
UNIT 2 CSR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we discussed that the first step in any systematic attempt to promote development through CSR is to prepare useful programmes based on the needs of community. Then the question is how to assess the needs and what are the methods to identify them? In the context of CSR, needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing development needs or gaps between current conditions and desired conditions. The discrepancy between the current condition and desired condition must be measured to appropriately identify the development needs of community.

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the meaning of need, types of needs and needs assessment in the context of CSR
- Explain the purpose and different methods of needs assessment.
- Describe how to conduct a needs assessment for CSR programme planning.

2.2 NEED

Need: Need is a condition marked by lack of something that is considered a requisite for development. In most needs assessment surveys, a need means something that specifically relates to a particular group or community development. Need is different from ‘want’ in that want indicates a desire for something. Fear (1988) advised that asking clients what they want should not be confused with their needs.

When we conduct needs assessment for CSR programme planning, we identify the discrepancy or gap between where the community is now and where the community should be (Witkin and Altschuld, 1995). So ‘need’ refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). Please note that the need is neither the present nor the future state; it is the gap between them. Please read the case study example given in Box 2.1 to understand the gap in a development setting for CSR intervention.

Box 2.1: Case Study : Understanding Gap in Development Scenario for CSR Intervention-Tribals Transform from Forest Gatherers to Entrepreneurs

It was a simple berry that helped tribals in the Bhimashankar sub-belt of Maharashtra near Pune sustain themselves through the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19. The berry, a non-timber forest produce, though has great commercial value as an ingredient in Ayurvedic medicines such as Triphala and in the leather tannery business. The tribals who collected and sold the berries were at the brink of survival during the lockdown. Tata Motors intervened to organise them into a Farmers Producers organisation, comprising 26 Self Help Groups, to not only sustain them through the lockdown but also take a first step towards financial resilience.

Approach: This non-timber forest produce, the Hirda berry grows in abundance in Bhimashankar, where 600 to 700 tonnes of berries is produced every year. Yet, the tribals are not allowed to sell this produce in bulk because of it being designated a common property resource. During the non-farming season they labour to collect the berries to sustain themselves, and then may be forced to make distress sales to feed their families. This compulsion to sell Hirda at abysmally low prices became even more acute during the lockdown. To prevent them from descending into abject poverty and to protect their incomes, Tata Motors encouraged them to create a formal social enterprise, collaborating with Shashwat, a NGO, to help the tribal communities form a Farmers Producer Organisation (FPO). The initiatives were based on Felt Needs and the Support required.

This collective brought together 26 Self-Help Groups and 400 families within it, which was registered with the purpose of engaging in commercial

transactions of Non Timber Forest Produce. The members of the FPO have been trained and also assisted in establishing a revolving fund for their working capital needs.

Impact: The FPO sold 25 tonnes of fruits worth Rs 50 lakhs from till March 2021, yielding an assured income of Rs 5000/- per quarter to each farmer and giving their families the ability to sustain themselves through the lockdown. The FPO created by the farmers has earned a revenue of Rs 4.4 lakhs in the FY 2020-21.

Based on its 'More from Less for More' approach, Tata Motors currently manages 66 per cent of the sales and the beneficiaries are responsible for 34 per cent. Over the next three years or by 2023-24, Tata Motors will taper down its contribution to a mere 7 per cent. In the same period, the project will be scaled up to benefit 600 families by next year and will touch 1000 families by FY 2023-24.

Source: TML's Annual CSR Report (2020-21)

2.2.1 Types of Development Needs

Development needs in the context of CSR can be classified into the following types:

- Felt needs
- Ascribed needs, and
- Normative needs.

1. Felt Needs: Felt needs are those that are self-defined by community members as being important. They are synonymous to issues or changes community deems necessary for development.

Baker (1984) divided felt needs into two categories:

- a) *Expressed Felt Needs:* Needs felt by people and recognized by CSR professionals are called expressed felt needs.
- b) *Unexpressed Felt Needs:* Needs felt by people but unrecognized by CSR professionals are unexpressed felt needs.

