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CURRENT TRENDS OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF BUSINESS AROUND THE WORLD WITH FOCUS ON AFRICA AND ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility, hereinafter referred to as CSR, or Social Responsibility of Business – whichever way it is called, the concept remains rife. But the diversity in its import across the world, and the manner in which it is treated by different continents, nations and businesses renders it to be revisited. Hence this research is intended to observe the present trends about CSR around the world, and among the African nations, with emphasis on Ethiopia. This research is also intended to redefine the CSR performance paradigms. It is a survey research carried out based on published data. The important findings of this research include: presence of the unabated spree of indulgence of companies, big or small, in violation of the statutes and facing heavy penalties; some Asian countries and almost all African countries are in their infancy as regards taking up CSR activities; governments have done their best and it is for the business sector to take-over in regard to addressing social responsibility issues since governments can spend only out of the taxes they receive; most of the businesses, including African businesses, place economic objectives first at the neglect of ethical and legal responsibilities and the article established that it is no longer plausible on the part of businesses to believe that indulgence in Social Responsibility renders them to incur losses; the legal framework or its mechanism in Ethiopian context is not only insufficient, but also ineffective in monitoring CSR activities including pollution abatement. CSR/sustainability concepts have begun to be considered core criteria when it comes to recruitment aspect, such as, job applicants started to look for employers' proclivity to CSR and sustainability commitment. As regards achievements of the SDG, the trend seems to have regressed as between 2015 and 2019.

KEYWORDS

CSR paradigms, SDG, corporate social responsibility, social performance, triple bottom-line.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The phrase, "Corporate Social Responsibility," is called differently among different quarters - *corporate responsibility, corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, corporate sustainability or responsible business*, so on and so forth; *definitions are ambiguous; terms like corporate social investment, corporate citizenship, business ethics are used interchangeably* (Judy N. Muthuri, 2012).

CSR and Corporate Governance go hand-in-hand. There is an overlap between the two as regards coverage of stakeholder classes. If distinction were to be drawn between the two, issues like philanthropy and community welfare, which fall in the non-mandatory domain of CSR, are not covered by Corporate Governance. What corporate governance covers, if not essentially differentiated from the agenda under CSR, are fairness, transparency, and accountability, with focus on investor protection (Uditha Lyanage, 2005)

CSR, remains the buzz word of even today, though the subject received greater attention and was sufficiently dealt with in developed countries already, while the middle income nations like India, some European countries, and South Africa are marching towards attaining perfection, whereas the low income economies have started embarking the path. With the ever growing concern world over about employee welfare, environment protection, and investor protection (the triple bottom line), the question of legalizing social reporting still being debated on in certain countries, the unabated trend of commission of corporate crimes, the emphasis on the question of CSR is rife.

A review of the global scenario of corporate social responsibility points to a marked variation among continents and nations along perception and practice of CSR - with some nations, absorbing the concept and practice to the core, while others being half way through and yet others found on the lower rungs of the ladder, moving upward progressively.

Some apprehensions about CSR around the world:

–CSR is by and large, a western phenomenon;

–CSR pursuance is most likely to be present in countries with "globally-active companies, democratic political structures, and active civil society organizations" (Baskin, 2006).

1.1 DEFINITIONS OF CSR

The concept of CSR has been first explained by Bowen, H.R. (1952) and reads that, "... while implementing strategies and making their decisions, organizations should act taking into consideration, society's values."

Stonier's definition goes like this: "In real sense, the assumption of social responsibilities implies recognition and understanding of the aspiration of the society and determination to contribute to its achievement." The report of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (Peter McKinlay, 2000) provides a definition of CSR as "*the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life*" and presents conclusion on its importance for business including "*a coherent CSR strategy, based on*

- *integrity,*
- *social values and*
- *long term approach,*
- *offers clear business benefits to companies and*
- *a positive contribution to the well-being of society."*

1.2 NATURE OF CSR

Corporate Social Responsibility is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model (McWilliams, Abigail. and Siegel, Donald., 2001). From the perspective of companies' commitment to ethical behaviour and voluntary actions surrounding community welfare and their pre-emptive pro-environmental actions, CSR can be said to be a self-regulated concept. But with the immanence of the increasing government's intervention and regulation, socially responsible behaviour comes to be state-regulated as well. Thus, the concept is two-faceted. The objective of CSR is to increase long-term profits and shareholder trust through positive public relations and high ethical standards to reduce business and legal risk by taking responsibility for corporate actions. CSR strategies encourage the company to make a positive impact on the environment and the stakeholders including consumers, employees, investors, communities, government and others. When one asks people from various walks of life as to what social responsibility means to them, one can expect a bizarre picture with some, answering - it is

charity; others, saying, community development; and still others, saying environment protection. Probably no single person would be able to give the exhaustive list of the stakeholder classes.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The current study intends to showcase the bird's eye view of the present trends of CSR related perception and practice around the world, through the expediency of the below-listed specific objectives.

1. To put forth a plea for re-defining the label, CSR;
2. To present the pattern of the variegated perception of the concept of CSR around the world;
3. To establish the rationale of CSR
4. To bring out an extended and revised model of CSR paradigm;
5. To examine the latest trends among entities around the world as regards sustainability pursuits;
6. To investigate the status of CSR philosophy absorption among least developed nations including African nations and Ethiopia;
7. To explore the scope for further research.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study aims to present the current status of the perception and practice of CSR around the world. Hence the study is exploratory, fundamental and descriptive. The study is based on secondary sources including journal articles, conference papers, web pages, text books, newspapers, and reports published between early 1950s and 2020. It is exploratory because, the study investigates the new trends and attempts to identify scope for further studies; it is fundamental because, the study intends to re-define the CSR performance paradigms in the light of the recent changes in perception; it is descriptive because important developments are reported as they are.

4.0 DELIMITATION

As this research deals with study around the world, the literature covers data published in different continents and nations, right from early 1950s to 2020. Since this research is based on secondary sources, there is no scope for quantitative analyses.

5.0 SIGNIFICANCE

In spite of a great deal of conviction among various quarters around the world about the need to adopt CSR, the skepticism among beginners, or start-ups, or even some established firms still prevail as to the certainty of profitability upon taking up CSR. Hence an attempt is made through this article to dispel wrong conviction about the rationale of CSR, if any. Those who might benefit from this study include government agencies, businesses, researchers, executives, consultants, investors, NGOs and so on.

6.0 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY – HOW APT IS THE LABEL?

