

Corporate Social Responsibility and Employment Generation: A Case Study of ACC Limited, Kymore, Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract:

Unemployment remains a persistent challenge in India despite various economic reforms and policy interventions. While initiatives such as the New Economic Policy (1991) and the National Education Policy (2020) have aimed to improve employment prospects, structural issues—such as the dominance of the informal sector and a shortage of skilled labor—continue to hinder progress. With 81% of the population working in the informal sector and only a small proportion engaged in formal employment, the gap between available jobs and employable skills is evident. In this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerges as a crucial mechanism to bridge the skills gap and promote self-employment. This paper explores the contribution of the private sector, particularly through CSR initiatives, in enhancing skill development. A case study of ACC Limited, Kymore (Madhya Pradesh), is examined to understand how corporate investment in skill-building can open pathways to employment and support broader national development goals.

Keywords: Employment Generation, Skill Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, NGO, Madhya Pradesh.

Introduction:

Unemployment remains one of the most pressing socio-economic challenges confronting both developed and developing nations. In India, despite the implementation of numerous policies and employment generation programmes, the problem persists and continues to grow. With a rapidly increasing population that has now surpassed 1.4 billion, India faces a daunting task in productively engaging its expanding labour force. The employment rate serves as a crucial indicator of a country's economic performance, and in India's case, it has not kept pace with the country's demographic surge. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), India recorded an unemployment rate of 7.91% in December 2021, highlighting the ongoing struggle to provide adequate job opportunities. Although there has been a rise in entrepreneurial activity and the influence of globalization has opened new

avenues for employment, especially among urban youth, a large portion of the workforce still remains underemployed or engaged in informal, low-income jobs.

The Indian economy, historically rooted in agriculture, is still in the process of transitioning towards industrial and service sectors. The government has launched several major initiatives such as Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY), and Skill India Mission (SIM) to enhance employment and skill development. Despite these programmes, the unemployment rate remains a concern, and many of these schemes have not been able to deliver job security at scale. Moreover, the Indian labour market is highly dualistic, characterized by a large informal sector where employment is typically insecure and unregulated.

Alongside the efforts of the government, the corporate sector has also taken significant steps to address unemployment through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Following the legal mandate of CSR under the Companies Act, 2013, many companies have redirected a portion of their profits toward social development. Between 2014 and 2023, over ₹1.25 lakh crore was spent by corporates on CSR activities, with education, skill development, and employment generation among the top focus areas. The involvement of corporates through CSR reflects a growing recognition that economic development must be inclusive and sustainable. By supporting vocational training, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship, CSR has emerged as a complementary force in tackling unemployment. Hence, this study seeks to explore the interplay between unemployment, government initiatives, and CSR contributions in India, while analyzing how effectively CSR is being leveraged as a tool to improve employability and economic inclusion.

Recognizing that employability is closely linked to education and skills, both the government and private sector have emphasized skill development as a strategic focus area. While schemes like the Skill India Mission, National Career Service, and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana are actively working to enhance vocational abilities, the corporate sector's role through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has also become increasingly significant. Since the introduction of mandatory CSR spending under the Companies Act, 2013, companies are required to allocate a percentage of their profits toward social development, including employment and skill-related initiatives. As a result, many corporates have launched or supported skill development programmes aimed at increasing employability, particularly among youth, women, and marginalized groups. These efforts reflect the belief that CSR can serve as an important mechanism to bridge the skills gap and boost employment.

This study aims to explore the current state of unemployment in India and assess how CSR initiatives are contributing to skill development and job creation. Special attention is given to examining selected CSR projects that focus on employability enhancement. The research also undertakes a focused analysis of ACC Limited's CSR interventions in Kymore, Madhya Pradesh, particularly in the area of skill development. ACC Limited, a major cement manufacturer, has been actively involved in community development and skill-building efforts through its CSR arm. By analyzing its initiatives and financial commitment toward enhancing employability in the region, the study seeks to understand the real-world impact of corporate participation in addressing unemployment. Through this multi-level examination, the research endeavors to assess how integrated efforts by the government and corporate sector can be scaled and sustained to alleviate the unemployment crisis in India.