Box 2.2: Examples for the Felt Needs

Following are some examples for the felt needs from the Case Study Presented in Box 2.1

- To collectivise the Tribal Communities to start a social enterprise that safeguards their livelihood during the non farming season.
- Capacity Building of the FPO for a social commercial enterprise.
- Resource support for:

- Starting a warehouse for forest produce
- Seed capital for operation cost
- Value addition of raw material for better profit margins
- Market linkage to products.

2. **Ascribed Needs:** Ascribed needs are those defined or identified by outsiders, and they may or may not be present in the community. The CSR departments, funding agencies or development departments, which often do not involve local communities in needs identification and prioritization, may focus on ascribed needs. This is a typical top-down approach of identifying development needs.

3. **Normative Needs:** Normative needs are those that CSR experts or development workers believe people’s needs to be. Often, experts determine local needs on the basis of comparison with national trends, and these are also called as relative needs.

Activity 1: Ask your colleagues what they mean by a ‘need’ in the context of CSR and development? Compare their views with those given in this section and write your observations.

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Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1 Write the difference between ‘need’ and ‘want’ in the context of needs assessment ?

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2 Name the three types of needs.

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3 What is the difference between expressed and unexpressed felt needs

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2.3 CSR NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A ‘needs assessment’ in the context of CSR is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for the CSR programme planning and future action. The needs assessments are conducted to help CSR programme planners identify and select the right development work before doing the CSR work. For your understanding the characteristics of needs assessment are summarised in Box 2.3

Box 2.3: Characteristics of Needs Assessment

1. Needs assessment focus on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be attained, rather than the means (i.e., process).

Example: Market linkage to products (in Box 2.2) is an *outcome*, whereas collectivise the tribal communities to start a social enterprise, capacity building and resource support are the *means* toward that end.

2. Established procedures and methods are used to obtain data for specific needs assessment.

Example: Focus group discussion method is used to assess group / community needs.

3. To facilitate sound decisions by CSR planners, needs assessment sets priorities and suggest criteria for solutions
Example: Macro level priorities at company level and micro level priorities at community level.
4. Needs assessment sets criteria for resource allocation.
Example: Best allocation of financial (money), human (work force) and other resources (facilities) that will improve the efficiency of means (i.e., process).
5. Needs assessment leads to action that will improve outputs and outcomes of CSR programmes, services, and operations, or a combination of these elements.
Example: The TML assessed the needs of Tribal community and transformed them from forest gatherers to entrepreneurs through CSR interventions (Box 2.1)

2.3.1 Why Do A Needs Assessment?

Why do program planners in CSR departments conduct needs assessments? Many times developmental interventions are designed and implemented without seeking inputs from people / community, and so at the end of the intervention, the community ignore the work, which is not much relevant or useful to them. What needs assessment does is identify a gap that is relevant to community felt needs, so that interventions by CSR workers fill the gaps.

Example: Collectivise the tribal communities to start a social enterprise and capacity building of the FPO has ‘relative advantage’ that safeguards their livelihood during the non farming season (Box 2.1).

‘Relative advantage’ is a defining feature behind a successful transformation of forest gatherers to entrepreneurs through CSR interventions in the above example. A thorough needs assessment as detailed in Box 2.2 results in more appropriate intervention with greater benefit to the community. A community needs assessment is an excellent means of involving the community in problem solving and developing local goals (Butler and Howell, 1980). How community needs are assessed in MGNREGA is summarised in Box 2.4 for your understanding and replication in CSR programmes.

Box 2.4: Community Needs Assessment in MGNREGA

After the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, the *Gram Sabha* became one of the most important platforms for strengthening people’s participation in development programmes, decentralised planning and for activating grassroots democracy. The *Gram Sabha* consists of all the adults (above 18 years) of the village which is chaired by Pradhan/Sarpanch/any senior member of the village. It is mandatory to conduct a *Gram Sabha* once every 3 months.

