

Gains and Challenges in Implementing a Principles-based Inclusive and Business Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility in the Philippines¹

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Abstract

This study focuses on a recent and pioneering initiative called Principles-based Inclusive Business Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility (PBIBS CSR), a pilot program supported by the Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) and implemented by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) and the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) from 2016-2019. The aim of the project was to determine the feasibility of a novel form of CSR anchored on three “ideals,” e.g., adherence to national laws and international standards (principles-based), co-produced and implemented by labor and management (inclusive); and contributing to the continuing viability of enterprises

1 This article is based on the evaluation report conducted by the authors on the PBIBS CSR project entitled “Promotion of Principles-based, Inclusive and Sustainable CSR Approach in the Philippines (2016-2021)” implemented by DTDA, ECOP and FFW.

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(business sustainable). As a pioneering approach in the world of CSR, the PBIBS CSR encountered many challenges. The major hurdles were the reluctance of stakeholders to commit to become part of the pilot enterprises; the uneven and complex contexts of the implementing pilot enterprises; gender-blindness in CSR programs; and the prioritization and institutionalization of CSR programs. Among the vital recommendations in the recently concluded evaluation process were: to institutionalize PBIBS CSR programs (i.e., integrate in company policies for day-to-day implementation) to ensure its space in the priorities of enterprises; synchronize PBIBS CSR programs within the social dialogue mechanisms; and include gender equality issues and concerns in the implementation of PBIBS CSR programs and activities.

Introduction

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained attention in research (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018; Jackson et al., 2018). CSR is defined as corporate actions oriented towards the welfare of stakeholders and driven by instrumental, relational or ethical concerns (Aguilera et al., 2007). According to Jackson et al. (2018) the study of CSR is concerned with both the claims about responsibility that corporations make of themselves, as well as the demands articulated by stakeholders in relation to social, environmental and other responsibilities.

The interest in CSR has been partly brought about by globalization, the rise in the number of transnational corporations (TNC), and widespread pressure from groups of social actors to ensure ethical practices by TNCs and their subcontractors in developing countries. In the 1990s, CSR instruments such as company codes of conduct and independent audits were used by firms as means for self-regulation and following high-profile cases of labor violations, such as the cases of Nike and Levi's. In recent years, international codes of conduct such as the UN Global Compact Initiative have been developed that included provisions on labor rights and standards. Clearly, workers' welfare issues are central concerns within CSR.

Through time, many CSR programs have become multi-faceted and integrated in multi-level corporate action agenda that tackle concerns ranging from environmental, medical, and even anti-corruption at the global, regional and national levels. Some CSR programs can also help improve conditions of work and labor rights adherence by companies. However, there is a difference between CSR programs focused on monitoring labor standards and CSR programs monitoring labor rights (Anner, 2012, p. 610). On the one hand, CSR programs monitoring labor standards refer to compliance on working hours, minimum wages, occupational safety, and so on. On the other hand, CSR programs focused on monitoring rights refer to ensuring compliance on freedom of association, collective bargaining and action, etc. Between these two foci, labor rights monitoring contributes more to social upgrading and to sustained improvements in workers' lives (Barrientos et. al., 2011).

However, while many CSRs include improving labor standards and workers' welfare in their agenda, trade unions are not typically involved in its design and governance (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018; Harvey et al., 2017; Jackson et al., 2018). By convention, CSR is managerialist in orientation and falls under the financial, planning, and operational control of management (Harvey et al., 2017). Given this, many unions tend to be skeptical of CSR motivations and outcomes, including self-regulatory measures, e.g. corporate codes of conduct, which have been found to have marginally improved working conditions in the studied firms (Locke & Brause, 2007). Importantly, CSR has been perceived as a threat to unions considering its conventional management-centric approach and far-reaching leeway that allows management to make decisions for concerns that are traditionally the purview of unions (Preuss et al., 2015; Preuss et al., 2006). These can, in turn, have an impact on union strength (Fox, 2004; Hui et al., 2012). Studies have elaborated on these sentiments and reservations of unions on CSR (Hui et al., 2012), but in recent years alternative views have also emerged.

