

Emerging Water Challenges: Social Risk Management



Photo credit to Unitus Seed Fund. Women collecting water from a bore well in Andhra Pradesh, India.

Context

The contemporary Indian social, demographic context is witnessing a steady rise in demand over water resources and experiencing crunch in its access and availability, clubbed with livelihoods challenges never before. On the contrary, meager policy instruments, inadequate institutional capacities and lack of machinery in place to address or ensure sustainability of its resources. Thereby, situation/s leading to exploitative, competitive demands among representative stakeholders for access, and stake over natural water resources.

These situations are often resulting in equating with rights, posing a serious threat to long-term sustainability concerns and challenges more specifically for water resources. Further to given context, allocation priorities (political decisions) are often undergoing rapid changes. Such social environment may hamper business goals and growth potentials, unless strategically aligned and engaged with the community, and key stakeholders, by managing social visibility through equitable and sustainable social benefits.

Therefore, our water-based industries are required to demonstrate water stewardship and sustainable process in equating with resources along with community and key stakeholders. The social /philanthropic - CSR base needs to revisited and aligned and equipped with social processes effective to engage, converge, build sustainable linkages consistently.

Common concerns of water-intensive industries:

- Lack of strategic CSR perspective and goals to measure social benefits and impacts
- Perception gap - Lacking strategic interventions like IEC and community education initiative in place
- Lack of institutional approach – local community-based organizing are not owning industry CSR initiatives – linkages and convergence lacking in building sustainability
- Most of the programs and interventions of CSR are done in isolation – integration, consistency on local specific challenges found to be missing
- Most of the corporate industries do not have a baseline on CSR – intervention/activities. Therefore, measurement of social impact/measuring Industry's social performance is missing
- Community and stakeholder engagement is lacking, thereby leading to negative perception

Common social interventions/mitigation measures:

- Perception management – IEC interventions
- Strategic CSR perspective and goals to evolve
- Baseline on key issues and challenges – monitoring and evaluation process in place to read social performance and benefits
- Community and key stakeholder engagement plan for having effective convergence and linkages for ensuring social visibility - sustainability
- Facilitation of micro-skill development for youth and SHG based income generation – reducing overdependence on agricultural activities on upstream habitations
- Engaging upstream farming community on educating on sustainable farming methods
- Water and sanitation interventions on upstream habitations – manage quality challenges – source protection
- Water harvesting / conservation structures – community education and linkages with NREGA – community water source management - source sustainability

Conclusion: This paper has made serious attempt to present, diverse and strategic importance of Social Risk Management (SRM). The Mainstay houses required expertise, competencies and skills to deliver customised services for water intensive industry.

For further information on the subject please contact us.