

# “CSR is a pre-requisite of the very existence of businesses today”

Max India Group through its social service arm Max India Foundation has earned its credibility as a passionate patron of CSR initiatives in India. With its focus on health for the underprivileged and eco-friendly environment, it has highly conformed to its pledge of giving back to the society. “To see ‘India Shining’, a concerted, focused multi-pronged approach to health, education and a clean environment for all is the only way ahead” says Mrs. Mohini Daljeet Singh, Head, Max India Foundation in an interview with IJLM. Excerpts:



**Mrs. Mohini Daljeet Singh**  
Head, Max India Foundation

IJLM: What are the various CSR initiatives adopted by your company till date? What are your future plans? On what basis have you selected your CSR interventions?

MDS: Max India Foundation is the Social Service arm of the Max India Group with its focus on health for the underprivileged particularly children and an ecofriendly environment within the Max Group.

We have selected our programs after careful deliberation. We believe that quality healthcare is the primary need of every human being. With the support of our Group Company, Max Healthcare, we can make decisive inroads towards this goal. We have been able to execute healthcare and health awareness programs through our doctors, medical staff and infrastructure of our Max Healthcare Hospitals. Max Healthcare employees are volunteers of the Max India Foundation for health related projects.

Having decided to focus on healthcare for underprivileged children, we felt that good health must start with correct and complete immunization. Collection of data made it evident that although many government projects were in place, immunization was not reaching all. Consequently, we decided to take this as a major initiative through our group company Max New York Life which has a Pan India presence. Details of this are given below.

Our Programs:

**Surgeries for Underprivileged:** MIF facilitates treatment and procedures including surgery for the poor who cannot afford such treatment. Since January 2008, when Max India foundation started its operation, we have sponsored 127 major surgeries and cases of high-end treatment for the underprivileged.

**Pan India Immunization:** - Max India Foundation through Max New York Life Insurance provides vaccinations to underprivileged children between 0-12 years of age. It covers the entire spectrum of immunization including Hepatitis B, DPT, MMR, and Measles. This is a special

## Communication is the key

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an exercise of "reaching out". You look beyond yourself, your organization and your own environment to a population or an issue where there is a need to be fulfilled or a problem to be solved. Once identified you take it upon yourself to work towards closing the gap. As the problem begins to get solved, the apparent success of the initiatives inspires more actions, leading to greater success. This results in a sense of gratification, a sense of "feeling good" about yourself and your company. It may have started as "something you had to do" but most likely will convert to "something you chose to do."

Increasing awareness and a sense of social responsibility, has made CSR initiatives an integral part of Corporates' agenda. A lot of companies are involved in and have achieved perceptible positive change. Each has paved its own path, which I am sure has worked very well. However, there are a few personal thoughts I would like to share on the subject.

Firstly, the exercise must be considered as lateral and not vertical. No one is doing anyone a favour. It is only by an accident of circumstances that we are where we are, if we need help, it is our right to ask for it and if we can give help, I think it is our duty or responsibility to give it; when in a position to make a difference...just make it.

How does one make this difference? Empathy, never sympathy, is the point to begin. Can we put ourselves in the beneficiary's shoes? Can we try to think in his/her language? For this we need to communicate - to speak and discover by discussing as an equal, making sure we never insult. One does have to be firm, often lecture and sermonise even chide but as long as we don't belittle we are on the right path. The human touch, through communication is what gives them faith in us. We have to earn the trust and faith of a community to work with them. Once you gained their faith and are ready to work with them, you have made an enormous difference already.

'Reaching out' often takes unpredictable turns and one could be faced with unusual challenges. A few years back, I met a young couple, the man was a soldier in the Indian Army, whose 11 year old son, a smart intelligent boy had been running fever consistently for a few months. When we got the child checked at a bigger hospital, it was confirmed that he was suffering from leukaemia. They were devastated. The child was immediately transferred to Delhi for further treatment and they moved too, with their

initiative where in employees from Max New York Life Insurance along with an empanelled doctor volunteer for the program. The program was launched on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2008. To date we have given 20313 immunization shots to 9024 children in 168 Camps.

Health centres: -

Max India Foundation Rail Majra (in the vicinity of the production unit of Max Speciality Films, Distt Nawashehar, Punjab) Health Centre: The Health Centre provides free medical consultation along with free medication to the villagers. Over 19000 patients have been treated up to date since it was started on 1st Feb 2008.

Chinmaya Health Centre: MIF in a joint initiative with its partner NGO Chinmaya Mission has set up a Health Care Unit at Ashram, New Delhi. Experienced gynaecologists, ophthalmologists and dentists are available for consultation for patients of Sunlight Colony.