According to Donaghey & Reinecke (2018), unions can capitalize on the goal and intent of CSR in ways that can benefit workers and improve their welfare. While CSR may threaten industrial democracy which places "unions at the center of the design and implementation of initiatives to improve conditions," CSR can also serve as "leverage points for unions and labor rights NGOs to develop improvements in labor conditions in the context of a lack of national institutions"

(Donaghey & Reinecke 2018, p.32). In the case of global supply chains, CSR has been used as a market-pressure tool directed at product brands; at the same time external pressure can bring more immediate relief to pressing issues. A key concern is whether and how this can be applied in small and medium firms in developing countries.

Developing country perspectives have been relatively absent in the CSR literature (Fox, 2004). CSR as a field of study has been dominated by perspectives and practices of countries in the North, but there are calls for more diverse research. There are important differences in the concept and practice of CSR in the North and in the South (Chapple & Moon, 2005) and according to Prieto-Carrón et al., (2006) the current attention of large firms to CSR needs to be balanced by more research that explore its local expressions in developing countries.

This study aims to contribute to this research gap by presenting the experiences of stakeholders in a pioneering initiative called Principles-based Inclusive Business Sustainable CSR, a pilot program supported by the DTDA and implemented by ECOP and FFW from 2016-2019. The aim of the project was to determine the feasibility of a novel form of CSR anchored on three “ideals”, e.g., adherence to national laws and international standards (principles-based), co-produced by labor and management (inclusive) and contributing to the continuing viability of enterprises (business sustainable).

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first initiative of its kind in the Philippines and Asia and the experiences from the PBIBS CSR program can contribute to literature on CSR in the Philippines and the region. This paper sets out to answer the following questions: what projects were implemented and their driving factors at the enterprise level; the implementation challenges; and the projects’ impact on industrial democracy as perceived by unions.

Data for the study were gathered through key informant interviews and secondary data analysis conducted from November 2020 to February 2021 as part of the end-of-project evaluation of PBIBS CSR by the researchers of this paper. Based on empirical findings and analysis of the PBIBS CSR project in the Philippines, this paper argues the following:

- CSR programs exhibit effectivity when they involve multi-stakeholders in conception and implementation, transparency in processes and promotes shared responsibility;
- CSR programs need to be institutionalized within the working environment to achieve sustainability; and
- CSR programs complement and strengthen other social dialogue mechanisms towards compliance of labor standards/policies and consequently, contribute to business sustainability.

A key concern is if an open and pluralistic approach to recognize and accommodate different views was taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of CSR⁴ and the impact of CSR initiatives on union strength and sustained implementation of labor standards by companies (Jackson et al., 2018).

The principles-based, inclusive and sustainable CSR and industrial democracy in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the concept of CSR has been highly contested. CSR is largely viewed as solely the purview of the company management. This makes many trade unions, and also some companies skeptical of CSR. Some employers maintain that CSR programs are implemented by management for immediate communities and environment as part of their social responsibility. Meanwhile, trade unions prioritize effective social dialogue through collective negotiations and grievance mechanisms. Proponents assert that CSR contributes to strengthening compliance to labor standards especially along supply chains. Critics on the other hand, argue that CSR programs smoothen public image and reputation of corporations “as part of a larger effort to weaken state regulation and displace labor unions” (Anner, 2012, p.610). The debate on the issue of CSR in the Philippines and abroad continues. Nevertheless, CSR is both a program of action and a process that labor market institutions, scholars and policy-makers cannot ignore, because it has implications to labor, business and society.

⁴ Donaghey & Reinecke (2018) refer to co-determination, whereas Jackson et al. (2018) describe this as stakeholders taking ‘pluralistic view’

Activities that directly relate to labor issues tend to be excluded from the 'official' CSR events reported by companies in the Philippines (Chapple & Moon, 2005). Chapple and Moon compared CSR activities in seven Asian countries as reported by the top 50 companies and found three different 'waves' of CSR that companies engage in: community-involvement, socially responsible production processes, and socially responsible employee relations. Community involvement was the most common among all seven countries, while philanthropy was the preferred modality for delivering CSR. The study found that Philippine companies mostly engage in community involvement (71%), followed by socially responsible production processes (29%), but 'give little attention' to socially responsible employee relations (0%) which were reported in countries studied as concerns related to employee welfare (Chapple & Moon 2005).

