

# Corporate Social Responsibility and Empowerment of Women: A Sociological Perspective

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## Abstract

*Multinationals are seen to indulge in development process in India. It is a recent phenomenon. The governmental measures have often been inadequate to address the vast majority of population who live in villages which are underdeveloped and suffer from acute social problems. The companies and their CSR programs emerge as an important agency for societal development where the multinational corporation achieves unprecedented economic, political and social power. Such an approach of CSR from a societal perspective is less focused in research. The social initiatives are often implemented informally or implicitly as a response to local expectation and demands. This often is conceptualized as explicit CSR where the communities are taken as stakeholders. Multinationals undertake various issues for community development including health, education and sustainable livelihood. Their accountability and transparency through corporate social reporting legitimizes their corporate social power. Keeping this as background, the present study focuses on such social initiatives taken by CSR of Tata Steel towards community development specially women empowerment. The study is carried on using secondary sources of information through the annual sustainability reports. The findings suggest that the company plays a significant role in empowering women by providing maternal health care practices and also by rendering income generation activities for sustainable livelihood. The company helps in social transformation and in increasing the status of rural women in Jharkhand and Odisha. The present research becomes relevant from the point of view that CSR linkage with women empowerment has been given least attention in research areas.*

**Keywords** - Corporate social responsibility, women empowerment, maternal health, sustainable livelihood.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The multinational corporations are predominantly dominant in capitalist production and ideology. Globalization has brought a harmonious balance

between business and society. There is the pressure and prominence of global corporation and expectations of socially responsible involvement of large corporation.

A large number of companies use corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a strategic approach to gain public support for their presence in global market. Corporate social responsibility which comprises three words refers to the responsibility of the corporate houses towards the society. Corporate engagement with the society also termed as corporate social responsibility, refers to one process by which an organization expresses and develops its corporate culture and social consciousness. Corporate social responsibility is understood in a globalized context where large multinationals prioritize not only their shareholders but also the benefit the stakeholders. Milton Friedman [1] said that the social responsibility of business is to increase profit. In this context CSR is defined as the integration of business operations and values whereby the interest of all stakeholders including investors, customers, employees and the environment are reflected in the company's policies and actions. Community stands as the most important stakeholder and development of women as the prior issue.

There is a discourse analysis to CSR where it reveals the historicity of the multinationals practicing CSR. There has been a shift of basic focus from the economic benefit to the larger altruistic approach of social development. Various companies have been seen to tackle different social issue of contemporary relevance and provide social welfare by problem solving approach. Community stands as the most important stakeholder. In today's global economy, it is critical for companies to embrace social and environmental responsibility in order to meet the demands of their investors, employees and communities they serve. Social responsibility is a condition for their long term survival and sustainability. And as globalization accelerates, large corporations have progressively recognized the benefits of providing CSR programmes in their various locations. The prioritization of CSR for social issues to be undertaken and the implementation

of programs differ in terms of company and are addressed as per the need of the local context. Social responsible investment help promote corporate social responsibility. The corporate includes variety issues undertaken under CSR like providing health care, educational facilities, sustainable livelihood, empowering women and community development. Keeping this in background, the present study focuses upon the role of corporate social responsibility in empowering women by setting the CSR of a Multinational company in context.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In India there are many issues unaddressed or inadequately addressed by the government. These issues involves health inaccessibility, backwardness in literacy, women having no financial independence, infrastructure problem like roads, street lights etc. Corporations are found to carry playing an important roles in solving problems of public concern [2], [3] not neglecting a role in human capital [4] suitable to achieving a level of social responsibility desired by the society. The selection of a social problem by the corporation depends upon the discretion of the corporation itself. Companies are involved with little guidance when they try to translate the abstract concept of CSR as social initiatives into practice. Social initiatives include not only the traditional practice of corporate philanthropy but also can encompass a variety of forms in local communities to nationwide program helping social welfare in developing countries [5].

In this context, the present paper attempts to analyze the social initiative undertaken by the Multinationals towards empowerment of women by enhancing their capacity building and providing sustainable livelihood, thereby increasing their social capital to empower them. The present study takes Tata Steel as a case in context to demonstrate the strategic business approach of the corporate towards community development generating women empowerment and leading to community development. The study utilizes the annual sustainability reports of the company to analyze the differential CSR practices for the case in research and the data is purely secondary in nature.

The paper examines the role of multinationals in generating community social capital through their CSR. The objective of the present study to understand the process of empowerment taking place by the corporate social responsibility of Tata Steel towards the rural women of Jharkhand and Odisha. The study chooses Tata Steel Company in its CSR initiation towards community since welfare is the oldest among all multinational and Tata Steel has institutionalized CSR efforts by globally being accountable through SA 8000, Global Compact Initiative etc.

