



CSR AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: CASE STUDIES IN DELHI/NCR

Ankita Singh

Postgraduate Student (Master of Social Work)

Amity University, Noida

ankitadinhwww5@gmail.com

Dr. Nandini Sahay

Assistant Professor

Amity University, Noida

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a key instrument of environmental sustainability, particularly in the context of fast urbanizing areas such as Delhi/NCR. This research paper explores the interface between CSR initiatives and environmental sustainability based on selected case studies of corporate organizations within the region. The research seeks to investigate how firms incorporate environmental issues into CSR initiatives and measure the material effects of such an initiative on host communities and native ecosystems. Conducted via qualitative case study method, the study uses interviews, firm reports, and secondary data to conduct a qualitative analysis of best practices, difficulties, and overall efficacy of CSR-driven environmental programs. The findings reflect a growing alignment of business goals and environmental protection, yet discrepancies remain in long-term impact assessment and public participation. The study identifies the capacity of CSR to promote sustainable development and offers policy recommendations to boost corporate accountability and environmental management within the NCR region. (Bansal)

Key Words: - Sustainable Development, Green Initiatives, Corporate Governance, Waste Management, Renewable Energy, Stakeholder Engagement, Urban Environmental Challenges, Delhi/NCR Case Studies.



Introduction

Throughout the recent decades, the mounting alarm over resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and climate change has positioned sustainability in the foreground of international and domestic agendas. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as an important vehicle in India where corporations make inputs to sustainable development objectives. The making of CSR provisions a statutory provision under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 has further entrenched the role of corporate entities in addressing social and environmental issues. Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR), being two of the most urbanized and industrialized regions in India, are suffering from critical environmental problems like air and water pollution, waste, and loss of green cover. The study adopts a case study approach to examine the CSR environmental activities of selected companies of Delhi/NCR. The study is based on company CSR reports, government records, and stakeholder interviews and field-level observation to examine the design, execution, and influence of these initiatives. (Bhattacharya, 2010)

Background and Rationale

Based on critical analysis of the cases, the study endeavours to explore innovative practices, learn from enablers and barriers of success, and provide recommendations to enhance the environmental value of CSR actions in the region. The overall objective of this research is to enrich the debate around sustainable urban development by illustrating how corporate responsibility can be synchronized with environmental imperatives. Through documenting and examining actual CSR interventions, the article aims to provide insights that will be useful for both corporate strategy and public policy-making. (Carol, 1999)

A. Overview of CSR and Its role in promoting Environmental Sustainability

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the ethical responsibility of companies to contribute to the growth of society along with conducting business in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner. CSR in India was given legislative endorsement in the form of the Companies Act, 2013, under which certain companies are mandated to invest a proportion of profit in CSR initiatives. Environmental sustainability has now emerged as the prime issue within CSR, where companies recognize that there is



a necessity to manage challenges such as climate change, pollution, resource scarcity, and biodiversity loss. CSR Provision under the Companies Act, 2013 (Section 35)

Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 is a milestone legislation in India's journey towards corporate social responsibility and accountability. It requires companies with specified financial parameters—viz., a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or net profit of ₹5 crore or more—to form a CSR Committee and incur a minimum of 2% of their average of the past three years' net profit on CSR initiatives. It also mandates firms to report their CSR policy, approach, and spend under the year's board report, hence making it accountable and transparent. (Carol, 1999)

Role of Schedule VII in Fostering environmental causes under this act Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 lists in detail the activities that are eligible for spending under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), serving as a guide to companies to plan out their CSR activities. Among the listed areas, environmental sustainability is listed as a focus area. Schedule provides the following activities like environmental sustainability, ecological balance, conservation of flora and fauna, natural resource conservation, soil, air, and water quality maintenance, and promoting renewable energy. (Chaubey, 2022)

B. Evolution of CSR from philanthropic strategic sustainability

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has seen a tremendous transformation—from traditional philanthropy and charity-based giving to a more formalized and strategic approach towards sustainability. CSR was originally perceived as a discretionary act of benevolence, where firms gave back to society's welfare through donations, relief, or sponsorships without any long-term engagement. (Freeman, 1984)

C. Importance of NGO Involvement in CSR funded Environmental Project

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are important agents in closing the gap between corporate will and actual ground-level implementation of CSR projects. Through their presence at the grass roots, capacity to engage with the community, and technical knowledge in the field, NGOs are the best partners in implementing environment-related projects funded by CSR. NGOs assist in grassroots-level identification of environmental concerns, community mobilization, tracking of project implementation, and transparency and accountability.



