

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, CSR & HRD

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Abstract

India did not perform well in removing gender-based disparities and ranked 108th out of 145 countries in 2015, 114th out of 142 countries in 2014 and 101st among 136 countries in 2013 in Gender Gap Index at World Economic Forum. Even companies such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) where women workforce comprises of one-third of its employees, women are still scarce at the company's leadership rank and non-existent at the board level. Gender policy has been found to be lacking even in majority of the Indian companies and less is to be said about women in underdeveloped and rural areas. Lack of literacy and poor education initiatives, low awareness on health issues, absence of decision making authority in family are some of the factors responsible for existing condition of women in rural areas. Corporate social initiatives are needed at policy level, such as skilling and employment of women and require involvement of public-private partnership in such efforts. Paper attempts at examining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Corporate Human Resource Development (HRD) departments of organizations which are need of the hour and may include assistance in formation of self-help groups amongst local girls and women in underdeveloped areas around them, encouraging their entrepreneurial spirit, training them through establishment of skill-development initiatives and educating them on vital areas such as crime against women, competency development, stress management and time management.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Human Resource Development, women, skill-development.

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Women empowerment can be best understood with the help of case of Shobha Thambare: Shobha Thambare resides in Ahire village, which is some 100 kilometres away from Mumbai, where she is more popular as Shakti Amma. In 2005 she lost the company of her husband, and life forced her to raise her child on her own. Project Shakti, which is an initiative of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) and is a rural direct-to-consumer retail distribution, enabled Thombare to live a decent life and raise her child also. Now, she is able to make a profit of Rs 2,500 a month, as she sells successfully products such as Fair & Lovely cream, Lux soap, detergents such as Wheel, and products including SIM cards. She, at the beginning invested Rs 15,000-20,000 with the support and assistance of a local self-help group that was working with Hindustan Unilever. Thombare earns a decent commission on products sold directly to consumers (as much as 12 per cent), and also on goods sold to retailers. Kedar Lele who heads Project Shakti commented that as 67 per cent of India lives in villages, this project was particularly designed for the Indian market. HUL in the 1990s could reach out to 40 per cent of the population, as their traditional distribution system didn't work in the hinterland. Therefore, HUL decided to create a self-sustaining model of micro-entrepreneurs in such areas. Project Shakti which started with 17 women in two states and by 2012 it gave approx. 48,000 women a chance to enhance their livelihood and provided access to quality products across 135,000 villages and over 3.3 million households. Owing to its success, the project got customized and several South-East Asian, African and Latin American markets like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Vietnam adapted it. It is still going strong. HUL aims at increasing the number of Shakti entrepreneurs to 75,000 by this year.

Women Empowerment: Introduction

India did not perform well in removing gender-based disparities and ranked 108th out of 145 countries in 2015, 114th out of 142 countries in 2014 and 101st among 136 countries in 2013 in Gender Gap Index at World Economic Forum and proper and effective gender policies have been found lacking in most of the Indian organizations.

"Empowerment happens from within, from self-confidence. So the emotion that 'I can do it' is very significant," Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan once said. Gender equality as a value and principle and prohibition of gender discrimination has been enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The

Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also advocates empowerment of the State to adopt measures of promoting and empowering women. Equality before law is guaranteed by Article 14 of the Constitution of India. Discrimination on the grounds of sex is prohibited by Article 15. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment.