Objectives of the Study:

- To get an overview of the current scenario of unemployment in India.
- To analyse the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in skill development and employment generation.
- To study the contribution of selected CSR projects towards skill development initiatives.
- To analyse the CSR spending by ACC Limited, Kymore, on skill development.

Research Methodology

This research is analytical in nature and primarily based on secondary data sources. While Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices are carried out across a wide range of sectors, this study specifically focuses on the area of skill development, as it plays a crucial role in addressing the issue of unemployment in India. The study aims to understand the current scenario of unemployment and to examine the contribution of CSR initiatives, particularly in the skill development sector, towards employment generation. The data used in this research has been collected from various credible and publicly accessible secondary sources. These include the National CSR Portal (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India), NGO Box (a platform that tracks CSR activities and projects), annual reports and CSR disclosures of ACC Limited, Kymore, and other relevant publications and government databases. The collected data has been carefully reviewed, organized, and analysed in alignment with the objectives of the study. This methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between CSR spending and its impact on skill development and employment generation, with a special focus on the CSR activities undertaken by ACC Limited in Kymore, Madhya Pradesh.

Role of CSR in Employment Generation

The discourse around unemployment in India often attributes the problem to a "lack of opportunities." However, a closer examination reveals that the core issue lies not in the availability of jobs but in the mismatch between job requirements and workforce skills. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS), out of approximately 470 million individuals of working age in India, only about 10% have received any formal vocational training or skill development exposure (NSSO, 2020). This indicates a stark imbalance between the supply of unskilled or semi-skilled workers and the demand for industry-ready professionals.

In this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) emerges as a strategic tool to address the employability gap. CSR enables companies to conduct skill gap assessments—analyzing the discrepancy between the skills desired by industries and the skills available in the workforce. By bridging this divide, CSR initiatives help enhance new-age skills among youth, create a pool of employable talent, and foster entrepreneurship. These programmes not only generate employment but also empower individuals with confidence and practical expertise required for long-term livelihood sustainability.

The Companies Act, 2013, mandated CSR spending for companies meeting specified financial thresholds. As a result, from 2015 to 2020, around 328 large companies invested ₹1,653 crore in over 775 skill development and training projects across India (NASSCOM Foundation, 2021). This strategic investment has played a crucial role in addressing the skill gap, especially in underdeveloped and semi-urban regions where access to quality education and employment opportunities is limited.

CSR-driven vocational education initiatives have proven effective in nurturing a skilled workforce. These initiatives are often delivered through partnerships with NGOs, government bodies, and sector-

specific institutions. In addition to providing job-linked skills, many CSR programmes include mentorship, entrepreneurship development, placement support, and digital literacy, thereby enhancing the overall employability of beneficiaries. Furthermore, CSR projects also emphasize educational support for socially and economically underprivileged communities, ensuring the long-term impact of such efforts in employment generation.

Table: 1
Top Skill Development Projects Through CSR in India

S. No.	Project Name /Company	Location	CSR Expenditure (Cr.)	Prescribed CSR (Cr.)	Focus Area
1	Skill Development Institute – IOCL	Odisha	150.59	543.38	Technical & Industrial Training
2	Vocational Training – Maruti Suzuki	Gujarat, Haryana	36.78	166.6	Employability Training
3	Project Swabalamban – Oil India Ltd.	Assam	27.84	55.67	Setting Up Skill Institutes
4	Upskilling Program – Asian Paints	14 States incl. MP, AP, TN	26.07	57.51	Industry-Based Upskilling
5	Skill Development Project – REC Ltd.	Pan India	23.29	156.68	Vocational Skills
6	Skill Initiatives – Mahindra & Mahindra	14 States incl. Delhi, Kerala	22.81	106.56	Entrepreneurship & Training
7	Skill & Vocational Training – ITC Ltd.	Pan India	16.91	326.17	Livelihood Enhancement
8	iTrain Programme – Berger Paints	Pan India	16.79	13.48	Skilling in Paint Industry
9	Project Grow – Dr. Reddy's Labs	Pan India	13	24.49	Career Readiness
10	Non-Farm Livelihood –	6 States incl. Gujarat, TN	10.24	21.39	Livelihood Generation

