

## India CSR: Reflections From the Last Decade, Visioning for the Next

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### Introduction

The **dus spoke India Inc Report 2025**, provides an in-depth analysis of the current state and future trajectory of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India. The report highlights a shift from CSR as compliance to CSR as a strategic opportunity, with growing ambition among leaders to challenge assumptions and reimagine CSR's role in India's social development. These findings are based on **interviews with 27 CSR leaders, surveys of 47 CSR leaders and 78 non-profit leaders, and a detailed analysis of India's top 200 CSR spenders.**

### Growth and Scale of CSR in India

- CSR spending is rapidly growing, projected to increase from INR 34,909 crore in FY24 to over **INR 1.2 lakh crore by FY35**, making it one of the largest and most stable private capital sources for social impact in India.
- The **top 200 companies contribute to 51%** of the total CSR spend, showing a high concentration of CSR activities among large corporations.

### Strategic Focus and Sector Priorities

- The allocation patterns of the **top 200 fall within 6 broad themes**, which together represent **92%** of all CSR expenditure. **Education (34%) and health (27%)** dominate CSR investments, followed by **skills (12%)** and environment (10%).
- Companies are increasingly using corporate foundations (39%) and direct execution (31%) to align CSR with internal strategies.
- CSR is becoming integral to **business strategy, driven by employee engagement (87%)**, community goodwill (74%), and positive customer perception (64%). • **Longer-term projects are on the rise**—37% of the projects funded by the top 200 companies run over **8 months** and reflect stakeholder priorities.

### Geographical Concentration

- CSR capital is concentrated in states with **strong corporate presence and infrastructure**, primarily **8 states that attract over half** of total CSR spend (MH, Karnataka, TN, Odisha, UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi).
- Low-income, high-poverty states and aspirational districts receive **disproportionately low CSR funding** (only 2% to the North East and 4% to aspirational districts), risking reinforcement of regional inequalities.
- Large companies are leading efforts to fund underserved geographies but have not yet

influenced wider corporate participation.

### **CSR Expectations & Challenges**

- **81%** of the CSR leaders emphasize the need for **leadership depth and for strengthening second-line leadership**.
- **77%** of the CSR leaders place a premium on **tech-integrated NPOs**: digital-first program delivery, data systems, and real-time tracking.
- Half of surveyed NPOs depend on CSR for **more than 50% of their funding**, yet only **47%** of CSR leaders invest in building non-profit organizational capacity. • **86%** of NPOs report **inadequate or absent** capacity-building support. • While 50% of total NPOs surveyed view themselves as collaborators on projects, the relationship tends to **leave little room for NPOs to shape priorities or influence direction**.
- **Rigid grant conditions, compliance-heavy, immediate results**: CSR relationships are often seen as transactional and NPOs expect CSR to have a deeper appreciation of **ground realities and support for systemic change**.

### **Barriers to Collaboration and Innovation**

- **Peer-to-peer corporate partnerships are rare** due to governance complexity (40%), brand sensitivity (40%), and strategic misalignment (68%).
- There is a significant **innovation deficit**: 73% of non-profits report little or no support for early-stage pilots or experimental projects.
- 55% of the CSR leaders express **ambiguity around compliance**, with 38% calling for more granular and publicly available data of CSR spending. 66% seek a shared platform **to identify scalable, proven models**.

### **Recommendations**

- Address misconceptions about the CSR laws.
- Embrace calculated risks through innovation.
- Enhance direct collaboration with other CSR initiatives.
- Address technical skills gaps in the CSR team.
- View NPOs as collaborators and engage in deeper and flexible partnerships. • Building long-term capacity in non-profit partners.
- Expanding beyond local regions to address structural inequities.

**Read More:** [India CSR: reflections from the last decade, visioning for the next](#)