

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Initiatives Should be Part of Business Strategy

By May Wong, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 30 August 2006 2310 hrs

(CSR Evening with CSR Asia, Standard Chartered, World Bank & Singapore Compact)

Companies should implement Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR programmes as part of their business strategy.

Business leaders say this will help increase productivity and motivate staff.

And tackling HIV-AIDS at the workplace is one of the key CSR issues raised at a seminar on Wednesday evening.

Productivity in the workplace is one key factor that affects a company's bottom-line and if employees are inflicted with serious illnesses like HIV-AIDS, the losses could be significant.

Thomas Aaker, CEO, Standard Chartered Bank, Zambia, said: "If 25 percent of our staff are infected, then chances are most of these staff will be away. Absenteeism. And so our productivity suffers. We'll have to have 25 percent more staff. Anything we can do and investments we can make to bring those costs down is a good business decision. So investing in programmes to encourage testing and to provide drugs is a good investment for our business."

And increasingly, companies are seeing the benefits of practising CSR.

Claire Chiang, President, Singapore Compact, said: "This is one example that people believing that if you do good and you're doing well, you're reaping reputation doing. So all in all, it satisfies the staff working in the company that they have management that care and with staff motivation, you retain good employees and adds to the stability of the corporation and that itself is another business advantage."

Some 50 participants from companies like SembCorp and Nokia attended the event.

Questions they raised included challenges of implementing CSR programmes and it's believed that the upcoming IMF-World Bank Meeting will discuss topics beyond the dollars, including CSR activities.

Peter Stephens, Spokesman, World Bank Group Office, said: "We're not just talking about lifting people out of poverty. We're talking about creating jobs for billions of people and we want to do it in a way where those jobs are very much the jobs that you'd see in an environment where companies are applying principles of Corporate Social Responsibility. So it's central to our agenda."

Some 16,000 delegates are expected at the IMF-World Bank Meeting which starts in about two weeks on September 14. - CNA/ch