The normative approach to CSR in the Philippines as in many other countries is a philanthropic or charitable program that is management-led (Asian Institute of Management, 2005). Still, while many initiatives are management-led, multi-stakeholder-initiated programs are also possible (Tanimoto, 2019). An alternative conception and program of action is offered under the Principles-based, Inclusive and Business Sustainable Corporate Social Responsibility approach.

How did the PBIBS CSR approach come about?

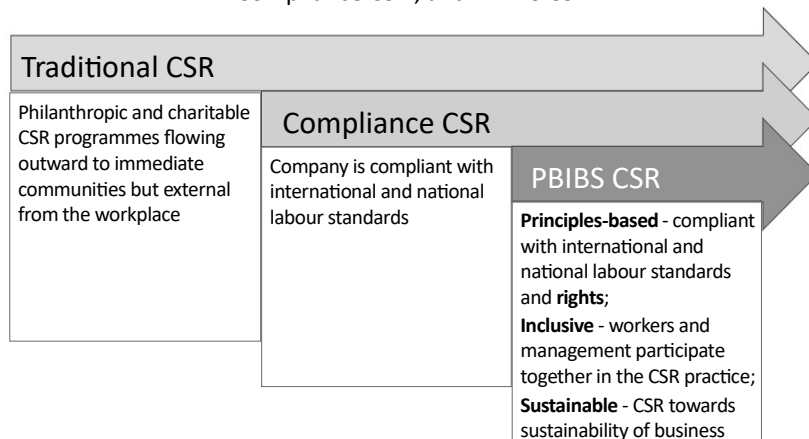
The idea of a principles-based, inclusive and sustainable CSR emerged in 2014 following the results of a fact-finding mission conducted by the DTDA⁵ on CSR programs in Philippine companies. The mission involved external experts from the Danish CO-Industry who found low compliance to labor laws in the country and workers struggling to unionize and conclude collective bargaining agreements (CBA), both of which can constrain the ability of workers and unions to push for improvements in working conditions and labor rights compliance. The mission observed that company CSR practices (1) lack focus on labor rights and working conditions; (2) provide limited employee involvement in the development and monitoring of programs and strategies; and that (3) labor market actors could benefit from general training and awareness-raising on CSR and CSR instruments. The DTDA

⁵ Formerly LO/FTF Council

fact-finding mission recommended the establishment of enterprise level Works Councils which can serve as platforms/forums to ensure the involvement of workers in the development of CSR strategies and programs and raise awareness about CSR instruments. Subsequently, the concept of a principles-based, inclusive and business sustainable CSR was developed by DTDA in collaboration with the Philippine Employers-Labor Social Partnership Inc. and Danish trade unions.

As shown in Figure 1, the PBIBS CSR concept and practice has the following characteristics: (a) it is beyond the traditional 'philanthropic CSR' because it promotes altruism as a practice that begins at home (company); (b) it is principles-based, conscious of and compliant with international and national labor standards and rights; (c) it is inclusive, since union and management are involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CSR activities; and (d) it is sustainable, it supports business sustainability. The Principles-based element anchors PBIBS CSR to the highest standards of ethical corporate practice.

Figure 1: Conceptual differentiation of the 'traditional CSR', 'Compliance CSR', and 'PBIBS CSR'



The PBIBS CSR program at the workplace was implemented following a two-pronged 'sub-component' approach: the National-level component or Component 1, implemented by ECOP, and the Enterprise-level component or Component 2, implemented by FFW. However, policy decisions, directions and implementation of the

activities were undertaken under a joint management committee. Component 1 focused on the national workshops, conferences and dialogues between labor-management on the issues of PBIBS CSR, while Component 2 focused on the activities of PBIBS CSR at the workplace level. The enterprise-level component is responsible for 'birthing' CSR activities on the ground using technologies designed by project proponents, informed by the experiences of pilot enterprises, and using an iterative process in which the outputs were documented and published as part of project materials. This paper focuses on the enterprise-level component of the project.

Brief Background on Pilot Enterprises

The pilot enterprises serve as implementers of the PBIBS CSR approach. The project aimed at enlisting 10 unionized firms. Non-unionized firms can also join if they have a functioning labor-management committee in which workers' representatives were elected by constituents. In addition, labor and management stakeholders should be willing to participate actively and equally in all activities including meetings, workshops and seminars. The project refers to this as 'bipartite participation'.

