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Conference on Corporate Support Responsibility: Sports as a Catalyst for Social Change

Date & Venue: 20th October 2011, Centre for Organization Development

Organized by: Magic Bus India Foundation

Partners: Dr. Reddy's Foundation and Australian Sports Commission

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Background

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a significant concept in the arena of business across India as well as around the globe. It is increasingly becoming an important constituent of the mainstream corporate agenda. The growing importance of CSR has rewritten the relationship of business not just with shareholders, but also with other stake holders including employees, supply chain partners, government, creditors, customers and communities. Engaging in CSR is thus a desired investment in the 21st century knowledge economy to further the development process for a sustainable future. Sport is an important factor in this paradigm.

Whilst pure sports sponsorship is often a hard –nosed marketing and business decision, any CSR Intervention Is based more on how a business can improve the communities in which it operates. In addition to being an effective CSR medium, Sport builds values that any socially-responsible business strives for and instills qualities like team work and fair play. Moreover, it involves employees and suppliers as well as building good community relations.

There are many examples of how businesses around the world use sport to fulfill their CSR objectives. Clearly, given its convening power, visibility and potentially high ROI, sport is perceived to add value to the sponsor, While Spotlighting individual sports. At the Same time, with the rights inputs, sport is increasingly being used to help change people’s lives at local, national and international levels.

Although sport for development is still at a nascent stage as a means for development. The development impact and outcomes achievable will be better understood in due course.

Introduction

The purpose of the conference was to provide an opportunity for organizations with active CSR programs to discuss and learn about the value that sport can bring to society. **The conference highlighted the accelerated pace that a sport for development approach offers to development projects, rapidly fostering the creation of communities which are healthy, active and behave responsibly.** It further emphasized the bond which sport can create between organizations and the communities they work for, by enhancing community connections and helping to build a sense of institutional belonging.

In order to explore the areas where CSR through sports can add value to corporate branding and shape strategies to integrate them, the conference platform brought those who already support sport for development programs and those who are otherwise active on the CSR front. The idea was to highlight the value of sports as a CSR activity which contributes to nation building and, accordingly, the discussions centered on sport as a transformational tool to improve lives.

Inaugural Session

The conference started with the lighting of the lamp by the chief guest, Ms. Amala Akkineni. This was followed by the presentation of bouquets to all the guests on behalf of Magic Bus India. Following which, the guests were then invited to the dais.

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To begin with a short video (an advertisement dt 2002 of ESPN channel) was played on the importance of sports in today's lives.

In the next session, Mr. Pratik Kumar, **CEO Of Magic Bus**, welcomed all guests and participants and thanked them for making it to the conference. He deliberated, it was a matter of pride and privilege to have eminent personalities from the corporate world along with national and international NGOs on the same platform to discuss support for sport development as a CSR avenue.

He spoke about How Magic Bus came into existence. Further he deliberated the imperative need for corporate engagement in the development sector and the ease with which children and youth could be actively involved in development programs through the medium of sport. Illustrating the Magic Bus experience in both urban and rural environments, he mentioned that female participation in sport had increased from an initial 5 to 10 percent to 40 percent within a year of Magic Bus' intervention. Moreover school enrolment had spiraled, from less than 60 percent to

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over 90 percent amongst children enrolled in Magic Bus Programs. He hoped the conference would serve as a catalyst to change the prevailing public mindset-which considers sport a relatively frivolous activity-and give sport and physical education the importance it merits in the holistic development of children and youth, through increased corporate ownership of sport for development interventions.



Address by Special Guests of Honor

Dr. S. Chellappa (I.A.S), Additional Director General, Marri Chenna Reddy Institute (GOAP)

Dr. S.Chellappa thanked Magic Bus for inviting him and further thanked the participants for making it to the conference. He strongly felt that sport has the power to change the world and bring people together. He also shared about the neglected status of sports in India. He reflected on his connections with famous Sport personalities like **P.T.** Usha and their contribution towards sports in India.

He concluded by thanking Magic Bus India Foundation for making an initiative in this field.



