

Corporate Social Responsibility: Answer to the Burgeoning Rural Infrastructure Problem in India

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Abstract

India is the second largest country in terms of its population after china. With the growing population there is an increasing pressure on urban infrastructures as people from rural areas are continuously migrating to cities in search of employment. Though the Government has taken many initiatives for the development of rural infrastructure, they seem to be insufficient. There is a growing realization that there is a need for private sector participation in infrastructure development initiatives. There is sufficient research in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility's (CSR) relevance in rural infrastructure development. As rural people are considered as an important stakeholder of the business houses, companies need to discharge their responsibility towards this segment of population. In this paper the problem of infrastructure development, the dearth of infrastructures of various types, role of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) in infrastructure development and how CSR can be an answer to this problem will be discussed.

Keywords: Rural India, infrastructure development, public- private partnership, Corporate Social Responsibility

1. Introduction

Really, India lives in its villages. There are approximately six lakh villages in India and seventy percent of the total population lives in rural areas. Previously, villages were the centre of trade, culture and traditions. Gradually, with economic growth villages legged behind and bigger cities emerged as trade centers. Since then started the negligence of rural India. Various governments framed various policies for the

development of the rural regions. It is true that to some extent these policies have been successful in achieving their targets and improving the rural life. But it is also a hard reality that we are far behind the desired outcome. Poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, hunger, illiteracy still persists in these areas. As a result the trend of migration from rural to urban areas is ever increasing. This in turn resulted in increasing pressure on urban infrastructure. Government is spending huge amounts of money for improving urban amenities but all in vein. The problem of slums, over crowdedness, insufficient housing, pollution, lack of health care, crime etc. is increasing at an alarming rate.

The current NDA Government has launched a very innovative program for urban areas i.e., SMART Cities. World class infrastructure will be available in these cities. According to a survey of McKinsey Global Institute, with better infrastructure India will be able to improve and maintain its growth rate by 1.0% to 1.5 % for a sustained period. This can accelerate the progress of the country significantly. So infrastructure is a key determinant of economic growth and social well being. But rural infrastructure in India in terms of roads, electricity, telecom connectivity, schools, health care etc are acutely short of demand. Thus, it is practically impossible for India to achieve the desired economic growth without developing rural infrastructure.

2. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary literature. An extensive study of articles, books and web sources has been made. The paper addresses the following questions:

1. What is the status of rural infrastructure in India?
2. What are the effective instruments for rural infrastructure development?

3. The State of Rural Infrastructure in India

Infrastructure is the backbone for economic growth of any country and that is why it is very crucial in all stages of development. Adverse political and economic conditions, poor management, budgetary constraint etc. can make investment in

infrastructure difficult. It has been reported that only eighteen percent of the total rural development budget reaches to the beneficiaries while the rest is wasted due to inefficient delivery system. This section will highlight the current outreach of rural infrastructure services in India.

- **Water and Sanitation:** As against the target of 7, 98,967 habitations for coverage under National Rural Drinking Water Program (NRDWP) during the eleventh plan period, the coverage up to 31st March 2012 was 6, 65,034 (83%). It is clear from this the supply of drinking water is impressive. But the growing concern is that the quality of water is degrading day by day. Increasing bacterial contamination and geogenic leaching has made the quality of water worse. The latest census reveals that the percentage of population having access to television and telephone in rural India in 2011 exceeds the percentage of households having access to toilet facilities and tap water. The Total Sanitation Campaign was launched in the year 1999 and it succeeded in improving the sanitation coverage from 22% in 2001 to 31% in 2011. The campaign was also successful in converting 28,000 PRIs 'Open Defecation Free'. But the progress was far from satisfactory. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Committee for water supply and sanitation reveals that 58% of the world's population defecating in the open in 2008 was in India. According to the Centre for Media Studies (2010) the major reasons for the gap in the access to and usage of sanitation facilities were the poor quality of construction and unfinished toilets.
- **Roads:** Rural roads play a very important role as they provide access to social and economic services thereby generating increased income and productive employment. A study carried out by the International Food Policy Research Institute (1999) on linkages between government expenditure and poverty in rural India has revealed that an investment of 10 million in roads can lift 16,500 persons above the poverty line. There has been imbalance development of road connectivity in India. Odisha holds the rank of 21st in terms of road connectivity and it is the poorest state in India. So it is evident that there is a positive correlation between road connectivity and the level of poverty. After

the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna in the year 2000 there is considerable improvement in road connectivity in India. But the major setback in this regard is lack of fund for maintenance, up gradation and rehabilitation of these roads.