Our oldest of historical evidences show women's empowerment in different spheres. Our Constitution believes in that, our laws and State encourage this policy. If we move in the journey of Five Year Plans, from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards we would find a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare-oriented to development-oriented. In recent years, the empowerment of women has come to be recognized as the national issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was established by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights of women. We have witnessed through the 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) of the Constitution of India that reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities have been provided for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels in the country. Judiciary has, time and again, contributed towards women empowerment. In *Air India vs. Nergesh Meerza* the Air India and Indian Airlines Regulation were challenged in Court as violative of Article 14 of Constitution of India. Regulation 46 provided that an air Hostess was required to retire from service upon attaining the age of 35 years or on marriage if it took place within four years of her joining of service or on first pregnancy, whichever was earlier. The Supreme Court came up with its judgement that such Regulation was violative of Article 14 of the constitution and struck down the Regulation providing for retirement of the Air Hostess on her first pregnancy, as unconstitutional and void. In another case *Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan*, Vishaka, a non-governmental organization working for gender equality, had filed a writ petition seeking the court's intervention for upholding dignity of women under Article 21 of the constitution. Petition was filed as a social worker in Rajasthan was gangraped as she opposed child marriage. The gangrape was an act of revenge. Supreme Court came up with number of guidelines to promote discrimination free environment against women at the workplace. The judgement became a stepping stone in enacting Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. In *Apparel Export Promotion Council v A.K.Chopra* Supreme Court

broadened the scope of courts while hearing cases of crime against women and held that, “In a case involving charge of sexual harassment or attempt to sexually molest, the courts are required to examine the broader probabilities of case and not swayed away by insignificant discrepancies or narrow technicalities or dictionary meaning of the expression ‘molestation’ or ‘physical assault’..... The sexual harassment of a female employee at the place of work is incompatible with the dignity and honour of a female and need to be eliminated and that there can be no compromise with such violation”. In Mohd. Ahmed Khan vs. Shah Bano Begum, which created uproar in Muslim Community, a five Judges Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court declared that a Muslim husband having sufficient means must provide maintenance to his divorced wife who finds herself incapable of maintaining herself. Such a wife was declared entitled to the maintenance even if she is not ready and refuses to live with Muslim husband because he has contracted another marriage within the limits of four wives allowed to him by Quran. Indian Penal Code (IPC) also has several provisions to punish crime against women. Section 304 of the IPC deals about murder of women in connection with demand of dowry. Sections 312 to 315 of IPC deal with punishment for causing miscarriage. Section 354 IPC provides punishment for assault or criminal force to women with intent of outrage her modesty. Section 376 IPC deals about punishment for rape and its scope has been widened by Criminal Law Amendment Act in April 2013. Section 494 and 495 of IPC protects women from bigamy. Section 497 IPC deals about protection of married women from adultery. Section 498 provides enticing or taking away or detaining any married woman with criminal intent as an offence while Section 498-A of IPC deals with husband or relative of husband subjecting women to cruelty and S. 509 IPC provides imprisonment for someone who utters any word or makes any sound or gesture to insult the modesty of a woman. Under S. 125, Code of Criminal Procedure, a woman has got right to maintenance.

Time and again, Corporates also have shown interest in women empowerment either on their own or by tying up with different partners. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) made headlines in 2014 for being the first private sector organization in India to employ more than 100,000 women employees. This is the result of several women-empowerment initiatives TCS has taken over a long period of time, however, women are still scarce at the board level. VLCC in the past has tied

up with the Women and Child Development Ministry to provide skilling and employment to women as part of corporate social responsibility.

Wipro Ltd. was honoured with the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEP) leadership award in New York in 2014 for its commitment towards gender equality initiatives and responding to women's multiple responsibilities through innovative programmes. Wipro has instituted gender equity effort and worked around the three themes of Exposure, Flexibility and Empowerment. The "Women of Wipro" (WOW) program, launched in 2008, is a strategic enabler that promotes equal opportunity and gender equality within the organization. Over the last few years, WOW initiatives have helped nurture an equal opportunity culture within the organization, support the career ambitions of women executives, and facilitate greater business participation by women leaders at different levels across the organization.

Vodafone India has been working towards expanding the network of its all-women stores, called Angel Stores. The Vodafone Angel Store is one of its kind, completely managed and run by women employees which aims at providing women employees with more secure and productive work environment. Additionally, it also aims at women customers who feel more welcomed while visiting the store.