Jamghat Day Care Centre: Max India Foundation has partnered with NGO, 'JAMGHAT - a Group of Street Children' and sponsored a Health and Day Care Centre in the Jama Masjid Area, Delhi. A pediatrician from Max Healthcare visits the centre every Thursday for health checkups. This centre also provides rehabilitation of street children by imparting Vocational Training, Life Skills, toilet and bathing facilities.

CanSupport East Delhi Centre: Max India Foundation sponsors the Field Centre at East Delhi for its partner NGO CanSupport to provide palliative care to patients and their families struggling with Cancer. To date the centre has supported 416 patients with 2862 home visits.

Health Check Camps - 12297 patients in 31 camps.

### Camp location

Camps	Location	No. of Camps	No. of Beneficiaries
NGO Vatavaran General Health Check Camp - 2009	Shahpur Jat	2	200
NGO Samarpan General Health Check Camp, Eye Check up and Immunization camp - 2009	Gadhia Lohar Community, Kotla Slum	4	100
NGO Udayan Ghar General Health Check up for orphaned children- 2009Max	Balaji Hospital, Patparganj, Max Medcentre Panchsheel	6	100

younger son. I gave them my mobile number, spoke with them and followed up with the doctors. Sometime later the doctor-in-charge told me that the child had acquired an infection and it would only be a matter of time. Suddenly one day, the father called me and told me that the boy was gasping for breath. I could hear Manju, the mother sobbing nearby. I knew the time had come. For a split second I wondered what to say. However, God gave me abundant strength. I kept talking to them telling them to hold their child and tell him they loved him and finally to let him go as he was going to a better place. I don't know if I had helped at all. I know that no words could console them. It was heart breaking to loose a lovely child at such a tender age but at least I was there for them. A few weeks later I was in their town and visited their home. The first thing I saw on the table in the living room, was the game and colouring set I gave him when he first went into hospital.

"If we need help, it is our right to ask for it and if we can give help, it is our duty or responsibility to give it"

Everyone needs to talk, a shoulder to cry on, a bag to punch or just someone to share joys and sorrows with. But today everyone is so engrossed in themselves with their own concerns that often people forget this. They are lonely, so are others around them. I am not talking of just CSR which is often a faceless process; but of life in general. I firmly believe this is the greatest cause for suicide today. Students cannot talk of their fears and concerns. Bottled up, those fears, simple as they may be, become nightmares. The student cannot communicate so he feels ostracised by society. Parents and teachers often miss the signs again because they are not communicating enough. A minor setback like a poor class report could trigger off a suicide, because no one has told the child that the problem is minor. Lack of support in terms of communication is the major cause of all suicides, be it a business man losing money, a farmer who cannot repay his loan etc. In the modern era, when family, friends and colleagues have a different connotation, professional counselling is the replacement. But how many can afford it or are aware of its existence?

I am not speaking of the boundaries of CSR, but in all organizations including Corporates, COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY. In an organization with a good HR department in place which believes in regular communication, the employees will be a happy lot.

Remember to talk- to your children, elders, parents, siblings, employees, servants. They should know you are there. Let us be socially responsible.

Eye and Dental Check Camp – 2009	Chandigarh	1	570 patients, 12 cataract surgeries, 43 pairs of spectacles given
NGO Agragati Cardiac and Eye Check up Camp – 2009	Gaushali, Vasant Kunj, Delhi	1	200
SOIL (School of Inspired Leadership) General Health Check Camp and Blood Sugar Testing- 2009	Gurgaon, Haryana	1	100
NGO Help Rural India Cardiac camp - 2009	Mandi, Himachal Pradesh	1	800
Oral Health and Hygiene Awareness Camp- 2009	Noida, UP	2	200
Women's Wellness Program- 2009	Epicentre, Gurgaon	1	100
Eye Check Up camp with Chinmaya Mission – 2009	Chinmaya Health Centre	1	200
Cancer Awareness Talk by Dr. Vedant Kabra MHC – 2008	Jesus and Mary College, Delhi	1	100
Women health Awareness Workshop – Vatavaran – 2009	Shahpur Jat	1	40
Slum Cluster Sec 50 Camp Chandigarh - 2008	Chandigarh	1	900
Women Heath Awareness with NGO Katha - 2008	Delhi	1	100
Health Check of Special Children by Ngo Vishwas – 2008	Delhi	1	50

**Artificial Limbs and Polio Calipers Camp:** We annually organize "Free Artificial Limbs and Polio Calipers" camp in association with Manav Seva Sannidhi. To date more than 1140 patients have been provided with Artificial Limbs and Polio Calipers in Valsad and Mohali, Chandigarh. Max India Foundation encourages and motivates employees from Max to volunteer for the event. We are planning to organize the next camp from 13th to 16th March 2010 in Mohali Chandigarh.