- **Irrigation:** The water use efficiency in Indian Agriculture is one of the lowest in the world, at around 30% to 40%, as against an ideal of 60%. The maximum irrigation potential in India is 139.89 m/hc but by the end of the eleventh plan only 113.24 m/hc irrigation potential was achieved. India has achieved considerable success in creating additional irrigation capacity, but the real difficulty is there utilization has been less satisfactory. The twelfth five year plan has started a National Irrigation Management Fund to catalyze and support demand for irrigation management and institutional support.
- **Electricity:** India is one of the highest consuming energy in the world. The demand for energy is expected to increase manifold in coming years as the economy grows and increased accessibility of electricity in rural areas. The NSS 66th Round Survey conducted by National Sample Survey Organisation, reveals that access to electricity during 2009-10 increased from 55% to 67.3% in rural households. Under Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana, since 2009-10, 1.40 crore Below Poverty Line (BPL) families have been provided electricity connectivity. The per capita consumption of electricity in rural areas is only 8 units per month as compared to 24 units per month in urban areas. This is because of poor quality of electricity supplies and reflects significant unmet demands.
- **Telecommunication:** There is a phenomenal growth in the telecom sector during the last decade. There has been growth in the coverage and due to lower tariffs increase in the number of subscribers in rural areas. Out of more than 6, 00,000 villages in India, approximately 5, 55,000 villages have mobile coverage. But the area of concern has been the slow growth in broadband penetration. Up to March 2012, there were only 14 million broadband subscriptions. During 2008-11, telecom sector has shown a growth rate of 35%. The overall teledensity has

also increased from 18.31% to 78.66% during the eleventh plan period. But the urban teledensity is almost 4.4 times higher than that of the rural teledensity.

- Education: Education infrastructure broadly includes teachers, teacher's guides to the curriculum syllabus, non consumable learning materials, and consumable learning materials, school buildings including water facilities, latrines and school furniture. From several decades Government is trying to improve the rural education by investing adequate fund in education infrastructure. During the period 1991-2002, the proportion of villages having pre-primary school facilities has increased from 39 percent to around 68 percent. The proportion of primary schools increased by only 6 percent, while the proportion of middle schools increased only by five percent. The UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2006 reveals that the Gross Enrolment Ratio in pre-primary Education in India is 34 percent. The National University of Education Planning Administration (NUEPA) reports that in 2004-05 there were 126 million students being taught by 3.1 million teachers in 0.9 million rural elementary schools for an average of 209 instructional days. The District Information Centre for Education (DISE) reports that 71 percent of the rural elementary schools are pucca. In these elementary schools an average of three or less than three class rooms are available. In 2005, 48 percent of these rural elementary schools in India had 2 or less teachers and only 25 percent schools had 5 or more teachers were there. The average student to class room ratio was 45 and the teacher – student ratio was 1:12. More than 80 percent of these schools were having access to drinking water. But according to a report by Pratham – a NGO, the quality of this water is not ensured. There was a limited availability of toilets in rural schools- less than 45 percent of schools have this facility.
- Health: Improved health care is the basic need of every society and access to health care is the right of every individual. In India, lack of quality infrastructure, dearth of qualified medical professionals, non access to basic medicines hinders its reach to sixty percent of population. The Government has started the project National Rural Health Mission, which aims to improve the health care system in the country. The mission is the commitment of the

government to increase spending on health from 0.9 percent to 2-3 percent of GDP.

The rural health care system has been divided in to three tier system namely, Sub Centre, Primary Health Centre (PHC) and Community Health Centre (CHC). As on 15th March 2015, on an average 5426 persons were served by SCs, 32944 persons by PHCs and 154512 persons by CHCs. Likewise, the average number of villages covered by the SCs are 4, the average number of villages covered by the PHCs and CHCs are 25 and 119 respectively. At all India level, 153655 SCs, 25308 PHCs and 5396 CHCs are there. There is shortage of 3002 qualified doctors at PHCs and shortage of 17525 specialists at CHCs. There is acute shortfall of pharmacists, lab technicians and nursing staff in India. At PHCs and CHCs 8321 pharmacists, 13691 lab technicians and 12953 more nursing staffs are required in India.