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Mr. Ravi Kant Reddy, Ex Captain India, Volleyball- He began by thanking the organizers and participants for providing him an opportunity to express his views. He sincerely requested the corporate sector to show interest in the development of sport in India and expressed concerns about the sports scenario of our country, where cricket is considered as the only sport. All other sports like hockey etc do not receive their due. He talked about the importance and impact of sports on an individual's life.

Ms Vasudha Mishra, Secretary, Youth Advancement, Tourism and Culture - She spoke about spreading the reach of sports and Magic Bus. She further deliberated about the development of sports in recent times and sports and main stream cinema. She requested the corporate sector to encourage and contribute in developing sports.



Anuradha Prasad, Managing Trustee, DRF -Ms Prasad welcomed the guests and spoke about the relationship between DRF and Magic Bus India Foundation. She expressed the hope that increased corporate support to the sports sector would help other sports apart from cricket to increase their standards and visibility both nationally and commercially. She spoke about Dr. Reddy's Foundation and its achievements in recent years. She concluded by wishing the best to Magic Bus in its future activities.

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Ms. Amala Akkineni –She spoke about on how sports can help in contributing to an individual and community. She further deliberated about sports and its benefits on a person’s life. She expressed that she would support whole heartedly the initiative made by Magic Bus and DRF. She further urged the corporate sectors to extend their help to make the initiative a success. She discussed about how the presence of social evil’s in today’s community as the hindering factor in the development of sports in India.

She concluded by deliberating on the steps required to be taken up by our country to succeed in highly competitive sports scenario. She signed off by congratulating Magic Bus India Foundation on the wonderful initiative.

Vivek Ramchandani - Mr. Ramchandani is the Coordinator of the Australian Sports Commission in India. He spoke about the Youth of our nation and the impact of sports on them and stated the fact that most athletes don’t have access to any equipment or facilities. He shared that people have much enthusiasm towards sports in their childhood or while watching a match. He spoke about the harsh realities of competition faced by today’s children and how sports can help the child to build up confidence, leadership qualities and motivation to face the world. He concluded by commending the initiative taken up by Magic Bus India.

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Session 1: Introduction to sports for development: Sports as a Catalyst for Social Change

Moderator: Hari Mohun Paruvu, Novelist and Motivational Speaker

Panelists were:

- Venkat Rao, Vice President, Finance, TGV Group
- Vijay K Cormaty, Zonal Manager, Deccan Chronicle
- M Jerome Inigo Jegam, Plant Head, MRF Medak
- Pratik Kumar , CEO , Magic Bus

A short video on Magic Bus India Foundation was showed to the participants.

Highlights of the video: It highlighted the tremendous benefits of sport for those who participate regularly: from fitness and improved health to leadership skills, increased aspirations, enhanced self-esteem, team spirit, etc In addition to the direct benefits of participating in organized physical activity, the discussion brought out the social value being placed on sport by governments. Sport can be used as a medium to improve the lives of marginalized or traumatized children and youth and as an effective tool to help build inclusive communities and address development issues. An NGO perspective illustrated the remarkably cost-effective development out comes being achieved through organized sport. The visually appealing and popular medium- by adopting a gentle, yet highly persistent mentoring approach to changing lives, especially for at-risk children and youth in marginalized, grass root communities.

Hari Mohun Paruvu- He talked about the educational aspect of sports and said that a person should have the will to learn. Also, that sports helps in developing compassion and team spirit. Sports should not be considered as a burden when compared with academics. If a person drops out from playing, and later on becomes a coach, the society tends to think that his contribution to the society is null. Management skills are very well known to sportspersons and they need not learn it later on in life. The three main issues discussed in the session were-

- Level Plain Field
- Creating Opportunities
- Recognition and Rewards



Venkat Rao-He spoke about the TGV Group and its association with Magic Bus in Kurnool district. He shared an incident from his childhood and shared how sport helps in creating equality in the society. He spoke about developing awareness and infrastructure facilities.