The pilot firms had to establish a Works Council or a dedicated committee which will serve as venue for CSR discussions and implement activities determined and designed by labor and management stakeholders. The pilot firms took part in seminars, training and workshops and in one-on-one consultations with ECOP and FFW before and during the course of the project.

In total, six unionized establishments joined as pilot firms: Continental Temic Automotive, II-VI Performance Metals, Allied Metals, Delfi Foods, Interphil Laboratories and Globe Telecom. A seventh pilot enterprise, Vishay Semiconductors (number 6 in Table 1) chose to discontinue its participation in the project.

Table 1: Pilot enterprises of the project

Company name	Year joined	Industry	Implementation results
1. Continental Temic Automotive	2016	Automotive Parts	Started CSR and social dialogue mechanisms after hostile labor-management relations. Project provided support. Granted an award as a “Union Like No Other” for its CSR project of supporting cancer patients in the community. The PH subsidiary of the German-based company plans to close in 2022 as part of corporate mainstreaming of operations in Asia.
2. II-VI Performance	2017	Metal	CBA includes provisions on CSR. CSR projects on environment, health and safety have been continuing, but now there is more worker involvement. Dialogue with management more open, labor-management relations also improved.
3. Allied Metals	2017	Metal	Started CSR and social dialogue mechanisms (i.e., Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Committee and broadened scope of Labor Management Committee (LMC) after difficult labor-management relations through the project.
4. Delfi Foods	2017	Foods	OSH committee has been inactive for several years. Participation in the project strengthened OSH monitoring and the number of first-aiders in the company was sufficiently increased.
5. Interphil Laboratories	2017	Pharmaceuticals	CSR and social dialogue structures (i.e., LMC) already existing, the project strengthened the structures.
6. Vishay Semiconductors*	2017	Electronics	Left the project mid-2019; CSR and social dialogue structures (i.e., LMC) already existing. The project strengthened the structures.
7. Globe Telecom	2018	Tele-communications	CSR and social dialogue structures (i.e., LMC) already exist. The project strengthened the structures.

*opted out of the project in 2019

The role of ECOP and FFW

The ECOP and the FFW are established labor market institutions, historically integral to the development of industrial relations in the Philippines. The FFW is considered one of the oldest social movements in post-colonial Philippines, having been established in 1950 (Federation of Free Workers, 2010). Established as a national union, the present FFW has chapters and affiliated labor federations in various industries in the formal economic sectors (i.e., metal, garments, services, etc.) and informal sectors (i.e., domestic workers, transport, construction, etc.). Twenty-five years later, in 1975, ECOP was formed in response to the need for a united employers' representation in the development of industrial relations during the Marcos period. ECOP has become the main representative of employers in the tripartite mechanisms under the Philippine industrial relations. The ECOP also represents Philippine industrialists and employers under the tripartite framework of the International Labor Organization, a United Nations special body, where the State, labor and employers from member-countries are the main constituents. Since then, the FFW and ECOP have worked historically in national and international tripartite mechanisms and dialogues. The historical working relations of ECOP and FFW, sometimes adversaries under Philippine industrial relations, became the foundation for their cooperation under the PBIBS CSR project.

The ECOP's and FFW's collaboration under the PBIBS CSR approach is ground-breaking and grounded in their mutual respect and recognition for each other and workers' issues. The PBIBS CSR approach likewise allows the two parties to carry their respective constituents' interests in a cooperative and solidaristic manner. The two organizations' commitment or 'buy-in' towards the implementation of the PBIBS CSR project in the selected pilot industries was crucial in the success of the project. The four-year collaboration using the PBIBS CSR approach likewise witnessed the tangible production of CSR videos, brochures, posters and peripherals, a risk assessment tool for employers, a PBIBS CSR training package, operational manual of collaboration committees and the PBIBS CSR Guide.

The ECOP and FFW organized seminars, trainings, workshops and consultations, and on the ground, monitored the progress and challenges that pilot firms faced, discussed these at the

Joint Management Implementation Committee, suggested recommendations, and ensured the continuity of the dialogue process at the enterprise level. The ECOP and FFW took leading roles in major components of the project, but each assisted their counterpart organization in designing and implementing their activities. Similar to how the project instituted bipartite participation at pilot firms, the project proponents also jointly participated in events, except perhaps, consultation meetings of union or management where limited attendance was requested by parties.

