

## Evaluation and Implementation of Village Cluster Adoption Program (VCAP) in Punjab

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### ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility is an emerging field which has garnered increased attention in recent years. This study was undertaken to explore implementation and evaluation of a CSR initiative named Village Cluster Adoption Programme (VCAP). For carrying out the research both case study method of research and field survey have been used. For having firsthand knowledge of the initiative five key personnel related to VCAP were interviewed. For studying the implementation and evaluation of VCAP, field survey was conducted in the villages adopted under VCAP. Ninety respondents, selected on the basis of willingness to participate in the study, were included in the sample. Primary data was obtained from respondents with the help of pre structured non disguised questionnaire. For the convenience of the respondents, the questionnaire was administered after translating it in Punjabi language. To fulfil the objectives enquiries were made regarding the main issues like awareness about VCAP, media used for spreading awareness, main achievements and overall benefits of the programme. From the results it was found that the respondents were well aware about Farmers Field School being run under VCAP and various facilities and reading material being made available at these schools. Training under expert guidance and contamination free post harvest handling and storage were the key components of VCAP. Respondents considered training at Farmers' Field Schools as the most important activity. Introduction of latest scientific techniques and making available enough reading material were also considered important under VCAP. Major benefits available from VCAP were Knowledge about Agricultural Practices, Expert Advice and Improvement in quality and yield of cotton. Comparison of pre-VCAP and post-VCAP data showed that there was an increase in cotton yield by at least 225 kg per hectare and about 30 per cent increase in area under cotton cultivation.

**Key words:** CSR, Evaluation, Implementation, Farmer, Punjab

### INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an emerging field which has garnered increased attention in recent years. No longer can firms continue to act as independent entities regardless of the interest of the general public. World Business Council for Sustainable

Development defines CSR as, "The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large".

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In another definition, CSR has been defined as, “The obligation of the firm to use its resources in ways to benefit society, through committed participation as a member of society, taking into account the society at large, and improving welfare of society at large independently of direct gains of the company”<sup>16</sup>. Many companies nowadays publish their CSR activities in annual reports or in special CSR reports. These reports reflect the need for corporate accountability in implementing CSR in order to enable its stakeholders to evaluate the implementation thereof. With transparency and accountability, it is hoped that companies voluntarily implement CSR. However, Haigh and Jones<sup>12</sup>, stipulate that most reports are only public relation tools and are not a form of accountability of the companies to the public. Furthermore, Cooper and Owen<sup>9</sup>, state that to fulfill accountability, a report should be supported by macro environment variables that encourage a company to implement and report CSR objectively.

A company has negative or positive impact on the external environment while doing its business. A company does not have any incentive to reduce its negative external impact, because the company has to bear the cost to reduce the impact while the benefit is received by other parties other than the company. Government plays its role and as long as the companies comply with government regulation, such negative externalities can be reduced. In the beginning, studies<sup>5</sup>, suggested that companies should remain focused on making profit and government shall be responsible for producing public goods and resolving externalities problem. However, later on some economic studies demonstrated that a company action to generate profit and to implement CSR at the same time may not be contradictory<sup>26,6,3,17,4</sup>. CSR may substitute, to an extent, the role of government in performing its public duty and thus should be encouraged. However, too much regulation on CSR may hamper business competitiveness. Present study was aimed at exploring Corporate Social Responsibility

initiatives undertaken in a selected unit and to study the implementation and evaluation of a selected CSR initiative.

### Review of Literature

This section presents a brief review of relevant studies in chronological order. Smith<sup>25</sup>, concluded that strategic management proved to be the most probable platform where CSR could gain significant recognition as well as all its probable positive outcomes. Clarkson<sup>8</sup>, argued that the economic and social purpose of the corporation is to create and distribute increased wealth and value to all its primary stakeholder groups, without favoring one group at the expense of others. Frankental, argued that CSR can only have real substance if it embraces all the stakeholders of a company, reinforced by changes in company law relating to governance, rewarded by financial markets. Lantos<sup>19</sup>, reviewed the CSR literature and redefined CSR by classifying it as ethical, altruistic and strategic. Ethical CSR is mandatory and means that a firm must obey all the laws and avoid doing harm as a result of its business. Altruistic CSR involves a firm helping to alleviate external social problems and inequities through charitable funding wherever it financially benefits the firm or not. Idowu and Towler<sup>14</sup>, enquiring about the nature of CSR reporting comment that the CSR reports which have now become an annual report in addition to the traditional annual financial reports is one of the vehicles used to demonstrate how caring they have been over the financial period that has just ended and how they intend to continue to be even more so in future periods. Isabelle<sup>15</sup>, stated that in the present decade, CSR has started fusion and merger with different domains of management in businesses and academics. It started to share close proximity with marketing, operations, human resources, entrepreneurship (social entrepreneurship) and other domains.

