

# Integrating Child Welfare into Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies: An Analysis of Best Practices

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## Abstract

*This scholarly article investigates the incorporation of integrated child welfare initiatives within Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks, emphasizing exemplary practices across diverse sectors. As corporates increasingly recognize the significance of social sustainability, the promotion of child welfare has emerged as an essential component of robust CSR models. The research delineates effective programs that prioritize child welfare, demonstrating how businesses can generate positive outcomes for children while remaining congruent with their fundamental values. The article conducts qualitative case study research to identify crucial elements that enhance effective integration, including the engagement of stakeholders, partnerships with non-governmental organizations, and conformity to global standards like the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The conclusions aim to assist corporations in refining their CSR strategies and contribute to the ongoing dialogue regarding responsible corporate citizenship pertaining to child protection and development.*

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Child Welfare, Stakeholder Engagement, Educational and Health Initiatives

## Introduction

After introducing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2013, CSR became an essential part of organizational strategy. Corporate companies are increasingly conscious that their financial performance is closely linked to their social and environmental impact. Consequently, a lot of corporates are taking C.S.R. investments into their strategic frameworks, acknowledging that responsible business practices lead to sustainable growth, long-term success, risk control and improved brand reputation. After ten years of the introduction of corporate social responsibility, the idea had undergone a significant transformation from a mere philanthropic activity to a much more comprehensive approach. According to the Ministry of Corporates Affairs data, during the financial year of 2022-23, an amount of 29,986 crore has been spent on a total number of 44425 C.S.R. projects. A major chunk of the investment is going into health and sanitation, Rural Development and E.D.L (Education, differently abled and livelihood).

Even though C.S.R. has undergone a significant transformation in the past ten years there are still areas that have desiring focused C.S.R. investments and interventions. Especially in a country like India, which houses the largest adolescent population in the world (253 million), the absence of a concentrated investment in the area of Child welfare is a significant concern. Understanding the importance and prioritising, the investment in the well-being and development of children is crucial to the future of our nation.

### **Major Areas for Focused C.S.R. Investment in Child Welfare**

#### **Health and Nutrition**

According to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) around 15% of India's population is still living in multidimensional poverty. To secure the holistic development of children, Prioritising investment in the area of health and nutrition is critical for the well-being of children. C.S.R initiatives can focus on providing access to modernised healthcare to children from underprivileged communities, corporates can fund to develop or modernise health centres or clinics in remote areas in India where government missionaries have limitations to reach. To make sure children living in these remote areas, do receive routine checkups, vaccination and critical care. They can also deploy mobile healthcare units in places where permanent facilities are difficult to develop.

Also partnering with NGOs who have expertise in the field of child welfare or paediatric care, making use of their knowledge and experience in the field will provide a more comprehensive coverage. And also, ensures that the provided health care is reaching efficiently and effectively to the communities and that the desired targets are met.

**Community Health Education:** sensitising the communities about preventive health and better hygiene practices and making them aware of the importance of routine medical check-ups can entitle communities to be better equipped to prioritise their children's health.

**Nutritional Programmes:** providing proper nutritional support is an underlying factor for the physical and cognitive development of children. Through various intervention programs, corporates can make a qualitative change in the lives of children like school meal programmes which ensure children receive at least one balanced meal daily. Also, can fund nutritional support programmes for children from low-income families, one of the common themes in children living in low-income families is many of them have vitamin and micronutrient deficiencies. Furthermore, arranging sensitisation programmes or workshops for families making them aware of proper nutrition and, a healthy diet can assist low-income families who may be struggling to ensure their children have the requisite nutrition.

#### **Education and Literacy**

Through C.S.R. initiatives corporates can fund building new schools or can renovate existing buildings by making them safe and suitable for learning. Many rural villages in India still don't have proper facilities in schools that are apt for providing quality education this includes accessible buildings, proper ventilation, and basic amenities like furniture, libraries, labs, and also. essential facilities like toilets and safe drinking water.

**Community Learning Centre:** by partnering with NGOs in the field corporates can establish community learning centres in areas where no possible formal schooling options are available. These centres will work as an alternative way of providing proper basic education for children.

**Transportation:** providing safe transportation facilities to children who may have to travel a long distance to access quality education. Funding transportation facilities will also reduce absenteeism in schools due to the reason of long distance and safety concerns.

**Scholarship Programmes:** financial constraints are one of the major factors for children from underprivileged communities resisting them from accessing quality education. Providing these students with merit-based scholarships and financial aid will provide a level playing field for children from underprivileged communities, ensuring that students can pursue their academic goals.

**Digital Learning Initiatives:** We are increasingly moving into a digital world, where children who have less accessibility to the internet and digital learning will be at a disadvantage. Corporates can fund to upgrade the existing technological capabilities of schools and also can run digital literacy programs for children in rural areas enabling them with essential skills that are required in the digital world. Moreover, conducting training programs for teachers to blend technology into their pedagogy will provide overall a better learning experience for students.