The ECOP and FFW leveraged on their role as national organizations of employers and workers to promote PBIBS CSR at the Asian regional level and nationally. ECOP took the leading role in organizing the project's Regional CSR Conference in Manila which drew some 79 participants from the CSR ASEAN Network, global labor federations, national trade union leaders, labor groups, employers and employers' organizations such as the Philippine Exporters Confederation. Meanwhile, the FFW was instrumental in bringing PBIBS CSR in discussions with union leaders at the national level and to its affiliate unions in the regions. With the assistance of the project, the FFW was also able to leverage a stronger Philippine trade union-ECOP network and leaders' forum to issue joint position papers on COVID-19 response and other concerns.

Study Findings

Implementation hurdles

The project proponents faced many challenges in implementing the program particularly at the enterprise level. The most significant difficulty was securing the "buy-in" which also refers to garnering the cooperation and commitment of management and trade unions to engage in the program. Two of the main reasons why companies hesitate to implement CSR were the added costs, particularly for small and medium firms, while some preferred to maintain a separation between labor-relations concerns and charitable initiatives for social responsibility. For example, Globe Telecom's Corporate Communications handles the company's CSR program which is separate from labor relations that is, in turn, the purview of human resources.

The added dynamic of management co-producing CSR with workers can be a slippery terrain between social dialogue and philanthropic programs. Even some unions had mixed views depending on their circumstances and differences in perspectives, experiences and strategies. While some readily welcomed the idea of PBIBS CSR, other unions were hesitant. Unions that had positive experiences with CSR and social dialogues were more open and optimistic while unions that were in the midst of a labor dispute or negotiating their collective bargaining would rather focus their attention on more pressing issues.

It was difficult to design a standardized, 'one-size-fits-all' approach in the PBIBS CSR implementation. There were typical administrative concerns and logistical hurdles such as the multiplicity of persons and departments to coordinate with for different aspects of the program i.e., communications, human resources, or labor relations departments; leadership transitions within unions and management; unexpected labor disputes; production cycle-related demands of companies; seasons for collective bargaining negotiations of unions; and the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the pace of activities.

Despite COVID-19, the project managed to hold activities using digital platforms and online venues which enabled more workers to join, but which may have caused some of the less-technologically adept workers and management representatives to be excluded.

The variety of situations on the ground affected the level of commitment and participation of stakeholders and their confidence in the value of the PBIBS CSR approach. Stakeholders have different backgrounds, experiences, and needs which affected the level of their participation in the project. While they may be fully committed to participate in the study, they also straddled between job demands and their other roles in the enterprise. Management representatives who were mostly from human resources had difficulty incorporating responsibilities in the PBIBS CSR project into their existing tasks and accountabilities. Given this, the project proponents and the support organization DTDA played an important role in mitigating concerns and capacitating and motivating stakeholders. The DTDA bore the costs of the pilot program which may have helped smaller firms to fully immerse in the activities whereas FFW and ECOP provided technical assistance and support.

CSR activities and driving factors

In two and a half years of project implementation, the pilot enterprises had established functioning joint committees for CSR programs and activities. Some pilot firms formed CSR collaboration committees, while others used existing venues such as labor-management councils, OSH committees, or family welfare committees as CSR discussion venues. The LMCs and OSH committees tackle other issues aside from CSR, but by nature, these mechanisms, similar to PBIBS CSR, are jointly participated in by labor and management. Meanwhile, the family welfare committee is typically not bipartite since it is lodged under the union structure. However, this committee tackles issues related to health, well-being and wellness which are usual themes of community CSR programs and so it was chosen by stakeholders as the venue for PBIBS CSR discussions.

While none of these committees were akin to the Works Councils that the project aimed for either in name or function, the establishment of Works Councils, mainly bipartite social dialogue in nature, may have been a high target for the project to begin with. Works Councils are part of a European labor movement tradition which are yet to establish roots in the Philippines. Nonetheless, other forms of social dialogue mechanisms exist in the Philippines and the integration of a PBIBS CSR mechanism within already existing social dialogue venues may have also been the most feasible outcome for the project since the process of creating new committees could take time. It was more efficient to tap into existing social dialogue venues or reactivate dormant mechanisms such as the LMC and OSH committees, as what happened in Allied Metals.

