

Gender and Corporate Social Responsibility – As a matter of sustainability

Abstract:

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is relevant to the continuing vow of a company to behave fairly and accountably towards the society within which it functions while contributing to economic competitiveness and development. Currently CSR is considered as a valuable tool to create gender equality in the workplace. Equality and diversity in the workplace are the main objectives of CSR. The organizations are progressively approaching the gender equality plan and including it in their CSR schedules, because of lack of skilled staff and an increase in the involvement of women in the workplace. The addition of gender aspect in CSR, it can play a vital role in attaining gender equality in the workplace by activities, initiatives, approaches and policies that give equal access to job opportunities to female staff and provide for equality of the treatment of women in the workplace. Despite of the current legal provisions women are repeatedly deprived of their fundamental rights, given a job of low wages and are stopped from the decision making process in the economy. Women have gone through discrimination both at home and at the society. Correct CSR policy and gender equality in the workplace, organizations can portray a better society and brand icon and will flourish in designing a stable workforce that can aim on and invest in excellent performance sets of the employees.

Keywords: CSR, Gender diversity and equality, Glass Ceiling, Women's rights.

Introduction:

The term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been achieving an amazing appearance in the world off late. CSR aims on essential ingredients: the community, the workplace, the marketplace and the environment. Presently, the term has been connected with Quadruple Bottom Line Reporting which mainly measures the performance of a company against economic, social and environmental and spiritual indices. The social view of quadruple bottom line reporting focuses on the just treatment of human capital by giving reasonable wages and a secure workplace and doing responsible and beneficial business activities and practices within the group.¹ The morals and practice of CSR demand that businesses supply acceptable work conditions to their staff, and help them achieve a better standard of life. Communally responsible human resource management attempts to provide a fidelity to life time learning, health and safety, a healthy balance between work, family and free time, better workforce diversity and gender awe rewards and career opportunities.

Although gender inequality has been on the layout of communal research and activism for years, gender imbalance in organizational leadership has been low spirited and ignored. The work area has become a principal sphere in the struggle for gender equality. In developing countries, women go through enormous issues in securing employment. Even in developed countries, the issues of inequalities are constant. Women have achieved unbelievable triumph in the so-called male controlling working world. There has been an appreciable growth in the

¹ http://www.ehow.com/about_5229554_quadruple-bottom-line-reporting.html#ixzz27RxXKJqf

number of women in the workforce over the decades with a analogous growth in the number of highly educated women furnished with technical expertise. However, gender inequality in the workplace has given rise to the issues such as occupational separation based upon gender, gender-based salary discrimination etc., all of which have affected their promotion in work that obtain higher societal acknowledgement among men. Development of women in management work has not kept pace with the corresponding increase in the number of working women. Regardless of their technical and professional qualifications, women are barred from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach the higher post in management.² The fact that women being sufficiently indicated in the work-force, but hardly present in the senior managerial positions has been tagged as the glass ceiling, which is “a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, however so strong that it stops women from moving up in the management hierarchy.”

Need for the Study:

This paper focuses on CSR as a capable policy instrument to promote gender equality and also to highlight the factors that are responsible for this glass ceiling.

Objectives:

- To know the business case for CSR and Gender Equality.
- To identify the factors contributing to Glass Ceiling.
- To suggest ways to improve the gender gaps.

Limitations:

- This article is limited to the policies of CSR to promote gender equality in workplace alone.
- This article is confined to the Indian laws to promote gender equality in workplace with the help of CSR.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR CSR AND GENDER EQUALITY:

In 2010 the United Nations Global Compact positioned Gender Equality on the CSR plan through the launch of the Women Empowerment Principles. These principles approach the problem of gender equality in all spheres including leadership, entrepreneurship and supply chains in communities.³ The principles give practical examples and spread awareness of what corporations can do to empower women’s role in the workplace. Empowerment of women to authorize them to participate entirely in economic life across all divisions and throughout all standards of economic activity is essential to:

- Build powerful economies;
- Create more stable societies;
- Achieve internationally agreed goals for sustainability , development and human rights;

² <http://sahaas.blogspot.in/2011/02/grand-step-towards-gender-equality-in.html>

³ <https://www.scribd.com/doc/22571816/Gender-Discrimination-in-Work-Place>

- Improve quality of life for families and communities, women, men; and
- Boost the operations and goals of businesses.

