

# The Implementation of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of the Agribusiness Firms in Bukidnon

*Beverly B. Bicar*

*ORCID No. 0000-0001-5481-6134*

*bbicar@yahoo.com*

*Bukidnon State University*

*Oscar B. Cabañelez*

*ORCID No. 0000-0003-2378-3127*

*oscar\_bcabanelez@yahoo.com*

*Bukidnon State University*

*Joy M. Mirasol*

*dr\_jmirasol@yahoo.com*

*Bukidnon State University*

## *Abstract*

This paper determined the implementation of the corporate social responsibility of the agri-business firms in Bukidnon. Specifically, it sought to identify the CSR projects that are being implemented by the firms, the manner they are implemented, the benefits of these CSRs, and the policies that can be generated based on the analyses of the findings. The results showed that the agri-business firms have been implementing several projects related to environmental protection, education and training, community development and enhancement of local employment. Some of the firms are documenting the implementation of their CSRs while others admit that they still have to measure the social impacts of their projects. Hence, one of the recommendations of the study is for the companies to employ an evaluation and monitoring mechanism to keep track of the progress and impact of their CSR programs.

Key phrases: Corporate social responsibility, agri-business firms, projects, education and training, community development

## *Introduction*

Bukidnon is a province that is often cited as the food basket of Mindanao. Its topography and climate are favorable to agricultural production. It is the source of rice and maize among other products in the region. Farms are tilled by the majority of the people and production is mainly intended for individual household consumption.

The influx of the agri-business production into the locality redefined the agricultural structure in the province. A long-established corporation with its pineapple plantation is

located in the northern part of the province. Two other firms, which are also both engaged in pineapple production, followed suit. Other companies paved the way for the commercialization of banana production while others embarked on sugar milling and refining.

The operations of these firms had led to agricultural industrialization thus changing the economic activities of the populace. These changes redefined not only the production of the privately owned farms but also the agricultural activities of the residents in the

province. Crop production thus became heavily concentrated on pineapple, sugar cane, banana, poultry and piggery in some areas. These products have become accessible to the people and competition among the producers has become inevitable.

Agribusiness corporations are often cited for the negative economic, social, and environmental consequences associated with their operations. While the companies have the potential to generate jobs, they are faulted for their supposed inability to provide fair wages despite the alleged health threatening working conditions for the field workers. Some concerned groups also cited the potential environmental risks resulting from the companies' inevitable use of "high levels of agrochemicals" for increased production yield – a practice that can lead to water contamination and ecological imbalance caused by the mortality among the so-called non-target organisms.

Amidst these issues, agri-business companies are attempting to do more good than harm by addressing the needs of the people through their corporate social responsibility. The CSRs may be related to the academe, advancement of clean technology, community development, environmental protection, health and wellness and others. The full implementation of these social services is crucial to the main agenda of the Philippine government which include among others the alleviation of poverty and empowering the youth through education. Recognizing the potential of CSR in impacting the disadvantaged community, the researchers were inspired to find out the extent to which the corporations in Bukidnon have realized their self-imposed social contracts.

### *Conceptual Framework and Related Literature*

This research is anchored on the assertion of Wood (1991) as cited by Haigh and Jones (2007) that business and society are intertwined rather than distinct entities; therefore, society has certain expectations for appropriate business behavior and outcomes. Wood's idea is said to be a departure from the conventional view that corporations operate for the singular

purpose of gaining profit for themselves. As such, they need to link with the communities, assume social responsibilities and create services in various forms as deemed appropriate considering the needs of the locality.

Haigh and Jones (2007) presented some arguments on CSR practice. They cited the assertion of Jones (1996) stating the need of CSR since it is an implicit directive driven by the ethical principles which in turn are derived from religious principles and existing social norms in the locality. They added that implementing CSRs will eventually benefit the corporations since by appearing responsible, they can gain government support, foster better business mileage by "differentiating its products from those of less proactive competitors", and perpetuate their economic pursuits.