The Walmart Foundation and Swasti Health Resource Center (Swasti) have trained over 12,000 women working in 30 factories across three states - Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat from 2012, which is part of the larger Walmart Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiative, aiming to train nearly 1 million women. The training programme in India, was launched by Swasti has taught critical life skills related to communication, hygiene, reproductive and occupational health and safety, and also has been working in the direction of identifying personal strengths and ensuring gender sensitivity. To encourage entrepreneurship among women many start-ups have also taken initiative. In northern India, organisations such as Chandigarh-based Start-up Accelerator Chamber of Commerce (SACC), Confederation of Indian Industry's Young Indians (CII's Yi) and Noida-based Sheroes.in have started initiating and organising mentorship programmes that bring together successful entrepreneurs and youngsters who plan to start their

own businesses. SACC also organised a boot camp for women entrepreneurs recently, in which more than 60 women entrepreneurs participated.

However, lack of literacy and poor education initiatives, low awareness on health issues, absence of decision making authority in family are some of the factors responsible for backwardness of women especially in rural areas.

Women Empowerment through CSR and Role of HRD

The term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerged in the 1960s, became increasingly popular and common in the 1990s and became a bit of a buzzword from 2000 onwards. Ministry of Corporate Affairs notified S.135 of Companies Act, 2013 and Schedule VII of Companies Act, 2013 as well as provisions of Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Rules, 2014 to come into effect from April 1, 2014. With effect from April 1, 2014 every company, private limited or public limited, which either has a net worth of Rs.500 crore or a turnover of Rs.1000 crore or net profit of Rs.5 crore, needs to spend at least 2% of its average net profit for the immediately preceding three financial years on corporate social responsibility activities. The CSR activities should not be undertaken in normal course of business and must be with respect to activities mentioned in Schedule VII of the 2013 Act. Contribution to any political party is not considered as CSR activity and activities in India would be considered for computing CSR expenditure.

HRD professionals need to be partnered with while designing CSR initiatives of the organization including women empowerment and HR may drive such CSR programmes from conceptualization to implementation. CSR programmes need to be part of serious business strategy to make it a success. HR professionals have been time and again, successfully performing the function of educating employees on the need and value of CSR within the organization, developing responsible CSR initiatives and practices, communicating CSR initiatives to stakeholders of the organization and providing a blueprint for CSR activities in the organization. Fully committed HR department may add value to women empowerment initiatives and may lead to enhanced employee participation.

Women Empowerment in Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) is an Indian state-controlled oil and gas company which has its headquarters in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The Corporation operates two large refineries of the country located at Kochi and Mumbai. Burmah Shell Group of Companies, on 24th January, 1976, was taken over by the Government of India to reshape as Bharat Refineries Limited. It was renamed as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited on 1st August, 1977. It was the first refinery to process newly found indigenous crude (Bombay High) in India. After nationalization in 1976, Bharat Petroleum changed gear to take a rapid growth path. It went on for massive expansion and modernization and gave a tremendous boost to the company's performance. Large scale recruitment and training became vitally important to meet the expansion demands.

BPCL's CSR Policy

BPCL's CSR Policy has been approved by the Board as per the new Companies Act 2013 which allots at least 2% of average net profits of the company made during the three immediately preceding financial years to be earmarked for undertaking CSR activities in every financial year. The CSR Committee of the Board consists of three directors and headed by an external director, which is the approving committee for all CSR projects. The CSR Committee of the Board includes External Director, Director HR and Director Finance.

