

The Corporate Social Responsibility and the Associative Project

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Abstract

From the perspective of corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate companies finance associative actions. But the relationship that is established between the company and the association as a stakeholder is not always innocent. Indeed, the association may be exploited. The question is how to make this partnership a win- to-win relationship. In answer to this query, we are interested in the case of Morocco where both a significant rise in the association movement rate and number as well as a recognizable new awareness within CSR have been simultaneously achieved during the year 2006.

Keys word: Moroccan associative movement, corporate social responsibility, stakeholders 'theory, associative project.

Introduction

In order to integrate global economy and promote local economic growth, various reforms have been issued in Morocco since the 80's. Therefore, influenced by worldwide globalization which imposes to align or at least get close to international standards, the labor code was revised in the year 2004 followed by more important changes in the year 2006. These changes concern two initiatives that have been undertaken. The first is the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD) which will give rise to a plethora of associations in addition to those that already existed. The second is the implementation of the charter of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) launched by the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises (GCME) whose objective is geared towards more ethical responsibility and philanthropy rather than towards any economic profit in favor of the stakeholders (customers, consumers, suppliers, associations, employees...).

On the one hand, the associative movement reflects the determination civil society has reached and the willingness to find solutions to economic, social, cultural, environmental and political problems. In fact, associations tried to intervene in specific areas and correct various problems where the State has proved power lessor almost absent due to other priorities or to insufficient budget. However, associations needed to seek donors willing to fund their projects in order to be able to carry out their actions and overcome financial constraints.

On the other hand, within the framework of CSR (corporate social responsibility), the corporate company must fulfill its duty towards civil society and its legitimate inter locator remains associations. At first appeal, this relationship company/ association seems innocent (it shows nothing more than a normal business show in generosity to fund an artistic event: "offering schoolbags", or "fighting illiteracy" etc.). In reality however, and due to the absence of an associative project, some companies seize this opportunity and exploit associations by performing various communication operation and social marketing to improve their public image.

As has been clearly stated above, this article aims to answer the following fundamental problematic: how can the associative project contribute to establishing a partnership/relationship between the association and the socially responsible company?

In answer to this problematic, a historical overview of the Moroccan associative movement will be provided, and then the question of corporate social responsibility as the stakeholder will be tackled followed by highlighting the significant role of associative project in building a win-to-win partnership.

1. Moroccan Associative Movement: Development and Partnership

1.1 Moroccan Associative Movement: An Overview

Before the creation of regulatory associations, informal structures have existed and still exist in some parts of the country such as "*Jemaâ*", "*Touiza*" and "*Zawiya*" which fall within customary law and are rooted in religion. The associative action has begun to assert itself with the promulgation of the Royal Decree No. 1-58-376 of 15 November 1958 concerning civil liberties.

However, and during the years 1973 to 1983¹, the associative work has witnessed a considerable regression in the exercise of freedom of association due to the limitation of freedoms in general and the social movement suffered from repression. Throughout the 1980s, marked by political and economic austere choices (structural adjustment program: SAP), reforms in this direction have led the state to disengage from social sectors. Meanwhile, a new dynamic was created in the associative movement through the human rights claims.

The 1990s witnessed revival to the associative work through a diversification of activities and missions. "Those years knew an acute awareness of social deficits which were aggravated by the SAP and the riots in Fez (1991). The political context was in favor of participatory development and partnership activities between the state and various social and institutional actors."²

In this way, new spaces have been invested such as: the creation of basic infrastructure (water, electricity, roads...), income generating activities and the protection of environment etc. Moreover new networks have been developed for the coordination and reflection on social issues. This new direction is based on the desire to build a civic society having a position of partner with public authorities and pushing them through a strong proposition force towards change and action instead of remaining at a deficient state. This period experienced a proliferation of humanitarian associations aiming to support administration, international NGOs and international organizations.

The early 2000s marked a turning point in the associative dynamic leading to greater political openness, the creation and administration of associations by the young and the consecration of the efforts of feminists, through the adoption of a new family Code.

1.2 –Associations and partnerships

The concept of partnership accompanied the country's development. Therefore, partnership has strongly characterized the development of the associative movement in Morocco.