**Project Citizen: St Columbas-** Max India Foundation has partnered with St. Columbas School to educate the

youth for active citizenship under Project Citizen. The project endeavours to inculcate values and principles of democracy, tolerance and feelings of political efficacy in young minds. We are also spreading eco friendly environment practices through monthly environment tips displayed in the school premises.

Adoption of Govt. School Rail Majra: MIF provides extra coaching for students of class X- Government High School, Punjab Education Board, Rail Majra for Maths, Science, and English. In 2009, the students achieved a 100 percent pass percentage as compared to 55 percent last year.

EnvironmentTipsandEnvironmentDayCelebrationatMax:

MIF is committed to spread awareness about a healthy and eco-friendly environment. Every month an Environment tip is displayed across Max Hospitals in Delhi, Max New York Life HO, Gurgaon and Max Speciality Films in Chandigarh and Rail Majra.

We also organize talks on related subjects and shares eco-friendly practices. We organised a workshop on E-waste with support from GreenScape and participated in the Environment Mela organised by St Columba's.

World Environment Day is celebrated on June 5 at Max India and Max Hospitals in Delhi by a plantation drive.

Max India Foundation has sponsored the plantation, protection and caring of 250 trees through NGO Nizhal in Chennai.

Social welfare and health awareness

Max India Foundation has produced and screened 4 films on Diabetes Awareness endorsed by Actor Sonam Kapoor.

Max India Foundation has also produced a Film on Oral Health and Hygiene which is screened at Health Check Camps for the patients while they await their turn.

Disaster Relief:

Max India Foundation provided medicines to bring relief to flood victims of Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh. Max New York Life Volunteers organized health camps with a doctor and dispensed the medicines themselves.

We also provided donation for victims of cyclone in West Bengal through OXFAM India.

Medicines and blankets to flood affected in Bihar in 2008: During the cold wave of Dec 2009, blankets were distributed to the underprivileged through various NGOs

Kargil Diwas: Max India Foundation organized an event to

commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kargil Victory and to honour soldiers, the Kargil Heroes on 29 July at the Auditorium, Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket. The accounts of their brave deeds were inspirational and motivating to all.

Max New York Life Pan India Blood Donation Camps: 83 camps were organised and 2462 units of blood donated by employees.

"The gratification we get from implementing our programs is our greatest motivation to do more."

## Future Plans

Consolidation

- Expansion – Enhance networking, Partnerships, Volunteers, Locations
- Mobile Clinic, Dental Clinic

IJLM: What have been your prime motivations for pursuing CSR initiatives?

MDS: The Max India Group is in the Business of Life. Although the Companies were involved with philanthropy, our Chairman, Anajit Singh felt in January 2008 that the business had developed to a level where it could give back to society and we must do so to make a marked difference to the lives of the less privileged by personal involvement of the companies and employees. Therein Max India Foundation started operations with contributions from the family and group companies.

We are all aware of the need for an integrated approach to improve the quality of life for our fellow countrymen and we want to contribute our efforts in a planned, focused manner. The gratification we get from implementing our programs is our greatest motivation to do more. The bonding of employees as well as the group companies in projects and the feeling of satisfaction at being involved in noble ventures is a great motivation for pursuing our CSR projects.

IJLM: What is your opinion regarding the CSR policy in India? To what extent has there been governmental support?

MDS: The concept of CSR in India is at a nascent stage. However, it is encouraging to see growing awareness and interest by corporate and government alike. There are many conventions and seminars taking place, showing that there is a general feeling of "WE MUST DO". Many have set forth on their path. But there is lot of ground to be covered in the "WHAT TO DO" and "HOW TO DO".

The government has shown interest in Public Private Partnership in CSR. Some states have been very active in executing welfare measures; however, overall accountability needs to be stressed in government initiatives.

IJLM: What challenges have you experienced in your CSR activities?

MDS: I have not experienced any major challenges to speak of. Having said that, every aspect of CSR is a challenge e.g. from fund raising to identifying sincere partnerships etc.

IJLM: What is your perception regarding the performance of Indian corporate in CSR? What would be your message to them?

MDS: It would be difficult to generalize on the performance. Some have begun to show positive energy and results. My message is that we must do our utmost; growth can only be inclusive. If we wish to see 'India Shining', the lustre must be spread to all. A concerted, focused multi-pronged approach to health, education and a clean environment for all is the only way ahead. No longer do we have the luxury of considering CSR; it is something we have to do with sincerity. In the social environment of our country today, I would say CSR is a pre-requisite of the very existence of businesses today. There are miles to go... but we have the means. With the correct intent, the light at the end of the tunnel is nearer than we think. Let us set ourselves achievable goals and make that cutting-edge difference to building our nation.



“Spreading its caring arms”



NOTE: Map not to scale. Boundaries of India and the states shown here may not be accurate.