Case of Jajpur District

As part of its CSR initiative BPCL took community development initiative in Jajpur District of Orissa. HR team of BPCL headed by HR Chief played a major role in the project. Having understood the need of the community, BPCL constituted a team to implement the work in the community with the objective of village becoming socially conscious and to make community self-reliant. Project was implemented in seven phases. The main participants in the project were:

- Villagers
- NGO partner – Research Analysis Consultants
- BPCL LPG Team based in Bhubaneshwar and Khurda
- BPCL HR Team at Kolkata headed by HR Chief and CSR co-ordinator
- BPCL Corporate CSR Team headed by GM (Admin)

Formation of SHG in the village

Phase 4 was related to formation of Self-Help Groups (SHG) and empowerment of women. The group comprised mainly of women. Women had mutually agreed to learn stitching and appliqué work (a form of embroidery famous in Eastern India). BPCL supported these women volunteers by way of providing teacher from the nearby village and also 4 sewing machines. Initially the women volunteers used to learn stitching work in the time they had in spare after getting free from working in the mines. Subsequently when the first batch completed the course, simultaneously a course was conducted on marketing the stitched products. A group of women were sensitized through training to market the stitched products in the local haats (local bazaar).

The course included:

- Training in Communication skills
- Understanding and assessing the market requirements
- Focus on Quality of stitched products
- Focus on Pricing the clothes stitched
- Proper Co-ordination within SHG
- Clear Roles and responsibilities and focus on living upto Roles

The group started with a slow beginning but began to generate income through stitching and that made a breakthrough in the village. The women from the SHG were able to contribute, though in very small amount, towards the family income which came mainly from mining and agriculture. More and more women came forward to learn stitching and to discontinue the mining job.

Women Empowerment in Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) is an Indian state-owned oil and natural gas company with its headquarters at Mumbai, Maharashtra. HPCL is a Government of India Enterprise with a Navratna Status, and a Forbes 2000 and Global Fortune 500 company. Originally it had been incorporated as a company under the Indian Companies Act 1913. It is listed on the Bombay Stock exchange (BSE) and National Stock Exchange (NSE), India.

HPCL has been playing role of a responsible Corporate Citizen and as part of that has practiced the CSR model of "Creating Shared Values", by reaching out to the stakeholders, community and society who are directly or indirectly involved in its business operations. HPCL has worked towards CSR and identified four focus areas for its CSR Programs - Child Care & Education, Health Care, Skill Development and Community Development to make a difference to the underprivileged. CSR activities of HPCL has primarily focuses on identifying gaps in the existing system of the delivery to society and intervening meaningfully with them, so as to create a long-term, sustainable impact.

CSR Council:

Chairman of the CSR Council Director HR and Executive Director are amongst the members of the CSR Council. Together they suggest CSR activities to CSR Department which align with Corporate Vision and review quarterly the CSR activities and expenditure vs Budgets, for midcourse corrections, if any. The CSR Management Committee consists of Director HR as its Chairman and members include Executive Director – HRD amongst others. The role / responsibilities of the CSR Management Committee include review the proposals for CSR projects/programs/activities received from various locations and approval of proposals of value between Rs. 25 lacs and Rs. 50 lacs against approved allocated budget.

Dr.Sarathi, Director HR commented on CSR ‘Our CSR policies and practices have been based on the 4 pillars- Community based CSR, Environment based CSR, Product based CSR and Workplace based CSR. Our contribution to each of these is in the form of ethical work practices, implementation of the principals of Global Compact, and active participation and interaction with the community. Our programs on Health Care, Drinking Water, Spread of Literacy and Education, Women Empowerment to name a few has had a deep impact on the Sustainable Development of the Society in which we operate.’

Dinesh Deshpande, Executive Director, Human Resource Development adds, ‘Nurturing a strong corporate culture which emphasizes CSR values and competencies are required to achieve synergistic benefits. An important issue corporations need to be aware of is that CSR is no more simply an activity for public relation and marketing object with peripheral commitment but

occupies a central place in developing such culture amongst employees which underlines CSR values and competencies...HR will play a stellar role in embedding the CSR values and strategic importance of CSR in the organization.'

The Concept

HPCL has pioneered a novel scheme called Rasoi Ghar (community kitchen) for promotion of LPG as a cooking fuel at the community level. The Rasoi Ghar scheme involves setting up a community kitchen at the village level equipped with gas stoves and LPG cylinder, in a space made available by the local community and accessible to all the interested section of the society. In this scheme women are encouraged to bring in their raw material and cook. They do not need to invest in stoves or pay a connection deposit, but only have to pay for the use of the fuel and the facility based upon the duration of usage.