Yet, ensuring the addition of women's talents, skills, experience and energies are in need of intentional actions and intended policies.⁴ There is growing evidence that gender equality, diversity and sensitivity in the workplace leads to better productivity of employees, and eventually the organization as a whole. The "business case" for gender equality asserts that the competitiveness of companies can be increased through enhanced diversity management, specifically by dropping turnover and training costs and minimizing reputational and litigation danger arising out of potentially discriminatory behavior. Therefore, there exists a firm correlation between gender diversity in management and financial performance. According to a report by Mckinsey & Co 2007,⁵ the organizations where women are most effectively represented in top management are also the organizations which outperform those with no women in top management. Furthermore, in another study it was signified that gender inclusive leadership actually causes organizations to be more socially accountable and also leads to increased humanitarianism and environmental welfare.

Factors contributing to Glass Ceiling:

There are many direct and indirect elements that hand out to gender inequality in the business world. The essential ones are as follows⁶:

Organization related Factors: The general state of women and gender vitality are affected by the organizational policies, structures and values. There exist the conventional stereotypes or old mental insight concerning women's commitment to their duties because of their civil roles and the secondary role of the duty for them. Women are provided positions that have titles with little actual power or supervisory control. Responsibilities such as sales and production conditions that are essential for progression to the top are thought-out to be "no-woman" areas. It is also noticed that some organizations have well documented and successfully communicated strategies, but these are not necessarily executed into practice or rooted within the organization customs. In addition, there are specific structural elements also which obstruct the career growth of the women such as discriminatory placement and promotion plans, lack of legal codes to make sure women participation, lack of women in unions or committees inside or outside the company, absence of leadership training and opportunities for career development for women etc.

Society related Factors: The socio-cultural insight, which builds the attitudes and conduct of individual men and women create obstacles to the equal involvement of women in top management. In addition to the legal system, society directly and indirectly imposes certain practices and endurable levels such as the role of women, prime concern for women, and the time women can work etc. The common societal ideas that women's role is first as a housewife and child bearer and working is their second priority and that they are temporarily in the market place to add their family income create issues. Hence, social insight affects the capability of women to work in some particular departments, work extra time and perform their duties efficiently.

⁴ McLaughlin Colm, Deakin Simon, 2011, "Equality Law and the Limits of the „Business Case“ For Addressing Gender Inequalities" Centre for Business Research, University of Cambridge

⁵ "Women Matters - Gender Diversity, a corporate performance driver" By McKinsey & Company

⁶ "Women Managers in India: Challenges and Opportunities" By Centre for Social Research (CSR)

Personal Factors: There are a lot of personal factors relevant to women that influence their career growth such as personality, attitudes and behavioral expertise of women themselves, absence of self-esteem and self-confidence, restrained aspirations in the sphere of management, absence of motivation and aspiration to accept difficult tasks to go up the ladder, being less assertive, less emotionally stable, women's reluctance to show off their achievements and capabilities making them institutionally unseeable and lacking ability to tackle a situation of crisis. There are also the elements relevant to male personalities like male managerial styles, discourse and language that keep women out, the persistent nature of cultural values and attitudes that firmly support women's childcare, family and domestic responsibilities as prime concern over career desires.⁷

Legal Factors: The theory of gender balance is manifested in the Fundamental Rights, Constitution of India, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). The Constitution ensures equality to women; it also authorizes the State to take on expedient of positive discrimination in approval of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to protect the rights and legal prerogative of women. Solutions under labour statutes, of course, remain accessible. For example, safeguard against gender-based discrimination in placement and advancement is ensured by the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 (ERA). There are labor laws which supply for a certain degree of safeguard for women's rights in the workplace i.e. maternity leave, childcare etc. But, women in the unorganized division are also frequently not covered under labour laws since these laws are restricted to industries or sectors employing a minimal number of workers. This is a kind of discrimination against unorganized employees. The newly enforced Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008, prioritizes to provide minimum security to such workers. In addition, there are no legal statutes which particularly forbid gender discrimination in labor opportunities or in the workplace, and no provisions force equal salaries for men and women who hold the same positions. These legislations are not sufficient to provide the adequate encouragement for women to access the workplace.⁸ There are several loopholes that remain providing the private sector with an opportunity to discourage or restrict the employment, opportunities and growth of women in the workplace. Protective legislations are required to be strengthened to empower the most vulnerable women workers in the society.

Some Corporate Examples Addressing Gender Equality:

1. Infosys is an Indian IT company that aims on gender diversity. The company has inaugurated the Infosys Women Inclusivity Network to motivate a gender sensitive work surrounding and the Family Matters Network to present help to employees on parenting related subjects. As a result of, presently women make up above 32% of the Infosys workforce.
2. Titan Industries Ltd. ("Titan") is an Indian company that belongs to the Tata Group and that produces watches, jewelry and glasses. With the help of his program, MEADOW i.e. (Management of Enterprise and Development of Women), the company has offered opportunities for poor women from countryside Indian communities to become salary earners and supported women's entrepreneurship through business learning.