Despite the earlier belief that the fundamental goal of an enterprise is the generation of profit, the corporate world has learned to acknowledge the importance of CSR. To cite a few cases, AT&T in California invested millions of dollars in support of education, of advanced technology to help dispense better health services, and of environment protection by introducing alternative fuel vehicles. UPS Foundation spearheaded a project in Los Angeles which empowered South African youth and women in financial literacy, dignity and entrepreneurship skills. Kraft Food Foundation (KFF) financed activities that assisted children with nutrition, fitness and literacy needs; and allowed families to visit prominent cultural institutions free of charge. It also provided youth the opportunities to develop marketable skills while working with younger children, and extended health and wellness educational experiences for young children.

Jollibee Corporation, which is based in the Philippines, cited social services in the area of education, community development, leadership development, and disaster response. Their Build-a-Classroom Project has erected at least 40 public school classrooms. The corporation's Busog Talino Program benefitted 232 schools in 38 sites in three years. The JFC Supply Chain Project drummed up the farm

production and marketing activities among the local farmers while the Jollibee Gawad Kalinga Village, in various parts of the country, has provided shelters to poor or displaced households. The Jollibee Foundation initiated leadership seminars to local leaders, and the company has launched numerous disaster preparedness initiatives in places devastated by power typhoons.

Although CSRs were previously thought to be the exclusive concern of business firms, studies on corporate social responsibility later included the agricultural industries. In 2009, Heyder and Theuvsen conducted a study on the corporate social responsibility in agribusiness to find out the perception and the motives for implementing CSR in Germany. They used a questionnaire with the five-point Likert scales allowing the respondents to agree or disagree with prepared statements. The findings of the study showed that the size of companies essentially determined the motivation to do CSR. Small companies were open to CSRS mainly because of philanthropic principles that are part of the corporate values; the medium-sized ones regarded the CSRs as ways of enhancing corporate reputation as well as a vehicle for increasing market share while the above-average sized corporations were driven by external pressures. These pressures include: 1) fair prices for farmers, 2) fair trade to help third-world countries, 3) acceptable social standards for employees, 4) higher environmental standards, and 5) more animal welfare.

Heyder and Theuvsen (2010) did another study that analyzed the determinants and effects of corporate social responsibility strategy to enterprises. They found that CSR "efforts in German business were influenced by the competitive strategy a company pursues, its number of employees and the degree of altruism it incorporates." Morimoto, Ash and Hope (2004) undertook a study which revealed that "CSR seems to be perceived by many as the social strand of sustainable development." Borck, Coglianese, and Nash (2008) evaluated the social effects of performance-based

environmental programs and found them to be requiring attention. They claimed that it was not enough to know if people are satisfied with the program or if they think it has social or environmental effects; these effects need to be demonstrated through careful empirical research.

The status of corporate social responsibility in the Philippines as implemented by 166 business-executives was reviewed by Maximiano (2004). He studied the CSR practice in the country considering the scope and societal impact. He claimed that the industry with the greatest extent of CSR involvement was the agricultural sector. His findings also indicated that 1) The firms considered it most important to provide the consumers with safe and reliable products/services while they operate with acceptable business practices; 2) CSRs of most industries were in education, poverty alleviation and health care; 3) CSR engagement focused on activities that were important to the customers and were favorable to the company's reputation; 4) CSR activities were not given prominence in the business plans of industries and if they were, monitoring and reporting were inadequate; 5) Limited resources; weak linkages between CSR and business; and disinterest among employees were constraints that companies needed to hurdle for them to become better corporate citizens.

The implementation of CSR engenders potential benefits for the firms (Hohnen, 2007; Shergold, n.d.; Kim & Van Dam, 2003). The benefits can include: 1) Better anticipation and management of an ever-expanding spectrum of risk; 2) Improved reputation management; 3) Improved innovation, competitiveness and market positioning; 3) Enhanced operational efficiencies and cost savings, and; 5) Improved relations with regulators.