Pratik Kumar- He spoke about the session and understanding of the chief guest and the moderator. He gave few statistics - About 1, 65,000 students are helped by Magic Bus in India of which 40,000 are from Andhra Pradesh. He expressed difficulties to tap in to communities than through schools due to social evils. The right way of approach is to create *Role Models* and develop *activities*. Around 300 activities by Magic Bus related to different sports are being taken up. A lot of market research is done before tapping in to a certain place. The 5 Pillars of Magic Bus S4D are:

- a. Ensure participation of all backgrounds,
- b. Create safe environment,
- c. Experimental learning,
- d. Fun
- e. Mentor.

The first four pillars are dependent on a mentor. The vision is to reach 1million people by 2014. Around 15000 children are part of Magic Bus programs every day. Magic Bus Programs also involves the parents at a later stage. Magic Bus is trying to involve more girl children in to their programs. It wants to increase its quantum of corporate partnership in its activities and programs. Presently Magic Bus is in partnership with 20 corporate partners.

He then addressed the second question by saying, **No demand can be seen from girls**. The push from parents is lacking. The scenario is very bad due to fault in direction. A member from Magic Bus Hyderabad Tarzana Spoke a few lines about the impact Magic Bus have created on her.

Lastly, his reply to the third question was that members from families who were considered black sheep are now role models. This itself is very prestigious and has helped in building self-esteem and respect.

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Jerome Jegam – He started his discourse with an incident regarding Magic Bus. He has worked with Magic Bus in the past for few programs at his plant. “We care at MRF” is a program which is partnered with Magic Bus to engage workmen and their families in sports to bring a positive change in them. MRF has also partnered with Magic Bus for another program called MSR (My social Responsibility). He expressed his desire to strengthen the partnership with Magic Bus and create a better future.

He addressed the second topic by saying MRF has started MRF Fast Bowling camp to create opportunities. The flame or passion needs to be ignited in children and partners. Infrastructure facilities needs to be further developed.



Vijay K Cormaty-He began by saying media has always kept social responsibility in mind and heart. DC sports have been launched recently. It is mainly for students. Deccan chronicle ensures participation through team work. The NDTV campaign: Back to school with Sachin Tendulkar helped in promotion of the thought. The coverage of success stories of sports personalities helps in creating role models

A video by UNICEF was played. The short movie showed that work and plays both needs to go hand in hand.

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Session 2: Sports and Education

Moderator: Mr. Somesh Kumar, IAS

Panelists:

- 1) Sandhya Damodharam, Head-Education Resource Centre, DRF
- 2) Lalitha Naidu, Principal, Meridian high School, Madhapur
- 3) Murali K Magham, Manager, GE Energy Services
- 4) Saikat De, Manager, Bayer Crop Sciences

A profile of the work and achievements of Magic Bus was presented.



Highlights:

A somewhat tarnished ‘commercial’ image has been attached to professional sporting events, which tends to over shadow the potential benefits and power of sport as a catalyst for social development. Sports programmes can actually offer a bridge across Socio- economic gaps and can be designed to contribute to improving the quality of individual lives. Sports can also enhance community ‘togetherness’ and aspirations and serve as a catalyst for social and economic progress. Corporate entities with active CSR programs need to only add sport as development element to their existing programs. This will accelerate and enhance the impact of such programs.

Another video by the Ministry of Youth and sports Affairs was played

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Somesh Kumar-He started speaking about the appropriate environment which should be present in schools. He also spoke about the right kind of facilities and spaces required in schools. He mentioned that the burden on children is on the rise while expectations of parents from schools are also increasing.

Sandhya Damodharam-She talked about the prevailing culture regarding sports in schools and how sports does not end at school level but goes on for life. She mentioned that schools help in overall development of a child. She congratulated Magic Bus on the initiative taken. She expressed **that many** more such initiatives need to be taken and become more reachable to many more schools.



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Lalitha Naidu-She invited the students of Meridian School for sharing their thoughts. The children shared some of their own personal experiences and talked about the games they played and impact these games created on them. They also spoke about the benefits of sports and how it helped them in their academics. They cited examples of sportspersons and their hurdles and achievements in life. They also spoke how sports help them to keep fit and avoid health problems. They also shared that sports has helped them to build their characters and take decisions in crucial moments. Sports helped them to smile through losses and maintain humility in success. Ms. Lalitha Naidu shared her own experiences as how there is an increase in attendance level in schools after she brought in sports in to the curriculum. She also spoke about the discipline sports bring in to all our lives.