⁷ Women Empowerment Principles-United Nations Global compacts

⁸ <http://sivanandammsw.blogspot.in/2010/11/problems-of-gender-discrimination-at.html>

3. Johnson & Johnson, headquartered in New Jersey, is one of the world's top most suppliers of health care products and facilities. The company involves diversity as an important process not only in recruiting, but also in its supply chain, product development, sales, marketing and advertising. The company is also recruiting women to senior management positions, which portrays gender diversity.
4. Ericsson, a Swedish supplier of technology and facilities to telecom operators, has initiated a programme to bring high speed internet network to rural Tamil Nadu, India. The program focuses to provide the region with a vast variety of internet-based resources which will help the region's women to avail to regular medical checkups via telemedicine and to register newborn children on internet, ensuring eligibility for essential health and education services.
5. Microsoft-India is demanding to get back the women who had quit the jobs of their company due to personal excuses and staying at home by giving flexible hours of working and work from home to bring the gender equality.⁹

Suggestions to remove the gender gaps:

One of the essential methods for advancing gender equality is the strategy of Gender Mainstreaming which implies to the reorganization, enhancement, growth and assessment of plan procedures, to include a gender equality point of view in all policies at all levels, by the people involved in decision making. The involvement of gender into the mainstream of corporate thinking will demand the alteration and reorientation of current policies, a change in decision-making processes, prioritization of gender-equality aims and re-evaluating the post of multi-stakeholders – staffs, consumers, suppliers so that present policy goals are more efficiently achieved. Hence, there is a requirement for strategies that promote women's role, opportunities and rights in the workplace and empower safeguard the workforce, both men and women, to contribute and participate with their capacity. A few suggestions in this area are:

- There must be a fundamental change in the company policies and practices to remove inappropriate discrimination against women in the workplace. Companies should organize well-defined equality and involvement of programs with the goal to promote gender equality through recruitment and retention efforts, to promote employee awareness and gender-specific responsibility measures.
- Managers should be given training on how to tackle with gender diversity and motivate gender equality in the workplace. Furthermore, there should be training for placement and selection employees to protect the incoming staff, can create a more balanced work environment.
- Women need to gain the confidence, attitude and skills required to succeed in business and enterprising activities. Women must be aware of their rights and they must be trained on how to be more proactive in the workplace and how to handle with problems, sexual harassment and complaints. So organizations should conduct awareness programs for women of organization as a part of CSR.
- Gender-related education and training programs should also conducted to increase employee awareness of gender problems and how these problems affect inter-office

⁹ UN Global Compact Commemorates International Women's Day 2009 Advancing Women in the Global Marketplace

relationships. Such trainings help to create interpersonal relationships and discourage gender discrimination in the workplace.

- Actions should be executed to facilitate work-life balance for women such as comfortable working hours, career flexibility etc.
- It should be made sure that recruitment; appraisal and career management mechanisms do not keep women back in their professional development and growth. Therefore, there is a requirement to adapt the Human Resource Management procedure also.

Conclusion:

The whole show offers the picture that women in India go through a very slow progression when compared to their male counterparts. In spite of simple entry, head ways slows down and in most circumstances irrespective of their qualifications, performances or achievements, women are barred from hiking the business hierarchy to the top. There are some examples of the women, who have come to highest position in their sphere of work, such as Kiran Mazundar Shaw of Biocon, Chanda Kochar , the incumbent MD & CEO of ICICI Bank, Vinita Bali of Britannia Industries, Kalpana Chawla, SunitaWilliams of NASA, President Pratibha Patil, Sonia Gandhi , Chairperson of UPA, Mamata Banerjee- MP, Jayalalitha (TN) from Indian Politics, Arundhati Roy, Shobaa De, Priety Zinta from IPL. But, the achievement stories of few women making it to the top are does not portray the total picture. Apart from a handful example given above, an overwhelming majority of Indian boardrooms are still no-entry spheres for women. Women presently comprise only 2 percent of the entire managerial force in the Indian Management division. Although India is seeing an increasing number of women occupying management posts in leading organizations, yet India's performance is well below the world level. Therefore, there is a demand to spread awareness concerning gender issues at the corporate and societal level. Through correct CSR policies and gender equality in the company, organizations can show a better society and brand icon and will achieve in creating a sustainable workforce that can aim on and invest in excellent performance standards. On the other hand if the organizations gave them correct status, position and money in the business world then without any second thought their position will improve in the home and they will earn more respect in the family and it will help in bringing the much required improvement in mental modals of our society. So companies should include gender diversity as a major factor in their corporate social responsibility for their own welfare and for the benefit of society.