Failure to carry out a CSR scheme can bring about damaging effects to the concerned business entities. Kim (2000) cited a Corporate Citizenship Study by Cone Incorporated, a strategy and communications agency, which revealed that corporate support of causes wins the trust of eight in ten Americans in

that company. Gaining the trust of potential customers is crucial considering that the current trend of globalization is pushing business firms to engage in stiffer and more rigorous competition with each other. Consumers are now faced with several options in the market, and it would be easy for them to switch to somebody else's products at the slightest provocation.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Looking at the context by which CSRs are implemented inspired the researchers to ascertain the implementation of the corporate social responsibilities of the agri-business firms in Bukidnon. A study was then conducted guided by the following questions: 1) What projects are implemented by the agri-business corporations in Bukidnon as part of their corporate social responsibility? 2) What benefits do the business firms and the local communities gain from the implemented CSRs? 3) What policies can be formulated to promote the positive impacts of the multinationals in the Bukidnon province?

The study aimed to benefit the R&D stakeholders, the agri-business firms, the community people, the CSR beneficiaries, the LGUs and the academe. The R&D stakeholders will gain insights on the determinants that influence the practice of corporate social responsibility that may subsequently lead them to explore other avenues for research undertakings. The multinational firms would be able to revisit their CSRs, assess the extent of its implementation and create strategies for heightening their positive impacts toward the community. The CSR beneficiaries will be able to develop awareness of the contribution of agricultural industrialization to the locality thereby valuing them. Results would provide bases for the LGUs in formulating policies that shall assist the multinationals in maximizing their social responsiveness. Finally, the academe can explore ways to serve the community people by forging possible linkages with the companies.

### *Methods*

This study is a descriptive research which mainly utilized qualitative data. The agri-business institutions that had been operating in the province of Bukidnon for not less than five years were chosen as subjects of this study. These multinationals include corporations that are engaged in pineapple production (cited in this article as Companies A, B, C), sugar milling and refining (Company D) and reforestation (Company E). Interview guides were distributed to the six informants who may be the manager, the CSR official or representative who is closely related. Responses to the interview guide were validated by conducting a more elaborate informal interview complemented by documentary analysis and on-site visits whenever possible. Twenty (20) randomly selected beneficiaries were also interviewed to authenticate the claims of the corporations. The responses were then analyzed, and findings were grouped based on the objectives of the study.

### *Results and Discussion*

This study focused on the corporate social responsibilities implemented by the firms; the benefits gained from them, and the policies formulated based on the data that were gathered. The discussion below is organized based on the identified CSR programs implemented by the different agri-business firms.

#### *The Projects Implemented by the Agri-Business Firms*

The responses of the informants and the documentary analyses revealed the similarities of the CSR programs of the agri-business establishments in Bukidnon. Just like any other commercial groups, the agri-business corporations sought to address issues that emerged, as a result of their operations in the province. Many of the long-running programs initiated by them were more on providing education and training to the underserved,

protecting the environment, strengthening the host community, and generating jobs for the people.

### On Education and Training

One of the major thrusts of Company A, a corporation which has been in Bukidnon since the 1960's, is its sponsorship of a scholarship for deserving students. This project eventually became an important priority of the organization in 1994. Financial assistance is currently allocated to poor but exceptional students in pre-school up to the post-graduate level. The company works with its product suppliers to help finance the project. About 100 of the 150 suppliers have partnered with the company generating funds for its scholars as well as the recipients of the Grants-in-Aid Program.

The company also provides other forms of support for the academe. A development program has been implemented in one recipient school. The said program provides assistance in the form of staff development initiatives and infrastructure. The community, where the fresh fruit packing house of the company is situated, is also the recipient of the company's assistance. A School Bus Project has been launched in the village to help elementary graders get to school for free. Toilets have been built for the school children's use, and free medical services have been provided to the pupils.