Within and through these committees, the FFW and ECOP guided the labor and management representatives of pilot firms to help them determine potential areas where PBIBS CSR could make sustainable positive impact for the company's internal stakeholders. The project proponents guided stakeholders to focus and identify problems and needs that are relevant to them and which have workable and time-bound solutions. Adopting a strategy of 'starting where they (pilot firms) are,' the project proponents facilitated the process of designing CSR programs based on stakeholder needs, resources, interest and circumstances.

The themes of CSR activities that were subsequently realized were on health and safety, mental health and COVID-19, and labor relations. Improvements in the labor-management relations situation were also observed by stakeholders. Table 1 on page 180 presents an overview of the CSR initiatives.

Health and safety

Health and safety were core issues for Allied Metals and Delfi Foods. Allied Metals is a factory fabricating commercial kitchen equipment. It was determined that the company and its workers can benefit from safety improvements such as increasing usage of personal protective equipment, installing safety guards, and undergoing training on basic OSH. Meanwhile, Delfi Foods, a confectionary manufacturer, had a long-standing health and safety situation that needed to be addressed. Over the years, the number of Delfi Food's first aiders and medical emergency first responders had dwindled, and it was the problem that stakeholders decided to prioritize. The number of first aiders was subsequently increased from three to 14.

The experience of the two firms suggests that health and safety is an unequivocal concern that can be discussed under CSR. The benefits of having a safe and healthy workplace redounds to individual workers and to the enterprise as a whole, but the costs involved can be a deterrent. The DTDA's assistance in the incidental costs of implementing the projects helped in this regard. Importantly, there was also a legal compulsion: in 2018, the Philippines passed the new OSH law that, among others, required enterprises to establish OSH committees and meet a range of OSH standards. Since it was a fairly recent law, many companies were still not compliant. The pressure to comply with laws and standards has been one of the drivers of CSR among large multinationals. This study shows that it is also an important motivator for smaller firms.

Mental health issues

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many workers to choose between their work and personal safety. Interphil Laboratories, a toll-manufacturer of medicines and health supplements, implemented a 21-day work bubble in the midst of rising cases of local transmissions

in surrounding areas. This meant that workers must remain inside the company for 21 days if they were in the bubble and 21 days at home if they were not. The 21-day work bubble had taken a toll on the mental health of some of the employees. The uncertainty of the situation at work, worries about their families at home, fear of getting the virus, and having limited means to communicate with the world 'outside' had led many to experience anxiety and depression. This situation was quickly identified as an action area for CSR. The first response of stakeholders and project proponents was to hold a webinar with health practitioners and DOLE officials as resource persons. The project also planned counselling sessions for workers. These concerns can also be undertaken under the Family Welfare Committees of trade unions and management.

This shows that personal and workplace needs of workers arising from unforeseen circumstances including health emergencies are also key drivers for CSR action. Extending assistance to co-workers in need has been a practice in many of the pilot firms, such as Continental Temic, Globe Telecom and II-VI Performance. However, many of these initiatives are ad hoc. A potential advantage of establishing PBIBS CSR as an institutionalized discussion platform at the workplace is that it enables stakeholders to take prompt action in future emergencies rather than through individual responses or ad hoc initiatives.

Labor relations

Labor relations concerns relating to discrimination in promotion, implementation of certain provisions in the Labor Code, and workers' benefits under COVID-19 were raised at Globe Telecom. Vishay, before the company left the project, developed a CSR program "Awareness Raising Towards Solid Labor Law Compliance" in their PBIBS CSR Project Implementation Plan. Apart from Globe and Vishay, none of the pilot firms tackled labor relations under PBIBS CSR because in their perspective, these were already covered in the LMC and collective bargaining. This tendency to not tackle labor relations issues in CSR may also provide some explanation as to why there was absence of labor relations type of CSR among Philippine firms as noted by Chapple and Moon (2005).

While most pilot firms did not tackle labor relations issues, they believed it was important to maintain good communication and maximize the use of social dialogue venues such as LMCs and OSH committees. Continental Temic's union said that CSR discussions are opportunities to talk about non-CSR concerns and it is helpful to reference these brief exchanges in future meetings to stimulate familiarity and collegial discussions between stakeholders. The dialogue opportunity under PBIBS CSR may thus expand and extend the scope of conversations leading to other positive effects.