In MGNREGA, community needs are assessed in *Gram Sabha*, which has the following rights and responsibilities under the act:

- It determines the order of priority of works in the meetings of the *Gram Sabha* keeping in view potential of the local area, its needs, local resources.
- Monitor the execution of works within its jurisdiction.
- It is the primary forum for conduct of social audits.
- It provides a platform to all residents to seek and obtain all relevant information from all the implementing agencies including *Gram Panchayat* in relation to MGNREGA works implemented in the locality.

Source : FAQs in MGNAREGA (2014)

2.3.2 Information Collected in Needs Assessment

While planning the CSR needs assessment study, you should know the kind of information required for the planned CSR intervention. Also you should know the purpose / usefulness of information and method to be applied to collect the information. Needs assessment generally aimed at collecting the following information (Suvedi and Kaplowitz, 2016):

1. Historical development information
2. Demographic information
3. Political and legal structure information
4. Economic information
5. Social, cultural and educational institutions information
6. Geography and infrastructure information

For your convenience and easy understanding, the information to be collected in CSR needs assessment, purpose and methods to be used are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Information Collected in CSR Needs Assessment, Purpose and Methods

Information	Purpose	Methods
Historical Development Information (Chronology of events as recalled by local people).	To understand how the community became what it is today and provides insights into the kinds of information to collect.	- Community forum - Time line

Demographic Information (Size of a population and the ages, races, castes and genders of its members).	To understand demographic breakdown of the community and recording the changes over a period of time in such areas as the community's growth patterns and population distribution and migration.	- Secondary sources like census data -Survey
Political and Legal Structure Information (Information on leaders and stakeholders)	It helps you understand the community-based selection of leaders and key players in development.	-Survey -Key informant interviews
Economic Information (Income and its sources)	It helps identify community's economic base and resource distribution.	-Survey -Secondary sources like economic survey data
Social Cultural and Educational Institutions Information	It will help you determine your community's values and social patterns.	-Key informant interviews -Focus group discussion
Geography and Infrastructure Information (Roads, electricity, irrigation systems, total project area, etc)	To learn how the infrastructural development has occurred, how big the focus area is, what type of landscape it has, etc.	-Transect walk

(Please refer Unit 4 on Participatory Methods - for more details on Participatory Methods like Time Line and Transect).

Activity 2: Visit a nearby CSR department or NGO implementing CSR programmes, and ask how they are assessing community needs. Write your observations.

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Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Write the meaning of needs assessment?

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2. Write any three characteristics of needs assessment.

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3. Needs assessment generally aimed at collecting what information?

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2.4 METHODS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Depending on the type of information needed and group orientation, Fear (1988) suggested the following needs assessment methods:

1. Group Dynamics Method
2. Social Networking Method
3. Survey Method
4. Social Indicator Method

Group Dynamics Method: It is designed to facilitate group or team-based consideration of needs.

Example : Focus group discussion.

Social Networking Method: It brings “state of the field” information to the attention of the CSR workers who will assess needs.

Examples : Drawing information from association network and conference presentations.

Survey Method: Mail, telephone and Internet surveys are popular in developed countries. Personal interviews, group-administered and key informant surveys are frequently used in the developing countries.

Social Indicator Method: It refers to the compilation and use of existing information (from secondary sources) to measure the CSR needs. Use of census information, newspaper reports/polls on community issues and data provided by service agencies are examples of social indicators.

In addition to the survey approach described by Fear (1988), Carter and Beaulieu (1992) suggest four other needs assessment techniques:

- Key Informant Approach
- Public Forum Approach
- Nominal Group Process Technique, and
- Delphi Technique.

The key differences among individual and group methods of needs assessment are summarised in Box 2.5.