Therefore, and during the years (1955-1973), this partnership took the form of charity in favor of the poor and disabled provided by the Mutual National Support. This form of partnership is maintained through out the period 1973-1983. The 1980s were marked by the withdrawal of the state and the call for private sector initiatives and other social actors, thus constituting an incubation period of partnership initiatives that will really gain momentum in the 1990s. Adding to this, the context of globalization and openness to different components made the country adopt new values allowing associations to be assigned the status of partners. This era was characterized by a participatory approach involving associations in programs initiated by the state or in projects from their own initiatives (supported by the state, NGOs ...). The associative movement gained more ground through out the period 1998 to 2004. This era was also marked by the creation of foundations (Mohamed V and Mohamed VI) and the institutionalization of partnerships between the state and associations with the Prime Minister's circular (Circular No. 7/2003) which normalized the partnership framework and established priorities.

1. Documents, espace associatif, « Développement démocratique et action associative au Maroc », « les objectifs du millénaire pour le développement (OMD) : rôle des associations dans la réalisation des OMD au Maroc », Mustapha Faouzi, 4 avril 2007 « Maroc : Genèse de l'action associative marocaine », Journal Libération,

2. Abdellah Herzini, p.235 « Evolution du partenariat et modalités de pilotage et de gestion du développement humain », 158

The year 2006 was characterized by the implementation of the National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD). This initiative targeted different areas, including health, education, social housing, rural development, support for social programs and income-generating activities.

However, the synthesis report audit conducted jointly by the secretariats, respectively, of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Finance and Privatization, presented in Rabat in December 2007, reported some failures affecting the success of this initiative. Thus, some associations beneficiaries still keep their accounts in summary form, which makes it difficult to achieve an audit for projects completed within the NIHD. Other associations use their ordinary current accounts. Yet others do not satisfy the requirement of archiving and preserving documents for spending NIHD funds. This finding reveals the inability for a good association management and the lack of a knowledge for specific regulatory framework within NIHDs and all this alludes to the question of the sustainability of projects entrusted to the associations through the partnership. Therefore, apart from the conditions for granting funding by NIHDs, it is important to include action in the framework of a common project with a common vision, clarifying the mutual commitments of the association and the State, through a contract that takes account of the financial, legal organizational and implementation issues.

2. The Corporate Social Responsibility

2.1 The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): What Do We Talk About?

Nowadays, the intensification of the globalization process raises the question of the balance between economy, society and environment. Ever since industrial revolution and taking into account the impact of economic growth on social and environmental business, economic growth has not been without consequences generating thus considerable social and cultural transformations. Nevertheless, this growth has resulted in inequality at the national and international levels exemplified through social conflicts for better protection and social security of employees. This situation made many agents wonder about the future of economic and ecological system of the planet. Sustainable Development (SD) thus emerges as a compromise between what is economic, social and environmental. As defined in 1987 by the Brundtland Report, it refers to: "economic development that meets the needs of the present generation without preventing the ability of future generations to meet their needs." Sustainable development is now at the heart of the international debate on the world's future and the means to invest on the political, economic, social and cultural development of all countries concerned by economic and financial globalization. Rooted in the business world, sustainable development is linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The basic idea underlying the concept of CSR is that companies need to work for the improvement and well-being of society. It is the voluntary integration by companies of social and environmental concerns in their business activities. However, the CSR concept has many definitions and is a subject for controversy. For critics, the term "CSR" is a form of manipulation of multinationals to improve their image, as to proponents this new concept is a premise that redefines the company and its relationship with society and political power. A further controversy raises the question about the role and behavior of the company in respect of its internal and external environment. For some, the role of the company is limited to the realization of profits for shareholders (Freedman 1962) for other role extends beyond profit exceeding the legal component to integrate social and environmental concerns. Therefore, controversial as it is, the concept of CSR is not a new concept. The phenomenon has gained more importance over the years and now occupies its place at the heart of business strategy³. For over 50 years, academics and practitioners focus on the concept and make use of different approaches in trying to understand and analyze it. Anglo-Saxon authors such as: Carroll (1979) Freeman (1984) Wood (1991) among others, have focused on the issue and have gained recognition through their research on CSR. Several definitions have followed the concept of CSR without leading to a consensus however. Still all keep in common the idea that CSR refers to the company's obligations to its stakeholders (Freeman 1984) without having certainty about the nature and scope of such obligations (Smith N.C., 2003).

2.2 – The Stakeholder Theory

The term "stakeholder" is the result of a deliberate pun to oppose at the company, holders of securities (stockholders) to holders of interests.

3. La responsabilité sociale de l'entreprise, Capron M., .F.Quairel-Lanoizelée., 2007

The word stakeholder is composed of stake which means the interests or issues an individual or group has towards the company. The word had to aim at planning the integration process of stakeholders instead of shareholders. The concept of "stakeholders" has developed both at the academic and practical sphere. It is used throughout the company and is insured through participatory approaches that pave the way for decision making at the organizations (companies, communities, associations ...). In the enterprise, taking into considerations Stakeholder reflects appropriate management to operationalize the social responsibility of the company.