D. CSR Funded Project: Trends in DELHI/NCR regions

In Delhi/NCR, a region grappling with severe urban environmental issues, CSR-financed activities have shown a growing focus on measures to mitigate air pollution, water conservation, noise pollution control, and better waste management practices. With the city frequently featuring in the list of the world's most polluted cities, corporate efforts have placed high priority on interventions relating to air quality such as urban forestry, encouragement of clean energy, and adoption of eco-friendly technologies. Water conservation projects like rainwater harvesting, water body rejuvenation, and awareness programs on water use efficiency have also attracted strong CSR attention. (Poddar, 2019)

E. Relevance of the Study in the Context of Delhi/NCR's Urban and Ecological Challenges

Delhi/NCR is among the most populous and industrialized urban areas in India, with severe environmental problems like air and water pollution, reducing green cover, unscientific construction methods, and growing waste generation. Seasonal smog, depleting groundwater, and open landfills are posing severe health and ecological risks to the people of the region and its biodiversity. In this background, the role of CSR in facilitating environmental rehabilitation and resilience takes on a central significance. The present study assumes significance as it explores how business organizations in Delhi/NCR are addressing these issues through CSR-funded environmental initiatives. (Hart, 1995)

F. Challenges in CSR-NGO Partnerships

In spite of the increasing momentum of CSR-funded environmental projects, CSR-NGO collaborations in Delhi/NCR are confronted with a number of long-standing challenges that limit their maximum potential. One of the key challenges is funding gaps, where delayed or irregular disbursement of CSR funds hinders NGOs from planning and implementing long-term projects effectively. Besides, regulatory hurdles, such as intricate compliance procedures and bureaucratic inefficiencies, tend to hinder access by smaller NGOs to CSR assistance or expansion of their outreach.



Objectives

- To find five NGOs in Delhi/NCR, which are actively engaged in initiating environmental sustainability projects supported by CSR schemes.
- To analyse the scope and nature of environmental initiatives implemented by these NGOs in areas like waste management, afforestation, air and water pollution control, adoption of renewable energy, and awareness campaigns among the community.
- To assess the effectiveness of these CSR-funded environmental interventions in their ability to influence local ecosystems and communities.
- To examine the limitations and challenges encountered by NGOs and corporate partners in planning, executing, and monitoring environmental CSR projects.
- To evaluate the quality of cooperation between CSR funders and NGOs, and its impact on the sustainability, transparency, and scalability of environmental projects.

Literature Review

Stakeholder Theory and its relevance to CSR

The Stakeholder Theory as a response to shareholder-centric corporate governance. He believed that firms owed not just to shareholders but to a broader group of stakeholders including employees, customers, suppliers, society, and the environment. It has since become a cornerstone pillar in the conceptual framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Under CSR, Stakeholder Theory believes that corporations should operate in a way that helps all stakeholders, not just economically, but also by helping social and environmental causes. (Mukherjee, 2016)

Triple Bottom Line strategy (People, Planet, and Profit) for sustainability projects.

In CSR activities, particularly in sustainability-oriented organizations, the TBL framework offers an integrated assessment instrument for measuring the overall effect of corporate activities. It allows companies to prove accountability not only to shareholders but to society and the environment as well. Savitz and Weber (2006) argue that companies that embrace the TBL approach are in a better position to predict risk, ensure stakeholder trust, and support sustainable development objectives. In India, the TBL is being increasingly incorporated into



CSR reporting templates and sustainability audits, especially in urban settings such as Delhi/NCR where social and environmental issues are intertwined. (Elkington, 1997)

Overview of CSR regulations in India (e.g., Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013)

The implementation of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 was a historic move in the Indian corporate sector, and India became the first nation in the world to make CSR mandatory by law. This provision mandates businesses with specific financial thresholds (net worth of ₹500 crore, turnover of ₹1,000 crore, or net profit of ₹5 crore) to invest a minimum of 2% of their average net profits over the last three years on CSR activities as envisaged under Schedule VII of the Act. (Mehdritta, 2022)

Role of NGOs in environmental sustainability.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are widely known to be key players in encouraging environmental sustainability at the grassroots and policy levels. Based on Princen and Finger (1994), NGOs perform the role of intermediaries between corporations, governments, and civil society by spreading awareness, promoting environmental conservation, and agitating for sustainable policy change. (M.N., 2013)

Corporate Social Responsibility

This seminal work by Carroll traces the historical development of the concept of CSR since the 1950s to the late 1990s. The author envisions CSR as a multi-faceted responsibility that has economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic aspects. The research highlights the fact that CSR has developed from a voluntary initiative to an expectation from multiple stakeholders. Current literature highlights the growing momentum of partnerships between NGOs and corporations, specifically under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), to roll out environmental sustainability initiatives. NGOs bring technical know-how, access to communities, and project management capabilities that make CSR-funded environmental initiatives more effective, says Utting (2009). Through their participation, it is ensured that projects are relevant to context, inclusive, and consonant with local needs as well as general sustainability objectives. In India, particularly in areas such as Delhi/NCR, NGOs are actively



involved in afforestation activities, improving air and water quality, waste management, and spreading awareness. (Kapoor, 2017)

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative case study design grounded on primary and secondary data sources to examine the impact of CSR on environmental sustainability through efforts made by NGOs in the Delhi/NCR region.