Murali Magham-He started on a lighter note. He considered Illiteracy the root cause of all social evils. He said that people are the major factor of a successful corporate. The qualities that people cultivate are induced from sports. He told that effective communication is a very important output of sports.

Saikat De-He talked about how corporate sectors help in sports development and how they include sports in to their work. He gave a background on Bayer crop Sciences and how they help in development of children through sports. Bayer Crop Sciences eradicated child labor through a month long sports camp. He also told that sports can even act an ice breaker. He further expressed to collaborate with Magic Bus in the future.

A few questions were asked by some of the participants. To this Mr. Somesh Kumar read out a survey from India today magazine done by Edusports dated 24th September 2011.

He gave statistics on the elite schools and the results were alarming.

Session 3: Sport as a Tool for Community Mobilization and Social Inclusion

Moderator: Mr. Shashi Bhusan Kumar, IAS, Commissioner Employment and Training & In charge Director – Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh



Panelists:

1. Radhika Sridhar, Operations Manager DRF – Livelihood
2. Meena Raghunathan, Director, GMR Foundation
3. Vivek Ramchandani, Coordinator ASOP India
4. P.Naveen Kumar, Executive Director, Progressive Education Foundation

Highlights:

The last session was around the benefits of sport on employability and performance and potential impact on the enhancement of livelihoods in the Indian context. Regular participation in sport gives the individual exposure to practical life experiences in controlled environment and contributes indirectly to raise self esteem and enhance her/his social and life skills.

Sport, by itself, helps in building leadership traits and enhances decision making, communication skills, organizing skills and spirit of team work.

Sports related initiatives also have a positive impact on organizational dynamics and work place environment by, creating synergy and a healthy competition, while contributing tangibly to training and skill development at all organizational levels. Finally, corporate involvement in sport helps build organizational and brand loyalty at the same time strengthens staff motivation, leading to lower staff turnover and better community links.

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Radhika Sridhar She made a power point presentation on DRF. The presentation started with an overview of DRF. DRF is presently working in 22 states of India with 1600 members and is still growing. She gave statistics on livelihood and youth. She shared about a program called 'LABS' (Livelihood Advancement Business School) started by DRF. She talked about the history, process and features of the program. She further shared about another project known as SRI (Skilling Rural India) which provides opportunities to rural people and has till date provided opportunities to 3664 youth through SRI.

Meena Raghunathan –She congratulated Magic Bus on its brilliant work and gave a background of the GMR group. GMR group is working in 12 states in India and also in Nepal and Maldives. GMR mostly works with government schools and sports are part of the curriculum. She cited some examples from her personal experiences as to how sports helped in overall development of a village school. GMR has 8 vocational training centers. She believes that sports have an important role in women's empowerment. She wanted to promote physical fitness all across. She wanted Magic Bus to come out with a methodology for all round development.



Vivek Ramchandani -He showed a film on Isha foundation run by Sadhguru Juggy Vasudev on rural rejuvenation / social inclusion.

Naveen Kumar –He spoke about eradication of social evils with the help of sports. Sports are a major tool for social change. Equality and access are very important for any sports. The interest for sports from childhood has to be inculcated by the parents. This interest in sports would encourage children to take up sports all through his or her life. The standards of mentors need to be improved considerably. Magic Bus is doing a great job by training the mentors in the best way possible. Highlight of Magic Bus' intervention is that -it consciously includes girls and disabled children in all the activities. Some policy changes need to be incorporated in regard to education and sports. He said he would be looking forward to work with Magic Bus.

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Vote of Thanks

The conference closed with a vote of thanks by Ms. Madusree Vemuru, Head of communications and Partnership, DRF. She thanked all the corporate for their support. She further thanked the moderators, panelists and participants for their sustained interest and active participation. She sincerely hoped that the conference had achieved its objectives of demystifying the concept of sport for development and peace for the benefit of the Indian business community.