of the retailers has its own approach to CSR and that there are substantial variations in the nature and the extent of reporting. More specifically the paper focuses upon four sets of CSR issues, namely those relating to the environment; the marketplace; the workplace; and the community, and on the measurement of CSR performance.

Tara (2007) aims to discuss issues and strategies of developing practices of ecological sustainability in organizations. Three questions guide the discussion: how are practices of social responsibility and ecological sustainability developed and maintained in organizations? What learning in particular is involved in developing practices of ecological sustainability in organizations? How might this learning be fostered by organizational leaders? The article draws from literatures in ecology, ecological learning and corporate social responsibility to describe the nature of ecological sustainability, intents and approaches of organizations developing it, and their challenges. Case examples drawn from studies of small business are examined to explore successful strategies of developing practices of ecological sustainability. These examples are analysed from a learning perspective. Challenges that hinder adoption of ecological sustainability practice include low stakeholder understanding and support, low management focus and strategy, and insufficient cost-benefit analysis. Organizations confronted these challenges by emphasizing education and enabling conditions that fostered learning in everyday action (decentralization, diversity, connections, shared focus, constraints, and feedback).

3.1. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Corporate social responsibility allows organizations to do their bit for the society, environment, customers or for that matter stake holders. Corporate social responsibility gives an opportunity to organizations to work towards the betterment of the society and make it a better place to live. Doing something for the society, stake holders, customers would not only the your business to a higher level but also ensure long term growth and success. Corporate social responsibility plays a crucial role in making the brand popular not only among the competitors but also media, other organizations and most importantly people who are the direct customers. People develop a positive feeling for a brand which takes the initiative of educating poor children, planting more trees for a greener environment, bringing electricity to a village, providing employment to people and so on. CSR activities strengthen the bond among employees. People develop a habit of working together as a single unit to help others. Infact they start enjoying work together and also become good friends in due course of time. They also develop a sense of loyalty and attachment towards their organization which is at least thinking for the society. Corporate social responsibility also goes a long way in building a positive image of the brand. Positive word of mouth eventually helps to generate more revenues for the organization. In today's scenario of cut throat competition, everyone is so occupied in chasing targets and handling the pressure at workplace that we actually forget that there is a world around us as well. Corporate social responsibility in a way also plays a crucial role in the progress of the society. Hence, this paper makes an attempt to evaluate the efforts of Chola in making this world a better place to live in through their community development ninitatives.

4.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the community development activities of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited.
- To appreciate the CSR initiatives of Chola in creating and developing social excellence.

5.1. METHODOLOGY

Information for the study was collected from both Primary and Secondary sources.

5.1.1. Primary Data

Primary was collected by interviewing the executives involved in CSR activities of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited and the beneficiaries of such programmes.

5.1.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from various online sources, books and journals.

5.1.3. Limitation of the Study

The study is confined only to CSR activities of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited.

6.1. THE JOURNEY OF CHOLA TOWARDS SOCIAL EXCELLENCE

The CSR department and community development activists of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited leave no stone unturned to serve the society and to make the world a better place to live.

6.1.1. Health Care Facilities

The health care facilities provided by Chola extend from Tamilnadu to Telangana and Chhattisgarh.

6.1.1. a. Renovation and Expansion of Sir Ivan Stedeford Hospital (SISH), Chennai - In partnership with A.M.M Foundation

For long, Sir Ivan Stedeford Hospital (SISH) has been filling the need by rendering health care for the poor and marginalised people in Ambattur area of Chennai, Tamil Nadu. However, with increasing diseases and ever increasing patients, the hospital regularly needs to be upgraded and expanded. By partnering with A. M. M. Foundation, a registered charitable trust committed towards providing invaluable education and health care to the less privileged through its hospitals, schools and a polytechnic college, Cholamandalam undertook to support the renovation and expansion of the hospital in three phases with a budget estimate of Rs 355 lakhs.

6.1.1.b. Swaccha Karimnagar – In partnership with Bala Vikasa Social Service Society

People of Karimnagar district in Telangana State suffer adverse health conditions due to arsenic and high fluoride contaminated water sources. To help mitigate the issues, Chola undertook initiatives for the welfare of the residents of three villages in Karimnagar district by planning to provide the community with water purified by the Reverse Osmosis (RO) method and individual toilets. The need assessment meetings with the people helped to understand that providing communal water and individual toilets could help in improving living conditions, resulting in the “Swaccha Karimnagar Project”. With an outlay of Rs.97.33 lakh, the aim was to make a beginning by providing safe drinking water through village water kiosks, community and individual household toilets, with people’s participation for ownership with dignity, making the district ‘Swaccha’ (pure) supporting the ‘Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan’. Bala Vikasa Social Service Society, a much respected local NGO with reach, was invited in as a partner. Safe water, using Reverse Osmosis system, is being provided with Any Time Water dispensing facility, powered by a sensor and smart card system, helping the villagers collect water for a very nominal fee of Rs.3-00 for 20 litres, at any time, without disrupting their work or daily wage earning. A primary school, in NTR Colony of Koheda, needed water and sanitation for its children and teachers. Hence, a complex of two closed toilets and 3 urinals each for Male & Female students has been provided along with a bore-well for water. Households in three villages, viz., Bejjanki, Guggilla and Vinjapalli have been provided with a total of 243 optimally spaced and tiled individual toilets, with a bath, to induce the villagers in using the toilets, and to mark a beginning to make the villages ‘Sampoorna Swaccha Gramam’s (Totally sanitised villages). The villagers contributed with about 10% of costs, and/or labour for foundation and brick work etc., thereby taking responsibility for the facilities provided to them. The villagers also took a pledge, in their respective Gram Sabhas, that after the completion of the toilets nobody in these villages will indulge in public defecation.

