



African Philanthropy Network
THE VOICE AND ACTION FOR AFRICAN PHILANTHROPY

MAURITIUS CASE STUDY FOR

**The National Corporate
Social Responsibility
Framework**

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Executive Summary

Mauritius has developed one of the most structured and state-driven Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) systems globally, evolving from a voluntary philanthropic model to a regulated national framework. This transformation was anchored in the Income Tax Act 1995 and reinforced by successive Finance Acts, fundamentally reshaping the private sector's contribution to social development. Rather than relying on fragmented charitable efforts, the country institutionalized CSR as a mechanism for Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM), requiring profitable companies to allocate 2% of their book profits to social initiatives. This approach reflects a broader national objective: to deepen social inclusion by aligning private-sector resources with the priorities of the welfare state and reducing reliance on external aid.

At the operational level, the framework introduces a hybrid allocation model. Companies must channel 75% of their CSR contributions to the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) via the Mauritius Revenue Authority, ensuring alignment with national development priorities. The remaining 25% may be retained for company-led initiatives or partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Resource targeting is guided by the Social Register of Mauritius, which identifies households living in absolute poverty, defined in 2026 as those earning less than Rs 14,650 (approximately \$317 USD) per month. This data-driven approach ensures that CSR funds are directed to the most vulnerable populations.

Between 2019 and 2024, the framework mobilized approximately Mauritian rupees (Rs) 5.3 billion (around USD \$114.6 million), supporting interventions in poverty alleviation, healthcare, and education. A notable institutional shift has been the adoption of Results-Based Management (RBM), which has significantly changed how Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operate. Rather than focusing on intentions or activities, CSOs are now required to demonstrate measurable social returns on investment. While this has improved accountability and impact measurement, it has also introduced administrative and technical complexities. Smaller, grassroots organizations, in particular, face barriers to entry, creating an "accessibility gap" due to limited capacity for compliance and reporting.

The Mauritian model offers several strategic lessons for African countries seeking sustainable development financing. Shifting from voluntary to mandatory CSR creates predictable, long-term funding streams, reducing uncertainty in social investment. Central coordination through institutions like the NSIF enhances efficiency and minimizes duplication of efforts, while maintaining some corporate flexibility remains important to encourage innovation. Furthermore, the framework highlights the value of investing in transformative interventions, such as youth vocational training, that address the root causes of poverty rather than providing temporary relief. More broadly, it demonstrates that African nations can increasingly finance their own development by leveraging domestic corporate success.

To strengthen the system, several recommendations emerge. The NSIF should streamline application and reporting procedures to make the framework more accessible to grassroots CSOs and introduce a standardized Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system with clear, uniform metrics. Corporates, on their part, need to shift their perception of CSR from a compliance obligation to a strategic component of their core business models. Finally, the APN is well-positioned to support the replication of the Mauritian model across the continent through phased implementation and pilot programs, fostering a more locally driven and sustainable culture of philanthropy.

1. Introduction

CSR has evolved into a strategic approach through which private-sector actors contribute to sustainable development. Unlike traditional philanthropy, CSR emphasizes structured, accountable, and impact-driven investments that align business operations with societal needs.

Globally, there is growing recognition of the role of domestic resource mobilization in advancing sustainable development. In this context, corporate philanthropy is a significant yet underutilized resource in many developing countries. CSOs play a crucial role in translating these resources into tangible development outcomes, particularly at the community level.

The APN seeks to transform development approaches by strengthening locally driven philanthropy and improving access to domestic resources. Previous studies across Africa found that although legal frameworks for corporate social investment exist, awareness and access among CSOs remain limited.

Mauritius stands out as a pioneering example of an institutionalized CSR framework, supported by legislation, government oversight, and structured stakeholder collaboration. This study examines how the model operates in practice, focusing on the effectiveness of the National CSR Fund, stakeholder dynamics, and CSO accessibility.

2. Understanding of the Context

The following background and context provide a detailed, contextual analysis of the Mauritian socio-economic landscape, the evolution of its welfare state, and the specific developmental gaps that necessitated a mandatory CSR framework. The CSR in Mauritius is a story of transition: from a sugar island to a financial hub, from voluntary charity to mandatory investment, and from fragmented giving to a data-driven, centralized system of social inclusion. This context sets the stage for the specific governance structures and operational mechanisms explored in the subsequent sections of this report.

2.1 Socio-Economic Landscape

Mauritius is often cited as one of Africa's most significant success stories. Since gaining independence in 1968, the country has undergone a remarkable structural transformation from a sugar-dependent monoculture to a diversified, upper-middle-income economy. This growth has been fueled by the strategic development of the manufacturing (textiles), tourism, financial services, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sectors.

Despite this macro-level success, the "Mauritian Miracle" has struggled to ensure that wealth distribution remains equitable. The rapid pace of globalization and the transition to a high-value services economy have left certain segments of the population vulnerable to structural unemployment and social exclusion. This economic backdrop created a dual necessity: maintaining a pro-business environment to attract investment while strengthening social safety nets to prevent the Gini coefficient (a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent income inequality) from widening.