Clearly, there was also a variation in the activities that resulted from the PBIBS CSR project, depending on the circumstances and priorities of pilot firms. Some activities had clear and measurable impacts, e.g., Allied Metals and Delfi Foods; for others, the effect was less defined such as for Globe Telecom, Continental Temic and II-VI Performance. Further, evidence showed that PBIBS CSR was able to complement other social dialogue mechanisms (i.e., LMCs, OSH committees, family welfare committees, etc.) that helped address workers' needs beyond the scope of CBAs. The union officers of Continental Temic, Delfi Foods, Allied Metals and Globe Telecom believed PBIBS CSR strengthened labor's role in CSR activities and the union had acquired legitimacy to participate in the design of CSR programs. The management representatives of Delfi, Globe and Continental Temic also observed higher union involvement and activity. Meanwhile, the union at Interphil Laboratories believed that PBIBS CSR can help improve the condition of workers in non-unionised firms better than in unionized establishments.

Gender blindness in CSR programs

A glaring finding in the project evaluation was the low integration of gender issues in the CSR programs both at the national and enterprise levels. Whilst activities at the pilot enterprises and national workshops encouraged equal gender participation, gender issues were not explicitly integrated in the CSR concerns and issues. In other words, the CSR programs and practices have not been subjected to gender-based analysis or gender lens. There were indications that questions on impact on women workers, expanding women's participation in CSR activities, and surfacing other gender concerns had not been discussed. Two factors seemed to play a role. First, women comprised

a small percentage of workers in at least half of the pilot enterprises. Secondly, all pilot firms are unionized and typically, gender and women's issues are already discussed in union committees (women's committee, gender and women, or family welfare). These factors may have made women and gender issues less visible, relevant or urgent for CSR action, at least, in the eyes of stakeholders. There is still more room for improvement in integrating gender in all aspects of CSR programs and actions as well as addressing the uneven development of CSR programs in the workplaces. The relatively recent Occupational Safety and Health Law can provide the initial pathway to integrate gender/women's concerns in CSR programs (i.e., provision of lactation rooms, etc.) towards addressing workplace discrimination, unequal pay, or sexual harassment issues.

The evaluation report strongly recommended that at the national level, policy recommendations and CSR programs need to integrate gender-specific issues or concerns (i.e., strengthening policy and implementation of gender-based legislations for women workers such as the Solo Parents Act; ILO Convention on Anti-discrimination; Violence Against Women; Sexual Harassment in the workplace, etc.). At the workplace level, gender-specific activities and practice integrated in CSR programs may include conscious inclusion of women in CSR program planning and implementation, and representation of women in all mechanisms/committees on CSR and social dialogue. Recognition of women's issues, such as reproductive health and safety, sexual harassment, equal pay and non-discrimination in promotion, etc., need to be concretized in gender-specific programs for women within the CSR committees.

Conclusions

The PBIBS CSR initiative has pioneered a new kind of CSR which includes the trade unions as a major stakeholder in the CSR program of a company. Traditionally, companies partner with other companies, communities, cooperatives, foundations, etc. in CSR programs. The PBIBS CSR radically shifts the traditional CSR partnerships by including trade unions as a major partner. Likewise, CSR programs under the PBIBS CSR have become inward- rather than outward-oriented, as has been the traditional CSR. The PBIBS CSR approach

straddles between the traditional CSR and social dialogue mechanisms which are either institutionalized or non-institutionalized. On the one hand, the PBIBS CSR approach expands into the relations of labor and management within social dialogue mechanisms; on the other hand, it advances informal or non-institutionalized relations between labor and management.

Based on the findings of the evaluation report, the inclusion of trade unions has added another dimension to the regular or mainstream social dialogue mechanisms in the workplace. Consequently, the PBIBS CSR approach practically encroached on the labor relations regime within the workplace. An example is when management and labor parties in the workplace decide to integrate the PBIBS CSR programs and activities within the existing social dialogue mechanisms, such as the LMC dialogues and OSH committees. The rationale behind this practice points to the overlapping discussions and activities between labor and management under the PBIBS CSR program and within the social dialogue mechanisms. Consequently, the promotion of the PBIBS CSR approach complements the traditional worker's voice in social dialogue mechanisms and forces CSR to re-orient the practice towards being internally-oriented (as opposed to the traditional external-orientation). The unique contribution of the PBIBS CSR approach within the workplace points to the establishment of informal spaces for dialogue between labor and management and from there, develop collegial, congenial and harmonious relationships among the representatives of labor and management.