When the word 'corporate' is used, it refers to registered companies in a country. Then what about businesses run in other forms, like sole proprietary, partnership, and cooperative? These organizations account for a considerable share of a country's GDP. While taking the contribution of informal businesses into account, SMEs contribute to more than half of employment and GDP in most countries irrespective of income levels (IFC, 2010) and their actions too have an impact on the society (externalities) – say, the impact on the environment, employees, government, suppliers, customers / consumers, partners of the firm (mutual impact), competitors, resource utilization, so on and so forth. So, can these entities be neglected when their role in the society is significant? If the use of the word, "corporate" were indispensable, there is likelihood that such firms take for granted that they are precluded from social responsibility initiatives, at least in regard to the mandatory agenda. Hence there is a strong case for changing the nomenclature from CSR to SRB (Social Responsibility of Business) so as to include businesses which are not registered companies.

But, besides this observation, there is another question still remaining unanswered. That is, the issue of NGOs. The ostensible nature of an NGO is that it is a not-for-profit organization, meaning: its sole motto is to serve the society. Further, most of the NGOs are not registered companies. In such a case, does the term, "Corporate" apply to them? Should they be included in the bandwagon? The mere fact that they are not likely to produce externalities, in general, such as various kinds of pollution, they cannot be exempted from taking up social responsibility. If not from externalities, they still have the obligations towards their employees, partners, suppliers, governments, aid agencies and the like – the stakeholder classes of NGO cadre. So, can the label, "Social Responsibility of Business" be used to include NGOs, though they are not of commercial nature? If the term "corporate" were to be used, proprietary, partnership and cooperative firms should be precluded. If the label SRB were to be used, NGOs get eliminated. Hence, a trade-off appears necessary here. The size of businesses in the unorganized sector is much larger compared to the size of NGOs world Hence it appears reasonable to retain the label, **Social Responsibility of Business (SRB)**, and discard the age old label, CSR. However, since the literate world is used to the term, CSR, the same label is carried throughout this article for the convenience of the readers. The author of this article call for a consensus among thinkers, researchers, managers and consultants to change the label.

7.0 THE VARIEGATED PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF CSR AROUND THE WORLD

Though the questions raised under this head had been dealt with in earlier studies, the author prefers to revisit these questions on grounds as follow:

- In spite of the fact that the concept of CSR has been discussed over almost a century, many entities do not even talk of the importance of CSR;
- There is possibility that the reason as to why most of the businesses are shy of embarking upon CSR pursuance is, lack of awareness or lack of conviction that CSR leads to prosperity under shared-value mechanism.

In the beginning, there were arguments against CSR, like, "The business of business is business, a corporation's purpose is to maximize returns to its shareholders and that obeying the laws of the jurisdictions within which it operates constitutes socially responsible behavior (Friedman, Milton, 1970). Another stance, with some moderation goes as - if shareholders individually wish to pursue social or other goals, then they are free to apply their personal incomes gained from the company for that purpose, exercising their individual choice...." The argument further states that diversion of shareholders' wealth amounts to the act of theft (Sunjib Dutta, 2003).

7.1 WHO IS IT TO SHOULDER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Some arguments that are not antagonistic of CSR dwell upon the question as to who is it to shoulder and monitor the onus. One argument goes like this: Better governmental regulation and enforcement, rather than allowing businesses to voluntarily implement CSR measures, is plausible (Ganguly S. 1999). However, critics claim that effective CSR must be voluntary, as mandatory social responsibility programmes regulated by the government interfere with people's own plans and preferences, distort the plan of allocation of resources, and increase the likelihood of irresponsible decisions (Armstrong, J. Scott & Green, Kesten C., 2013). The author's conclusion is that better CSR governance emerges through collaborative *fora*, among business, government and society representatives.

7.2 DOES CSR ADD TO COST AND ERODE COMPETITIVENESS?

Though this was the apprehension held during early years, almost all recent and contemporary studies indicate that expenditure on social agenda is investment, but not cost. While CSR benefits are hard to quantify, Orlitzky, Marc., Frank L. Schmidt., & Sara L. Rynes (2003) find that social/environmental performance and financial performance of the business entity are positively correlated. Gopal K. Kanj, and Parvesh K. Chopra (2010) too contend that profit means what remains after all costs have been recovered.

7.3 RATIONALE OF SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN BUSINESS & SOCIETY – A MATTER OF GIVE AND TAKE

Interestingly, there are contenders, who see the relationship between business and society through a different lens. They see interdependence of these two sects to signify symbiosis or partnership. Howard R. Bowen (1953) puts forth that businesses, on the one hand, must adjust their operations to the needs of the society

at large and on the other hand, society must develop attitudes and policies more favorable to business. Bowen's perspective thus seems to make society, equally responsible in playing its part by helping businesses formulate their social wellness strategies (Howard R. Bowen, 1953). Keith Davis, professor emeritus at Arizona State University (USA) is cited to have held that organizations are members of the society and that, since they draw resources from the society for their own use, they have a responsibility to return to society a value for those resources (Randal B. Dunham and Jon L. Pierce, 1989). Tunzelmann opines, as laid down in "A Summary of Themes in Social Responsibility and the Company: A New Perspective on Governance, Strategy, and the Community," that business benefits by helping to improve social conditions. [Adrienne von Tunzelmann, 1997 – McKinley Douglas Ltd.]

7.4 ADOPTION OF CSR IS A CAMOUFLAGING TACTIC: THAT IS – TO ELUDE THE SCRUTINY OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC!

Some critics contend that some multinational corporations appear ostensible as regards adoption of CSR. They do this in order to elude government's scrutiny along the former's ethical behaviour (Henderson, David, 2001). Adisalem (The Addis Fortune of Ethiopia, 2015) contends that the floriculture sector is one of those sectors that are known to be at large in using polluting substances while on the other hand, they volunteer in community development activities like building schools and hospitals. Addis Fortune finds these measures as a dissembling tactic. This is called 'green-washing'.

7.5 DOES THE CORPORATE ACT OF PUBLICIZING ITS CHARITABLE DEEDS (THAT ARE PART OF THEIR CSR AGENDA) AMOUNT TO UNDUE OSTENTATION?

According to some quarters, corporate indulgence in charitable activities is believed to be its bounden duty as part of its CSR agenda; but publicizing such good acts becomes undue ostentation and unnecessary (Seble Samuel, 2016). The author of this article contends, what's wrong in publicizing good acts, though they are part of the agenda of a company's CSR activities? He further contends that such publicity might be justified from the point of view of "shared value concept," that is, the society benefits from the company's act of giving and in return, the company benefits by reciprocity from the society in the form of favourable attitude of the latter.

7.6 DOES CSR HELP BOOST THE IMAGE OF A COMPANY?

Empirical studies reveal that "more favorable corporate evaluations and increased purchase behavior" could be attributed to CSR practice (Lichtenstein, D.R., Drumright, M.E., & Braig, B.M., 2004); CSR nurtures "higher customer satisfaction and market value of a firm" (Luo, X., & Bhattacharya, C.B. 2006). This automatically translates into increased wealth of a business. Besides this, it is also contended that CSR improves employees' perceptions about the firm. It is an aid to recruitment and retention (The Economist, 2005).

7.7 BUSINESS CAN RISE TO THE CHALLENGE – LOW PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING GLOBAL GOALS PORTENDED!