The company also sponsors trainings for various sectors in the community including the local professionals. Seven thousand (7,000) community leaders and workers, heads of families, and out-of-school youth in Mindanao have availed of the technical skills training sponsored by the company. Among the short-term courses offered are building wiring installation, basic electrical work, and food processing which had already benefited about 50 trainees.

A similar project is also implemented by another company employing a unique scheme of fund generation. Scholarship grants based on the volume of production per bag are open

to children of low-income earners in the entire province. Two slots are made available each year. Privileges include a seven-thousand pesos monthly stipend inclusive of book-allowance. Two-thousand pesos (PhP 2,000.00) monthly allowance is granted to high school beneficiaries. Short-term courses are also offered mostly to the women in the local barangay. These include trainings in hairdressing, massage, reflexology, mushroom culture, animal raising and candle making.

A third company, which currently oversees two agrifirms in Bukidnon, also provides assistance to financially constrained young people wanting to get into school. The following criteria serve as the basis for selecting the prospective scholar: 1) The family has a monthly income of less than 6,000.00 pesos; 2) The family does not own a home; 3) The candidate is not a child of a landowner; and 4) He/she is not a relative of any local government official. The firm also participates in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) of the Department of Education, a project intended to benefit the out-of-school youth. The company pays for the learning materials of the ALS scholars for one year while the local officials pay the honorarium of the ALS teachers. It also organized skills training in coordination with TESDA and with the local government units. One example was the case of 60 people who underwent training in agriculture to improve their agronomic practices.

Other projects were launched by the company in the past. A library was built for the students in one community. A Day Care Center was built in one of the remote villages in the province, where the school children were also provided with books. A vocational school was also established at another site in which 89 people participated in skills training development programs (e.g., hair cutting for 16-68-year-olds).

One corporation links with TESDA to provide skill development services to the community. It also generates donations of school supplies and equipment for some local schools. Literacy projects are also organized by

another agrifirm to help bridge the knowledge gaps in the communities where it had set up business.

Education-related benefits were mentioned by most beneficiaries when they were interviewed about the corporations' CSRs. Three of them confirmed the construction of day care centers and library for school children in their locality. Sixty-five percent (65 %) claimed that they were able to send their children or siblings to school because of the income they earned from the corporations while 30% of the beneficiaries had children who were recipients of the scholarships provided by the corporations. The scholars received a stipend ranging from PhP 8,000.00 to PhP13,500.00 along with the provision of school uniform and book allowance.

#### On Environment Protection

The vision and mission of the agribusiness firms in Bukidnon depict their serious concern for the preservation of the environment. A corporation specializing in pineapple production (Company A) focuses on specific priority initiatives relating to environment preservation. These include conservation of natural resources, reduction of all forms of waste, and utilization of industrial materials and chemicals that are compliant with international safety standards. The company commits itself to efficient use of resources like fuels, lubricants, water and electricity. It helps regulate the incidence of environmental pollution by controlling production wastage. The wastage management is done by employing the so-called high-filtration extraction system that converts extra fluid into pineapple concentrate and syrup. Government approved fertilizers and chemicals are used, and quality of products are regularly subjected to periodic assessment by designated accrediting authorities like the Good Manufacturing Practices, Hazards Analysis and Critical Control Points, ISO 9001, Kosher and Halal. Medium scale initiatives include the setting up of tree nurseries, tree planting, educational drives on wildlife protection,

environmental management of coastal waters, and protection of water resources. These projects are implemented with the help of company employees who willingly take part in the undertakings.

Another pineapple producing firm (Company B) has a self-imposed social mandate that also focuses on environmental protection and development. The company strongly supports the re-greening program of the local government by keeping a one-hectare reforestation area as well as a bamboo nursery to help moderate pollution. Just like the first company, one of its advocacies is the use of fertilizers and pesticides that are approved by the Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority (FPA) and authorized by the government. This ensures that the chemicals utilized by the firm do not engender adverse effects.