	Tata Chemicals				
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(Source: National CSR Portal)

About ACC Limited, Kymore, Madhya Pradesh

ACC limited is a leading player of Indian corporates which provides building material. It was established in 1936 and it is the very first company which include environment protection as a corporate commitment. In Madhya Pradesh, Its plant is in Katni district of Madhya Pradesh. ACC works on various locations with 17 cement plants, 4 concrete plants and 26 offices which served Pan India across all markets. Since its formation of this company in 1936, ACC Limited has always been concerned about of its obligations to the society and environment. Over the past years, ACC Limited has carefully inculcated the ethics and the values of people engagement.

Table: 2
CSR spending by ACC Limited

Year	Total Funding Crores)	CSR (in Crores)	CSR Funding for Skill Development (in Crores)	Percentage Share (%)
2014	27.45		7.74	28.1
2015	31.16		6.64	21.3
2016	22.27		6.07	27.2
2017	18.73		3.71	19.8
2018	20.45		5.7	27.8
2019	25.07		6.31	25.1
2020	32.33		5.76	17.8
2021	35.95		5.74	15.9
2022	37.5		6.1	16.3
2023	38.8		6.55	16.9
2024	40.25		6.95	17.3
Total	359.96		66.57	18.5 (avg.)

(Source: Annual Reports)

From 2014 to 2024, ACC Limited demonstrated a consistent commitment to CSR with total spending rising from Rs. 27.45 crores in 2014 to Rs. 40.25 crores in 2024, marking a 46.6% increase. During this period, Rs. 66.57 crores were allocated to skill development initiatives, accounting for an average of 18.5% of total CSR funds. While the absolute funding for skill development increased—from Rs. 7.74 crores in 2014 to Rs. 6.95 crores in 2024—the percentage share declined, indicating a gradual diversification of CSR focus. The highest allocation was seen in 2014 (28.1%), largely due to the launch of key initiatives like Project DISHA, while the lowest was in 2021 (15.9%), possibly due to pandemic-related reallocation. Despite the relative decline, the continued investment in skill development reflects ACC's strategic alignment with national employment goals and its commitment to sustainable livelihood generation, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

Projects initiated under DISHA

Launched in 2014, Project DISHA is ACC's flagship livelihood and skill development initiative aimed at enhancing employability and self-reliance among the rural population around its plant sites. DISHA operates in multiple states including Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu. The project partners with NGOs like Hand in Hand, Head Held High Foundation, Shanti Ashram, and IIMPACT, among others.

Table: 3
Yearly Amount Spend on DISHA Project

Year	Amount Spent on DISHA (Rs. Crores)	Key Activities – Project DISHA
2014	7.74	Youth employability training, participatory rural micro-planning, soft skills, digital skills, micro-enterprise promotion
2015	3.71	Employability-linked training, SHG formation, microfinance mobilization
2016	2.80	Vocational skills training, farmer-producer group mobilization, organic farming support
2017	3.71	Placement assistance, entrepreneurship promotion, household counselling
2018	3.93	Continued technical & soft skills training, micro-enterprise seed support
2019	4.50	CRO & QA training for women, expansion of vocational trades in multiple plant locations
2020	3.95	Soft & digital skills, technical training, formation of SHGs, savings & bank loans via SHGs, FPO setup
2021	3.47	Microplanning, district-level counselling, livelihood training, multi-skilling workshops
2022	3.65	Continuation of vocational trades, IT & soft skills, placement linkages across communities
2023	3.95	Expanded trade offerings, digital literacy, women empowerment via SHGs
2024	4.20	Upskilling rural youth, micro-enterprise incubation, rural placement facilitation

(Source: Annual Reports)

Project DISHA is ACC Limited's flagship CSR initiative aimed at empowering rural communities through employability training, digital and soft skills, entrepreneurship support, and microfinance facilitation. From its inception in 2014 through to 2021, the initiative cumulatively trained over 1,700 youth, empowered around 7,695 women through Self Help Groups, and reached 14,304 individuals. DISHA's activities consistently include micro-planning, vocational training, community counselling, and promoting self-employment through SHGs and FPOs.