## II. PROPOSED MODEL

There exists a relationship between corporate social responsibility and women empowerment. Maternal health care and sustainability livelihood brings an impact on rural women. Environmental protection, education, infrastructure, agricultural developments are other avenues under CSR for community development.

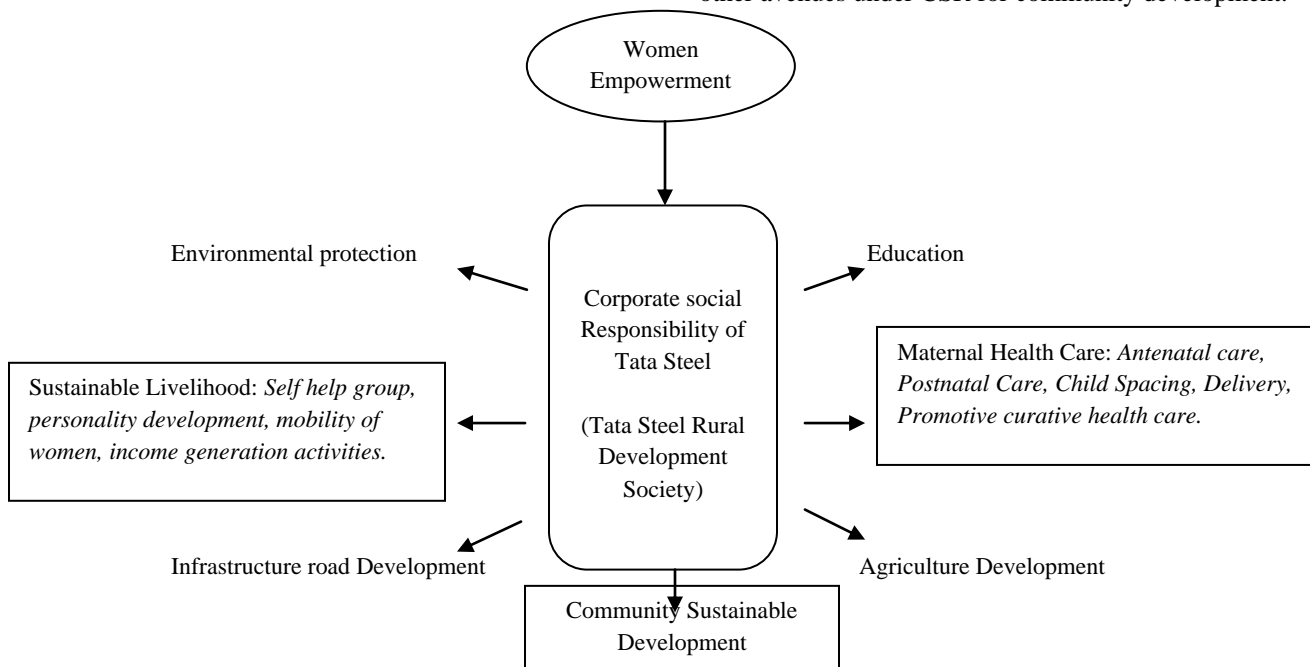


Fig 1: Conceptual framework Model

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Corporate social responsibility in community development

Community is seen to be an important stakeholder in the society so community development becomes a prior agenda for the Multinationals. The corporate are seen to engage in many community development programs like health care services, education, sustainability livelihood, road and transport facilities, environmental awareness, agriculture development, contributing towards widow re-marriage/dowry-less mass marriages, by providing social security (insurance) culture, through women empowerment, by constructing roads and homes for the homeless, by providing rural electrification, irrigation and water storage structures. Companies have also installed solar lights, constructed acoustic ceiling for community halls, installed hand pumps and introduced technology based agriculture interventions. Companies have been working for support of community by building homes for underprivileged women and HIV positive children, has adopted various programs in the orphanage families for children and sponsored financial aid for medical expenses of the children, buying generator, building community hall, sponsoring school uniforms and food during festivals and other occasions. Companies have financially helped economically disadvantaged families by way of enterprise development, youth education and livelihoods, financial capability and asset building, microfinance etc. Some companies have organized book and shoes donation drives, set up libraries, held eye-checkup camps, organized skills camps for truckers, set up food donations, carried out theatre workshops, generated contributions from employees to provide lunch for orphanage and elderly home, donated clothes for the mentally challenged children, cleaned the local parks, build homes for the underprivileged. Hence, corporate social initiatives are new business practices that support community initiatives [6], [7], [8].