Box 2.5: Key Differences among Individual and Group Methods of Needs Assessment

Key Informant Interviews

Intensive interviewing with an individual who meets specific selection criteria based on their personal experience. It is a way to obtain in-depth information about feelings and perspectives.

Focus Group Interview

A method of interviewing a carefully selected small group of people, who participate in a pre-determined, focused discussion led by an experienced CSR worker. It is helpful when working to collect specific in-depth thoughts and opinions on a topic.

Community Meetings

Community meetings include gathering information about individual or community needs in a target population or community. They do not provide as in-depth information as a focus group or key informant interview, but is a way to gather information from larger groups.

Survey

A method of needs assessment that provides development workers with specific information that can be used to create a statistical summary of the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and opinions of a target population.

(Source: Conducting a Needs Assessment, University of Minnesota).

In addition to the above methods, participatory needs assessment methods are also popular. Participatory planning of CSR programmes and some of the participatory methods are discussed in the next two units for your understanding.

2.4.1 Selection of Needs Assessment Method

Selection of needs assessment method depends on resources available with CSR organization and purpose of the needs assessment. Some of the factors to be considered while selecting a needs assessment method are summarised below (Suvedi and Kaplowitz, 2016):

1. What is the development philosophy of the CSR organization?
2. How important is involving the community in needs identification?
3. Does the community have any definite preferences?
4. How much time do you have to conduct the needs assessment?
5. How much money is available to complete the task?
6. What is the level of staff expertise to conduct the needs assessment?
7. Are resource persons available to assist in the needs assessment?
8. What is the past experience in conducting needs assessment?
9. What are the corporate considerations and future plans?
10. Are local leaders and decision makers open to conducting a community needs assessment?
11. Do they have commitments to address local needs and problems?

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Name four needs assessment methods

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2. Write any four factors to be considered while selecting a needs assessment method.

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2.5 HOW TO CONDUCT CSR NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

Although there is a range of ways to go about doing needs assessment, following three-phase approach which progresses through a defined series of phases suggested by Witkin and Altschuld (1995) is useful and appropriate for development workers (Fig. 2.1).

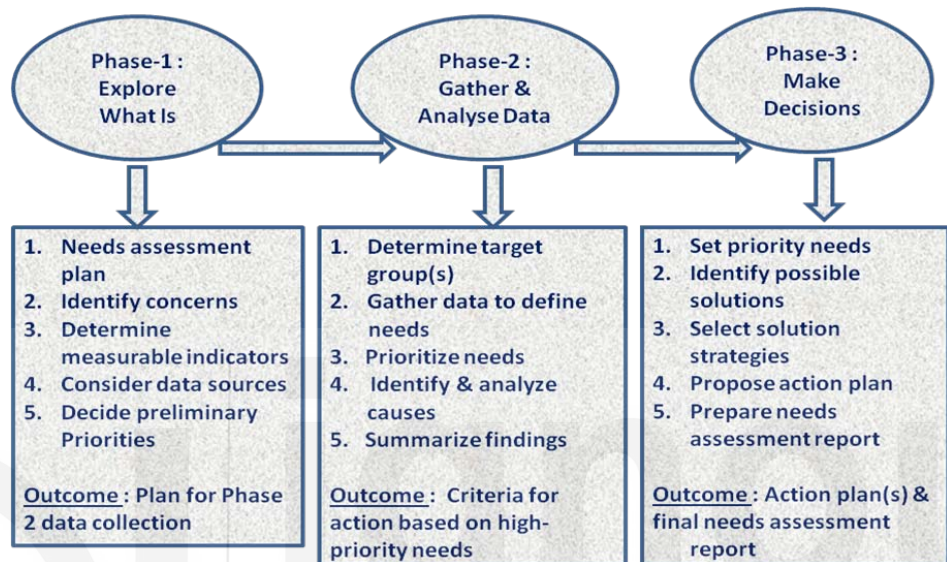


Fig.2.1. Three Phases of Needs Assessment

Let us discuss briefly the steps under these three phases.