The benefits of Rasoi Ghars are as follows:

1. Improvement in social relationships - Rasoi Ghars have become places of social interaction to the women using it, kids are seen playing outside, while mothers cook inside.
2. Advantage of better health, hygiene and safety for women
3. Prevention of one-time investment on LPG connection (deposit, stove, utensils).
4. Cooking place readily available with affordable fuel (payment according to usage)
5. Time saving otherwise spent on gathering firewood as well as reduction in cooking time
6. Environmental benefits including reduced deforestation and climate change

Extension of the Concept

The concept has also being extended to other areas. HPCL is now currently running Rasoi Ghars in many reputed hospitals like AIIMS - New Delhi, King George Hospital - Visakh, Lal Ded hospital - Srinagar, PGI - Chandigarh etc., to ensure cooking of hygienic food at affordable cost for the relatives of patients who accompany the patient. Rasoi Ghar project has been also doing well with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan. Today more than 1950 Rasoi Ghars are successfully operating across the country, benefiting 22,000 families and empowering women through social interaction and increased safety.

The Nanhi Kali programme: A female empowerment initiative

The Nanhi Kali program has aimed at providing academic material support to the girl child and creates an enabling environment to help her pursue her studies and get basic education. The project has also aimed at giving the beneficiaries a platform to display their creative talents. The girls are also taken for educational tours, which exposes them to new places and experiences. It is a good combination of study and pleasure. Most of the beneficiaries of the Nanhi Kali Project come from backward and tribal areas whose parents are below the poverty line.

This initiative aimed by the organization speaks of proper chalked out gender policy towards women empowerment which has been found to be lacking even in majority of the Indian companies.

Following are the recommendations to create women-empowerment:

- HR departments need to work towards empowering women by training them in vital competencies such as making them sensitive about understanding their strengths, training needs by going for self-analysis and environmental scanning, self-confidence, belief in self, need for skilling themselves, need for entrepreneurship, legal empowerment, some kind of risk taking ability amongst others.
- Legal information regarding women empowerment including judicial and legislative initiatives may be provided by HR (either on its own or with help of advocates/legal departments/law firms/NGOs/Women Empowerment Organizations/Associations) to make such empowerment initiatives more effective
- HR should work towards formulation of Gender policy within the organization and for the CSR initiatives aimed for women in underdeveloped and rural areas to make it effective.
- Women empowerment programmes should be aimed at true value creation and should aim at skilling, training and educating women to unleash their potential with the partnership of Corporate HR team which can understand such training needs
- In rural areas HR may organize skill-development programmes related to farming products, masonry training, maternal and child healthcare programs and plan job counseling for young women
- Women in rural areas should understand the need for such initiatives and for that they need to be sensitized and awareness programmes should be carefully planned involving participation of

local people who may touch upon the key needs of such women which may be financial independence, employment and skill-development

- Regular survey of such women empowerment and development initiative should be conducted after a regular interval by HR
- Competencies required for women entrepreneurship must be carefully examined and must be inculcated in women in rural areas through case studies and motivational & educative lectures focusing on skill development

Conclusion

Women empowerment and entrepreneurship succeeds when women are sensitized about the abilities they have, well-equipped with the necessary skills to carry out the initiatives on which they have been trained. The women empowerment projects are part of CSR initiatives of the Corporate Houses. Effective planning and implementation of CSR requires organizations preparing itself for that critical function across the levels when it starts to move from the state of initiation to a state of flow of energy and action. The companies may conduct specific CSR programs for the upliftment of rural women in their areas of operations. The companies may undertake targeted interventions built on the micro enterprise framework of skill development. The objective may be to provide income generating opportunities to these women so that they can support themselves and their families. Improvement in their economic conditions, in addition to adding to their self-confidence, may also help elevate the social stature of these women, who get more say in decision-making at homes and in the society.