The stakeholder theory aims to be a compromise approach between two diametrically opposed visions namely:

- A vision oriented towards utilitarian (business) and enrolled in a strategic logic: taking into account the interests of stakeholders is a measure of economic and financial performance, particularly for shareholders. Seen from this perspective, the partnership relationship with the association has a utilitarian character. In fact, the relationship is not innocent and devoid of interest, but it must be a return on investment, and the most common research is communication and image impact.
- A vision-oriented towards ethical or normative philosophical foundations emphasizing the moral obligations of the company in respect of the stakeholders. The interest of stakeholders has an intrinsic value in this instance: the company is indebted to the company and the manager must reconcile the objectives.
- Geared towards greater social justice and equity, partnership with the association in this sense is anchored in a process that transcends the financial interest to include a dimension of well-being for the recipient community and the social action. Based on associative thinking, the project clearly highlights its relevance in that it can be an asset to the association to join his actions around other partners including businesses.

3 – The Associative Project

"In the beginning, the project is considered as the fundamental founder of a membership organization."⁴ However, many associations are small and they carry a project with an altruistic, selfless dimension which is constantly responding to social demand increasing in times of crisis. The association is *par excellence* the place of creativity and innovation. However, what may be a difference between a true and a false association is the existence of unifying project members that are indispensable certainly but difficult to convince and assemble. In sum, the project depends on several factors, including the context, the interaction with the environment or which it was initiated, the degree of adaptation and the ability to synthesize leaders of the project, intensity in psychosocial relations and effort towards creativity and innovation. In addition, the project involves resources, with means, to skills not covered by the same authority. All these elements must be considered and coordinated in order to achieve the project goals.

Quite expectedly, the decision to create an association requires an assessment of the situation at a time. To perform this assessment, however, there is a need to conduct an environmental diagnosis to the whole situation including: 1) identifying external opportunities and threats, 2) Determining internal strengths and weaknesses of the association. In other words, opportunities are possibilities that take into account the external environment and its components and that allow the association to be implemented and recognized among other social agents of development. On the other hand, threats are defined as aspects of the external environment that may influence the association. At this level, the analysis focuses on the economic, political, legal, technological, social and ethical dimensions. The resource assessment allows the association to ensure it has the necessary material, human and financial resources to enable it to achieve its objectives. It can therefore determine its strengths and weaknesses and plan how much each resource is malleable, extensible, and perfectible. The project should also highlight the skills of volunteers to gain credibility with external partners.

The associative project summarizes the major social priorities of the association and indicates the means to be achieved in a document, written and produced dynamically. Its construction is based on four key ideas:

1. Sharing a new vision based on a commitment from the association's part to move towards a future it serves as a reference compared to decisions. It results from an individual or collective reflection but it must necessarily be shared. Mobilizing, it helps generate meaning to the mission of everyone in the organization by answering the question "what, to whom, do we serve?"

2. Incorporating a system of shared values: the norms, beliefs, convictions rooted in the mind of each member of the association may affect aspects of activities through moral judgments, reactions to others, commitments to achieve collective goals. Share the same values in relation to the mission of the organization allows to work towards the same direction and crop where members deviate.
3. Determining the mission: According Omar Aktouf⁵, the mission is "the general framework whereby we give meaning to what we plan to do in the years to come. This is the reason that indicates the direction in which we should not deviate". The mission is the subject of a general statement, writing and stating the reason for the association. It takes into account the following elements: a) a definition of the beneficiaries of the association b) a statement of privileged values c) a statement of the manner advocated to provide the association with services and products.
4. Identifying priorities and major areas for action that will result in making the goals. These can be classified in two categories: a) the general objectives (or strategic) that specify the direction of the association and what it proposes to do; b) the operational objectives that reflect the expected results and focus on performance with measurable results.

Conclusion

All in all, changes in Morocco require a new way of improving the standard of living. The government itself has difficulty in facing the multiple requirements. It is probably for these reasons that our society needs the involvement of more convincing agents. This can be achieved both through associations and also through the adoption of some companies to the concept of corporate social responsibility. On the one side, companies are looking to fund charitable projects through philanthropic activities and on the other side associations are suffering from a lack of funding and research funding for their actions. In between, the associative project comes as a shield to prevent any exploitation attempts from the companies declared to be socially responsible.

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5. Omar Aktouf, « management between tradition and renewal », p.113