2.5.1 Phase 1 - Explore What Is ?

Step 1 - Needs Assessment Plan : The first step in needs assessment is to determine time frame and form a team representing individuals who are critical to conduct the needs assessment study and follow-up the findings.

Step 2 - Identify Concerns: Identify major goals / outcomes and list the important concerns under each goal.

Step 3 - Determine Measurable Indicators: Check the indicators that could verify that a developmental problem / issue exist.

Step 4 - Consider Data Sources: Check from primary and secondary data sources for availability of information to clearly define the need(s).

Step 5 - Decide Preliminary Priorities: In the step 2, major goals and important concerns under each goal are identified. Now to address the problem, identify priorities of each concern. The identified priorities help as focal points in collecting needs assessment data.

The overall purpose and outcome of Phase-1 is summarised in Box 2.6 for your easy understanding.

Box 2.6. Purpose of Phase – I : Explore What Is

1. To investigate what is already known about the needs of the target group.
2. To determine the focus and scope of the CSR needs assessment.
3. To gain commitment for all stages of the assessment, including implementation of the findings.

The overall outcome of Phase 1 is a 'Plan for Phase 2 data collection'

Activity 3 on 'Exploring What Is': Survey a community in your nearby locality and identify any developmental gap or need. Write briefly about goal, concern, indicators and sources of data to address the need.

a) Goal:

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b) Concern:

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c) Indicators:

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d) Sources of Data:

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2.5.2 Phase 2 – Gather and Analyse Data

Step1-Determine Target Group(s): Under this step you need to determine the scope of needs assessment and target group(s) for the CSR intervention.

Step 2-Gather Data to Define Needs: Spell out a desired outcome and collect data to determine the current state of the target group in relation to the desired outcome. Identify the gap and state the needs to fill the gap.

Step 3-Prioritise Needs: With the limited resources it may not be possible to address all the concerns identified in the needs assessment. Therefore we need to prioritise the needs based on two major criterion - importance and feasibility (Sork, 1979):

a) Importance: The importance of a need can be determined by the following:

- **Mandate** - Is the need identified relevant to CSR mandate of your organisation?
- **Urgency** - Does the need identified call for immediate CSR intervention?
- **Gap** - Is the discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be) large or small? Larger the gap, more important is the need for CSR.
- **Number of Beneficiaries:** How many people have identified the need? Utilisation of CSR intervention by more people deserves priority.

b) Feasibility: The feasibility of a need can be determined by the following factors (Oakley and Garforth, 1997):

- **Acceptability** – Community willingness to reach desired state from the current state.
- **Resources** - Time, money, staff and leadership expertise required to meet the need.
- **Change Forces** – Community forces working for and against the proposed developmental intervention. Greater the community support, greater the feasibility.
- **Community Perception** - How do community and other stakeholders view the possibility of success of developmental intervention?

Step 4- Identify and Analyse Causes: Identify the specific causes of high priority needs with the question why does this need persist?

Step 5 - Summarise Findings: Summarise major causes under each need and share the findings with key stakeholders.

The overall purpose and outcome of Phase-2 is summarised in Box 2.7 for your easy understanding.

Box 2.7: Purpose of Phase-2 : Gather and Analyse Data

- To compare the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be).
- To determine the magnitude of the needs and their causes.

The overall outcome from phase 2 is a 'set of tentative priority needs and causes'.

Activity 4 on 'Identifying & Analyzing Causes': In the activity 3, you have identified a need. Read the footnote directions, identify and analyse causes related to the need.

Need	Causes	Consequences	Difficulty to correct (Low /Medium/ High)	Criticality (1,2,3,4,5)

Footnote :

Column 1: Write the need previously identified in activity 3 or any needs assessment.

Column 2: List all the causes of need. A given need may have more than one cause.

Column 3: List consequences if the cause is not removed and the need is not meet. There may be more than one consequence for each need.