Research Design

The research is based on a multiple-case study design, which targets specific NGOs in Delhi/NCR who are actively involved in CSR-funded environmental initiatives. This design permits insight into the nature, practice, and implications of CSR initiatives. The methodology allows comparative findings between organisations and project types.

Field Informant

The respondents for the main research were representatives of five NGOs working in Delhi/NCR: Hara Jeevan, Nitya Foundation, Goonj, and greenpeace, heal the globe foundation. The respondents were project coordinators, CSR managers, field workers, and administrative

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data was gathered through structured questionnaires filled out by the key personnel of the chosen NGOs. The questionnaire touched upon aspects like the type of CSR support provided, environmental initiatives undertaken, challenges encountered, and results obtained.

Secondary Data was collected via a literature review of NGOs and corporate annual reports, government documents, CSR announcements, and other relevant national and international journal articles and reports on CSR and environmental sustainability.

Data Analysis

Data Collection using the questionnaires was coded and analysed thematically to establish emergent patterns and insights regarding CSR funding, implementation of projects, and



perceived effectiveness. Secondary information was analysed applying content analysis principles to glean trends, policy background, and best global practices.

Survey questionnaire

Section 1: General Information

What is the name of your NGO?

- Not willing to disclose
- Other (Please specify) _____

How long has your NGO been operational?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years

Section 2: CSR Funding

Does your NGO receive CSR funding for environmental projects?

- Yes
- No

What is the primary source of CSR funding?

- Private Corporations



- Public Sector Enterprises
- International Organizations
- Other (Please specify) _____

How frequently does your NGO receive CSR funding?

- Annually
- Bi-annually
- Occasionally
- Not at all

Section 3: Environmental Initiatives

Which environmental issues does your NGO focus on? (Select all that apply)

- Air Pollution
- Water Pollution
- Noise Pollution
- Waste Management
- Climate Change
- Other (Please specify) _____

What types of activities does your NGO undertake?



- Awareness Campaigns
- Policy Advocacy
- On-ground Cleanup Drives
- Tree Plantation
- Water Conservation Projects
- Other (Please specify) _____

Section 4: Challenges and Strategies

What are the major challenges faced in implementing CSR-funded projects?

- Lack of Funds
- Regulatory Barriers
- Public Apathy
- Limited Corporate Support
- Other (Please specify) _____

How effective do you find CSR funding in achieving environmental sustainability goals?

- Very Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Neutral



- Not Effective

What strategies does your NGO adopt to overcome challenges?

- Community Engagement
- Government Partnerships
- Corporate Collaboration
- Use of Technology
- Other (Please specify) _____

Section 5: Impact Assessment

Has your NGO achieved measurable environmental improvements through CSR projects?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how would you rate the success of your initiatives?

- Highly Successful
- Moderately Successful
- Neutral
- Not Successful

What is the level of corporate involvement in project execution?



- Highly Involved
- Moderately Involved
- Minimally Involved
- Not Involved

Do you think CSR policies should be improved to enhance environmental sustainability efforts?

- Yes, significantly
- Yes, but only minor improvements are needed
- No, current policies are adequate
- No, CSR should not focus on environmental sustainability

Findings

Operational Tenure of NGOs

The statistics indicate that 40% of the NGOs covered in the survey have been in operation for over 10 years, 40% for 6-10 years, and the remaining 20% for 1-5 years.

CSR Funding Reception

All NGOs (100%) said they received CSR funding for environmental projects specifically.

Primary Source of Funding



100% of CSR financing among the surveyed NGOs comes from private companies. This proves the major contribution of the private sector to financing grassroots-level sustainable development activities.

Frequency of CSR Funding

The findings show a split in the frequency of CSR support—40% of NGOs receive funding annually, while another 40% receive it occasionally.

Focus Area of Environmental Concern

All the NGOs reported on working on air pollution, water pollution, waste management, and climate change, while only 20% worked on noise pollution as well.