The current turbulent state of affairs of the politics is indicative of falling short of achievements of the global goals (SDGs) by 2030 (Edelman, 2019). Edelman Trust Barometer indicates a general dissatisfaction among the employees about job security in the wake of globalization and automation. People cherish that the CEOs be personally involved to pilot the 'diversity and sustainability' missions.

8.0 RATIONALE OF CSR

8.1 THE CORPORATE RATIONALE

Now, it's the turn of corporations. Corporations and businesses organized in other forms too have concern for social responsibilities. A question as to why corporations should have this concern spurs a three pronged answer according to Howard R. Bowen (1953). First, organizations find that they are compelled by society through regulations. Secondly, they are persuaded to be more concerned because, as members of the society, they have acquired many of its attitudes and values. Thirdly, the emergence of large corporations facilitated the separation of management (businesses in company form), which emerged as a discrete body and found itself to be occupying a fiduciary status as against all classes of stakeholders including shareholders. The perspective of these managers, who are highly educated and well experienced, drawing covetable salaries and interested in the sustainability of the company, differs markedly from that of the owners. This distinct status of the managers enables them to give due attention to social issues.

8.2 MANAGERS' SELF INTEREST IN ENSURING LONG-TERM STABILITY OF THE BUSINESS

Managers are supposed to have a flavour of self-interest in their operations nurtured by the drive of long-term stability. "Those who advocate a low price do so not only because it is good as a social policy but also because it is good business in the long-run." More or less, the same rationale is echoed by the Social Investment Policy of Grand Metropolitan (a UK conglomerate of companies in food industry before its merger with Guinness plc in 1997 to form Diageo), read as, "A policy of sustained involvement in resolving a few social issues carefully chosen by the company in order to protect its long-term corporate interests and enhance its reputation," (Adrienne von Tunzelmann, May 1997). Are these not good examples for the quarters, which are skeptical about success with CSR?

8.3 ACTS OF SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY CAN RUIN THE REPUTE BUILT UP OVER DECADES

Eisingerich, A.B. and Ghardwaj, G. (2011) opine that reputations that take decades to build up can be ruined in hours through corruption scandals or environmental accidents (Eisingerich, A.B. and Ghardwaj, G., 2011) and such acts draw unwanted attention from regulators, courts, governments and media. CSR can limit these risks. (Kytte, Beth; Singh, Paramveer, 2005). The unabated trend of business indulgence in scandals necessitates implementing CSR policy and practice.

The recently published 17 worst corporate crimes of 2015 and others are examples of this stance. The scandals, both of civil and criminal nature cover such companies as Citibank (Deceptive financial practices). Citizens Bank (Cheating depositors), Whole Foods (Overcharging customers by mislabeling), a subsidiary of ConAgra (Food contamination – salmonella-tainted peanut butter), Sanofi subsidiary, Genzyme Corporation (Illegal marketing), General Electric, Office Depot, LG Electronics (all the three on grounds of failure to report safety defects), Tuna producer Bumble Bee (workplace hazards), Deutsche Bank (Sanctions violations with Syria and Iran), Glass manufacturer Guardian Industries (Air pollution charges), An Italian company called Carbofin (Ocean dumping - disposing of wastes into the ocean), Exxon Mobil (in question of deceiving shareholders and the public about the risks of climate change), Millennium Health (allegations that it billed Medicare, Medicaid and other federal health programs for unnecessary tests), Lockheed Martin (Illegal lobbying for extension of contract), German auto parts maker Robert Bosch (conspiring to fix prices and rig bids for spark plugs.), Goodyear Tire & Rubber company subsidiaries (paid bribes to obtain sales in Kenya and Angola), Oilfield services company Halliburton (it improperly categorized more than 1,000 workers to deny them overtime pay). The amount of penalties ranged between a couple of million dollars to a couple of billion dollars (Phil Mattera / Dirt Diggers Digest December 18, 2015)

8.4 OTHER INSTANCES THAT INDICATE NECESSITY OF CSR ADOPTION

CSR programme can be an aid to recruitment and retention (Bhattacharya, C.B.; Sen, Sankar; Korschun, Daniel, 2008) within a competitive graduate student market. It is also contended that potential recruits generally consider a firm's CSR policy to be enhancing employees' perception of the company and it comes of avail through employees' payroll giving (contribution to charity from salaries), fund raising or community volunteering activities besides fostering customer orientation among customer-facing employees (Korschun, D., Bhattacharya, C. B.; & Swain, S. D. 2014).

9.0 STAKEHOLDERS

9.1 STAKEHOLDERS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Occupying a fiduciary status, managers are thrust upon with the necessity of knowing what stakeholders need and their aspirations. This is not as simple as that. The number of stakeholder-classes is alarmingly large. An attempt to cater to all these classes is not as simple. The problem is accentuated by the conflicting nature of their demands and expectations (such as augmented employee-welfare expenditure erodes return to the stockholders, whereas a commitment to escalate shareholders' return curtails benefits to employees and other legitimate claimants, say, consumers, who would have enjoyed the benefit of reduced or fair price otherwise). A trade-off would then, seems to be a conundrum for the managers.

This complexity is exasperated when one is driven to explore the areas within the demand set of a given stakeholder-class (consumers) such as "product reliability (the responsibility to provide a product that does what it is supposed to do), product promotion (the responsibility to make honest claims about the nature of the product) and product safety (the responsibility to protect the user of a product from harm and danger)." Similarly, "responsibility to investors also spreads over a number of different areas. These include providing truthful information about an organizations' financial status and past use of capital, as well as prudently using current capital, for organizational activities." It is also contended that the nature of social responsibility changes with changes in social and cultural norms and mores (Randal B. Dunham and Jon L. Pierce, 1989).

9.2 A QUESTION OF PRIORITY AMONG STAKEHOLDER CLASSES

The primitive apprehension was that when it comes to social well-being, the patron is government alone. Businesses appreciated the need of social responsibility only around the middle of the 20th century, and hence are viewed as “complementary of or alternative to government policies and programmes.” Contemplating in the context of complementarity, government, today, appears to be in a fix as to defining the respective domains of itself and businesses along the question - which stakeholder-classes are to be included. On the one hand, government is shy of criticism over its divestiture if it attempts to demarcate, say, leaving societal aspects entirely to businesses. On the other hand, a question stems as to whether businesses are so capable to take up the whole task so as to absolve governments? There are “limits on business capacity.” Hence businesses are only in a position to prioritize the stakeholder classes, while decisions on allocating resources are taken. However, the current scenario shows that some harbinger-companies have their spectrum of CSR agenda widening – a state, which suggests that governments could be gradually relieved from the burden of investing on social cause, and their role confined to law-making about corporate activities pursuant of CSR implementation. If a business chooses to commit its time and money to educational initiatives, benefits may be apparent from the emergence of ‘educated future workforce’. On the other hand, business may choose to invest these resources on the other business activities to reap the benefits such as research gains, employee developments, higher dividend to investors, creation of jobs through investing on new ventures, etc. (Adrienne von Tunzelmann, AIC Conference, 25th May 1997). Now, one can easily isolate what businesses may choose from the two options. But the choice is not that simple when it is to be exercised among the direct stakeholders. The problem lies in reconciling the diverse, and most often, conflicting interests of different stakeholder-classes.