HR needs to play a key role of an effective partner in implementing CSR initiatives especially related to women empowerment, education, training and skill-development. HR department with the skills, exposure and training are equipped with competencies to partner women empowerment initiatives better as seen through the examples of HPCL and BPCL.

HR must first plan the CSR initiatives related to women empowerment and skill-building towards maximum outcomes. HR Department may chalk out the programmes to equip rural women with self-respect and financial independence through vocational training, skill development and up gradation, financial education through training for Self Help Group model.

However, such initiatives need to be coupled with providing essential legal knowledge for protecting and empowering women.

HR professionals may be better equipped to appreciate the inherent potential of the women, their significant contribution in the progress of the nation and may work with the belief that every woman is entitled to her share of happiness and fulfilment, irrespective of her social or financial standing. For that it needs to channelize it with innovative ideas and direction, motivation and partnership of internal and external resources, towards a destination and a vision for tomorrow. HR departments may play a key role in women empowerment, by contributing in the direction of training & development opportunities for women, confidence building, imparting legal knowledge and providing the opportunities for support and mentorship.

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Appendix-1: CSR at BPCL

Policy

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited is a leading organization committed to society through its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives across the country. Being a leading organization, we recognize our responsibility towards the community and have been working conscientiously for the betterment of weaker sections of society for years. It is our constant endeavor to maximize the positive impacts of our activities and ensuring that it reaches to all our stakeholders.

CSR Vision

"Be a Model Corporate Entity with Social Responsibility committed to Energizing Lives through Sustainable Development".

CSR Mission

- BPCL would have created a 'positive impact' around all the communities where we operate.
- Would have transformed around 150 villages from 'water scarce to water positive'.
- Would have impacted towards enablement of education of more than 10 lakh children.
- Would have created a resource of 'Expert Panel' on issues pertaining to our thrust areas.
- Employee volunteering would be a part of our Corporate culture & we would have a minimum 10 % of our employees volunteer in the next five years.

BPCL's CSR Policy

BPCL's CSR Policy as approved by the Board as per the new Companies Act 2013 (in brief) is:-

- In every financial year, at least 2% of average net profits of the company made during the three immediately preceding financial years will be earmarked for undertaking CSR activities.
- The CSR Committee of the Board consists of three directors and headed by an external director, which is the approving committee for all CSR projects.

Constitution of the CSR Committee of the Board:-

- External Director (As the Chairman of the Committee)
- Director (HR)
- Director (Finance)

Appendix 2: CSR at HPCL

CSR Policy

I. CSR Objectives

1. HPCL will focus its CSR activities on local communities around which the Company lives and operates like Refineries, Terminals, Depots, LPG Plants, Pipelines, Aviation Stations, Lube Blending Plants, Project locations and other offices, etc. HPCL is committed to allocate at least 60% of the CSR Budget for these local communities.
2. HPCL will implement CSR activities to empower weaker, less privileged and marginalized sections of the society to create Social Capital.

CSR Council:

Members of the CSR Council:

Chairman: Director HR and Executive Director as one of the members.

Members : ED–HRD, ED–Retail, ED–LPG, ED–O&D, ED–P&P, ED–HSE, ED–MR and Head CSR

The role / responsibilities of the CSR Council include:

1. Suggest CSR activities to CSR Department which align with Corporate Vision
2. Review quarterly the CSR activities and expenditure vs Budgets, for midcourse corrections, if any.

CSR Management Committee

Members of CSR Management Committee

Chairman: Director HR,

Members: ED – HRD, Functional SBU Head / ED RCD (for Mktg. /Ref proposals resp.), Head – CSR, GM – Corp. Finance, Chief Manager – CSR (Secretary)

The role / responsibilities of the CSR Management Committee include

1. Review the proposals for CSR projects/programs/activities received from various locations.
2. Approve proposals of value between Rs. 25 lacs and Rs. 50 lacs against approved allocated budget.