Types of Environmental Activities

Most NGOs are engaged in awareness drives (100%), ground-level cleaning activities (80%), plantation activities (80%), water harvesting (60%), and policy lobbying (60%).

Challenges in CSR Funding Project Implementation

The major challenges identified include regulatory barriers (40%) and limited corporate support (40%), with a minority reporting lack of funds (20%).

Perceived Effectiveness of CSR Funding

Interestingly, all NGOs ranked CSR funding as "somewhat effective," none ranking it as "very effective" or "ineffective."

Strategies to Overcome

Community outreach proved to be the most commonly embraced strategy (60%), followed by government collaboration (20%) and corporate partnership (20%).

Discussion

Experience and Longevity



The fact that there was no NGO with less than one year of experience indicates that only mature organizations with a lot of field experience are likely to get involved with CSR activities. This is perhaps a result of the intricate regulatory demands and the confidence required from corporate donors, which newer NGOs do not yet command.

CSR Funding as a Universal Mechanism

The sole dependence on private corporations as donors (100%) also implies that India's private sector is more aggressive in directing CSR funds to environmental sustainability than public sector organizations or foreign donors. This is in line with the law under the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates that such eligible companies contribute 2% of their profit to CSR for better association with national sustainability priorities.

Frequency and Focus area of Funding

The absence of biannual or extremely frequent funding demonstrates the project-specific character of CSR funding, which can be based on corporate cycles, performance, and focus themes. Environmental concerns like air pollution, water pollution, waste management, and climate change were common concerns for all the participating NGOs, reflecting a common perception of Delhi/NCR's urgent ecological problems.

Activities Undertaken by NGOs

A variety of on-ground and advocacy-based activities are being undertaken, with all NGOs participating in awareness campaigns, 80% in clean-up operations and tree plantations, and 60% each in policy advocacy and water conservation. These numbers reflect a balanced combination of community mobilization and policy interventions, indicating that NGOs understand the necessity to both empower local people and shape wider governance structures.

Implementation Challenges and Strategic Responses

Among the challenges reported, 40% of NGOs cited regulatory barriers, and an equal percentage mentioned limited corporate support. Only 20% faced issues related to a lack of funds, and none reported public apathy as a barrier. These results suggest that the main hurdles in implementing CSR-funded projects are structural and systemic rather than social.



Impact and Perception of CSR Effectiveness

All the NGOs indicated that CSR funding was "somewhat effective" in meeting environmental sustainability objectives. This collective middle-ground rating indicates that although CSR facilitates project implementation, it might be lacking in terms of long-term effect or systemic transformation. This result proves that while the initiatives are producing outcomes, there is space for improvement in design, reach, and alignment with strategy.

Corporate Involvement and Policy Views

All the NGOs graded corporate participation in project implementation as "moderate," which means that although funders are involved, they might not be deeply invested in daily operations or long-term planning.

Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility in India has undergone a dramatic shift with the passage of the Companies Act, 2013, particularly under Section 135 that mandates CSR interventions for eligible companies. Greenness or environmental sustainability has been one of the most critical and pressing areas of focus under CSR—a territory increasingly defined by climate imperative, urbanization stress, and community resilience mandates. This dissertation sought to analyze the function of CSR-funded environmental activities, with specific focus on some selected NGOs in the Delhi/NCR area, through a mix of primary and secondary research methods. The research findings clearly show that CSR is not just a source of funds but a probable force for massive ecological restoration if channelled through legitimate and committed NGOs. All the NGOs included in the research—Greenpeace India, Hara Jeevan, Goonj, Nitya Foundation, and Grow Billion Trees—have been engaged with CSR-funded environmental projects, thus emphasizing a common congruence with corporate sustainability goals. With respect to environmental focus, the NGOs as a collective attempt to deal with different challenges such as air pollution, water pollution, management of waste, and climate change, and only 20% of them deal with noise pollution. The nature of activities that they undertake ranges from awareness campaigns (100%) to tree plantation, conservation of water, and cleaning drives, and it represents a well-diversified mix of grassroots action and advocacy. This multi-dimensional approach reflects the attempt of the NGOs to include education, action, and long-



term planning for sustainability. Lastly, this study confirms the mounting importance of CSR in addressing environmental issues through the non-profit mode. While NGOs have demonstrated strength, commitment, and innovation, their potential is often limited by systemic problems of funding and business involvement. There is a greater need for greater strategic and unwavering CSR policy, business responsibility, and NGO-business-government cooperation to deliver lasting environmental outcome. In the future, embracing digital technologies, institutional partnerships, and community-centered sustainability work agendas. (Lal, 2013)

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Ankita Singh
Dr. Nandini Sahay