10.0 NATURE & EXTENT OF SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

10.1 THE PARADIGMS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Business organizations are engaged in several socially responsible activities, which vary in nature and degree. Each business entity represents a unique set of performance elements in varying degree according to its history, the background of members of management, the environment in which it operates, so on and so forth. The elaborate social programme, of Grand. Metropolitan, IBM, Tata group of companies, etc., are some glaring examples.

Whatever the activity and its level are, all social performance activities, more or less, seem to emerge from or fall within the paradigm developed by A. B. Carroll (1979). His model is depicted as a cuboid, which is 3-dimensional. Each of the three dimensions of the cuboid represents a set of variables.

DIMENSION I REPRESENTS CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, BEING:

1. Economic responsibilities for producing goods and services to be sold at a profit.
2. Legal responsibilities for complying with societal laws and regulations while fulfilling economic responsibilities.
3. Ethical responsibilities for meeting societal expectations of conscientious proper behaviour even when these expectations are not reflected in the letter of laws and regulations.
4. Discretionary responsibilities for carryout voluntary acts, even if failing to do so would not be judged unethical. Making philanthropic contributions and providing day care for employees’ children, and the like come under this category.

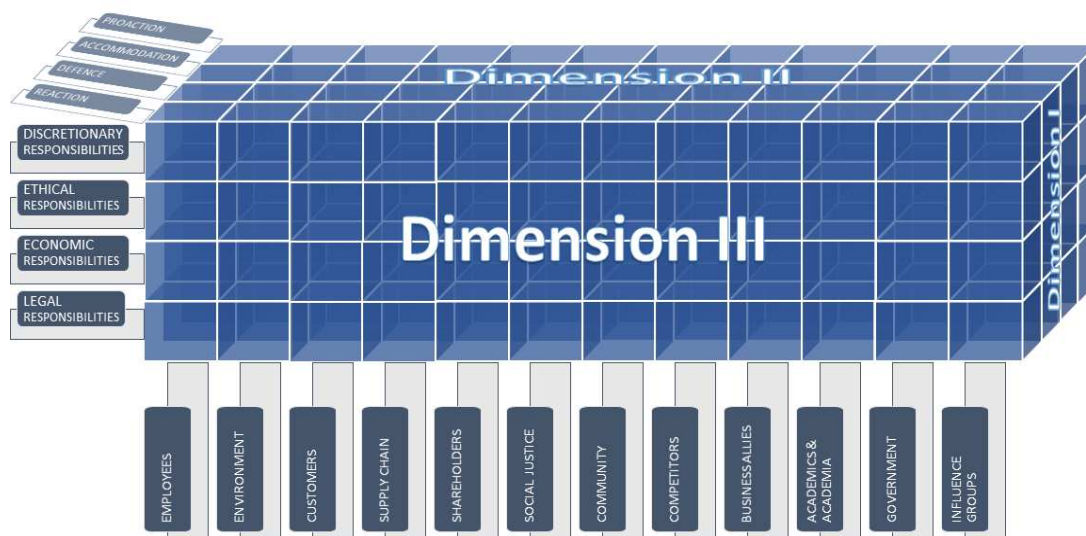
DIMENSION II OF THE CUBOID REPRESENTS THE PHILOSOPHIES THAT GOVERN AN ORGANIZATION’S RESPONSE TO SOCIAL ISSUES AS FOLLOW:

1. Reaction philosophy to address social issues because the organization is compelled to do so by outside forces such as legal, regulatory, or social pressure.
2. Defense philosophies to address social issues to avoid being compelled by outside forces.
3. Accommodation philosophy to address social issues because they exist, even if demands to do so are not likely.
4. Pro-action philosophies to anticipate and address social issues before society in general recognizes the issues as important.

DIMENSION III REPRESENTS THE AGENDA LIKE CONSUMERISM, ENVIRONMENT, DISCRIMINATION, PRODUCT SAFETY, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY, & SHAREHOLDERS

Francis Cherunilam, referring to the Carroll’s cuboidal model, which is described to show economic responsibilities at the base, followed by legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities in the upward direction, argues that the foregoing responsibility is legal while economic responsibility is secondary. His contention is that “a company must inevitably obey the laws even if it were unable to discharge some of the economic objectives as long as it exists,” (Francis Cherunilam, 2002). In an attempt to expound this stance, the author adds that any business entity comes into existence subject only to legal provisions, that is to say, a company cannot come into existence unless it is registered under the statutory authority concerned. Even if it is a partnership firm, the behaviour of the firm and its partners is governed by the Law of Partnership. Even in case of the sole proprietary firms, the foregoing mandates of law subsist, say, the environmental clearance. The firm at least has to get registered under tax authorities, or obtain certain licenses. Hence, the foregoing responsibility appears to be the legal one. The organizational Social Performance Model of A. B. Carroll (1979) seems to serve as the management’s tool to plan their social performance programmes (Randal B. Dunham and Jon L. Pierce, 1989). Expanding the agenda on its III dimension and re-arranging the priority of types of responsibilities on the I dimension as contended in the above argument and maintaining status quo in regard to dimension I, the model looks like figure 1.

FIGURE 1: THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PERFORMANCE PARADIGM, IMPROVED BY THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE



Source: Modified by the author from the previous models

11.0 THE GLOBAL TRENDS AND MONITORING MECHANISM FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The UN Global Compact stands out as the long time leader in fostering and monitoring sustainability among the commercial and non-commercial entities around the world. The mission of the United Nations Global Compact is to "Mobilize a global movement of sustainable companies and stakeholders to create the world we want." (United Nations Global Compact Progress Report 2019, P.9). "The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact are an authoritative framework that guides businesses in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Derived from UN Declarations and Conventions, these universal principles represent the fundamental values that businesses should embed in their strategies and operations." (Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, July 2019). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the UNO, also called the Global Goals, though focus on achievement of time-bound quantitative objectives for business and other stakeholders, in tandem with the Ten Principles, arm the private sector businesses with values and vision that would enable it to be an effective vehicle in achievement pursuits. (A Principles-Based Approach to The Global Goals, United Nations Global Compact PROGRESS REPORT 2019, p. 12).

