Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is 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. Corporate accountability (CA) is a term that might not ring a bell whereas many people have heard of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The desired outcome for both concepts is the same; a better situation for all stakeholders involved in terms of sustainability, equity, dignity and justice.

Corporate accountability can be defined as the ability of those affected by a corporation to control that corporation’s operations. Most corporations often take no responsibility for these negative impacts and have no mechanisms to prevent or mitigate them.

The tourism industry in India is growing immensely and the government of India is supporting this growth in many ways. This does not pose a problem in itself. However, that many local communities face serious problems because of this growth, adds a new dimension to this issue. Many of the corporations in India’s tourism industry have not shown concerns about their impacts on the social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects of the individual and community rights. Corporations often take no responsibility for these negative impacts and have no mechanisms to prevent or mitigate them.

A Call for Corporate Accountability in Tourism in India

WILL THERE BE CHANGE?

Achieving Corporate Accountability in tourism is a long process and the situation is not likely to change overnight. But there is hope. Sustainable and responsible forms of tourism are gaining ground which benefit local people, have fewer negative effects and is an enriching experience for the traveller. Join us in the push for more accountability in tourism!

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NOT A CHOICE BUT AN OBLIGATION!

Corporate Social Responsibility Versus Corporate Accountability

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“Corporate accountability can be defined as the ability of those affected by a corporation to control that corporation’s operations”.

-Friends of the Earth.

CSR in India is mostly understood and implemented in project mode. Corporations spend
money on CSR projects (often no doubt altruistic) but most times have no connection with the core work that the Corporation is involved in and which is causing negative impacts on local communities. Also most CSR activities are voluntary.

CA is based on a stricter framework of impacts and regulation, which makes corporations more accountable to the communities whose life it impacts. The most important aspect of CA is the shift in power.

With the paradigm shift from CSR to CA in industries such as footwear, clothing, arms and tobacco the change in behaviour of these corporations under scrutiny has been dramatic. Unfortunately the tourism industry is still off the hook and there is little protest or action against the negative impacts caused by tourism corporations.

**WHAT AND WHO NEEDS TO CHANGE?**

That Corporations would become accountable without regulation is unlikely. For this to happen concerted attitudinal and behaviour changes is needed in all players of the tourism industry.

**Role of Corporations**
- Corporations need to make their actions visible through transparent and accurate reporting on social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts. These reports need to be accessible to local communities. A regular impact assessment conducted on the social, cultural, economic and environmental levels. Corporate decision making to be influenced by these assessments.
- Company plans that impact local communities need to be in consultation with them to keep them informed and give them the opportunity to object. Before assessment point
  - Resources or property should not be taken from local communities and if this might happen they should be compensated appropriately and adequately for their loss.
  - Standards on social, environmental, labour and social justice issues should be high and based on the existing legal frameworks of the country and international conventions.
- Companies should mention their CA philosophy and practices on their websites so that their customers can make informed choices.

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**Role of the Government**
- Ensure that local self governance institutions in the country are strengthened and rights to monitor corporations in their jurisdiction be given to them.
- Legal aid should be accessible to local people as many do not have the resources to pursue legal action.
- Stringent sanctions against companies, introduced when actions of the company are negative.

**Role of Civil Society Organisations**
- Push for change in the legal system by addressing governments.
- Keep a watch on actions of the corporations by monitoring.
- Draw public attention when the actions of corporations are harmful in any way.

**Role of Tourists**
- Tourists should inform themselves before they use the services of tour operators, accom-
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Who we are

Established in 1985, EQUATIONS is a research, advocacy and campaigning organisation charged with the vision of democratising tourism in India. We study the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism on local communities. A key area of our work is the impacts of tourism corporations on local communities.

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