4. Infrastructure quality of BRIC and OECD countries

In the Global Competitiveness Report (2012-13), the quality of infrastructures of the BRIC and OECD (Organizations for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries were compared. India performs fairly well in terms of transportation which comprises road, rail, air and water (port) transportation. In fact, India held top rank in air transportation among BRIC countries. But energy sector demands more attention in India as the quality of electricity supply in India is very poor. India is far behind the other BRIC countries in terms of quality of electricity.

The OECD countries have developed a very superior quality infrastructure in their country. Germany and Japan are far ahead than USA in terms of quality infrastructure. India needs to make a very concentrated effort to develop world class infrastructure as it lag behinds the developed economies like USA, Germany, Japan and China. During the twelfth five year plan India plans to invest an amount of Rs. 1 Trillion in infrastructure. However, ample infrastructure needs and wide geographical area are two biggest hindrances in the field of infrastructure development in India.

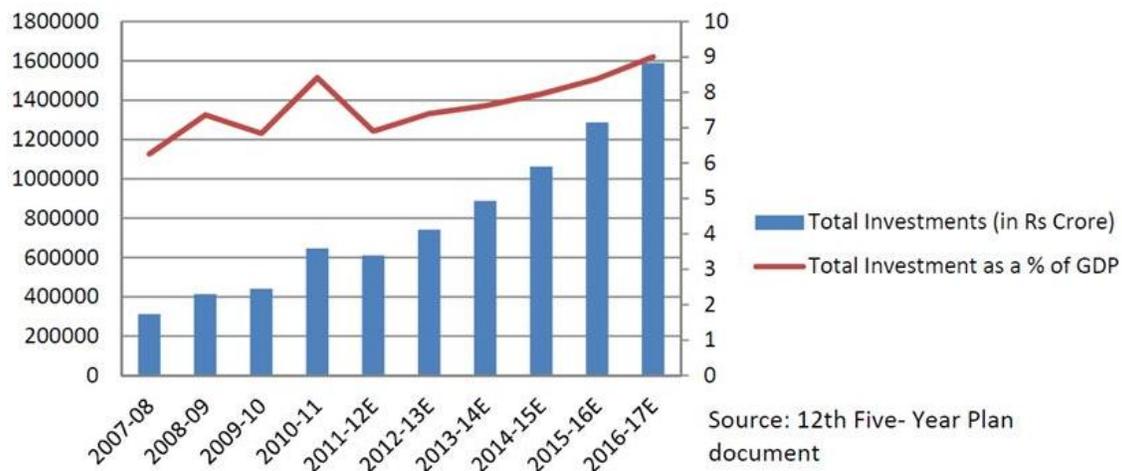
Table 1. Infrastructure Quality in BRIC and OECD countries

Quality of Infrastructure (Scale: 1 = extremely underdeveloped, to 7 = extensive and efficient by international standards; 2011-12 weighted average)												
Country	Overall		Roads		Railroads		Ports		Air Transport		Electricity	
	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	Value
<i>BRIC Countries</i>												
Brazil	107	3.4	123	2.7	100	1.8	135	2.6	134	3.0	68	4.9
China	69	4.3	54	4.4	22	4.6	59	4.4	70	4.5	59	5.2
India	87	3.8	86	3.5	27	4.4	80	4.0	68	4.7	110	3.2
Russia	101	3.5	136	2.3	30	4.2	93	3.7	104	3.8	84	4.3
<i>OECD Examples</i>												
Germany	9	6.2	10	6.1	7	5.7	9	6.0	7	6.4	19	6.4
Japan	16	5.9	14	5.9	2	6.6	31	5.2	46	5.3	36	5.9
Mexico	65	4.4	50	4.5	60	2.8	64	4.3	64	4.8	79	4.6
South Korea	22	5.8	17	5.8	10	5.6	20	5.5	26	5.9	32	6.0
United States	25	5.6	20	5.7	18	4.8	19	5.6	30	5.8	33	6.0

Global Sherpa, 2012 (www.globalsherpa.org); Source: World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report 2012-13*.