The five actions the Global Compact (UN Global Compact, 2014, p. 45) has prescribed for the commitment of the entities are: Principled Business, Strengthening Society, Leadership Commitment, Reporting Progress, and Local Action. More than 8000 companies and greater than 4000 non-business entities had signed the UN Global Compact. Europe stands first in participation with over 4000 companies, followed by Latin America, Asia and North America (Kreckova Kroupova, Z., 2015). By September 12, 2017, the number of members changed to 9500 (Business category) and 3000 (Non-business category). With these, there is a sharp rise in the strength from 12000 to 12500 between the years 2014 and 2017 (Who should join UN Global Compact? <https://www.unglobalcompact.org> – site visited on May 12, 2020).

Interesting trends are seen from the global survey (2014) held by MIT and UN Global Compact. The survey reveals that more than 3,795 executives and managers from 113 countries ascribe the key weakness of sustainability progress to low involvement of corporate boards. It is interesting to note that sustainability percolated even to the level of core competencies of all employees of the firm. It is claimed to be one of the eight core competencies, called "driving sustainable solutions," being included in employee's performance reviews (Post, R. 2014). The current situation presents a mixed scenario with business leaders in sustainability representing a minority across geographies and among companies and in the other angle, the companies that stand out are a handful, which are demonstrating that "innovation, efficiency, and lasting business value" are driven by sustainability activities (D. Kiron, G. Unruh, N. Kruschwitz, M. Reeves, H. Rubel, and A.M. Zum Felde, 2017). However, the number of companies that place sustainability at the top of agenda is increasing year by year. However, the longitudinal survey of MIT-BCG (Boston Consulting Group), concluded in 2017, reveals that there remains a long way before majority of companies across the world begin to appreciate and reap the benefits of sustainability initiatives (D. Kiron, G. Unruh, N., et al. 2017). From the situation of 2015, as regards implementation of the Ten Principles of the UNGC, not much progress is indicated by the annual survey of the UNGC as envisaged by the UNGC Progress Report 2019. The survey covered more than a 100 nations and about 1600 respondents. The survey focused on, *inter alia*, the extent to which businesses are committed to development along the UNGC Ten Principles. The important observations are that the principles have their place in the core corporate policies to the tune of 90 percent; 67 percent of employee respondents indicated that CSR policies are developed and evaluated at the level of the CEOs; it is also reported that a half of such companies are imparting training to employees along sustainability agenda. (United Nations Global Compact PROGRESS REPORT 2019). On the global goals front, as regards achievement, regression is obvious as could be found from the UN DESA special edition 2019. Though global unemployment rate went back to pre-2008 financial crisis levels, many seem to fall short of reaping the benefits. Eight percent of the employees and their families around the world were found to be living in extreme poverty even by 2018.

12.0 CSR IN LOW AND MEDIUM INCOME COUNTRIES

The concept and performance of CSR in developing countries have not been apparent and the marginal attempts of corporations along CSR initiatives have not been acknowledged as CSR activities (Kassaye Deyassa, 2016). CSR is found to be less widespread among Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mexico, and Thailand (Welford, R. 2005).

The form of CSR related challenges for developing countries was brewed in the year, 2000 into the Millennium Development Goals - a world with less poverty, hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and their infants, better educated children, equal opportunities for women, and a healthier environment. A study on CSR reporting in Asia (Chapple and Moon, 2005) found that almost three-fourths of large companies of India claim that they have CSR policies and practices in place as against Indonesian businesses' CSR-engagement admeasuring to a quarter. However, businesses in developing countries, in general, do not have CSR as the centre stage. CSR and corporate governance are found as the fringes of agenda of businesses. The extent of social performance is limited to the point where the additional cost on account of this does not lead the businesses to make losses (Uditha Lyanage, 2007). This can be overcome by the businesses through appreciation of the concept of shared-value – invest on community, environment and customers and the benefits begin to accrue.

12.1 CSR IN THE AFRICAN AND ETHIOPIAN CONTEXTS

12.1.1 THE AFRICAN SCENARIO

The study carried out by Judy N. Muthuri (2012) encompasses the context of five African nations, namely, "South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and Malawi. The proclivity of African business towards CSR is moderated by the frame of "ethics of slavery, colonialism & apartheid" (Judy N. Muthuri, 2012). The socio-economic and political conditions of African nations seem to have redefined the priority among A. B. Carroll's model of socially responsible performance dimensions as being in almost the reverse order, placing Legal Responsibility in the last, as shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: PRIORITIZATION OF CSR PERFORMANCE DIMENSIONS – THE AFRICAN CONTEXT



Source: Modified by the author based on the observations of J. N. Muthuri, 2012.

Poverty reduction and community development, according to popularity, are at the top of the agenda of social performance, whereas governance and accountability are the lowest rungs of the ladder among ten priorities (Judy N. Muthuri, 2012). Making investments in small businesses to promote economic growth throughout the African continent; to encourage employees to take up their own community services by granting them paid time offs; instituting scholarships for the children of the employees that are the first in their families to go to college; taking initiatives in pollution abatement – "these are a few examples of how a number of companies (big and small) in Africa are demonstrating their social performance." (Center for Creative Leadership. 2011).

12.1.2 NEED FOR A TRADE-OFF

It is difficult to imagine the survival and prosperity of African companies without commitment to CSR practice and at the same time, the African business world does not place strong CSR drives on the top of the priority list on grounds of paucity of funds and other resources. Hence, what can be done is to wait and watch. So, the questions that still hover around in the African context are: "What are the benefits of investing in CSR? Does CSR impact employee attitudes?" The African

businesses have potential to bring change in their communities through further investments. And when it comes to the employees' attitude, CSR is ushered by them with the exception that they have an issue with job satisfaction (Center for Creative Leadership, 2011). South Africa witnessed a substantial progress "in terms of CSR regulations and development of CSR programs." Both government and private sectors seem to have addressed/addressing the social needs by taking up CSR activities backed by substantial investment year after year (Md. Humayun Kabir, Janine Mukuddem, & Mark A. Petersen, 2015). In parlance with the US statute of Blacks empowerment, the South African government took initiative of the "Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment" (BBBEE). The BBBEE Act 53 of 2003 became a legislation in January 2004. Since then, companies had to include this in their CSR agenda (Skinner and Mersham, 2008). The law entails that if companies intend to do business with government and its agencies, they need to become BEE-compliant (Gary Mersham, 2016). The study of Diana Sanchez (2016) carried out on five large firms in South Africa and Swaziland observes that the companies are expanding into Africa with social investment drive. The study further identifies that it is the private sector that is likely to reap the benefits of CSR more. The study, however, concludes that there is a need for further studies to establish the impact of corporate social investment in the region. The sub-Saharan Africa presents even a worse scenario with the share of working poor at 38 per cent in 2018 as against 55 per cent in 2016. It is alarming to note that a whopping size of four billion people have not been covered by any social safety net (UN DESA. Special Edition: 2019)

