

Helping hand of a medicine man

Dr Reddy's Obsession To Give Back To Society Has Helped 1.5L Youth Shape Their Lives

JUST WHAT CONSTITUTES THE idea of a Corporate Citizen? Is it a company's CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives or does it entail an ethical way of doing business?

The ET jury deliberated this category with a surgical knife, dissecting philanthropy and charity, and corporate citizenship. Eventually, the jury opted to bet on a corporate that has a focus on CSR as well as a core business philosophy which contributes to society at large. And the honour went to Dr Reddy's Foundation (DRF), the CSR arm of Dr Reddy's Labs.

Cut to a few months back. A dozen youngsters who had made it in life broke down when they came face-to-face with Dr K Anji Reddy, chairman of both DRF and DRL. "Each one of them broke down when they recounted their

past," says Dr Reddy. They were the alumni of DRFs Livelihoods Advancement Business School (LABS), nurtured by a broad-hearted corporate.

DRF was set up in 1996 to train the economically-disadvantaged youth. LABS has 160 centres which will be scaled up to 250 by the end of this fiscal. The programme comprises three months each of classroom training and on-the-job apprenticeship. The mission has covered over 1.5 lakh youth of which more than half are girls. The target is to cover a million by 2010.

LABS has also worked in drought and extremism-prone areas and with marginal communities like sex workers, street kids, pavement dwellers, ragpickers, resettlement colonies, peripheral suburbs and downsized industry workers. It is also close to completing work in

Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.

The money spent on LABS may be modest. But the results have been striking, driving stakeholder partnerships with companies, government bodies, agencies, NGOs and civil society. Companies have chipped in to design the syllabi, hire LABS trainees or fund the programme.

More domains have been added over the past decade. "We are scanning the village economy to identify areas in which the youth can be hand-held to start their own enterprises. Pilots have been initiated in rural areas in Hyderabad and Pune. We are also focusing on deploying technology to assess real-time results at these centres," says DRF CEO Jitendra Kalra.

The foundation's initiatives include Grameen Labs, in partnership with the

ministry of rural development. It is also part of QUEST — an alliance that works towards effective use of education technology for the underprivileged in India.

Besides, DRF has tied up with construction companies to set up transit schools for children of migrant labour in Hyderabad as part of its other major initiative called School Community Partnership in Education. DRF lays itself open to an unbiased social audit as well as checks by external agencies.

The jury also praised ITC and Ambuja. However, DRF got the nod. In a sense, Dr Reddy's determination and focus were what facilitated the pursuit of his dreams. He reckons that DRF has been a concrete step towards realisation of his obsession to "give back" to society. He calls it an innovation, on the same lines as drug discovery.



**CORPORATE CITIZEN
DR REDDY'S FOUNDATION**

**THE AWARD SEEKS TO
honour the contribution to
the public good through
commitment to critical
social causes that influence
the lives and livelihood of
thousands of needy Indians**