

Pahwa Group has been serving communities long before 2013, says CSR Head Anandita Pahwa

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Gurgaon based Pahwa Group has been working on education, skill development, health & hygiene, and sports for enriching the lives of underprivileged and differently-abled, as part of its CSR programme. DRI is running many skill development programs for underprivileged women/youth as a part of its CSR Initiatives. The objective of these projects is to develop self-employment skills to underprivileged Youths/Girls/Women so that they can be gainfully self employed. In an Interview with Apresh Mishra, Anandita Pahwa, Head CSR Initiatives, Pahwa Group said the company has been serving communities long before CSR became a mandatory affair. *Excerpts of the interview:*

Tell us about your CSR initiatives?

CSR has been part of our DNA. Dr. Mathra Das Pahwa grandfather of our chairman Mr Deepak Pahwa, was a philanthropist and an eminent eye surgeon. He was known for his charitable work for the underprivileged in the field of vision, more so, for cataract surgery, free of cost.

DRI and Bry – Air have undertaken Dr Mathra Das Pahwa Vision Outreach Program and has been carrying the mission forward through the “Dr. Mathra Das Pahwa – Vision Outreach Program”. This is the flagship program of CSR which provides Free Eye Check Up, Free Medicine, Free Spectacles and Free Cataract Surgeries to underprivileged people in rural areas. It was started in February 2011. The eye camps are conducted in Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Punjab. So far 99 Camps have been organized and 100th campus is coming up on 15th March in Moga, Punjab. DRI has organized 98th Eye Camp at Govt High School, Manpur village, Palwal under “Dr Mathra Das Pahwa Outreach Program”. More than 300 people from Manpur, Seoli, Bahin, Nagla Jat, Pahari and Kondal village attended the eye camp. In camp free medicine and free spectacles were distributed. Cataract patients went to Indira Gandhi Eye Hospital, Gurugram for cataract surgeries.

We also have DRI Udaan Skill Development Center for Beautician and Tailoring course which is running in partnership with 'Humana People to People India' since 2015 at Chakkarpur and Bhawani Enclave Centers in Gurugram. In the 14th Batch of Beautician and Tailoring course 97 Girls/Women Bhawani Enclave and Chakkarpur Centers has been awarded with the certificates.

Your intervention in Education?

We have many ongoing programmes on Education and Skill Development. We launched Scholarship program on merit basis in the schools of Moga village, Punjab. Learning centers for women has been setup in Moga, where they are provided with vocational training for stitching.

Further, we tied up with an NGO called 'Literacy India', and are running two schools with them namely Bry-Air Pathshala (Dharam Colony, Gurugram) and DRI Pathshala (Caterpuri, Gurugram) and . These schools provide non- formal education to kids of primary age. The kids are from underprivileged section (never went to school, parents are construction workers).Once the kids reach a certain level to education, they are transferred to regular schools.

In the afternoon remedial classes are organized for students who go to regular schools but require assistance to do well in the school. These schools also have computer labs, digital learning tools called 'Gyan tantra digital dost' where they learn from.

DRI has celebrated this past Diwali with underprivileged children at DRI Pathshala. The theme was plastic free Diwali. Approximately 60 students had participated in this activity. Activities such as Rangoli making, Poster Making, and Slogan writing was organized for the students.

We also have 4 vocational training centers in Gurugram and one in Moga with courses- Electricians (for men), stitching and beautician (for women).

You water initiative?

We have set up community water centers(CWCs) in villages. Five such centers with RO water plants with chilling systems(providing drinking water) are already setup.

Our aim through these projects is to provide clean and safe drinking water and in the process improve the health of the inhabitants of the surrounding areas. Idea is for it to be sustainable and promoting hygiene habits related to drinking clean water. Training is provided to the villagers on how to run these centers. These CWCs are benefiting more than 1500 people in four villages in Gurugram and one village in Alwar district. Bry-Air has partnered with MA, My Anchor Foundation to implement the project.

All households in the village get a monthly water card of Rs 10 valid for a month. The money goes for the salary of the person (from the village) who is managing the center.

Bry-Air is also promoting hygiene and sanitation by constructing individual toilets. Till date we have constructed about 60 toilets in Kaduki village, Alwar district. This project is implemented by Sapna NGO.

Would you prefer CSR as a mandate or as voluntary activity?

I don't think it is a matter of preference, I think people who are wanting to do something good for the society (like us) were doing it before it became a mandate. A lot of companies were already working in CSR even before it was mandatory.

After it became a mandate, it has led to many more people contributing to CSR work. Identified areas, as well as funding NGOs. All in all, more funds are available and more work is being done. People are conscious that CSR spends focus on well researched projects. We need good work to happen. If you are in this space you know what we are saying is not even a drop in the ocean with the amount that needs to be done in villages, in so many different fields. If a company does things in a proper manner then a lot of good work can be done and is being done. If a company is just signing a cheque and giving it in NGO or something like, where there are no checks and balances, then the funds may be wasted and not utilized in its maximum potential.

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