12.2 THE ETHIOPIAN SCENARIO

12.2.1 BACKGROUND

Ethiopia is predominantly an agrarian economy. According to the World Bank (2012), currently the country is one of the least developed nations in Africa. As indicated in figure 2 plotted in the discussion on CSR above, Ethiopia too has the legal and ethical responsibilities as the least priority in terms of practice. As the informal sector grows and more privatization takes hold, attention to corporate governance issues is expected to increase. At present, the scale of business is too small to warrant attention to corporate governance" (Bahru Zewde, 2002; Diana C. Robertson, 2009). Traditionally, corporations were responsible only to their owners, operating with profit motto alone at the cost of community welfare and environmental protection. Though the erstwhile business practices caused enough damage to certain communities and resources, recently many entrepreneurs started to think that both profit and concern for environment are indispensable. However, the primitive apprehensions about CSR around the world, such as that held by Milton Friedman and New Zealander Round Table, seem to have been co-extensive with the Ethiopian context too (Adisalem Desta, 2015). The available literature on CSR in Ethiopian context indicates that CSR has a long way to be absorbed by the corporate sector. Though, reports of CSR adoption in the sector exist, they are sporadic and that too, the scope of CSR performance is confined to community development - Saint George, Walia, and Dashen Beers under brewery industry; floriculture sector, as examples (Adisalem Desta, 2015). Kassaye Deyessa carried out his research in Ethiopia during 2014 by identifying a few cities including Addis Ababa. The study covered about eight MNCs and about four governmental and non-governmental organizations, picked by the researcher on the basis of information that the entities are indulged in CSR activities. The results of the study (published in 2016) show that CSR in Ethiopia is in its infancy; the main drivers of recent import of the concept into Ethiopia are MNCs and NGOs; and philanthropy seems to be the dominant dimension of the Ethiopian CSR performance. However, some of Ethiopian companies have a tradition of entering partnership dialogue with their communities and stakeholders in the form informal CSR practices.

12.2.2 Harbingers in CSR performance in Ethiopia - Contributions of Dr. Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Al-Amoudi

The gargantuan contributions of Dr. Sheikh Mohammed Hussein Al-Amoudi on the CSR front in Ethiopia is not unknown to the Ethiopian community and deserve a mention here. Sheikh Mohammed's commitment as a development partner and a great son of his motherland can be understood from the following list. The list is very long, but is summarized as:

- Road construction, leading to agricultural farms
- Establishment of schools and clinics
- Supporting Environmental and Health Advocacy Groups
- Massive investment in the various sectors of the Ethiopian economy.

Major Philanthropic Contributions

- His decision for a gracious financial contribution of \$20 million to the Clinton HIV/AIDS Initiative to help in its efforts of increasing care and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS,
- He also made a significant financial contribution to the African Humanitarian Action (AHA), a Pan African NGO that provides humanitarian assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and local communities throughout Africa.

12.3.1 THE ETHIOPIAN CSR SCENARIO AS PORTRAYED BY RESEARCH STUDIES

12.3.1.1 CSR AS REDRESS TO THE ILL-EFFECTS CAUSED BY INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY

According to Kassaye Deyassay's study, CSR, as idea, is new in Ethiopia and started off as redress by multinationals to remedy the effects of their extraction activities on the local communities. This is seen in the form of the recent development of formal CSR performance practices mainly driven by MNCs.

12.3.1.2 CSR CONCEPT IS NEW ALTOGETHER AMONG CORPORATE AND GOVERNMENT CIRCLES

Another observation is that almost all of national companies and government organizations have not developed a concept of CSR. However, some of Ethiopian companies have a tradition of partnership and dialogue with their communities and stakeholders in the form of informal CSR practices. On the other hand, the continual indulgence of NGOs in socially responsible activities has been immanent. But the activities of NGOs cannot be reckoned with CSR, since these are non-commercial organizations, though, their contribution to the society is commendable.

12.3.1.3. SOME MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES AND THEIR CSR PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES AND PATTERNS

"Brand building and the desire to give back to society; exploring new business opportunities; social and environmental innovation; achieve enhanced brand value, reputation; comply with International Standards; maintain good relations with government and communities; -improved financial performance; concerns for efficiency and productivity; better management of risk and crises." (Kassaye Deyassay, 2016).

12.3.1.4 PERCEPTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF BREWERY FIRMS IN ETHIOPIA

Fentaye Kassa Hailu, K. Rama Mohana Rao (2016) held a study (covering 595 local communities of major five brewery firms) with main objective of examining the perception of local communities towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Brewery firms in Ethiopia. The study focuses on community related aspects such as charity, health, environment and social infrastructure. A finding of this study revealed that awareness level of the local community about the firms' CSR initiatives is not significant, i.e., the knowledge is shallow. However, the opinion of the local communities is positive about what the industry is doing on CSR front. The study categorized the CSR initiatives under the heads: (a) sponsorship and donation; (b) community development and helping the poor (c) creating employment opportunities; and (d) environmental responsibility. The study reveals that except the second aspect all other dimensions of social performance got scores of three and above on a five-point scale. According to the respondents from East Africa Bottling Share Company and MOENCO Ethiopia Limited Companies, training is the key to improving CSR and there is a need to both raise the awareness of managers about CSR issues and develop the capacity to begin to implement CSR practices within companies.

12.3.1.5 NATIONAL COMPANIES AND CSR

According to the respondents, since all national companies have not developed a CSR concept, a CSR policy and strategies, all of the companies have not also developed CSR drivers. Respondents from Almeda Textile Factory, Muger Cement Factory and Wonji Showa Sugar Factory state that, training programmes should be extended beyond just managers and employers of the company. According to Hilton Addis and Flora Eco Power, CSR in Ethiopia has so far tended to be the preserve of multinational companies and NGOs.

12.3.1.6 ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES (13-01-2017)

This information is derived from the State Department's Office of Investment Affairs Investment Climate Statement. Some larger international companies have introduced corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs; however, most Ethiopian companies do not practice CSR. There are efforts to develop CSR programs by the Ministry of Industry in collaboration with the World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, and others. CSR programs supporting workforce capacity-building and services, community-building and infrastructure investment programs taken up by foreign corporations can serve to further align company objectives

with GOE's overall GTP II (Growth and Transformation Plan II) development goals. The host government encourages CSR programs for both local and foreign direct investors but does not maintain specific guidelines for these programs, which are inconsistently applied and not controlled or monitored. In early 2015, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce & Sectorial Associations published a "Model Code of Ethics for Ethiopian Businesses" that was endorsed by Ethiopia's President Mulatu Teshomme as the model for the business community.