### **Safety and Protection of Children**

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), data shows that overall, 1.62 lakh cases have been registered on crimes committed against children in India during the year 2022 which is an 8% increase compared to the previous year, which shows the critical and alarming condition children in India are facing. Safeguarding children and providing them with safety and protection is indispensable for their overall well-being and development.

**Child Rights Advocacy:** Corporates can collaborate with NGOs in the field and run awareness campaigns by educating parents and community members about the importance of child rights and also, sensitizing children about their rights will show transformative results in the long run.

**Legal Support:** Several organizations in India, are supporting vulnerable children and their families with legal support but due to the financial constraints they have been facing, the service they are providing will not have the coverage they have been desiring. Corporates can collaborate with these organizations and giving them financial support will make certain that vulnerable children and their families do receive the required legal support.

**Conducting Safety Programmes in Schools:** providing training to teachers, and non-teaching staff to identify any sort of distress, trauma, or behavioural changes in children. These programs will enable teachers and non-teaching staff with skills that will help them with early identification of the issues children are facing so that they refer the children to appropriate support systems.

### **Vocational Training**

Conducting vocational training and skill development courses for children is essential for the development of the nation, children are the future workforce of our country equipping them with essential skills will enable them to have successful careers in the future. This training not only empowers their employability but also nurtures personality development, resilience, and integration into society. Corporates can work with NGOs and run skill development centres, that will provide state-of-the-art training to adolescents to make them qualified for the industry demands. Conducting internship programs or apprenticeship programs for adolescent children and providing them with hands-on training in their institutions will help them to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained in practical circumstances; this will certainly make them more confident in their talent.

**Financial Literacy Programs:** while partnering with financial institutions through their C.S.R. initiatives corporates can conduct financial literacy programmes like banking, credit management, and online banking and also can conduct classes on stock marketing, and trading these classes will help them to have their own earnings at a tender age and make them financially independent and empowered.

### **Research and Advocacy**

To meet the desired objectives of any C.S.R. projects or interventions well-conducted research is essential. The research will help us understand the complex issues the children are facing and also help us plan the programmes effectively so that the intervention will reach as many children as possible.

Through C.S.R. initiatives corporates can provide financial support to research institutions that are conducting research in the field of child welfare.

Need assessment and evaluation- research will help the C.S.R initiatives to understand, the particular issue a community is facing so that the company can plan the targeted interventions effectively to gauge maximum success. Also, in the case of evaluation firms have to conduct evaluation research to understand the effectiveness of their project, how it is working, and what are the major issues it is facing. It will help the corporates to make the required changes in their projects or schemes so that they will be more effective in the future.

**Advocacy:** corporates can run awareness campaigns, that will raise public awareness on a particular issue related to children's welfare. These campaigns help us mobilise public support for the cause. By using the help of print media, TV media, and online media the awareness will disseminated to a wider public.

**Lobbying:** another important tool corporates can successfully use to influence policymakers and government officials to enact specific child protection laws, policy changes, or schemes that benefit children.

A concentrated and well-thought-out C.S.R. investment in the field of child welfare will provide long-standing benefits to society as well as the business involved. by enabling the safety, protection, health and mental well-being of children and also providing them with life skill training and career guidance, corporates can play a significant role in the development of our nation.

### **C.S.R Initiatives: Best Practices in Child Welfare**

It is a mutually beneficial process for corporates to integrate their C.S.R initiative with child welfare, corporates can use their expertise, resources, and authority to meet the unique needs of children and vice versa it will amplify the brand value of the company. Integrating Child-specific projects and schemes into the strategic objectives of a corporate C.S.R. policy facilitates a more sustainable and equitable future.

Below we are discussing some of the notable child welfare C.S.R initiatives done by the top corporate companies in India over the past 10 years.

### **Health Sector**

#### **Thalassemia Bala Sewa yojana**

It is a C.S.R. project run by Coal India; it is a public sector undertaking (PSU) that has been running this project from 2017 onwards. Thalassemia is a hereditary blood disorder that causes the body to have less haemoglobin than normal It constitutes a rare and onerous medical condition necessitating continuous and recurrent blood transfusions throughout one's lifespan, in addition to various costly medical treatments for the sake of survival (Bhattacharya 2024). According to data, there are over 10,000 children are born with thalassemia every year in India. And permanent cure for this disorder lies in bone marrow transplantation, also studies are showing that transplantation is more successful in children whenever it is done at the earliest.

Coal India is running this project in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Through the thalassemia Bala Sewa Yojana initiative, the company is providing up to 10 lakhs to eligible patients for bone marrow transplantation. The company has opened a website exclusively

for inviting applications to the scheme. Presently 11 reputed hospitals all over India are collaborating with Coal India with this programme like AIIMS Delhi, PGIMER Chandigarh, CMC Vellore etc...