Frynas<sup>11</sup>, using the example of multinational oil companies, argued that the current CSR agenda fails to address the crucial issues of governance and the negative macro-level effects that multinational companies

cause in host countries. Amalric and Hauser<sup>2</sup>, argued that the potential benefits companies derive from CSR activities arise from two sources. The first source is expectations held by the immediate stakeholders of a company and the second driver is the threat that the state will impose new binding regulations on companies. Laszlo *et al.*<sup>20</sup> argued that stakeholder value based on the economic, environmental and social impacts is a rapidly growing source of business advantage. Taking advantage of this source, however, requires a change in the mindset of leadership and a disciplined approach to integrating stakeholder value throughout the business. Pappasolomou *et al.*<sup>23</sup>, reported that it is important that organizations are committed to fulfilling expectations and moral obligations at the level of society. Lane<sup>18</sup>, opined that not only is there a need to be concerned with the wants and needs of workers, customers, and stockholders, but there is also a need to be concerned with future workers, customers, and stockholders, and also the media, rating agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the environment. Consumers are increasingly more concerned with how the companies make their money and are expecting businesses to be responsible for their social, ethical and environmental impacts on the society and the community. Lockett *et al.*<sup>22</sup>, investigated the status of CSR research within the management literature from 1992 to 2002. Major issues, related to CSR, identified by this effort include that for CSR research published in management journals, the most popular issues investigated have been environmental and ethics; the empirical research has been overwhelmingly of a quantitative nature; the theoretical research has been primarily non-normative; the field is driven by agendas in the business environment; and the single most important source of references for CSR articles was the management literature itself<sup>9</sup> (i.e. it is narrow and insular in its focus). Polaski<sup>24</sup>, reported on an innovative policy experiment in Cambodia that links improvement of workers' rights with increased orders and market access for the

products of the country's garment factories. The policy originated with the US-Cambodia Textile Agreement, which awarded Cambodia higher garment export quotas into the US market in return for improved working conditions and labor regulations. The author concludes that the agreement's effectiveness has depended on a regulatory role for the ILO, 'acting as a compliance monitor and government intervention, preventing some apparel producers from free riding on others' improvements'. Doherty<sup>10</sup> emphasized that conservation and sustainable practices can result in substantial cost reductions for companies. Sustainability not only concerns the environment, but also has to do with the ability of the company to operate successfully in the present without compromising on its ability to operate in the future. Hartman *et al.*<sup>13</sup>, compared the psyche of Europeans and Americans and said that where European sustainability concerns are focused on social and environmental impacts of products and services, the United States sustainability concerns are focused on long-term profitability. U.S. firms are also less eager to comply with internationally recognized human rights and environmental standards. Lattemann *et al.*<sup>21</sup>, argued that the national governance environment dominates the national income level in affecting CSR communications intensity. The authors demonstrated that the macro institutional environment in a country strongly affects firm CSR behavior. Bihari and Pradhan<sup>7</sup>, suggested that banks in India have increased their CSR activities, which also have a positive impact on performance of the business, apart from improving their image and goodwill. Amaladoss and Manohar<sup>1</sup>, The debate concerning corporate social responsibility (CSR) is shifting from public relations, reputation management, and cause marketing to issues of competitive advantage and good corporate governance. Authors argued that there is a scope for improving management of CSR activities in India.

A number of studies have been conducted on CSR activities in the past and majority of these studies have been conducted

in the developed nations. CSR activities have picked up in India and with the provisions of New Companies Act, 2013; the pace is expected to increase tremendously. Present study attempts to capture CSR initiative and its evaluation in a relatively less explored domain.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research design was both exploratory and descriptive in nature. Exploratory research design employed case study method of research. Descriptive research design was employed for studying the grass root level implementation and evaluation of selected CSR initiative. Village Cluster Adoption Programme (VCAP) was the major CSR initiative undertaken by the selected unit. This CSR initiative was aimed at improving cotton yield and productivity of the cotton farmers in Punjab. For these reasons, it was decided to include VCAP in the study for exploring its implementation and evaluation. For exploring the conceptualization, development and implementation of the selected initiative, primary data from five executives or key persons related to CSR initiative was collected using unstructured personal interview method. Descriptive research design was used to carry out the study in cotton growing areas in the state of Punjab. The focus was on exploring the various CSR initiatives of the selected unit and studying in detail the benefits of VCAP to the ultimate beneficiaries. Population for the study comprised of the beneficiaries of VCAP in the villages adopted by the selected unit in Punjab and for the purpose of carrying out the study a list of 90 beneficiaries was prepared on the basis of convenience. Primary data was collected by surveying the adopted villages. Primary data was obtained from respondents with the help of pre structured non disguised questionnaire. For convenience of the respondents the questionnaire was administered after translating it in Punjabi language. To fulfill the objectives, the queries explored the main issues like awareness about VCAP, media used for spreading awareness, main achievements and overall benefits of the programme. Questions contained multiple

