

## CSR has been a way of life



We view CSR as an opportunity to make a meaningful difference to society, contribute to nation-building, partner inclusive progress and make the world a better place, says **ARATHI SHETTY**, Non-Executive Director, Allcargo Logistics

### Is the need for regulatory authority justified?

If we look at the history of provisions of the CSR, in 2007, the Government came up with voluntary CSR guidelines. However, very few companies came forth in embracing them and eventually it was made mandatory in the Companies Act 2013. The idea here is not just to contribute to prevailing issues but encourage industry and corporate to work towards reducing economic disparity. If companies go beyond compliance, adherence to provisions would become irrelevant and the incentive would be to spread smiles and bring about a positive change at the community level. For us, CSR has been a way of life, much before it was regulated by authorities. It is a sense of duty and responsibility we feel towards the environment and society and is ingrained in our Vision, Mission and Values.

**The going Pandemic has devastated livelihood and has left the vast majority in penury. What are your CSR activities in the Pandemic period to alleviate the suffering of the have-nots?**

Lockdown and impact of Covid-19 has led

to loss of livelihood and reverse migration. Keeping this in mind, we have focused on creating agriculture-based livelihood. Our short-term efforts are directed towards providing for the immediate relief needs of the communities we work with by distributing food, ration kits, etc. For the long term, our efforts are directed towards creation of sustainable income for the targeted communities. So we not only ensure food security for the current times, but also help towards meeting future needs.

**When we say CSR activities it is quite often assumed some noble activities in tribal and rural areas. What are the CSR activities you conduct for the deprived people in the urban areas?**

Each CSR initiative we undertake is carefully chosen based on the impact and empowerment parameters, be it in urban or rural areas.

A number of our projects like Drushti, Jeevan: Coping with Cancer, Jeevan, Leprosy Elimination Action Project (LEAP), in the area of healthcare are very impactful and help improve affordability and accessibility of healthcare, thereby mitigating physical and



economical stress of the marginalised sections of society. We are one of the first corporates to collaborate with all three major BMC hospitals like Sion, KEM and Nair, and have been partnering with them for eight years now. Through projects like Disha, Disha Career Seed, Nipun - Skill Development, we strive to shape a brighter future for the youth and help them achieve their potential.

**Please take us through your collaborations with NGOs and other players to provide better CSR to the target audience?**

Partnership with the NGO and community is key driver in our CSR implementation. We identify grass root level committed organizations which form the bridge between our organization and the beneficiary communities. We believe and practice partnership in the true sense, fulfilling objectives of the projects and enabling sustainable change. The focus of our partnerships is to create congenial change at all stages of the project and decentralize decision-making to bring about efficient yet far-reaching impact.

**Can you brief about the regulatory changes that have taken place in recent years and how it is benefitting / affecting your CSR activities?**

There have been lot of regulatory changes in CSR and we ensure compliance

through well thought-out SOPs and a committed team. However, as an organization, we take pride in going beyond compliance. For us, CSR is a duty, a way of life. We view it as an opportunity to make a meaningful difference to society, contribute to nation-building, partner inclusive progress and make the world a better place.

**How are you leveraging technology to get your noble CSR activities done effectively and in a time bound manner? Can you share some instances with us?**

Openness to adopt and embrace technology is of utmost importance in today's times. Having an adaptable and flexible approach is integral to our activities. During the lockdown, due to mobility restrictions, our skill development sessions could not be conducted at the centre. We took this in our stride and initiated online sessions which worked really well. We could address students' concerns, make quality training accessible and still maintain all the Covid-19 precautionary and hygiene protocols.

**Can you share a few success stories of your CSR activities?**

We have managed to create deep positive impact through our programmes. Right from empowering women with training, changing the lives of 1000s of farmers by ensuring

their livelihoods or stepping up to carry out a number of Covid-19 relief activities, our initiatives continue to change lives. On an average, our CSR interventions impact over 50,000 individuals annually and we have spread smiles and happiness to more than 4 lakh lives over the years.

**In your long career there are quite a few CSR activities that have gone haywire. If you have to revisit one, which one it would be?**

When we plan our projects, they are carefully chosen in a manner that they are need-based and very impactful. Having a structured approach that encourages de-centralization and empowers our people and teams has helped prevent any untoward situation.

**In the next three years, how are you planning to take your CSR initiatives forward?**

After working on a replicable and scalable model in the area of healthcare, education and environment sustainability, in the interest of bringing smiles on the faces of as many more individuals as we can, we aspire to expand our nationwide spectrum of activities. Our aim is to scale up our initiatives by partnering with like-minded individuals, organizations, NGOs and relevant government bodies, so we can do more, do better and be a ray of hope for anyone who needs it. EPCWorld