12.3.1.7 EFFECTIVENESS OF ETHIOPIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND MONITORING BODIES. THE LACUNAE IN ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS

As the brief review of Ethiopian environmental laws in this article has revealed, Environmental Wrong-doings (EWDs) in Ethiopia can entail civil, criminal and administrative measures/remedies. On the other hand, the recognition of these remedies creates the impression that they can contribute to the effective protection of the environment if used properly. However, a closer look at the provisions of these laws reveals that there are certain problems which affect the effective use of these remedies. Among other things, the civil remedies they recognize are limited to certain types of EWDs; they do not permit suits against environmental protection organs for failure to discharge their duties under environmental laws; environmental protection organs have not been fully authorized to take some important administrative measures against violators of environmental regulations, and the ability of the penalties recognized for EWDs to serve their purposes is becoming smaller with the declining value of Birr. Therefore, it is recommended that all relevant environmental laws should be amended to avoid these defects. In particular, article 11 of the Environmental Pollution Control Proclamation should be amended to recognize public interest litigation in its broader sense; that is, against any person, including government organs, and for all EWDs including cases where harm has not occurred. Similarly, the fines that have been recognized by various environmental laws must be reconsidered to suit the needs of the time. (Dejene Girma Janka, 2013)

12.3.1.8 ENVIRONMENTAL WRONG-DOINGS (EWD) AND INADEQUATE INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

One of the urging goals of environmental laws is monitoring human behavior surrounding the environment. Thus, EWD is seen when businesses fail to comply with environmental regulations / tenets. Thus, EWD may be deemed to be non-compliance on the part of businesses, with environmental regulations, though such non-compliance may not result in harm. This study indicates that the necessary institutional capacity (human, financial and material resources) is low. Inadequate institutional capacity is clearly a constraining factor in the effective functioning, and implementation of the Environmental Pollution Control law by EPA and relevant sectoral institutions (Dejene Girma Janka, 2013).

12.4 FROM NEWS REPORTS AND RESEARCH STUDIES

Traditionally, corporations were responsible only to their owners, operating with profit motto alone at the cost of community welfare and environmental protection. Though the erstwhile business practices caused enough damage to certain communities and resources, recently many entrepreneurs started to think that both profit and concern for environment are indispensable (Adisalem Desta, 2015). However, the primitive apprehensions about CSR that prevailed around the world, such as that held by Milton Friedman and New Zealander Round Table, seem to be co-extensive with the Ethiopian context too. The available literature on CSR in Ethiopian context indicates that CSR concept has a long way to be absorbed by the corporate sector and this situation is ascribed to the prevailing political and economic conditions. Though, reports of CSR adoption in the sector exist, they are sporadic and that too, the scope of CSR performance is confined to philanthropy and community development as is the case of Saint George, Walia, and Dashen Beers under brewery industry, and floriculture sector (Adisalem Desta, 2015). Kassaye Deyessa carried out his research in Ethiopia during 2014 by identifying a few cities including Addis Ababa. The study covered about eight MNCs and about four governmental and non-governmental organizations, picked by the researcher on the basis of information that the entities are indulged in CSR activities. The results of the study (published in 2016) show that CSR in Ethiopia is in its infancy; the main drivers of recent import of the concept into Ethiopia are MNCs and NGOs; and philanthropy seems to be the dominant dimension of the Ethiopian CSR performance. However, some of Ethiopian companies have a tradition of entering partnership dialogue with their communities and stakeholders in the form of informal CSR practices.

13.0 TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS RESEARCH

The bird's eye view of the global proclivity to CSR is discouraging with the uneven degrees of absorption of the CSR philosophy (1.0). The author established sufficient ground for the need to re-label the concept, that is, from "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)," to "Social Responsibility of Business (SRB) (6.0)." There is a criticism about some MNCs and some floricultural enterprises for their camouflaging tactics by way of indulging in some community welfare activities so as to elude scrutiny of governments and society about their corrupt practices – a practice, also called green-washing (7.4). CSR boosts the image of the firm among customers and employees (7.6). The UNGC Report 2019 envisages that the government and society look to businesses to rise to the occasion in the wake of the backwardness in achieving the global goals (7.7). The rationale of CSR might be predominantly justified on grounds, *inter alia*, that businesses have an obligation to return something to the society out of what wealth they earn; segregation of managers from ownership places them in fiduciary position as regards all stakeholder classes; sustainability of the businesses; the immanent need to monitor the activities of businesses in the light of the continuing offences and crime of businesses – big and small (8.1; 8.2; 8.3). Potential recruits have started looking for employers who are CSR oriented on grounds that payroll giving system might be presented and employees would be trained to approach customers in a responsible way (8.4). From the stakeholder perspective, when a business embarks upon CSR implementation, the challenge lies in prioritizing the stakeholder classes; it has to reach a compromise among the divergent stakeholder classes, the aspirations and expectations of which are often conflicting (9.2). As per the 2014 global survey of MIT and UNGC, the number of sustainability leaders among companies across the world is not significant. Another study indicates that sustainability drive is identified as one of the eight core competencies expected of recruits. It is also interesting to note that sustainability drive has percolated to the lower level employees also (11.0). On the global goals front, as regards achievement, regression is obvious as could be found from the UN DESA special edition 2019. Though global unemployment rate went back to pre-2008 financial crisis levels, many seem to fall short of reaping the benefits. Eight percent of the employees and their families around the world were found to be living in extreme poverty even by 2018. The sub-Saharan Africa presents even a worse scenario with the share of working poor at 38 per cent in 2018 as against 55 per cent in 2016. It is alarming to note that a whopping size of four billion people have not been covered by any social safety net (UN DESA. Special Edition: 2019). As regards the social performance pattern, the cuboidal model of A. B. Carrol, (1979) has served as a good bench mark. With the identification of legal responsibilities as the foregoing ones and with identification of more stakeholder classes, the existing model of A. B. Carrol has been restructured by the lead author of this paper as in figure 1. The UN Global Compact stands out as the long time leader in fostering and monitoring sustainability among the commercial and non-commercial entities around the world bearing a roster of signatories of about 12500 entities. At the same time, the number of companies that place sustainability at the top of agenda is increasing year by year. It is observed that sustainability concept percolated even to the level of core competencies of all employees of the firm, as such it got included in employee's performance reviews criteria. It is also found that the involvement of corporate boards in sustainability initiatives is also low (item 11.0). However, the longitudinal survey of MIT-BCG (Boston Consulting Group), concluded in 2017, reveals that there remains a long way before majority of companies across the world begin to appreciate and reap the benefits of sustainability initiatives (11.0). As regards the progress in CSR adoption by the Asian countries, 75 percent of large Indian companies claim good amount of progress, whereas Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are found to be trailing behind. On the North American front, Mexico is reported to be falling behind. The Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations as well as the focus on basic needs of citizens among low and medium income nations indicates that these nations have a long way to go in demonstrating a mature level of social performance (12.0). In case of African nations too, the CSR priorities, as reflected in figure 2, indicate that the legal and ethical goals are preferred least (item 12.1.1). It is interesting to note that among African nations, South Africa appears to be the harbinger in CSR absorption and practice. However, the low level of absorption of the concept is ascribed to the prevailing political and economic conditions. Coming to the Ethiopian context, one study reveals that CSR adoption comes as a redress by MNCs in response to the damage caused by extraction industry, and that the concept is new altogether for Ethiopia. CSR, for Ethiopia mean mere addressing community issues and charity. A finding of this study revealed that awareness level of local community about the firms' CSR initiatives is not significant, i.e., the knowledge is shallow. However, the opinion of the local communities is positive about what the industry is doing on CSR front. Employees of certain companies recommend training along CSR theme for employees and company managers. The initiatives taken by government of Ethiopia are marginal. However, there are efforts to develop CSR programs by the Ministry of Industry in collaboration with the World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, but action in this direction doesn't seem to be taking good pace. The host government encourages CSR programs for both local and foreign direct investors but does not maintain specific guidelines for these programs, which are inconsistently applied and not controlled or monitored. The initiative taken during early 2015 by the Ethiopian Chamber