responses (more than one response) and some of them were dichotomous in nature. Questionnaire contained both open-ended as well as close-ended questions. Rating scales were used to explore the benefits of VCAP accruing to the beneficiaries. A five point Likert scale was used and a rating of 5 was given to “Strongly Agree” and 1 for “Strongly Disagree”.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section has two parts. First part details out the structure and activities of the initiative and second part deals with the evaluation and benefits of VCAP.

#### Village Cluster Adoption Programme (VCAP)

VCAP was started with the adoption of first village, Nawa Pind (Tehsil Talwandi Sabo, Distt. Bathinda) on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2003 by the selected unit under the aegis of the Chairman with the aim of transfer of technology to farmer’s fields for raising the productivity and upgrading the quality of cotton of the entire village and also to ameliorate condition of cotton farmers in close collaboration of Punjab Agricultural University. The Chairman had keen interest in purchase of raw material and he himself had worked for 4-5 years at the grass root level. Once he was on a trip to Bathinda (in the year 2000) and the cotton productivity was very low in that particular year. But he came to know that one farmer in a village was having exceptional yield. As he personally met him, he thought of giving him some monetary reward.

The main concept of the VCAP was adapted from the United States of America where Field schools were running under the National Council for Farmers. These field schools gave technical know-how to the farmers to improve the crop productivity.

The following major participants were involved in VCAP:

- ❖ **Textile Mills:** Vardhman Textiles Ltd., Nahar Group, Trident Group, Aarti Group, GPI Textiles Ltd., JCT Ltd.
- ❖ **Banks:** State Bank of India, State Bank of Patiala, Punjab National Bank.

❖ **Other Institutions:** Punjab Agricultural University, Department Of Agriculture.

The following major areas were focused in VCAP:

- ❖ Introduction of latest scientific techniques to the doorsteps of farmers.
- ❖ Training of farmers and make available expert guidance and advice from time to time during season for raising a good crop.
- ❖ Demonstrating techniques through planned visits to research centers and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK's).
- ❖ Propagation of IPM techniques including a push to biological control methods such as Trichogramma cards, light traps etc. may be stressed.
- ❖ Contamination free production, picking, storing and cleaning.

The major concern at the beginning was the low yield of cotton in cotton growing Malwa region of Punjab. Punjab was having the highest cotton productivity in the country from 1989 to 1993. Actually the real ordeal of cotton growers of Punjab started from the year 1997-98 when hell let loose on cotton growers of Punjab because the fields were devoured and destroyed by American Bollworms. This continued until 2002 when the programme actually started with the adoption of Nawa Pind.

Alarmed over the constant decline of cotton productivity in Punjab, the selected unit in 2003-04, took the onerous task of increasing productivity of cotton upon itself and adopted Nawa Pind on an experimental basis. The idea for adopting the village was to develop it as a show piece by implementing participatory and sustainable approach for cotton farmers and by arranging for them all the information, inputs

and services they needed to enhance the production and to cut their cost of production, at their doorstep. A scout was recruited for every village and trained by experts of Punjab Agricultural University on cotton cultivation and extension activities. The programme also included appointing an agricultural graduate to supervise every cluster consisting of 5 villages. The specialists from Punjab Agricultural University visited the villages on scheduled dates, advises the farmer and look into the problems faced by them from time-to-time till harvesting.

The said experiment made a great success as this village produced 792 kg per hectare of lint cotton. Subsequently the initiative gathered momentum with the increase in the number of villages from 10 in 2004; the number had risen to 95 in 2008. Also there has been a stupendous growth in the yield from 800 kg/ha in 2003-04 to 915kg/ha in 2008-09. It found mention in the President's broadcast on Technology Day (11/05/04) as a 'technological event which has the potential to penetrate into our everyday lives'. VCAP also found mention in the President's address to the nation on the eve of India's 56th Republic day. The President of India was gracious to bless one of the participating Villages -'Gehri Buttar' (District - Bathinda) by his presence on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

#### Evaluation of VCAP

This section deals with the evaluation of VCAP on different dimensions. Table 1 presents the classification of the respondents on basis of land holding. It can be seen that majority of the respondents, about 43 percent, were medium farmers.