5. Trends of Investment in Infrastructure in India

Investment in infrastructure in India is always a very crucial issue. The amount of money spent for developing infrastructure in our country is not sufficient. There are numerous unfulfilled needs in various areas like education, health and transport etc.

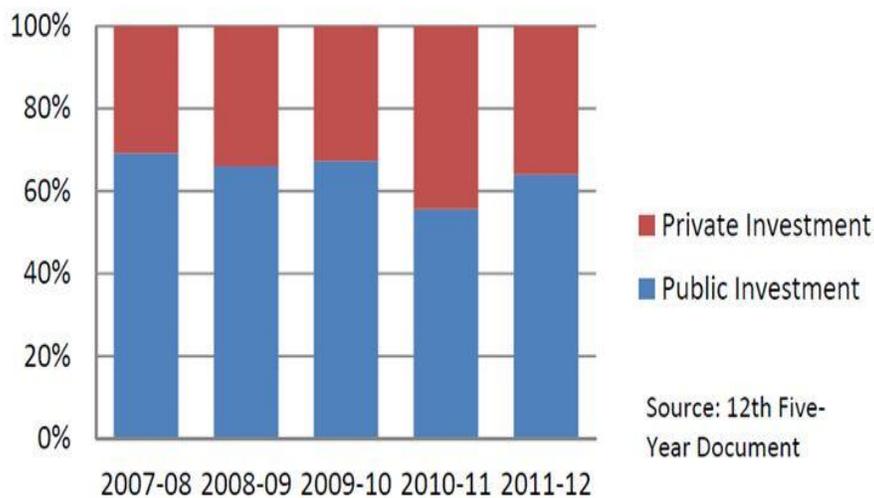
Table 2. Year wise investment in infrastructure from 2007-2017

The above graph shows that the percentage of GDP spent for infrastructure development is increasing continuously. It is expected that around 9 percent of GDP will be invested for infrastructure development in India during 2016-17 while less than 7 percent of GDP was spent for this purpose during 2007-08.

5.1 Scanty Private Sector Investment in Infrastructure

Traditionally infrastructure development is considered as the obvious responsibility of the government. This belief has laid to poor infrastructure investment by the private sector. According to the 12th five year *document over the years it is the public sector which is dominant in infrastructure investment. More than 60 percent of the total investment in infrastructure is done by the public sector.*

Table 3. Comparison of public sector and private sector investment in infrastructure in India from 2007-12



With growing industrialization, globalization and consumer awareness, it has been realized that private sector also has a crucial role to play for the infrastructure development of a country. It is the moral obligation of a company to develop the peripheral areas. By developing adequate infrastructure in these areas, a company can reap many benefits like talented workforce, improved transportation, improved productivity etc.

5.2 Issues in Infrastructure Development in India

India is suffering with poor infrastructure from a very long period of time. Various researchers have worked to find out the reasons why India is lagging behind in the infrastructure sector. According to a report by Standard and Poor (Rating Agency) increasing urbanization and industrialization has created pressure on available

infrastructures (demand for efficient power projects, transportation system etc.) in India and inadequacy of infrastructure can prove to be a hindering agent for achieving 9-9.5 percent annual growth in 2012-17. According to the report constraints in securing clearances, land rights and long term funding could cause the companies to fall short of their targets. A very relevant example in this regard is the Santa Cruz-Chembur Link Road was expected to be complete and open for the public in 2004. Due to delays in land acquisitions and care free attitude of the state government the project took 10 more extra years to be completed. The project was considered to be one of the "world's most delayed road project." As of February 2016, out of 1071 projects 341 projects are behind schedule and 238 projects were estimated to exceed the allotted budget. According to a study by Ministry of Statistics, the total cost of implementation of these projects was estimated to be Rs 12, 66,248.36 crore. But it is estimated that the anticipated cost of completion of these projects will be Rs 14, 26,985.93 crore. It implies that the total cost over runs for these projects is Rs 1, 60,737.57 crore. Nearly three out of ten central infrastructure projects in India are held up with delays.

