

Need-based CSR reaches just 30% of districts, finds survey

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Only around 30 per cent of eligible rural districts in India receive corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds aligned with their development needs, while 23 per cent show a complete mismatch between the funds received and their requirements, and 47 per cent show partial misalignment, a recent survey by the Development Intelligence Unit (DIU) has found.

DIU is a collaborative initiative of Sambodhi Research and Communications and Transform Rural India, a non-governmental organisation. The survey also highlights that low-income or aspirational districts in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and the Northeastern states — regions with the greatest development deficits — remain underfunded in terms of CSR spending.

CSR stays close to home, skips the needy

- **2022-23 CSR spend:** ₹29,989.92 crore, up 12.8% over previous year
- **Rich states hog it:** Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, New Delhi
- **Poor states lose out:** Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Northeast, etc
- **Funds flood education, health, poverty;** skip climate, jobs
- **Most projects:** Top-down, token, impact-light

“Ironically, these six states account for over 60 per cent of India’s aspirational districts (according to NITI Aayog) but receive less than 20 per cent of the total CSR pool,” the survey stated.

It also noted that CSR spending continues to be concentrated in three broad sectors — education, healthcare, and rural poverty alleviation — which together account for over 60 per cent of all CSR funds. Meanwhile, critical sectors such as environmental sustainability and livelihood enhancement receive

inadequate attention.

The survey uses a refined methodology to estimate CSR spending in rural areas, focusing only on districts where more than 50 per cent of the population is rural (according to Census 2011) and on sectors with a clear rural development focus.

The analysis computes average per capita CSR spending and compares it against the Rural Quality of Life (RQoL) Index to evaluate how appropriately funds are allocated.

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