The sugar refinery corporation (Company D) aims to help moderate environmental pollution in the community where it operates. It espouses certain mitigating measures to accomplish this objective. It maintains a 30-hectare tree farm which has been in existence for over 10 years for purposes of watershed and carbon sequestration. It fosters the preservation of the adjacent lake by regulating the use of pesticides to avoid fish kills and hiring fisher folks to serve as river guardians. It acquired high-priced equipment including a gas scrubbing system that controls the emission of the company's boilers, a sedimentation tank, a spray pan that allows water recycling for irrigating the sugar cane plantation, as well as an automatic filter press that reduces production wastage. It also regularly contributes to the preservation of a mountain range nearby allocating as much as 50,000.00 pesos for its maintenance.

The primary enterprise of Company E is the development of a cost-efficient man-made forest to reverse the shrinking woodland in the province. It currently maintains a 5-hectare nursery of fast growing trees, which provides the seedlings for its 39,000-hectare-reforestation project. The company also puts a premium on the preservation of the natural fauna and flora

in the reforested areas. Maintaining balance in the ecosystem is essential since Bukidnon is the haven of endangered wildlife, the most famous of which is the monkey eating eagle.

Company C, on the other hand, has yet to draw up clear-cut measures to promote the advancement of clean technology although it has already delegated specific offices to take charge of its Environmental Management System and Rainforest Alliance. These offices are tasked to engage in projects promoting the preservation of the environment and plans related to this endeavor are in progress.

The interview with the residents provided some evidence indicating that the CSRs had the following priorities: forest protection; wildlife preservation; biodiversity conservation; waste segregation; pollution prevention; waste reduction; dengue control and carbon footprint mitigation through the installation of high-end technology.

#### On Community Development and Health and Wellness Initiatives

Community development is the cornerstone of most agri-business social responsibilities. As a matter of fact, the Barrio Assistance Program was the earliest form of the community development project of Company A. It organized local cooperatives, installed water systems, and provided medical care to the residents with its mobile clinic. Humanitarian and economic assistance has continued since then. Health related courses had been conducted in the 13 municipalities in the two provinces of Northern Mindanao promoting health consciousness among the beneficiaries as well as address problems related to nutrition and food safety. Periodic training is conducted to reinforce natural herbal remedy teachings among barangay health workers. Medical missions promoting natural family planning and healthy family life among the 1,000 families in far-flung localities in target areas were done. A prime barangay recipient of specific projects of the company is the current site for the Integrated Development Program,

part of which is the 120-day feeding project for 80 malnourished children. Seventy-four (74) mothers have been taught responsible parenthood and home management. As of now, the company maintains a Home Care and Preventive Health Program with the German doctors who continue to serve the locals.

To help attain its mission "to become responsible corporate citizens", Company D has launched the Organic Fertilizer Project out of the mud cake (mud press) that it produces as a by-product of sugar. The project is currently managed by the Organic Fertilizer Workers Multi-Purpose Cooperative owned by the employees. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the cooperative's earnings go to the sugar cane planters. Patrons of the said project include a Bukidnon-based reforestation company, the residents of Gawad Kalinga, the indigenous people in the locality as well as the different organic plant growers in places as far as Davao City.

Value-formation activities and organizing cooperatives for the employees were the priority projects of Company B although other programs were held among the residents of the villages where the plantations are located. Preferred beneficiaries were the employees and their families, those that support the communities around the farms, and those that promote the protection of the environment. Social services extended to the residents included the conduct of the sanitation and medical missions, TESDA-supervised training sessions, and feeding program for the children. A cooperative for the production of home-made candies out of pineapple scraps was also organized to help the women contribute to their family's income.

Bridging the gap between the Local Government Unit and the community was of vital importance for Company C. The basic needs of the community people were verified, and findings were communicated to the local officials to be addressed. Among the projects installed in some sites were a multipurpose building for one village and a water system to help the people gain access to potable water.