**Table 1: Classification of the respondents on basis of Land Holding (n=90)**

Category	Frequency
Marginal farmers (<1 ha)	5 (5.55)
Small farmers (1-2 ha)	6 (6.66)
Semi-medium farmers (2-4 ha)	20 (22.20)
Medium farmers (4-10 ha)	39 (43.30)
Large farmers (>10 ha)	20 (22.20)

The respondents were asked about the source of their awareness regarding VCAP. Responses thus obtained have been shown in table 2. It was found that out of 90 respondents, seventy of them were told by their friends about the programme. Forty two

respondents came to know of VCAP through Promotional measures and announcements made by Panchayats and companies and twenty one became aware through fellow farmers and eleven through their family members.

**Table 2: Source of Awareness Regarding VCAP (n=90)**

Source of Awareness regarding VCAP	Frequency
Friends	70
Promotional measures	42
Announcements by Panchayats and companies	42
Fellow Farmers	21
Family	11

It was found that all the respondents responded in affirmative and were well versed with facilities and reading material being made available at these schools when they were enquired about the Farmers Field School being run as a part of VCAP. Pamphlets and posters were the most preferred method used for

spreading awareness regarding VCAP. The second most popular medium was the announcements that were made by Panchayats and Gurudwaras. Personal visits by company personnel and group discussions came in third and fourth.

**Table 3: Methods Used For Spreading Awareness (n=90)**

Methods used for spreading awareness	Frequency
Pamphlets and posters	74
Announcements made by Panchayats and Gurudwaras	72
Personal visits by company personnel	67
Group discussions and mass demonstrations	63

It was found that respondents considered training at Farmers' Field Schools as the most important activity. Introduction of latest scientific techniques and making available enough reading material came to be the second

and the third main activity, whereas the propagation of IPM techniques and contamination free cultivation practices came in at fourth and fifth place respectively.

**Table 4: Main activities carried under VCAP (n=90)**

Main Activities Under VCAP	Frequency
Training of farmers at Farmers' Field School	80
Introduction Of latest scientific Techniques	78
Availability of enough reading material to schedule farm operations	78
Propagation Of IPM Techniques	74
Contamination free production, picking, storing and cleaning	70

#### ***Main achievements of VCAP***

It was found that the respondents considered the overall economic prosperity as the main achievement. Introduction of latest scientific techniques and technology transfer and the

training of farmers under expert guidance came in at second and third place whereas contamination free cultivation practices and the propagation of IPM techniques came in at fourth and fifth place.

**Table 6: Main achievements of VCAP (n=90)**

Main Achievements Of VCAP	Frequency
Overall economic prosperity of farmers	80
Technology transfer and latest scientific techniques	72
Training of farmers under expert guidance	56
Contamination free production, picking, storing and cleaning	34
Propagation of IPM techniques	24

Respondents were enquired about varieties grown before and after VCAP. It was found that people were using varieties mentioned on the left side of table 7 which consisted mainly

of hybrids and desi varieties whereas after VCAP, they started using the Bt-cotton Varieties like RCH-134,317, MAHYCO-6301, 6304 etc.

**Table 7: Comparison of Varieties grown before and after VCAP**

Varieties commonly grown before VCAP	Varieties commonly grown after VCAP
ANKUR, MOTI, GUJARATI BT	RCH-134,317,

An increase in mean yield level and percent area under Bt-cotton was also witnessed. Data substantiating the same has been presented in table 8.

**Table 8 Comparison of Yield Levels Pre And Post VCAP**

Variable	Pre VCAP	Post VCAP
Yield Level	528 (44.44)	773 (34.03)
Percent Area Under Bt-cotton	42.5 (7.4)	79.5 (7.7)

Based on the results of paired t-test, comparisons of pre-VCAP and post-VCAP data indicated that there was an increase in cotton yield by at least 225 kg per hectare and about 30 per cent increase in area under cotton cultivation.

#### Benefits of VCAP

In this section the benefits of VCAP and related activities have been discussed. This section has been structured under the following headings:

❖ Knowledge about Agricultural Practices.

❖ Expert advice.

❖ Cotton Quality and Yield

Discussion regarding the above mentioned dimensions has been provided as follows:

#### **Knowledge about Agricultural Practices**

In this category the statements used for evaluating VCAP in context of knowledge about agricultural practices have been analyzed. The results of the analysis have been discussed in table 9.