### **Rural Creche Initiative by Azim Premji Foundation**

In partnership with civil society organizations (CSOs) in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. Azim Premji Foundation have set up 300 creches and they are planning to build another 1000 creches in the next 10 years.

In rural India mostly in the remote areas of India, children between the age group of 1-3 years are at a high chance of being vulnerable to malnutrition even though these children are qualified for the free immunization and vaccination programs of the government. However, due to a lack of connectivity and unavailability of basic infrastructure in these remote village's government services are unavailable to these communities which make them highly vulnerable to severe health issues and malnutrition.

Creches work like community-based centres. Where it will provide children under the age of 3 years with proper nutritional support, regular health checkups, early primary education, and early childhood development (ECD). These creches will provide one hot meal and snacks two times a day. All the staff in these creches were properly trained, and they will regularly monitor the development of children by checking their weight and height and if they find any malnourishment in children, they will report to the nutrition resource centre for medical support.

### **Vocational and skill development**

#### **Police Girls and Boys Club in Association with HCL Foundation**

HCL Foundation and Tamil Nadu police jointly started the project “police girl and boys club” in 2011 to empower children living in the urban slums of Chennai, avadi, and Tambaram metropolitan areas. This initiative aspires to establish a comprehensive platform for underprivileged children, thereby providing them with a supportive and nurturing atmosphere. The primary focal points of the initiative encompass after-school programs, digital education, ancillary support services, athletic activities, health initiatives, environmental stewardship, scouting and guiding organisations, along with advocacy for children's rights.

The project has already reached over 25,000 children from the 29 slums in Chennai, Tambaram and Avadi.

#### **Skill Development Program by NIIT Foundation and Angel One**

India houses the largest younger population in the world, and the population continues to face the persistent problem of unemployability. According to the latest data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, India's unemployment rate is at 9.2%. in association with Angel One, NIIT Foundation has started a skill development programme for adolescents, by providing them with advanced training in banking, financial service and insurance (BFSI), and Business process outsourcing (BPO).

The foundation provides free of cost online training for students from underprivileged communities, they are using a multipronged approach to training by integrating self-learning and instructor-led training modules. According to Foundations data, over 4000 trainees have successfully received job placements in multiple reputed organisations like HDB Financial, Quess Corp, and C-tech. A majority of 58% of placed trainees are female trainees from underprivileged communities from several Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat.

## **Education**

### **Tinkering labs- Xiaomi India and United Way India**

In association with United Way India, Xiaomi is founding Tinkering labs in schools in Karnataka and Delhi. The objectives of these tinkering labs are to establish environments conducive to the acquisition of innovative competencies among the youth, wherein they can ideate through experiential methodologies, operate, and engage in a dynamic learning setting. To develop our adolescent population with the critical competencies necessary for the 21st century, including creativity, innovation, analytical reasoning, design thinking, social and intercultural collaboration, in addition to principled leadership, among other abilities. Also to facilitate the development of inventive solutions tailored to India's distinctive challenges, thereby bolstering the nation's aspirations to advance as a knowledge-driven economy. They have successfully delivered educational training to more than 4,000 students across 12 distinct educational institutions.

### **Vidyadhanam Program- Tata Motors**

This program utilizes a comprehensive methodology designed to augment the educational achievements of students attending secondary and higher secondary government institutions. It incorporates a range of initiatives, including specialized tutoring sessions for secondary school pupils and preparatory coaching for individuals aspiring to enter Medical and Engineering programs. Moreover, Vidyadhanam provides merit-based scholarships to deserving students who encounter financial hardships, thereby promoting inclusivity within the educational landscape. In addition, Tata Motors incorporates athletic programs, extracurricular activities, and workshops focused on value-driven life skills into the framework to cultivate a well-rounded educational experience. By addressing deficiencies in educational infrastructure, Tata Motors plays a pivotal role in fostering positive and supportive learning environments within government-operated public schools, ultimately empowering countless students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

## **Conclusion**

A concentrated and strategic investment in the critical domain of child welfare should not be perceived merely as a philanthropic endeavour, but rather as a comprehensive and multifaceted approach that ensures the delivery of substantial and meaningful benefits not only for society at large but also for the various business entities that engage in such initiatives. By taking proactive measures to guarantee the protection, enhancement of health standards, provision of quality educational opportunities, and the development of essential life skills for adolescents, corporations can assume a crucial and transformative role in the process of shaping a significantly more promising and prosperous future for the nation of India. This strategic alignment between the interests of businesses and the pressing needs of society culminates in a framework for sustainable development, which ultimately yields advantages for the community, contributes positively to the economy, and creates lasting benefits for the corporations themselves over an extended period.

## **Declaration**

This Research Paper is the original work of the authors, has not been published and has not been submitted for publication elsewhere.

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