6.1.1.c. Swachh Raipur – In partnership with Sulabh International and Bala Vikasa Social Service Society

Chhattisgarh is an industrial city and has several Transport Nagars in its proximity. To support the health requirements of the truck drivers and other related workers of the sector and to provide Pure drinking Water and Sanitation facilities in the Transport Nagars, a need assessment was done and it was identified that the Transport Nagar in Hathkhaj-Bhilai with an estimated 10,000 foot falls a day requires a toilet complex, as the old complex was in a dilapidated condition and that they also need purified drinking water. Similarly a Toilet complex at Pandri Bus Station is needed in Raipur. Accordingly with an outlay of Rs. 73.4 Lakh they have partnered with Sulabh International for constructing two 30 seater Semi-Deluxe Toilet complexes in both places. The complexes will have toilets and bath rooms separately for men and women users as also urinals for men and clothes washing facilities. The Toilet Complex in Hathkhaj-Bhilai was completed and inaugurated on the 21st April, 2016 while the water purification plant in Hathkhaj-Bhilai and the Toilet complex in Pandri are in the construction stage.

6.1.2.Improving access to education

Chola strives very hard to improve access to education across Tamilnadu covering many districts.

6.1.2.a. TI Matriculation Higher Secondary School– In partnership with AMM Foundation

At a time where schools are looking at students as just mark producing machines, TI School is refreshing change where it focuses on providing value based quality education for children from around Ambattur. The school believes that shaping the character of the student is of utmost importance and academic excellence will follow. With its unique system of parent feedbacks, and self-assessment methodologies, the school is fast moving towards excellence. TI has received many awards and accolades, the most recent being the International School Award by the British Council. At TI School, the child is more important and every child who steps in to TI School is cherished, valued and groomed to a confident and responsible adult. The school needs to renovate the administrative block, repair and maintain other buildings, replenish teaching aids, Stocking up the Library and sports equipment. Chola is supporting the school development activities with a budget of Rs.95 Lakhs.

6.1.2.b.Isha Vidhya Project – In partnership with Isha Education

In addition to providing with education and support facilities in Chennai, Cholamandalam also wants to judiciously support such efforts in rural areas providing educational facilities for the underserved, deprived and the marginalised. Towards this, they support the “Isha Vidhya Matriculation School” in Perumapalayam, Erode district and “Isha Vidhya Ramaniyam Matriculation School”, in Nangavally, Salem district both in Tamil Nadu. Isha Vidhya Project aims to provide high quality English-medium schools for rural children. The holistic activity-based approach of Isha Vidhya’s educational system nurtures children’s development beyond academics. The important needs of the school, included buses to fetch children from remote villages to the respective schools, Laboratories and equipment and sports material and equipment, are supported by us with a budget of Rs. 33 lakh

6.1.2.c.Eureka Schools – in partnership with AID India

Continuing its work in education, , with a budget of Rs.3 Lakh, Chola sponsors education of 30 children in rural schools called “Eureka Schools” located in Parameswaramangalam village, Kancheepuram district and Venketarayanpettai village, Tiruvannamalai district. The Eureka Schools in both these places provide high quality education for poor children from these and nearby villagers most of whose parents are daily wage earners. In most cases these children are first generation learners. Parents, although illiterate themselves, aspire for the best education for their children, hoping that the next generation would at least break out of the cycle of poverty. These two Eureka Schools, with 350 children enrolled from LKG to V Standard, have been delivering their promise of quality education and changing the lives of rural children through individual-centric learning, engaging teaching methods and a collaborative and inspiring schooling environment.

6.1.2.d. Education Scholarships” – In partnership with Christel House India

Extending its support from educating children in cities and villages to slums, Chola, in partnership with Christel House India, reaches out with Comprehensive Scholarships for education along with nutrition and healthcare with a budget of Rs. 2 Lakhs.

6.1.3. Provision of skill development/vocational training

One of the important components of 'Make in India' is varied skills, but most importantly vocational skills, which can help a person get a new / better job or be an inducement to start an enterprise to enter a better life.