Column 4: Enter a rating (low, medium, high) of the difficulty of correcting the problem once it has occurred.

Column 5: Enter a rating, on a scale of 1 to 5, of the degree of criticality of the need if it is not met, with 5 being the most critical.

Source: Adapted from Witkin and Altschuld. (1995).

2.5.3 Phase 3 – Make Decisions

Step 1- Set Priority Needs: It is always advisable to set priorities in two stages:

- a) Broad areas, such as goals, concerns (needs) or target groups; and

b) Critical needs within each area.

In Phase 2, Step 3, we discussed that priorities are to be set based on importance and feasibility. From the Figure 2.2, we can conclude that needs with high importance and high feasibility should be given top priority for CSR intervention, while low important and low feasible needs are to be discarded. There is scope for CSR project proposals to address the needs with high importance and low feasibility. We may take up these needs as and when the feasibility factors are favourable. Sometimes needs with low importance are adopted due to appeasement reasons as the feasibility is high.

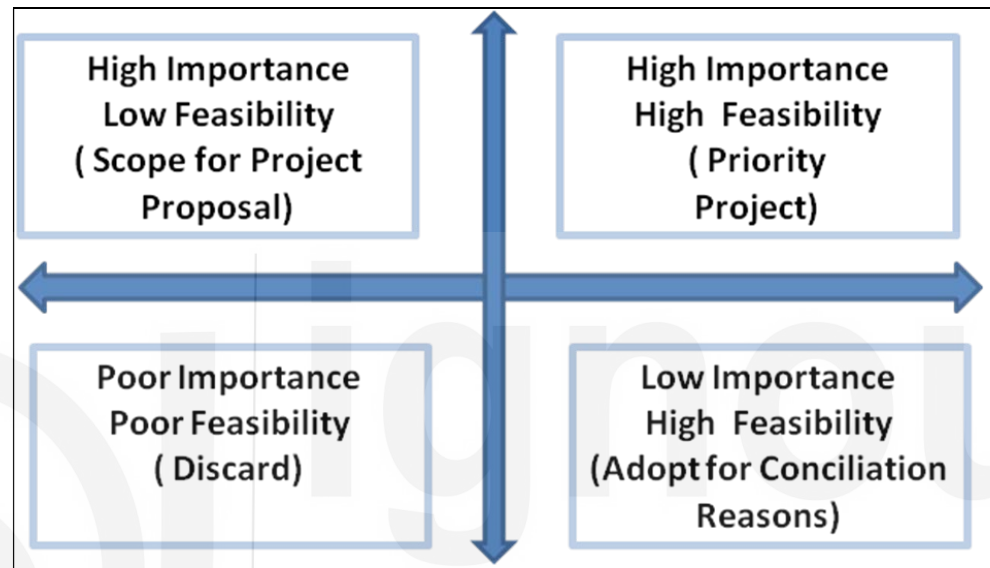


Fig.2.2. Prioritisation of Needs

(Source : Sork, 1979; Suvedi and Kaplowitz, 2016)

Step 2- Identify Possible Solutions: To address the prioritised needs, generate and examine potential solutions. Review of previous CSR evaluation reports helps in understanding merits and demerits of each alternative solution. Consider the available resources and feasibility while judging the alternative solutions.

Step 3- Select Solution Strategies: Appraise each solution separately against the following criterion.

- Technical
- Institutional
- Organizational
- Managerial
- Social
- Commercial
- Financial
- Sustainability

On the basis of the appraisal information, select one or more solutions for each need area.

Step 4- Propose Action Plan: The CSR action plan to implement solution should include descriptions of the solutions, rationale, proposed timelines, and resource requirements.

Step 5- Prepare Needs Assessment Report: Based on the findings of the study, prepare a CSR needs assessment report to be submitted to the decision makers. The needs assessment report should include contents on background, description of the needs assessment process, key findings, priority needs with criteria used to determine such priorities, solution and alternative solutions, recommendations, action plans with estimated resource requirements.