The role of business in society in the form of philanthropy gives a way to corporation to keep hold on the community through its social welfare activities because earlier corporations were not involved in proper implementation of CSR, rather the approach towards the society was only philanthropic. But, philanthropy by itself does not necessarily mean that a firm develops broader strategy to compressively asses its impact on society to improve it overall performance towards society. Such long term perspective of economic gain to the society is CSR and not short term philanthropy. The role of business in society brings the importance of community as a stakeholder which is a central concept in CSR where it forms the link between aim and ambition of the organization and expectation of

society [9]. Gray [10] define CSR from a stakeholders oriented concept that extends beyond the organization's boundaries and driven by ethical understanding of the organizations responsibility for the impact of its business activity, seeking in return society's acceptance of legitimacy of the organization. Davis and Blomstrom [11] argues that business had the resources to solve social problems that may surpass the resources of other institutions that work in social areas are deficient of many things where business stand apart for its substantial pull of management talent functional expertise and capital resources.

The Companies Act, 2013 has introduced the idea of CSR for promoting ethical business and making its CSR effort completely accountable and transparent through disclosure. Schedule VII of the Act, constitutes community as an important stakeholder. Philanthropy is not sufficient in so CSR focuses beyond philanthropy. Therefore in community companies are found to bring change in society at the ground level. Such CSR activities include social, environmental and economic objectives.

#### B. Contextualizing women empowerment in Indian scenario

Women empowerment now constitutes an important agenda in the process of human development in India. It is thought that the difference in the perception of male and female in human society is a cultural barrier to comprehensive human development and it is necessary to improve the status of women through a process of empowerment. Gender inequality is inherent in Indian patriarchal society since during the legendary period and after independence it has found to be more deepened. The oppression of women can be understood under the phenomenon such as (i) enhanced crime against women, (ii) Role of socialization and gender stereotyped attitudes and (iii) Patriarchy ideology and loss of women's autonomy at familial level. All the three are depicted in gender discrimination in terms of health, education and financial situation of women in rural areas. In traditional India the socialization process has taught about the lower position of women in all spheres especially in decision making process. The secondary position of women and their vulnerabilities can be outlined in society and expressed through declining sex ratio which is an indicator of health, nutrition and survival status of women and girl children. Infant mortality is also found to be increased due to neglect, malnutrition and inadequate access to health care. Repeated pregnancy leads to high rate of maternal mortality. The loss of women financial autonomy at familial level is a major indicator of women disempowerment.

Empowerment is a process to change the distribution of power in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society or a process of acquiring, providing, bestowing the resources and the means for enabling the access to a control over such means and resources. Self empowerment also means that women gain autonomy, are able to set their own agenda and fully involved in the economic, political and social decision-making process. Empowerment is defined as “giving power to, creating power within and enabling”. In this sense, empowerment is a multi-dimensional process which enables individuals or groups to realize their full potential and powers in all the spheres of life. Empowerment is a process which helps people to gain control over their lives through rising consciousness, taking action and working in order to exercise greater control. Empowerment is also a feeling that activates the psychological energy to accomplish once goal. In other words, empowerment can be regarded as a process of awareness and capacity building that leads to greater participation, better decision making power and transformative action. Empowerment covers both individual and collective transformation. It strengthens one’s innate ability through acquiring knowledge, power and experience. Empowerment emphasizes both individual and collective efforts.

Women empowerment can be brought by helping rural women for better accessibility and quality health care practices. Moreover, increasing income generation to the rural women can make them economically independent. The CSR of many companies focuses on this health and income generation as their prior business endeavor towards community welfare. Health and nutrition are important indicators to empower women. The National Family Planning health vision gives priority to the antenatal care where maternal mortality and negligence during the pregnancy leads to higher number of death among expectant mothers. It is seen that lack of post natal care is a risk to neonatal health and well being of the mother. In rural areas antenatal care forms as a step in bringing women in contact with the health care system because it facilitates women’s access to medical care for future health needs, including postnatal care. The importance of antenatal care and counseling about pregnancy complications for increasing the likelihood of appropriate delivery care is seen more particularly among rural women. Empowerment of women can be brought by bringing economic assistance and autonomy to them. Economic independence can enhance their decision making capacity at household level and increase their status in

the community. Income generation activities through self help groups can help them to be economically independent and contribute to women entrepreneurship. The concept of self help groups is catching up as the most viable means to empower women, especially at the grass root level. Women have shown extraordinary dynamism in organizing themselves in group activities for income generation, better bargaining power and improvement in the quality of life. Social capital and networking is an important requirement for the women to empower. Women’s organization in groups provides them a platform to discuss helplessness in their own society. In this process, the women will not only identify their problems but also become aware of their innate capacities in order to raise their status in the family and in the society. The goal of many development programmes is to enhance income-generating activities of rural women by expanding their entrepreneurial capacity and thereby empowering them economically.

