

Corporate Social Responsibility – Devotion at Work

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) takes on a whole new meaning at SOBHA Limited, the only backward integrated real estate player in the country. CSR at SOBHA Group is a sincere devotion that stems out of genuine concern and drive to provide comprehensive and sustainable social development to rural India. It is in this context that SOBHA, under the aegis of '*Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust*', initiated *Graamasobha*, a unique social developmental initiative for *Vadakkenchery, Kizhakkenchery & Kannambra (newly added) grama panchayats* in *Palakkad* district of Kerala in 2006.



THE SOBHA ACADEMY

The Trust has identified nearly 4485 families (around 17171 people) from the Below Poverty Line (BPL) bracket. Individual photo identity cards were issued to each member of the adopted families. As a result, the Trust has detailed and authentic data about each beneficiary and his or her individual requirements. Based on the data, the *Graamasobha* model was developed. The lives of

thousands of underprivileged citizens are getting positively transformed through this growth model, which has a bottom-up approach towards poverty alleviation.

The families have been adopted through an in-depth scientific poverty mapping called Social Empowerment Mapping Exercise (SEME) to implement Vision 2020. The in-depth Social Empowerment Mapping Exercise was undertaken by the Social Empowerment Department (SED) of the Trust to fulfil the following objectives:

- To identify and enlist genuine beneficiary families from the two *panchayats* using clear-cut norms and terms.
- To generate qualitative and multi-dimensional 'Baseline Reports' on the target families, so that specific programmes and activities could be implemented for their benefit.
- To devise target-based, area-specific empowerment programmes and activities for key human development verticals like education, health, employment, housing, sanitation and water.

- To design an effective mechanism to measure and monitor processes and the pace of the empowerment programmes of the Trust.

In 2006, the Trust selected and trained a team on a full-time basis to complete the exercise. For about a year, they studied the incidence, depth, and severity of poverty of the beneficiaries with the help of various mapping methods. Families, which had extremely poor living conditions or those which had a monthly income level of Rs. 7,500 or below, were categorised as BPL. In 2016, the Trust has identified nearly 4485 families (around 17171 people) based on a revised survey where families earning less than Rupees 1,50,000/- per annum are the beneficiaries.

The aim of this action plan is to achieve comprehensive and sustainable social empowerment of these families. The program covers key human development verticals like education, health, employment, water, sanitation and housing besides various social empowerment measures. In the history of Indian villages, it is perhaps a first of its kind initiative undertaken with so much investment for designing, developing and delivering state-of-the-art infrastructure to the poorest of the poor, without any discrimination of religion, caste and creed.

Broadly, SOBHA's CSR activities span the following areas:

- Providing education
- Providing healthcare facilities
- Looking after the aged, the elderly and those in need

Providing education

SOBHA Academy

The SOBHA Academy was started in the year 2007 to empower and enable the rural poor to break away from the vicious circle of poverty, ignorance, deprivation, and exclusion by providing their children with high-quality education. Selection to the Academy is done through an open draw from a list of eligible candidates short-listed after intense research. Targeted specifically at children from the weaker sections, all applications that come to the





SOBHA Academy are scrutinised to ensure that only deserving candidates are given access to the free and quality education that the Academy provides. Selected students undergo a medical fitness test and the final selection of students is done through an open draw. Every year 90 girls are admitted to LKG through draw. The Academy, which follows the CBSE curriculum, provides all academic and related costs like that on fees and books, transportation, food and healthcare, all free. During 2018 - 19, 1131 students in the Vadakkenchery, Kizhakkenchery and Kannambra panchayats were on the rolls from LKG to Class 12.

A unique feature of The SOBHA Academy, which is perhaps unparalleled, is that almost 100 per cent of its students belong to under-privileged communities. These students are given high quality education backed by advanced technology. In an attempt to help these children even more, girls in Class 10, 11 & 12 are provided free boarding and lodging and also assisted by tutors to help them in the learning process. This also helps students become self-reliant in their routines.

SOBHA Icon

SOBHA has also launched several educational initiatives for the benefit of the children. One of the initiatives of the Trust is 'SOBHA Icon', which aims at creating 'icons for India' by making high-quality learning opportunities available for deserving students of other government schools who have exceptional skills but not the opportunities to grow. Regular academic professionals have been engaged to enhance the performance of more than 250 students.