6.1.3.a. Skill Development" to enhance employability and self-employment - In partnership with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)

Chola wished to help the unemployed and underemployed youth by supporting them with imbibing vocational skills with the outlay of Rs.50 Lakhs. They aimed to provide skill training to youth across 3 States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra (Vidarbha region) and Tamil Nadu, through the NSDC partner network and work towards instilling economic security and stability through holistic development, facilitating enhanced access to technical knowledge and job opportunities in Industries and through self-employment.

6.1.4. Promoting Arts, Culture & Sports

Chola also endeavours to promote Arts and Culture through their versatile programmes.

6.1.4.a. Learning through Arts Program– In partnership with Madras Craft Foundation

Chola supports Arts, Culture and Heritage to help the new generation citizens to understand our country's great culture, its arts and historical heritage. For this purpose, they have partnered with the NGO Madras Craft Foundation, whose flagship effort 'Dakshina Chitra' – an inclusive museum - aims to use the arts, theatre, craft, music and rhythm and drawing as techniques for self-expression, the development of self-confidence and also to create awareness of oneself and the world around them.

6.1.4.b. Education through Arts Program – In partnership with The Little Theatre

Chola with an aim to tread the innovative paths and as a part of such a move have partnered with The Little Theatre, which conducts workshops in dance and drama in the slum areas and select talented children / youth from them to extent holistic education to them by supporting them comprehensively through educational scholarships.

6.1.5. Entrepreneurship development

Chola aims to create more job providers than job seekers through their entrepreneurship development programmes.

6.1.5.a. Support to Incubators of Indian Institute of Technology, Madras(IIT-M)

In a bid to support the development of Technology through an incubator model, Chola has entered into a partnership with Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) to support the endeavours of the IITM Incubation Cell and the Rural Technology and Business Incubator, with a budget of Rs. 100 lakhs

6.1.6. Research

Research is an inevitable part of development of any country. Chola takes adequate efforts to activate the research activities.

6.1.6.a. Research and development of nutritional foods / supplements for rural communities – In partnership with Shri AMM Murugappa Chettiar Research Centre (MCRC) In Tamilnadu

MCRC is a registered society conducting research and development in science and technology for rural development mainly in the areas of Food, Energy and Environment for improved livelihoods (FEEL) Providing Farmers nutrients and water quality analysis through the year.

Research in the area of sustainable Agricultural Practices

CSR Budget was allocated to support the ongoing research in Sustainable Agricultural Practices for Smallholding farmers in the Coimbatore, Cuddalore, Dindugal, Kancheepuram, Karur, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Sivaganga and Villupuram districts of Tamil Nadu.

Nutritional Food and supplements for Rural Community

Research is conducted in eradicating Malnutrition, to help Children, Women and the Elderly facing the risk of nutritional deficiencies; Conservation of Natural Resources and Enhancement of Livelihoods by encouraging nutritious food production as part of Rural Development, in Sustainable Agricultural Practices for Smallholding farmers in the Coimbatore, Cuddalore, Dindugal, Kancheepuram, Karur, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Sivaganga and Villupuram districts of Tamil Nadu and in Puducherry of Puducherry.

6.1.7. Miscellaneous /others/ special outreach

6.1.7.a. Chief Ministers Public Relief Fund

The months of November-December 2015 were historic as Tamil Nadu state suffered unexpected amount of floods due to incessant rains causing havoc and exorbitantly huge losses. This necessitated the state administration seeking support from all sources and especially the industry.

Chola contributed Rs 2 crore to Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund towards flood relief activity in Tamil Nadu.

Support to Public

Rs 3 lacs, was given by Chola to "Nutrition on wheels" for medicines to be distributed in urban slums during Chennai floods. Chola Help desk – A task force that reached all employees in Chennai to check their safety & need during the TN flood. This task force all volunteered for various relief work from rescuing colleagues to extending shelter and providing supplies

Support to Employees

We Believe & We Heal – Flood Relief: A program to support the flood impacted employees. 480 employees reported damage following the flood in TN. Following facilities were extended to employees: Grant amount of Rs. 20,000 for medium impacted & Rs. 40,000 for high impacted released. Two wheeler repair charges reimbursement up to a limit of Rs. 5000. Car repair – tie up with workshop and reimbursement up to a limit of Rs. 50,000. Interest free loan with a repayment option of 24 / 36 months.

7.1. CONCLUSION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become one of the standard business practices of our time. For companies committed to CSR it means kudos and an enhanced overall reputation – a powerful statement of what they stand for in an often cynical business world. The establishment of a CSR strategy is a crucial component of a company's competitiveness and something that should be led by the firm itself. This means having policies and procedures in place which integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights or consumer concerns into business operations and core strategy – all in close collaboration with stakeholders. For companies, the overall aim is to achieve a positive impact on society as a whole while maximising the creation of shared value for the owners of the business, its employees, shareholders and stakeholders. Chola truly believes that service to mankind is service to society and service to society is service to God. The community development initiatives of Chola have definitely made this world a better place to live in.

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others”

-Mahatma Gandhi

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