**Table 9: Benefits of VCAP through knowledge about Agricultural Practices (n=90)**

Statements	Mean	SD	F-value
Quality of information material being supplied by VCAP is good	4.80	0.402	0.43
VCAP has contributed towards increasing area under cotton especially Bt-cotton	4.74	0.487	1.11
People have started to give more attention to cultural practices like deep summer ploughing and pre sowing irrigation post VCAP	4.42	0.749	0.65
VCAP has improved the awareness regarding the dosage of plant protection chemicals	4.42	0.734	0.540
VCAP has made people more knowledgeable about the critical stages of irrigation and plant protection chemicals	4.35	0.605	0.92
VCAP has enhanced the knowledge regarding the various seed treatment practices	4.08	0.592	0.43
VCAP has helped to ensure easy availability of bank loans	3.98	0.461	0.28
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.39</b>	<b>0.549</b>	

It was found that the mean score is highest (4.80) in case of quality of information material supplied under VCAP being good followed by mean score of 4.74 in case of VCAP's contribution in increasing area under Bt-cotton. Other statements included in this category were related to attention to cultural practices, awareness regarding the dosage of chemicals and imparting knowledge about critical stages of irrigation with mean scores of 4.42, 4.42 and 4.35 respectively. Overall mean score for "Knowledge about Agricultural Practices" came out to be 4.39. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for each

statement for finding out whether significant variations in benefits available for respondents exist across different categories of land holdings. For all the statements F-values were found to be less than corresponding table values. This indicates that there was no difference in benefits available from VCAP on the basis of land holding.

#### **Expert Advice**

In this category the statements used for evaluating VCAP in context of expert advice about agricultural practices have been analyzed. The results of the analysis have been discussed in table 10.

**Table 10: Benefits of VCAP through Expert Advice (n=90)**

Statements	Mean	SD	F-value
VCAP has increased the awareness regarding the high yielding varieties of cotton	4.64	0.586	0.37
Frequency of visits by Agri-Experts was satisfactory	4.58	0.616	1.09
VCAP has made improvements in the awareness regarding the methods and dosage of fertilizers according to PAU recommendations	4.43	0.719	1.72
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.55</b>	<b>0.640</b>	

It was found that the mean score was highest (4.64) for VCAP's role in increasing awareness regarding the high yielding varieties of cotton followed by mean score of 4.58 and 4.43 in case of other statements. Overall mean score for "Expert Advice" was 4.55. For all the statements F-values were found to be less than corresponding table values. This indicates that

there was no difference in benefits available from VCAP on the basis of land holding.

#### **Cotton Quality and Yield**

In this category the statements used for evaluating VCAP in context of cotton quality and yield have been analyzed. The results of the analysis have been discussed in table 11.

**Table 11: Improvement in Cotton Cultivation (n=90)**

Statements	Mean	SD	F-value
VCAP has increased awareness regarding other crops that can be sown near the cotton crop	4.38	0.830	1.24
People have started to give importance to the proper soil and water testing after the VCAP	4.33	0.67	1.48
VCAP has succeeded in freeing farmers from exploitation by private money lenders	3.97	0.540	0.48
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>0.68</b>	

It was found that for statements categorized under cotton quality and yield, the highest mean comes out to be 4.38 in case of increased awareness regarding other crops that can be

sown near the crop followed by 4.33 and 3.97 in case of other statements. Overall mean score for "Cotton Quality and Yield" came out to be 4.22. ANOVA was used for each statement for

finding out whether significant variations in benefits available for respondents exist across different categories of land holdings. For all the statements F-values were found to be less than corresponding table values. This indicates that there was no difference in benefits available from VCAP on the basis of land holding. The respondents were asked to rate VCAP, on an overall basis, on five point likert scale. Mean score of 4.33 (SD 0.71) indicated that the respondents were highly benefitted by VCAP.

### CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to explore various aspects of VCAP. Respondents were well aware about Farmers Field School being run under VCAP and various facilities and reading material being made available at these schools. Pamphlets and posters were the most preferred media used for spreading awareness regarding VCAP. Training under expert guidance and contamination free post-harvest handling and storage were the key components of VCAP. Respondents considered training at Farmers' Field Schools as the most important activity. Introduction of latest scientific techniques and making available enough reading material were also considered important under VCAP. Major benefits available from VCAP were Knowledge about Agricultural Practices, Expert Advice and Improvement in quality and yield of cotton.

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