Just like the other agricultural firms,

Company E also engages in various undertakings to help its host communities. Water systems, roads, and bridges were built by the company benefitting the residents. Livelihood and livestock dispersal projects have been instituted to help alleviate poverty issues in the localities. The company also extended its services to women who have been introduced to the economic value of weaving thus enabling them to become better money earners.

Documentary analysis and interview with the beneficiaries confirmed the corporations' claims. Among the items most often cited by the respondents were the provision of medical-dental services, feeding program, installation of water supply, road rehabilitation and skill development services (e.g., special training for food safety, and fire safety, among others).

#### On Generation of Local Jobs

The presence of the agri-business firms encourages the people to rent out their farm lots resulting in the reduction of the farmers' opportunity to engage in family controlled economic activities. With the firms taking over much of the land area, the small farmers became farm hands earning hourly wages. This could be an advantage since the concerned households are assured of a regular income. However, this could also be restricting because of the apparent loss of direct control over one's property.

The landowners are not the only concern of the firms. Tweeten (n.d.) cited that the forces of technology and markets brought about by agricultural industrialization have also marginalized the ordinary farm workers. This occurrence has critical implications to the earning power of the farm laborers even if this displaced workforce will be eventually absorbed by the agricultural industry. Ait Amara (n.d.) claimed that there must be net growth per person employed in agriculture to have improvements in incomes of agricultural workers.

To address this issue, the companies, who were taken as subjects and respondents to this

study, assumed in part the responsibility "to generate local employment in areas where they operate." They did this by hiring at least one family member from each of the landowners. This arrangement ensured continued earnings for the local dwellers and assured the inflow of income into the community.

Whether or not the farm laborers would end up having a stable net worth is difficult to determine at the moment. During the interview, 75% of the respondents claimed that they had some form of employment because of the presence of the agri-business firms in their locality. Most families had one (1) or two (2) members working with the corporations; while others had as many as four (4) to six (6) members getting hired depending on the job demands. Part-time and seasonal jobs were widespread providing a daily wage ranging from Php 200.00 to Php 700.00. Monthly earnings for regular employment ranged from PhP 8,000.00 to PhP 16,400.00. Although some respondents expressed their desire for higher pay but most of them were appreciative of the job opportunities. Six respondents claimed that they were able to build a house; one was able to buy a motor vehicle; while another one was able to build a convenience store out of their income.

#### Benefits Gained from the CSR Activities

The data generated from the interview that was conducted with the officials of the agribusiness firms revealed some patterns of benefits gained both by the corporations themselves as well as the host communities.

#### Benefits of the Company

Kim (2006) opined that it is quite difficult to measure the exact dollar for dollar impact of most CSR activities because sometimes it takes a long period for a program to have a measurable influence and, therefore, hard to quantify in advance. At other times, the noticeable influence may be a result of many confounding variables. However, he argued

that CSR activities are supposed to make the companies good corporate citizens in the minds of stakeholders. This notion affirms the claim of one corporation that the biggest benefit gained out of the implementation of its corporate social responsibility was the respect they get from the community which would hopefully translate to increased patronage of its products.

A well-crafted and well-advertised CSR induces cash flows from both consumers and investors as exemplified in the case of Company A whose production has expanded from fruits to vegetables, tomato products, and broths. Shergold (2009) declared that CSR has been increasingly recognized as a positive strategy, able to add value to long-term corporate goals by providing a comparative advantage over the market competition. He further claimed that community engagement increases brand identification and improves corporate image. The improved brand reputation is crucial because, as cited by Kim and Van Dam (2003) on account of several studies, "corporate reputation eventually translates to financial value." A policy paper drafted by the ASOCIO (2004) has, in fact, reported that the CSR programs of a company influence 70 percent of all purchasing decisions. This claim implies that although the outcome of the corporate social investment may not be tangible at some point, eventually its implementation will have some commercial value.

