

## Introduction

Over several years, the corporate social responsibility has been developing quite well in Senegal. This is due in particular to the CSR Senegal initiative who organize and hold annual forums, as well as of course helping to organize and bring together all of the sector's players, as well as helping to spread awareness of this idea of social responsibility in Senegal.

There are several different descriptions, but if I wanted to sum up social responsibility (SR) in a few words, I could say that SR is an approach which involves a company taking into account the consequences of its actions on its stakeholders when these actions are of an environmental, economic, or social nature, or with an impact on these fields. Essentially, let's remember then that SR is of a voluntary nature and that not only does it concern businesses, but that from now on, it applies to all organizations. When I say organizations, I mean businesses but also associations, groups, states, NGOs, etc., and that it's their contribution to sustainable development.

To get back to our topic, three main causes explain, in my opinion, the limits of the development of SR despite the interest that it's provoking. Firstly, SR is a victim of preconceptions. Secondly, it remains a little known concept, and, in particular its advantages are still little known to businesses and the public. Finally, there's a form of inflexibility in the concept which deserves to be better understood and rooted in the local reality.

### 1. The SR is victim of prejudices

To get back to the preconceptions, one of the most common is that SR is only a matter for big businesses. It's true that SR is the prerogative of the big businesses who previously used to input on a social level by turning to sponsorship or patronage. As a result, SR is linked to these ideas and remains in the mind of some people as a communication tool or a form of marketing, with no real interest for the company's management. Consequently, and unfortunately, small businesses and SMBs, small and medium businesses, though they make up an essential part of the country's economic fabric, consider SR to be out of their reach, because, in their mind, it's reserved to big businesses.

### 2. A misunderstanding of the concept and of his advantage

For a big number of operators, SR is a constraint which is of very little interest. An extra constraint. And yet, SR can bring several advantages. Thus, on a social level, an appropriate policy guided towards the profit of the employees will help to improve their working conditions, will reassure them of effort that the company is making on their behalf, and of course, will improve their involvement in the profit of the business. On an environmental level, a good policy of waste management, and

therefore of recycling, will allow certain industries to make savings in terms of energy by using this waste as fuel, for example.

Another thing, on an economic level, strengthening the abilities of a company's suppliers will allow these suppliers to provide products of a better quality, which will undoubtedly impact the quality of the products and services provided by the company who will be able to make use of their services. So, you can clearly see that SR has a certain number of advantages on a social level in terms of good governance. The advantages are not only to the profit of the stakeholders, but also to the companies who make use of this approach by increasing their involvement by contributing to a greater performance, and consequently, by creating a competitive advantage in relation to the companies who don't have an SR policy.

Can we say that CSR is a win-win partnership? That's the case, at least in my opinion, when it manages to combine taking into account the stakeholders' needs, at the same time as taking into account the company's strategy.

### 3. A concept which is not still well adapted to the local context

The flexibility, if I may say, of CSR, we must remember is that it's a concept that was created by Western countries and which, because it's still difficult to accept locally, is perceived as a foreign concept. And that is certainly reinforced by certain SR policies in place in branches of large businesses in Senegal, but whose policies are influenced by the policies of the headquarters of these branches, located thousands of kilometres from here and which are not necessarily connected to the needs of local stakeholders. These things together, both create a perception of inadequacy and inflexibility amongst businesses.

Of course, it's not a case of going back to the basics of SR which are the fruit of a real and long dialogue. However, it's about knowingly taking in the fact that Senegal, like a big number of African countries, is still a developing country with specific priorities and different things at stake for businesses and people, taking into account the political, sociological, and economic environment of this country.

What's more, it seems that SR is considered as a lever for environmentally friendly social, economic and societal development, and therefore it helps with the concerns of businesses and people, which would help economic players to show more interest in social responsibility. Therefore it's a case of convincing people of its utility, and of the necessity of integrating SR into their global strategy.

### To conclude, three solutions are possible

To conclude, it seems to me that there are three solutions which would be best to respond to the causes that we have identified. First, it's to inform and to massively educate students in major schools and universities, as well as executives and managers of businesses, about the potential of CSR and how they can use it to their advantage.

The second thing would be to be pragmatic and to further contextualise CSR by introducing policies which are conceived of locally and which take into account the needs of stakeholders as well as the company's strategy, so that it's the result of a convergence of interest.

Thirdly, optimising the voluntary nature of CSR by legislating and by adopting and unifying introductory policies to the benefit of companies, also guiding policies based on sector to the benefit of these businesses, but also bearing in mind perceptions, opinions, changes in the local people, civil society, and syndicates. It's, in my opinion, thanks to these measures that CSR will be able to become a true matter of societal order.