Having specific actions under the PBIBS CSR program in the workplace has expanded CSR's effectiveness to strengthen social dialogue mechanisms, whether these mechanisms are institutionalized or not. Based on the feedback of stakeholders, the PBIBS CSR approach likewise strengthens the bipartite social dialogue framework, vis-a-vis the mainstream tripartite framework of Philippine industrial relations in the last 40 years. The openness of some employers to engage in CSR may stem from the perceived difficulties at the tripartite level to resolve labor relation issues as against direct engagement of labor and management at the bipartite levels. CSR scholars have long realized that when state regulation may be absent or weak (even where desirable), it is important to understand what factors may support corporate managers' engagement with social issues (Jackson

et al., 2018). Many countries, such as Denmark, prefer to strengthen bipartite dialogues and negotiations than having the State, with its different political interests, interfere in the industrial labor relations. The PBIBS CSR approach aimed to improve workers' conditions through CSR, at the same time support business sustainability. Through a four-year project of the DTDA, ECOP and the FFW, the PBIBS CSR approach in the Philippines had been a trailblazing, yet complex and difficult initiative in advancing a new and alternative concept and practice of CSR.

CSR in the Philippines is highly contested. The 'traditional' CSR approach, bearing philanthropic and external-oriented community programs, is perceived to provide a good media image only for the company that will redound to business sustainability. The 'compliant' CSR approach likewise only monitors employers' superficial compliance to labor standards and regulations but lacks in-depth monitoring of compliance on labor rights such as freedom of association, collective bargaining and anti-discrimination in the workplace. The PBIBS CSR approach seeks to remedy the need to ensure compliance of labor rights within the workplace through the inclusion of labor organizations as an important stakeholder.

The pilot study enabled the three ideals of PBIBS CSR to be tested on the ground where the experiences of pilot firms helped illuminate how companies translate these ideals into practice. The outcomes of the PBIBS CSR project suggest that the identification of gaps in compliance resulting out of stakeholders' own examination of company practices vis-à-vis laws and standards ('principles-based') provide a strong justification for a company to engage in CSR activities that can address those deficiencies or deviances. However, the pilot firms had difficulty incorporating gender concerns in the design and implementation of CSR activities and there is a need for stakeholders to consciously apply a gender lens in CSR discussions.

Ensuring labor and management participation ('inclusive') is the key difference between PBIBS and typical CSR programs. Feedback from the stakeholders suggest that bipartite participation enhances the level of engagement of stakeholders in the CSR program and complements existing dialogue mechanisms. Yet, the quality of participation of stakeholders also depends on the skills, attitude and experiences

that labor and management representatives bring into the process. The participation of the union in the CSR dialogue appears to help counterbalance the external orientation of many CSR programs and the pilot study showed that addressing the needs of internal beneficiaries is also the social responsibility of companies.

The PBIBS CSR model also emphasized the need to embark on programs that enhance the viability of the enterprise ('business sustainable'). While more data is needed to determine the longer-term impact of the activities from the pilot project, there were some immediate positive benefits for firms, such as enabling them to achieve compliance, improving safety at work, and stabilizing labor-management relations.

As a pioneering approach, the PBIBS CSR encountered many but surmountable challenges. The major hurdles were the reluctance to commit to become part of the pilot enterprises; the uneven yet complex contexts of the implementing pilot enterprises; gender-blindness in CSR programs; and the weak prioritization and institutionalization of CSR programs. The pilot study showed that CSR need not be limited to community outreach activities, it can touch upon a variety of concerns and crucially, it can also be inward-looking. Among the vital recommendations in the recently concluded evaluation process are: to institutionalize PBIBS CSR programs or integration in company policies for day-to-day implementation, to ensure its space in the priorities of enterprises; synchronize PBIBS CSR programs within the social dialogue mechanisms; build upon the project outputs (i.e., CSR Guide, infovideos produced on CSR, compendium of CSR practices) to promote PBIBS CSR; and include gender equality issues and concerns in the future implementation of PBIBS CSR programs and activities.

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