A strong CSR can boost the corporate image of a firm (Heyder & Theuvsen, 2009). A company in Bukidnon has received various citations from the different award-giving bodies not only because of its quality products but because of its environmental and social investments. In 2006, it garnered a five-year accreditation with the Philippine Council for non-Government Organization Certification that affirmed the company's "conformance with the highest standards of good governance, transparency and social responsibility." Before that, the company was cited as the Regional Winner of TESDA's Kabalikat Award as well as the Commendable Institution Award by one municipality. The company eventually

expanded its operation to the global market serving not only the Asia Pacific but also Europe, North America, Middle East and Africa. The expansion is a manifestation that social partnership increases the long-term commercial viability of a business enterprise (Shergold, n.d.). The citations and international recognition earned by the company are indications of the prominence it has gained among its clients.

Corporate social responsibility enables the corporations to be proactive in its risk management system. Launching projects relating to environment preservation is invaluable. The use of environmentally friendly equipment, efficient use of natural resources, water recycling, re-greening initiatives, material recycling, sensitive waste disposal systems and absorbing the local labor are mechanisms that save the firms from the threat of legal, economic, environmental and social risks. This notion is implicitly supported by Kytte and Ruggie (2005) who maintained that adopting a CSR program is related to corporate risk management through two means: by providing early detection of the potential risks and by finding effective ways to respond to them in which the key to both is managing stakeholder responsibility. They further stressed that by integrating the business sensing, learning, and innovations gained from the CSR program, companies can better manage their risks and subsequently their economic, social and environmental impacts. The scheme ensures not only the continuing operations of the companies but also their future expansions.

### Benefits of the Community

The apparent benefits gained by the community from the CSR of the business cannot be refuted. Certain advantages were earned by the host communities and the residents. The continuing scholarship programs of the companies helped a significant number of recipients. Some students have been recipients of funding from the companies and this culture to extend assistance to the needy still continues to benefit successful aspirants with some of

them eventually earning high-end employment after graduation.

Company A in this study claims that its scholarship program has benefited over 1,000 recipients with many of them currently participating in various community projects. Prominent names lead the roster of its beneficiaries as featured on the company's website. They include a graduate who later served as the Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority; a congressman representing a city in Northern Mindanao; a chairperson of the Board of Trustees of a prominent university; a medical doctor turned politician; and a nationally acclaimed plant geneticist. The company continues to assist 200 scholars who are currently enrolled in different disciplines.

The other initiatives of Company A have been helpful to many school children. The School Bus Project in one village is thought to have contributed much to the zero-drop rate in the local school. About 242 schools have received over twelve thousand (12,000) reference books courtesy of the company in cooperation with Asia Foundation. With the help of IBM International and Philippine Training Institute APC Center, the firm was able to sponsor a three-day-training on digital technology among the teachers in four public schools to help upgrade instruction at the pre-elementary level.

The CSRs of the corporations promoted environmental stewardship among the employees and also among the surrounding localities. One firm made every effort to acquire the equipment that can help mitigate air and water pollution. Others instituted farming practices that not only aided environmental protection, such as the use of appropriate fertilizer and pesticides but also promoted soil and water conservation. The re-greening, reforestation, and nursery projects indicated the serious commitment of the businesses to address the threat of environmental destruction which is crucial to Bukidnon since the locality is fundamentally agriculture-based. The filtration of the water system and treatment of

product residues (e.g., fluid, juice, mud press, and scraps) done by the companies resulted in the creation of usable by-products with commercial or practical value. These practices promoted the well-being of the people as well as helped alleviate poverty in the locality.

The social investment of the companies benefited the children, the youth, the elderly and the women. The medical missions and feeding programs prevent the recurrence of disease and nutrition-related problems. The preventive health training sessions, which were conducted, enabled barangay health workers and mothers to address domestic emergencies thus promoting health and wellness among the households. Skills development training along with the establishment of cooperatives allowed some of the previously unemployed residents and the out-of-school youth to start some income generating initiatives (e.g., candle making, mushroom growing, mud cake enterprise, candy production, etc.). Values formation initiatives helped develop responsible citizenship among the youths.

