**What is CSR?**

**Introduction:**

Within the world of business, the main “responsibility” for corporations has historically been to make money and increase shareholder value. In other words, corporate financial responsibility has been the sole bottom line driving force. However, in the last decade, a movement defining broader corporate responsibilities– for the environment, for local communities, for working conditions, and for ethical practices–has gathered momentum and taken hold. This new driving force is known as corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR is oftentimes also described as the corporate “triple bottom line”–the totality of the corporation’s financial, social, and environmental performance in conducting its business.

**What is CSR?**

While there is no universal definition of corporate social responsibility, it generally refers to transparent business practices that are based on ethical values, compliance with legal requirements, and respect for people, communities, and the environment. Thus, beyond making profits, companies are responsible for the totality of their impact on people and the planet. “People” constitute the company’s stakeholders: its employees, customers, business partners, investors, suppliers and vendors, the government, and the community. Increasingly, stakeholders expect that companies should be more environmentally and socially responsible in conducting their business. In the business community, CSR is alternatively referred to as “corporate citizenship,” which essentially means that a company should be a “good neighbour” within its host community.

**What does CSR mean for international health development?**

The business community can make tremendous contributions in promoting good health and well being, especially if innovative CSR initiatives are undertaken in partnership with government and civil society. In all but the most remote areas or closed societies, business has massive reach and influence. For decades, business has been engaged in charity, philanthropy, and civic activities including social investments in health. However, oftentimes these investments were less than strategic, and were not directed to real social change. Today, business understands that viewed through lenses of “doing well by doing good,” CSR can be a revolutionary way of contributing to systemic social changes in which investments can produce lasting social benefits in the health arena.