These delays in infrastructure projects and growing costs for them will result in less investment both by foreign and domestic companies in India, which will again adversely affect the gross fixed capital formation and economic growth. Some 65.7 trillion rupees will be invested in infrastructure projects in India over the five years from fiscal 2012 to fiscal 2016, according to the Planning Commission, which draws up the nation's five-year plans. It is true that there are great business opportunities in the infrastructure sector, but a drastic policy change is needed for rapid progress in projects.

6. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Rural Infrastructure Development

Corporate social responsibility acts as a motivating factor for the corporate to invest in rural infrastructure development which will help them to develop a strong brand image. Apart from internal organizational benefits, communities too reap a wide variety of

benefits out of the CSR activities. Various studies in different parts of the world have been undertaken to establish the linkage.

Table 4 . Earlier studies establishing relation between CSR and rural development

Researcher	Year	Country	Method	Findings
Mal,D and Chauhan,k	2014	India	Exploratory	30 percent of the companies surveyed take CSR initiatives in the field of infrastructure development.
Kaur, S and Bhaskaran, R	2015	India	Qualitative Study, Comparative Analysis	Public Banks are widely engaged in CSR activities like education, community welfare, financial inclusion, rural development, entrepreneurship development and environment. Private sector organizations are also actively engaged in community welfare , education and rural development
Sarkar,J and Sarkar, S	2015	India	Content analysis, Empirical study	Food, drinking water, sanitation and health, education, skill development/ employment are the major CSR activities undertaken by big Indian companies

Ngowi, R.P	2015	Tanzania	Case study, descriptive statistics, frequency analysis	CRDB Bank (Tanzania) is contributing significantly for the development of the community. Rapid population growth, climate change, inadequate loan management skills among clients and lack of awareness are some of the hindrances for implementing CSR activities.
Whellams, M	2007	Peru, Bolivia	Case study	Mining companies are actively engaged in diverse field of community development especially in which they operate.
Amaeshi ,K. M, Adil, B.C and Amao.O.O	2006	Nigeria	Descriptive, Questionnaire, Snow- ball Method	For addressing the socio-economic Developmental challenges most of the indigenous company undertake CSR activities, especially in the form of philanthropy
Arato,M Haylenbroeck, G.V, and Spellman, S	2016	American Continent	Theoretical, Empirical	Majority of firms from a variety of industries have engaged in CSR programs by supporting rural communities

SHRM	2007	US, Australia, India, China, Canada, Mexico, Brazil	Email based survey among HR professionals of seven countries	57 percent of the surveyed companies in these seven countries implement community development programs through company sponsored voluntary projects
Ghosh ,S	2014	India	Empirical and analytical study, qualitative document analysis, conjoint analysis	Education, health care and environment are the areas where most CSR activities are concentrated. The most neglected areas are drinking water and sanitation. Manufacturing and service sectors are highly engaged in the field of CSR.
Jose, P.D and Saraf, S	2013	India	Exploratory, Focused group study of 100 companies	Most of the CSR activities are taken in the area of education, health care, community development and infrastructure development.

Through CSR activities the companies can ensure that the funds will flow to the rural areas which have been left out of the developmental process. TATA, Reliance, Wipro, HUL, BHEL, SAIL, Vedanta etc are the prominent players in the field of CSR in India. Public sector companies such as ONGC, SAIL, Indian Oil Corporation has been spending almost one percent of their profit on CSR activities. ONGC'S CSR project aims at improving higher education, granting scholarship to deserving students of less privileged section of the society, construction of schools etc. Reliance Industries has

initiated a project called project Drishti to bring back the eye sight of the rural poor. Another major pharmaceutical company in India, Glaxo Smith Kline is promoting health and healthy living style. They are operating their projects in tribal villages where they provide free medical checkup and treatment, health awareness camps etc. The software giant Infosys has its foundation called Infosys Foundation which organizes training camps for destitute women and built orphanages where education is given priority. In India it is realized that the corporations can play a very significant role in promoting infrastructure both in rural/urban areas especially when the government is running short of funds. Corporate not only invest in infrastructure, they share their knowledge and expertise for the noble cause of development of the society.