SOBHA Icon Higher Secondary Course

SOBHA Icon Higher Secondary Course is a two-year full time on campus, regular, 6 days intense, technology-driven, professional college enrolment oriented programme for a batch of 80 students each in Science and Commerce streams, being conducted at SOBHA Icon Campus at *Moolamcode* and is registered with Kerala State Open School for certification. The Trust also provides financial assistance to students from poor families, who obtain merit seats for engineering and medical courses. All their expenses are covered including tuition fees, uniforms, books and basic accessories. In the 2017-18 Kerala Higher Secondary Board Examinations, all but one of the 51 students passed with distinctions with 90% students scoring over than 95 percent marks. 18 students scored full A pluses in all subjects with the top score being 99 percent. All students have been enrolled in colleges based on merit.

Many students have qualified in the International Competitions and Assessment for Schools (ICAS) 2017 of University of New South Wales, Australia. Over a dozen students of the 2017 batch have been selected for INSPIRE & PRATHIBHA Scholarship by the DEST, GOI and Kerala Government respectively. One student each has passed the JEE(Mains) and NATA 2018.

SOBHA Icon- High School support initiative

This initiative provides learning opportunities for deserving high school students from the Kizhakkenchery Government School. There are 90 students, 30 each in class VIII, IX & X standards, who are provided with coaching support in their studies during 7.15 am to 9.15 AM & 4.15 TO 5.45



pm every day. On holidays, they get full time support. Of the 30 students who wrote the Kerala SSLC Exam 2018, 11 have secured full A Pluses in all subjects. All passed with good grades and are now enrolled for higher secondary course. In Class VIII, 6 Icons have received the National Merit cum Means Scholarship Examination 2017 which is a creditable achievement.

Regular meetings are held with parents of students of all educational institutions to discuss the progress made by the children so as to maximise the benefits of the education being provided to them.

SOBHA Icon –UG support initiative

As part of encouraging better performers of Icon Higher Secondary course, the Trust has been extending financial assistance to Icons to pursue their UG courses since 2015. As of now, nearly 102 students are receiving support. To ensure commitment, continuance of scholarship beyond semester two, has been linked a minimum score of 80 percent or grades equivalent there to. A close monitoring of their progress is being done continually to ensure the initiative delivers its purpose.

Anganvadi

Donated 5 cent land for Anganvadi at Vazhuvacode, Anjumoorthemangalam, Vadakkencherry for the benefit of small children.

Providing healthcare facilities

SOBHA Health Care

SOBHA Health Care, which was started in 2007, is one of SOBHA's flagship CSR activities which provides free and easy access to primary healthcare. SOBHA Health Care has redefined the limits of primary healthcare institutions anywhere in the country. The target group comprises the 2,500 BPL families of the adopted *panchayats*, senior citizens of SOBHA Hermitage, students of the SOBHA Academy and their parents. The facilities include free consultation, diagnosis, tests, treatment, and medicines. The Centre has also set up outreach counters to reach out to the needy at their doorsteps.

The following beneficiaries avail of free healthcare facilities under the various Sobha Healthcare programmes:

- All SOBHA's project staff and migrant workers are provided annual medical screening.
- Residents of SOBHA Hermitage.
- Students of the SOBHA Academy who are screened twice a year for medical / ophthalmology / dental care. Road to health growth charts are also maintained for all students.
- All parents of students at The SOBHA Academy undergo medical / relevant clinical laboratory examinations; they are also provided appropriate treatment.
- All employees of the *Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust* who undergo yearly medical / relevant clinical laboratory investigations.
- Below the poverty line families in the two selected *panchayats* of *Vadakkencherry* and *Kizhakkencherry* who have also been given identity cards.



During 2018, 12406 outpatients have been treated under the SOBHA Health Care programmes. More than 2 lakh patients have been treated so far under this initiative which shows the important role that it is performing at the community level in terms of accessibility and acceptability.

Looking after the aged, the elderly and those in need Coverage of CSR activities

SOBHA Hermitage

The focus of SOBHA's CSR activities is not only on the young. The Company also believes in looking after the elderly in their golden years. SOBHA Hermitage, which was set up with the specific aim of providing shelter and assistance to elderly from weaker sections of society, has now become a home for senior citizens and young widows and their children. Besides providing residents a roof over their head, SOBHA Hermitage also makes sure that they are provided all necessary amenities to lead comfortable lives. Residents have independent rooms, a library and a common television room, a gym and also internet access. All residents can also avail of round-the-clock medical facilities, if needed, which are provided by paramedical staff; there is a doctor on call during non-working hours. The Hermitage also has an in-house clinic. Cultural and social activities like celebrating birthdays of residents are also organised at the Hermitage.