The overall purpose and outcome of Phase-3 is summarised in Box 2.8 for your easy understanding.

Box 2.8: Purpose of Phase – 3 : Make Decisions

- 1) To make plans to use the needs assessment findings in a practical way.
- 2) To answer important questions:
 - What needs are the most critical?
 - What are possible solutions?
 - Which solutions are best?

The overall outcome of Phase 3 is 'an action plan and final CSR needs assessment report'

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1. Write the three phases and expected outcome from each phase in CSR needs assessment

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2. Name the two major criteria to be considered while prioritising needs.

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3. What are the major contents to be included in any needs assessment report?

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2.6 LET US SUM UP

We started this unit with a question - how to assess people's needs and what are the methods to identify them? Need refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). CSR development needs can be classified into felt needs, ascribed needs and normative needs. A 'needs assessment' is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for CSR intervention / action. The procedures include individual and group methods with both quantitative and qualitative approaches as per requirement of needs assessment. A three-phase approach on needs assessment which progresses through a defined series of phases viz., explore what is, gather and analyse data and make decisions was discussed with relevant examples.

2.7 KEYWORDS

Need : It refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be).

Expressed Felt Needs: Needs felt by people and recognized by development workers.

Unexpressed Felt Needs: Needs felt by people but unrecognized by development workers.

Ascribed Needs: Needs defined or identified by outsiders, and they may or may not be present in the community.

Normative Needs: Needs that experts or development workers believe people's needs to be.

Needs Assessment: It is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action.

Focus Group Interview: A method of interviewing a carefully selected small group of people, who participate in a pre-determined, focused discussion led by an experienced development worker.

Key Informant Interviews: Intensive interviewing with an individual who meets specific selection criteria based on their personal experience to obtain in-depth information about feelings and perspectives.

Community Meetings: Community meetings include gathering information about individual or community needs in a target population or community.

Survey: A method of needs assessment that provides development workers with specific information that can be used to create a statistical summary of the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and opinions of a target population

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2.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Need refers to the gap or discrepancy between a present state (what is) and a desired state (what should be). Need is different from 'want' in that want indicates a desire for something.
2. Felt needs, Ascribed needs, and Normative needs.
3. Expressed felt needs are felt by people and recognized by CSR workers, whereas unexpressed felt needs are the needs felt by people but unrecognized by CSR workers.

Check Your Progress 2

1. A 'needs assessment' is a systematic set of procedures that are used to determine needs, examine their nature and causes, and set priorities for future action.
2. Needs assessment focus on the ends (i.e., outcomes) to be attained, rather than the means (i.e., process); Established procedures and methods are used to obtain data for specific needs assessment, and; To facilitate sound decisions by development planners, needs assessment sets priorities and suggest criteria for solutions.
3. Needs assessment generally aimed at collecting historical, demographic, political and legal, economic, socio-cultural-educational and geographical information related to proposed developmental intervention.

Check Your Progress 3

1. The four needs assessment methods are: group dynamics methods, social networking method, survey method and social indicator method.
2. Factors to be considered while selecting a needs assessment method include: development philosophy of organization; involving the community in needs identification; community preferences; time, money and other resources available etc.

Check Your Progress 4

1. The three phases and their expected outcome in needs assessment are :
 - Phase 1 - Explore What Is : The overall outcome of Phase 1 is a 'Plan for Phase 2 data collection'
 - Phase 2 – Gather and Analyse Data: The overall outcome from phase 2 is a 'set of tentative priority needs and causes'
 - Phase 3 – Make Decisions : The overall outcome of Phase 3 is 'an action plan and final needs assessment report'
2. Importance and feasibility are the two major criteria to be considered while prioritising the needs.
3. The major contents to be included in any needs assessment report include background, description of the needs assessment process, key findings, priority needs with criteria used to determine such priorities, solution and alternative solutions, recommendations, action plans with estimated resource requirements.



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