

## Conference Note

### Better Education through CSR 24 Feb. 2014, New Delhi

A conference on the theme of 'Better Education through CSR' was held on 24 February 2014 in Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi, jointly by Partners In Change, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and NGOBOX. The main focus of the conference was on the contemporary and vital issue of engagement of multiple stakeholders in education sector through CSR in India. The forum also deliberated on the matters of quality education and access to education with the help of multiple partners of CSR like corporations, government and civil society and on further scope for innovations. It was jointly discussed by participants from all sectors that CSR in India has evolved and has involved work of multiple levels of governance and policy making. With the advent of the New Companies Act, CSR has found a new meaning in Indian context. CSR intervention in the field of education has been looked as one of the top priorities in the new regulatory provision. The main premise of the conference was to build on new avenues for CSR to work towards maximum utilization of resources such as technology and business know-how in order to build a better educated and skilled nation.



From left to right: Ms. Chetna Kaura, Brig. (Retd.) Rajiv Williams, Mr. Satyam Darmora, Mr. Soumitro Chakraborty and Mr. Umesh Brahma

The participants and speakers in the conference were eminent names from government sector, corporate sector and non-government sector. Ms. Chetna Kaura, Chief Programme Executive, National Foundation for CSR, Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) was the Guest of Honour for the event. Experts from corporate sector and non-governmental sector provided with valuable inputs and innovative ideas in the field of education through CSR. The conference did emphasize on the great potential of CSR in the field of education that can bring forth various innovative and highly efficient models in the way we conceive the aspects of literacy, education

and skill. The solutions on how maximum efficacy could be achieved through a holistic ecosystems approach, innovations and dynamism were brainstormed by the speakers and participants.

The welcome address was given by Mr. Bhomik Shah, Chief Executive, Partners In Change. The session started with the in-depth analysis on the CSR provisions of the New Companies Act and the Draft Rules by Guest of Honour, Ms. Chetna Kaura. The role of the CSR committee and the requirement of creation of CSR policy were also dwelled upon. Inputs from the representatives of corporate sector were provided in terms of new innovative models for better education and skill development for marginalized section of the society. Mr. Satyam Damora from The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation deliberated on the needs of building internal capability of the implementing agencies and interconnectedness of the projects. Soumitro Chakraborty, Chief Executive of Fiinnovation mentioned the need to understand the irony of the education sector in terms of disappointing data of education in the Indian context. He further discussed the ways to resolve such irony through strategizing and implementing the CSR projects in efficient manner. Umesh Brahme, representing the NGO- Room to Read, presented his views on non-competing partnerships bringing maximum funding coverage and substantive change. The keynote address by Brig.(Retd.)Rajiv Williams, Corporate Head-CSR, Jindal Stainless elaborated on the subject of education being important facet that directly impacts growth and development. He further mentioned the important tenets of getting the processes right and improving the existing system.

The conference included two in-depth panel sessions with diverse representation of panellists from various organizations of multiple sectors. The focus of the panel sessions were primarily on the advent of new models of better partnerships in education arena through CSR. The need for such models was discussed upon and it was cohesively agreed that imperative aspects of quality and access to education and role of technology within innovative partnerships is the contemporary requirement to build a better educated and skilled India.