The corporate-community partnership forged between the industries, and the consumers resulted in positive yields. The businesses' preference to hire local workers and the establishment of livelihood projects ensured income generation among the farm hands. Water systems, roads, bridges, and other physical facilities have helped improve economic activities in the communities. The companies became a source of humanitarian and financial assistance in various forms forging a stronger relationship between the service provider and the beneficiaries. However, the actual impact of all the previously mentioned projects cannot be determined at the moment because the monitoring and evaluation of the CSRs were not implemented by the companies in the past although plans to address this concern are underway. Evaluation is essential as it tracks the overall progress of the firms' CSR approach. It forms the basis for improvement and modifications, and allows the firm to rethink its current approaches and make an adjustment (Corporate Social

Responsibility: An Implementation Guide for Canadian Business, n.d.).

### Focus Areas for Possible Policy-Generation Based on the Research Findings

The data gathered from the informants showed that while some companies have a well-defined CSR implementation, others are still at the infancy stage. Some of these companies have formed well-established foundations to take charge of their social responsibilities; while others focused on the hiring of CSR officers to address this concern. Some have definite sources from which financing are drawn while others seem to struggle with some forms of deficits. Some successfully implemented their policies and plans; however, monitoring and evaluation appear to be the most recurring problem among most of the firms. Programs and projects have yet to be assessed regarding their long-term impacts to the public.

The previously mentioned observations necessitate the consideration of potential policy enclosures. These policies might focus on: 1) The clarification of the role that corporate CSR has to assume in relation to consumers' and workers' welfare, health and safety, human rights, environmental protection and CSR governance; 2) The strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation systems with reasonable documentation for the corporations to keep track of their progress in their CSR programs; and; 3) The potential establishment of alliances between the agricultural firms and other concerned entities, like the academe, for partnering purposes.

### Conclusions

The data gathered in the course of conducting this study were inconclusive since there were no initiatives on independent monitoring of the CSR activities. However available data showed some evidence signifying that, to some extent, the agribusiness firms in Bukidnon did understand the value of corporate social responsibility. They demonstrate a relatively

strong drive to implement their CSRs in the areas of education, philanthropy, environmental protection, community development, as well as in the generation of local jobs. While some firms have already created strong CSR implementing structures, others are engaged in fledgling projects that have yet to be fully institutionalized. There is, therefore, a need for the firms to review their CSRs so they can continue to strengthen, expand and innovate in their endeavors. Furthermore, there is a need for the corporations to find potential opportunities for partnering with local academic researchers to conduct an independent monitoring on the effectiveness and impacts including the environmental costs and benefits of their CSRs.

### Recommendations

Some gaps were observed in the evaluation and monitoring system of the CSR programs. To some extent, the data indicated that stakeholder engagement was not optimized at the different phases. Based on these observations, the following recommendations have been formulated:

- 1) The agribusiness firms will continue to sustain their CSR programs related to environment protection (including climate change mitigation), education and training, community development, and job generation.
- 2) A CSR framework is crafted and institutionalized by the agribusiness firms ensuring a proactive rather than a reactive response to community needs.
- 3) The firms' linkages with the academe and other CSR beneficiaries need to be strengthened.
- 4) Monitoring and evaluation of the CSR implementation need to be reviewed for possible strengthening to verify their long-term impacts to the public.
- 5) The firms shall consistently strive to review their operations to take stock of the desirable features, as well as the vulnerabilities of their system.
- 6) The corporations shall make full use of

stakeholder engagement in making decisions related to planning, improving and innovating CSRs.

- 7) The firms may consider doing a cost-benefit analysis of their CSR engagements to rationalize the selection of activities

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