of Commerce & Sectoral Associations in publishing a "Model Code of Ethics for Ethiopian Businesses," endorsed by Ethiopia's President Mulatu Teshomme as the model for the business community, is well ushered. As regards implementation of the environmental laws it is found that use of remedies of environmental wrongdoings is ineffective. This is because of inadequate institutional capacity – say – *inter alia*, lack of qualified and skilled manpower; lack of awareness promoting activities; lack of sustained spree of pollution control efforts.

14.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The author established a strong case for changing the label from CSR to SRB (Social Responsibility of Business). Governments have done their level best in regard to community development, community health and policy-making about environment, employees and other relevant stakeholders. It is for the businesses to take over the burden. Though this conviction had been long drawn, it is reiterated in the UNGC report 2019. However, it is recommended, since it is government that is supposed to have the big picture, that the initiative be taken by the government itself in formulating CSR philosophy of the nation by taking inputs from the corporate sector harbingers / champions under a joint committee mechanism. Business risk can be averted through adopting CSR practices, say, corporate misdeeds arising out of ill-advised strategies attract ignominy and so, such a bad repute can cause irreparable damage to the organization as well as the respective stakeholder-class. For example, negligence of pollution abatement or violation of human rights can attract legal action and loss of repute among the stakeholders and the society at large. Since CSR presupposes all types of risks that might face the business and is a perfect guide towards achieving shared-value status, businesses should invariably begin their journey with CSR and CG (corporate governance). The argument of Armstrong & Green (2013), discussed in the body, that CSR pursuance should be voluntary and not to be imposed by government is not tenable absolutely. As regards the debate as to, who is it to shoulder CSR (whether Government, or Business), the author's conclusion is that better CSR governance emerges through collaborative *fora*, among business, government and society representatives. Issues like philanthropy and community infrastructure could be left to the voluntary domain of CSR performance, whereas, it would be impractical to think that issues like environment protection, employee protection, consumer protection, investor safety, ethical behaviour, transparent behaviour and accountability should be left to the voluntary domain of CSR performance; but, subjugated to government's scrutiny. The concept of CSR should be appreciated and adopted by the businesses especially from the low income countries that they leverage their respective nations' economies. This is how that works: engagement in CSR boosts the image of the incumbent business entity and results in increased patronage of the stakeholder classes; size of business increases and thereby profits; contribution to taxes and GDP rises. All those businesses, big or small, who have not thought of CSR so far can begin in a humble way, say beginning with adhering to statutes surrounding employee-issues (because every second citizen of the USA, according to a survey, finds employee class as the first priority among all other stakeholder classes of a business) and switching attention to addressing problems of customers. Emphasis on quick profits should be postponed because profiteering should be a natural outcome as a byproduct of a sustainably run business. Profits might look meager at the beginning but will multiply dramatically in the long-run; then focus attention on environmental issues followed by supply chain issues. But, if the shoddy quality of the products is attributable to the supply chain, focus on this stakeholder simultaneously. This way, the businesses can proceed to address other stakeholder-classes, one after the other, for it might demand commitment of huge amounts of resources. For accelerating the pace of CSR concept absorption, the need of legalizing social reporting appears glaringly important on the part of governments. Many low income and middle income nations fall short of initiating such a mandate for one reason or other. Companies or businesses must begin to constitute, if not in place, CSR and CG monitoring boards or committees (standing or ad hoc as per the need) so that the activity becomes sustainable, leading to corporate citizenship.

15.0 CONCLUSION

The concept of CSR and its associated concept of Corporate Governance remain buzz words even today on grounds that the concept of CSR is yet to be absorbed in many countries to the extent the developed nations have demonstrated. If one attempts to examine the reasons for low level of absorption or disclamation of it by the businesses in such countries, one might find the same conundrum, (to be the reason) which boggled the thinking of the business world once upon a time, i.e., the confusion as to whether assuming CSR is a cost escalating exercise and so erodes profits and competitiveness. Now, the onus lies on the researchers to dispel this conviction among businesses in low and medium income countries like Ethiopia. As this condition is so, some quarters believe that businesses take up CSR only to divert the attention of the public and the governments from scrutiny of their unethical and environmental wrongdoings – a camouflaging tactic. On the other hand, local media are caught up in the apprehension that taking up community development activities, which is the very responsibility of businesses, are being advertised about in their promotional campaigns so as to manifest that the business / company is benevolent. Can one deem such a behaviour to be taking undue advantage? No, it is not so. Publicizing what good things the organization is doing, leverages the returns to the entity. This is what we call, "the shared value system." As regards achievements of the SDG, the trend seems to have regressed between 2015 and 2019.

16.0 LIMITATIONS

In line with the purpose of this research article, being, taking a cross-sectional picture of the world trends as regards the status of CSR, only secondary data are used. Hence applying statistical techniques has no place. The accuracy of data is subject to the accuracy of the sources of information. Since this is a comparative account, nothing in this article is intended to demean any nation or any continent, or any institution.

17.0 HORIZONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There seems to be absence of adequate and comprehensive surveys / research on the business world of Africa and Ethiopia in the realm of CSR. The study of Kassaye Deyassa, (2016), titled, "CSR from Ethiopian Perspective," covers a few businesses along their objectives of CSR engagement. Since the number is smaller, the results do not represent Ethiopia by and large. Same is the case with African nations, where, there are more studies on South Africa than on any other country. Another study carried out by Rajasekhara Mouly Potluri and Zelalem Temesgen (2008) is relatively wider, covering companies, customers and public in considerable size, but this is a twelve-year old one. Hence a straight applicability of the findings raises questions on grounds of chronology. Yet other studies are there, but they are sector-based like hospitality, brewery, tannery, and so on and so forth. Given this premise, there is a glaring need for research on exploring reasons for the low level of absorption of CSR and Corporate Governance concepts among some of the middle income nations and most of the low income nations of the world. Besides this, research should be carried out to explore for strategies to bring such nations under the umbrella. Another glaring need for more research is, identifying the factors that inhibit small and medium entities from embarking upon CSR programme.

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