These initiatives trends for 2022–2024 continue this integrated model—blending technical training with social support and enterprise development—underscoring ACC’s long-term commitment to sustainable livelihood and skill-building in rural host communities. Let me know if you'd like this visualized via a chart or infographic.

Focus Areas of Project DISHA

Project DISHA targets unemployment in rural areas by equipping youth and women with vocational and entrepreneurial skills. Its core objectives are:

- Enhancing economic opportunities in rural communities.
- Providing youth with access to employability-focused training.
- Promoting social inclusion and gender equality in livelihood creation.

Notable Initiatives under Project DISHA

1. Women Empowerment through Technical Training

In 2019, 56 women were trained as Control Room Operators (CROs) and Quality Analysts at the ACC Cement Technology Institute (ACTI) in Jamul. By 2020, all trainees completed a 3-year residential program and became eligible for jobs across manufacturing sectors (ACC Annual Report, 2020).

2. Improving Livelihoods of Farmers

In 2016, the ACC Trust helped establish the "Rajiv Lochan Producer Company" involving 100 farmers, later expanded to 500 farms across six states by 2020. Farmers were trained in organic farming, composting, and natural pesticide production—reducing dependency on chemical fertilizers.

3. Tailoring Program for Women

This initiative, launched at Kymore, imparts stitching, embroidery, and knitting skills through a 4-month training course. Outstanding participants receive sewing machines to start home-based businesses. By 2021, 107 women had completed the training and many had begun generating income (DISHA Progress Report, 2021).

4. Beautician Training for Dropout Girls

ACC DISHA also offers beautician courses for girls aged 17 and above. These 4–6 month vocational programs help school dropouts gain financial independence. As of 2020, 97 girls from Kymore villages had completed training and started earning livelihoods.

Conclusion:

Unemployment in India continues to be a major socio-economic issue, largely due to the mismatch between available jobs and the skill levels of the workforce. While government programs aim to address this gap, the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly significant in recent years. Among the many companies contributing to this cause, ACC Limited stands out as a leading example of effective CSR-driven skill development. Through its flagship project DISHA, ACC has focused on empowering rural youth and women by providing vocational training in areas such as tailoring, beauty services, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship. These initiatives are designed to foster self-reliance, enhance employability, and support sustainable livelihoods in underdeveloped regions. Between 2014 and 2024, ACC Limited invested approximately Rs. 49.21 crores specifically in its DISHA program, making a direct impact on thousands of beneficiaries. The company’s projects have not only built skills but also contributed to improving the overall socio-economic conditions in rural

India. From promoting women's participation in income-generating activities to supporting farmers with improved livelihood practices, ACC's CSR activities are holistic in nature and deeply rooted in community development. At the national level, CSR spending on skill development has remained consistent, with key players like Indian Oil Corporation, ITC, Tata Chemicals, and Mahindra & Mahindra also contributing significantly. However, as the India Skills Report reveals that only 45.6% of institutionally educated youth are employable, the urgency for practical and industry-relevant training remains high.

In this scenario, ACC Limited's approach demonstrates how focused and need-based CSR initiatives can bridge the skill gap, generate employment, and build long-term community resilience. Their sustained investment in skill development aligns well with national employment goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offering a model that other corporations can emulate. As India progresses, such corporate-led interventions will play a crucial role in converting the country's demographic potential into a skilled, empowered workforce.

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