SOBHA Young Mother Rehabilitation programme

A comprehensive rehabilitation package for the young mothers (widows) living in the Hermitage is in operation. Special arrangements are in place for their living, safety, security and welfare at absolutely no cost. The widowed mothers and their children live together. All mothers have been encouraged to continue their education and many have completed their graduation and others are catching up. All are employed at the SOBHA Academy with good remuneration which they can save. Their children are admitted to the prestigious SOBHA Academy, where they obtain quality education. Special arrangements are made to teach music and dances to their children at the SOBHA Hermitage. Separate living apartments are being constructed for them which they can move into as their children grow older. Support is also provided if they want to get re-married. 7 out of 18 young mothers were remarried with the support of the Trust. In short, an integrated social rehabilitation for the hapless widows, saving them from exploitation is in full swing at the Hermitage with great success. Perhaps, an initiative with so much depth and devotion may not be found in the country and this is another example of SOBHA's philosophy of social service, 'Devotion at Work'.

SOBHA Rural Women Empowerment

It has taken 50 widowed mothers and their children belonging to the Vadakkenchery and Kizhakkenchery panchayat under its wing. They are provided with a basic monthly living allowance, clothing, medical and other personal accessories. Educational expenses of their children are met by the Trust to give them adequate opportunity to come up in life.



PASSION AT WORK

SOBHA Social Wedding Programme

Social weddings are a practical response to the serious social problem faced by numerous women whose families are too poor to get them married. *Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust* conducts social weddings that are free from the fangs of dowry and till date has carried out 630 weddings. It helps approximately forty women get married each year and provides basic resources to the couples to help them begin their wedded life. The couple is given pre-marriage counselling. The Trust's staff also monitors the couples' post marriage life periodically and renders help if needed.



DOWRY-LESS SOCIAL WEDDING

SOBHA Community Centre

The SOBHA Community Centre is a beautiful and spacious edifice for the deprived. It plays host to various community mobilization programmes including medical camps, orientation and training classes and social weddings. The Centre also comprises of a dining hall that has a seating capacity of 300, where several poor people are fed twice free of cost every day.

Other Initiatives

SOBHA Green Initiatives

SOBHA's green philosophy of development is widely accepted across the spectrum as evident from the numerous awards and recognitions it has bagged. Akin to that, several green initiatives are underway in the CSR project areas also. The entire campus was constructed with minimum carbon footprint and without making much change to the natural surroundings. Large-scale rain harvesting methods and processes are put in place, planting of more than 3000 herbs and plants and preserving the existing flora and fauna to the extent possible has been undertaken. The Trust has also very large waste management plants put in place to process the waste generated here. All the CSR project campuses are a plastic free, no-smoking and non-alcoholic areas, thus striving to achieve sustainable lifestyle. Also recently, a solar energy plant was installed.

SOBHA Organic farming

The Trust has been cultivating rice and organic vegetables for the past two years. During 2018, around 2600 kg of paddy and 3000 kg of organic vegetables are produced.

To promote the awareness in organic farming with the guidance of agricultural department, the Trust has selected around 600 parents of students of The SOBHA Academy and SOBHA Icon and given them the support required such as training, seed, manure etc. The Trust encourages them to produce



vegetables and if they produce is in excess of their requirement they have the option of selling it to the Trust.

Rising to other causes

Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust has been highly active in providing relief to flood-hit families in *Vadakkenchery* and *Kizhakkenchery panchayats*. The families were provided assistance for the reconstruction of their damaged houses. It also provides assistance for other projects such as maintaining community pond, sponsoring students who get admissions to engineering and medical graduate courses but have no financial means to carry on their studies.

All CSR programmes and projects embarked upon by the *Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust* are implemented in consultation with the local *panchayat* authorities without placing any financial burden on them. SOBHA Group strongly believes that if an initiative like *Graamasobha*, in which adoption of one or two *panchayats* can be taken up by other companies, institutions and organisations, then it could change India's poverty equation forever and bring about a sea change in the social fabric of this country.