How Clinton Global Initiative has impacted India and Sri Lanka

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The novel coronavirus appears to have taken a toll on India and its southern neighbour, Sri Lanka. As many as 1,400 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported so far in India and Sri Lanka, out of which more than 40 people have succumbed to the disease. At the same time Indian and Sri Lankan authorities are hard at work to stabilise the situation.

In this scenario, the need of the hour is to ensure the well-being of citizens. Even small efforts can make a big difference right now. As we look back at the devastation caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, we remember the terrible death and destruction. Post this, there were rehabilitation and recovery efforts with great support and assistance from the international community.

In 2005 as a measure of consolidating the tsunami recovery efforts, former US President Bill Clinton as the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, visited the tsunami-affected nations in Asia to review the post tsunami rebuilding progress. Three years later, on 2 December 2008, at the opening of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Asia meeting, Clinton emphasised the unique opportunity to work together in innovative and effective ways to achieve positive changes during a time of great uncertainty for the world.

In furtherance of his message, the Clinton Global Initiative took positive measures to remedy the post tsunami damage in both India and Sri Lanka. Moreover, education, energy, climate change and public health are the four main focus areas of CGI.

CGI in India

In India, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), a separate, affiliated entity, began working on paediatric HIV/AIDS cases in Asia. With the help of UNITAID and UNICEF, CHAI popularized a portable machine – point-of-care-diagnostic tools (POC) – that can be used anywhere to immediately provide a CD4 count, cutting the time between testing and beginning antiviral therapy in half.

CGI also aligned with Clean India Campaign to construct over 2500 toilets and while also advocating for menstrual health hygiene. CGI’s 2016 public-private partnerships to India has been one of the key actors in spurring social change in India. Furthermore, through the Keystone Human Services a CGI was able to support
the rights of people with disabilities by grooming them for leadership opportunities. Other than health CGI India also focused on various community based trainings and skills development programmes.

In 2008 The Vital Voices Global Partnership sponsored by the Standard Chartered Bank empowered women with key educational opportunities and financial skills training that will enhance their participation capacities in the society. Through annual training summits CGI helped the women to grow the capacities of the Small and Medium (SME) businesses.

In partnership with SAGE Foundation CGI ensured a self-sustaining village model in Maharashtra, helping to improve the lives of 30,000 people. The CGI-SAGE partnership project ensured disadvantaged communities have access to relevant educational and training opportunities.

It is worthwhile mentioning that the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U), the higher education program of the Foundation, activated the next generation round the year programmes through supporting students who are committed to take action and address the world’s most pressing challenges.

CGI in Sri Lanka

Even in Sri Lanka, CGI’s efforts have been immaculate. After the tsunami of 2004, the CGI and Rockwool Foundation created several job opportunities for women, offering vocational training programs such as sewing, computer skills, and English.

During the internal conflict phase in Sri Lanka, the Clinton Foundation implemented a program to improve education, vocational training and psychosocial services. During the post-conflict period, the foundation has made numerous efforts to extend support to Sri Lanka in preventing elephant poaching and ivory trafficking.

In light of the recent global pandemic, the CGI along with the World Health Organization and the Gates Foundation is trying to increase access to oxygen in hospitals for treating victims of COVID-19. In South Asia too, we need considerable funding for treatment and supplies in hospitals and the role of Non-Governmental Organisations and the private sector is a key to tackling scarcity of essential supplies.

The Clinton Global Foundation has constantly supported many healthcare initiatives in India and Sri Lanka and with the current COVID-19 situation persisting, CGI can do a commendable job in helping combat this deadly disease.

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