### **C. Analysis and Findings**

The multinationals are involved for the development of tribal people through their corporate social responsibility approach. The multinationals in this regard constitute two kinds of stakeholders [12] (i) internal stakeholders like the suppliers, employees and others (ii) external stakeholders like the community. In the present paper an attempt is made to explain and describe the impact of the CSR of the companies on the external stakeholders. The strategy taken by Tata Steel is Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS). The TSRDS was established in 1979 to share its resources with the rural areas within which the company operates its business. The areas of operation are spread over Jharkhand and Odisha. The objectives of TSRDS are 1. To create a self sustaining process of integrated rural development. 2. To build a model that could be replicated by likeminded industrial houses and other organizations elsewhere with similar socio economic situation in India. 3. Network with agencies Government and non Government national and international for bringing best available resource and practices to the rural community it works with. It covers nearly 650 villages. The company encourages community involvement and their solution in the context of and responsibility towards its future ie with full participation of people. Programmes of self help through education and social awareness help the rural community to learn the difference between welfare and rural development. Table I shows the CSR activities under Tata Steel.

**Table I.**  
**Corporate Sustainability Services of Tata Steel.**

Corporate Sustainability Services	Initiatives	Activity
Rural	Sustainable livelihood	Empowerment-SHG
		Environment
Tribal	Ethnicity & Education	Promotion and Preservation of Ethnic Identity
		Promotion of Rural Enterprises
		Education
Urban	Vocational Training	Vocational Training
		Youth Dev/Sports
		Volunteerism
Family health	Preventive, Promotive and Curative Health Care	Mother & Child Health
		HIV / AIDS
		Communicable Diseases

Source: TSRDS annual sustainability report.

The company carries various community development approaches from which the present study focuses on health care practices for empowering women and the sustainable livelihood for women

empowerment by TSRDS. Table II focuses on the annual expenditure by the CSR of the company for four financial years.

**Table II**  
**CSR expenditure by Tata Steel**

Financial Years	CSR spending in crores
2014-15	171.46
2015-16	204.00
2016-17	193.61
2017-18	231.62

Source: TSRDS annual sustainability report

#### D. Health Care practices

Tata Steel focuses on the maternal health care practices to empower women. Tata Steel Family Initiatives Foundation is a non-profit organization promoted by Tata Steel addressing reproductive health concern. The community health and hygiene programmes of TSRDS are carried out at three levels. Promotive health care includes health care for mother and child AIDS awareness, health awareness and education and adolescent reproductive health care. Curative health care includes clinical outreach units, village health providers, health camps, eye camps, cleft lip and cleft palate procedure. Preventive health care includes immunization, sanitation, safe drinking water and protection against sexually transmitted diseases. It deals with maternal and child health, adolescent reproductive sexual health. It does project based health initiatives like RISHTA, SAHAS. It also deals with HIV specific focus areas. There is a resource centre which provides health awareness to young adolescent girl regarding sexuality, advices to pregnant women and post natal care through modern technique methods..

Tata Steel Family Initiatives Foundations (TSFIF) has been working in the field of maternal and child health since the late 50's by proving various health care

services to the underprivileged segment in urban as well as rural areas of intervention. TSFIF-led interventions improves maternal and child health and aims to reduce maternal and under-five child mortality and morbidity with the purpose of increasing access to MCH products, and promoting the adoption of positive maternal and child health practices. TSFIF provides a window of facilities to its beneficiaries to maintain good health, both mental and physical, through the following services:

- Antenatal care
- Postnatal care
- Immunization
- Counselling
- Treatment of STI/RTI
- Awareness Generation
- Family Planning Services

The health workers of TSFIF regularly visit households in their assigned areas in order to provide information related to health and Family Planning, counsel and motivate women to adopt appropriate Family Planning practices. For the family planning

permanent methods were used by many people of the villages in and around Jamshedpur. Table III shows the

number of couples protected under the health initiatives by the company.

**Table III**  
**Number of couples protected in 2016-2017**

Activity	Achievement
Antenatal Checkup	3782
Post natal checkup	2693
Immunization	2115
Laparoscopic Tubectomy	6281
Non Scalpel Vasectomy	340
Condoms	4560
Pills	2688
IUDs	70
CuT	788
Depo Provera	79
Total couples protected	14806

Source: TSRDS annual sustainability report.