6.1 The context of Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh was formed in the year 2000 which was one of the BIMAROU states (undivided Madhya Pradesh). There are no considerable changes in the fate of the state. The census of 2011 reveals that forty six percent of the population lives in Empowered Action Group states (Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand) where the Human Development Index is very low in comparison to the other states of the country. According to the report of the Tendulkar committee and Annual Report of RBI, forty percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The state is predominantly based on agriculture. There is availability of chip and unskilled labour in the state and there is lack of mobility among them. Districts with rich mineral resources and highly industrialized districts are also suffering from the problem of poverty. It is one of the states which is densely forest (Bijapur, Bastar, Sarguja and Narayanpur). Maoist problem is also very acute here. Due to lack of employment opportunities and lack of cultivable land, people in these areas are also suffering from extreme poverty. More than fifty percent of the population of the state belongs to scheduled tribes and castes. According to the Kundu committee report almost forty five percent ST and thirty four percent SC populations in rural areas live below poverty line. Under such circumstances it is difficult for the government to fight against all these maladies. It is important for the companies to come forward and

participate in the development process. Improved infrastructures will definitely help the state to eradicate the problem of poverty and thus will lead to an improved HDI.

6.2 Bhilai Steel Plant: Eminent CSR practitioner

Bhilai Steel Plant is one of the premium public sector organization established in the year 1955. It has own the Prime Minister's trophy eleven times for best integrated steel plant in the country. The organization has assumed a pioneering role in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility in Chhattisgarh. BSP has its own CSR department that celebrated its tenth foundation year in 2016. This signifies the fact that BSP is actively engaged in CSR practices much before the compulsory CSR provision came in to existence. BSP spends a substantial amount of money for the development of the peripheral areas adjacent to Bhilai and Dalhi Rajhra. The allocated budget and total spending in CSR activities of the last three years are given below:

Table 5: Details of CSR Budget Allocation / Utilization as on 30.11.2016

Sr.	Year	Budget Allocation (Rs. In Crores)	Budget Utilization (Rs. In Crores)	Budget Utilization (%age)
1	2014-15	16.14	12.10	74.94
2	2015-16 ¹	27.60	25.46	92.24

Source: Department of CSR, BSP

Apart from spending on peripheral development, BSP actively works for the improvement of health care services, educational facilities, environmental protection, preservation of local culture, women empowerment etc.

Table 6 Different CSR activities of BSP

Sl No	Areas of Work	Activities
	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU between BSP and Akshaya Patra for the provision of mid day meals in 200 government schools • Running its own schools named as Bhilai Ispat Vikas Vidyalaya, donations to livelihood colleges • Orientation Workshop was conducted for 30 teachers in different BSP school by faculty from ICICI Foundation for Inclusive Growth. • Coaching for professional exams being provided through professional institute in hostel premises itself. • Gyandeeep Scheme for Mentorship of Hostel inmates launched. 40 BSP employees have joined the scheme as mentors to the students. • Infrastructure upliftment scheme for school of physically challenged children.
2	Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhilai Ispat Kalyan Chilitsalya got 5S certification. • From QCFI, Secunderabad. • Medical camps at different Model Steel Villages. • Donations for procurement of medical equipments. • Dispensaries run by BSP in remote areas.
3	Women empowerment / youth training / elderly care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on Computer, Communication skills including English Speaking. • Formation of Kaushal Kutir (Vocational training institute) .

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swayam siddha and Bhilai Mahila Samaj are the NGOs run by BSP . • Nursing course in P.G. College of Nursing, Sector-9, Bhilai for girls and Training through I.T.I. Durg (VTP) for Driver and Mechanic, Plumber, Electrician trades for boys. • Training program for farmers. • BSP has been honoured with Vayoshreshtha Samman by the Ministry of social welfare, GOI for taking care of elderly through Siyan Sadan.
4	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massive tree plantation program organized from time to time • Awareness program on Swaccha Bharat Abhiyan • Safai Pakhwara Celebration
5	Art, culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40th C.G Lok Kala Mahotsav organized at Open Air Theatre, Civic Centre, Bhilai • CSR team performed a play Ramayani- based on the epic Ramayan • Honors to eminent personality for their contribution to the society

7. Conclusion

Since independence India has achieved considerable success in various fields. The country has launched its satellite in to outer space, make notable achievements in the field of IT, science and technology, medicine etc. But it could not achieve matching success in rural development. It is high time for us to think of innovative ways and invest more on rural infrastructure development because India has assumed its journey in the path of economic growth which cannot be achieved without a robust rural development policy.

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