The company also looks for adolescent reproductive and sexual health for which they undertake numerous project based health initiative such as Project RISTHA (Regional initiative for Safe Sexual Health by today's Adolescents) is a consortium project on Adolescent's Reproductive and Sexual Health services like safe abortion, which aims "to improve the sexual and reproductive health and well being of adolescents. It adopts families and communities, Panchayat leaders and elders from the communities, while for specific clinical service like safe abortion and emergency contraception, the target group includes young women, both married and unmarried and other women who access RH clinical services, including Anti natal care, Post Natal Care and RTI/STI treatment. Another project SAHAS (Strategies to improve Adolescent Reproductive Health and Rights through Advocacy and Services) aims at improving the reproductive health and well being of youth and adolescents in Jamshedpur by partnering with local organizations and youth clubs. The program has brought a downfall of maternal mortality in the area of operation and also 100 percent immunization coverage has been made.

#### **E. Sustainable livelihood**

The company provides many income generating programs for the rural women to empower them. It provides economic assistance, bank linkages to help the rural women to form self help group (SHG). Different SHGs carries different activities and thereby increase the capacity building for the rural women on skill development. The company not only provides them with economic assistance but also helps in marketing of the products produced in different SHGs for income generation. It promotes entrepreneurship through self help group as women entrepreneurship serves as an important indicator for empowering women (13). The

SHGs supported by Tata Steel offer training in tailoring, stitching, local crafts, animal husbandry and organic farming, with an aim to open doors to income generation opportunities. Market linkages are also provided, wherever possible. SHGs also provide women the opportunity to socialize with other women, share their concerns and learn from others' experiences. This leads to their holistic well-being.

SHG is the process by which a group of people with a common objective are facilitated to come together in order to participate in the development activities such as savings, credit and income generation. The SHGs are voluntary association of people formed to attain a collective goal. The objective of SHGs is to inculcate the habit of thrift, savings and banking culture (availing loan and repaying the same over a given period of time), and thereby ensuring economic independence. Women are engaged in income generating activities like poultry farming, gardening, stone carving, saura painting and setting of small industries like phenyl and pickle making. Pragati SHG does brick lines, pottery, poultry, public distribution system and mushroom farming. It has succeeded in leaflet making. The principles underlying the SHGs are financing the poorest of the poor, ensuring excellent recovery level, and achieving holistic empowerment. It is considered a better practice to empower women through informal sector like this instead of engaging them in formal sector where they are bounded by more rules that might lead to a dual role conflict (14). In formal sector, it is difficult to bring work family balance. Therefore, organizing women in SHGs will enhance the status of women as participants, decision-makers and beneficiaries in the democratic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. The SHGs have inculcated a great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day to day life. It has also brought an

increase in the decision making capacity at household level due to their economic independence. Table IV

shows the number of women empowered through SHG by TSRDS.

**Table IV**  
**Women empowered through SHG**

Year	No of women benefitted
2017	10,259
2016	9975
2015	9033
2014	9700

Source: TSRDS annual sustainability report.

In rural Orissa apart from weak market linkages in the context of income-generating activities, there are also a few other concerns in relation to women's empowerment. First is the capacity building of self-help groups, which are in need of support in accounting, financial management, and organizational development. The second concern is about the gender focus in rural financial services. The third challenge is about how to link self-help groups to agricultural activities, which are of key importance for the livelihoods of small farm holders in India, but at the moment self-help groups have not taken much agricultural activities, as the decisions on agriculture are mainly taken by men. Self help group has been responsible to bring women empowerment in rural Orissa to a great extent. Empowerment can be achieved through five strategies like education approach, economic approach, development approach attributes poverty to their powerlessness, yet another approach believes that women empowerment requires awareness of complex factors causing disempowerment of women. This approach advocates collective organizations of women as well as gender sensitization, gender planning, and strategy and consciousness raising activities. The Self Help Group engaged not only in economic activity but also in social empowerment and capacity building in rural women. Health, education, medical facilities, literacy, alternative agricultural practices, leadership qualities and team building are other activities of SHG

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The relationships between business and society have been studied for decades with outcomes being influenced by economic paradigm but modern concept of CSR states that the business enterprises in their usual process of business decision making should pay due attention to the social interest of the people in the community. Corporate social responsibility has been envisaged as the continuing commitment by the business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of the life of workforce and their families as well as of the local community and the society including customers and

people at large. CSR is the integration of social and environmental concerns with business operations and this means that corporate social responsibility is beyond the philanthropy. Multinational Corporation achieves unprecedented economic and political power under capitalist globalization [15]. Moreover, interaction with the stakeholders rather than shareholders is the crucial aspect of corporate social responsibility. It brings women empowerment and plays a significant role in transformation of communities towards development.

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