2.2 Mauritius, a Welfare State

Mauritius has a long-standing tradition of being a "welfare state." Since independence, the government has provided free universal healthcare, free education from primary to tertiary levels, and non-contributory pensions for the elderly. However, by the early 2000s, it became evident that traditional state-funded welfare alone was insufficient to tackle "pockets of poverty" and marginalized communities that remained stuck in a cycle of multi-generational poverty despite the availability of free public services.

The government recognized that to achieve deep-rooted social inclusion, it needed to mobilize the private sector's resources, efficiency, and innovation. This led to the conceptualization of the National CSR Framework, designed not as a replacement for state welfare but as a complementary "social investment" vehicle funded by the corporate sector's success.

2.3 Social Register of Mauritius

A critical element of the CSR context in Mauritius is the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM). The SRM is a sophisticated management information system that identifies and registers households living in absolute poverty. Households are assessed using a Proxy Means Test (PMT), which evaluates income, living conditions, and assets. As of 2026, the absolute poverty threshold is set at a monthly income of approximately Rs. 14,650 (equivalent to USD 317.90) for a family of two adults and three children.

NSIF, the SRM serves as the primary "compass" for resource allocation. By mandate, CSR-funded projects must prioritize individuals and families listed on this register. This ensures that corporate social investment is data-driven and targeted to those with the greatest objective need, rather than being distributed based on subjective or anecdotal requests for charity.

2.4 Philanthropy Landscape

Prior to the institutional reforms of 2017 and 2019, the CSR landscape in Mauritius was highly fragmented. Although companies contributed 2% of their profits, they often did so in isolation. Corporate funds were disproportionately concentrated in urban centers or near corporate headquarters, leaving rural "pockets of poverty" underserved. Popular causes, such as high-profile sports or prestige environmental projects, received excessive funding (overcrowding), while essential but "invisible" services, like adult literacy, disability care, and halfway houses for victims of domestic violence, faced chronic budget deficits. Without a central governing body, there was no standardized way to measure the impact of these funds. Many CSR initiatives were "feel-good" projects that provided temporary relief but failed to address the root causes of poverty.

2.5 Global and Regional Context

Mauritius does not operate in a vacuum. Its shift toward mandatory CSR mirrors a growing global trend toward "Integrated Reporting" and "Environmental, Social, and Governance" (ESG) standards. Regionally, the APN has identified Mauritius as a unique case study in CSR giving practices and national mechanisms. While many African nations rely heavily on external Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Mauritian model emphasizes Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM).

The background of this framework is rooted in a desire for sovereign philanthropy, the ability of a nation to

fund its own social development through its corporate success. By mandating a 2% contribution by cooperates, Mauritius has created a sustainable internal financing mechanism that reduces dependence on foreign aid and ensures that the private sector is a formal partner in the nation's social contract.

2.6 The Role of Civil Society

Finally, the context of CSR is intrinsically linked to the vibrancy of the Mauritian NGO sector. With over 500 active CSOs, the sector acts as the implementation "infrastructure" of the CSR framework. These organizations often possess the local knowledge and trust that the state and large corporations lack. However, they historically suffered from a "hand-to-mouth" existence due to the erratic nature of voluntary donations. The evolution of the CSR framework was, in large part, an attempt to provide these CSOs with a stable, professionalized, and predictable funding environment.

3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to conduct a comprehensive desk analysis and document a case study on the NSIF and National CSR in Mauritius. Specific objectives include:

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of the National CSR Fund;
2. Assessing CSO accessibility to resources;
3. Analyzing stakeholder relationships; and
4. Identifying lessons for other African nations to adopt.

4. Methodology

The following methodology offers a detailed overview of the research design, data collection processes, and the strategy for managing study constraints. The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design, using a qualitative case study approach to evaluate the institutional evolution, governance, and operational performance of the Mauritian CSR framework. The methodology was structured to provide a multidimensional view of how legal mandates translate into grassroots social impact.

4.1 Data Collection Strategy

a) A rigorous analysis of secondary data was conducted, including:

- Scrutiny of the Income Tax Act 1995 (Section 50L) and various Finance Acts to understand the statutory evolution of CSR;
- Analysis of National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) annual reports (2017–2025), policy guidelines, and strategic plans;
- Review of Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) statistics regarding fund collection, compliance rates, and remittance trends; and
- Examination of NGO project reports, evaluation datasets, and sectoral impact studies.

b) Qualitative insights were gathered through targeted, semi-structured interviews with key actors in the ecosystem, including the Secretary General of the NSIF, senior officials from the MRA, and representatives from both established and grassroots NGOs.

4.2 Analytical Approach

Data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis and Results-Based Assessment. The consultant evaluated the framework against five core pillars: Relevance (alignment with national needs), Effectiveness (achievement of objectives), Efficiency (resource optimization), Impact (tangible social change), and Sustainability (long-term viability of interventions).

4.3 Limitations and Mitigations

Recognizing the complexities of a national case study, the following limitations were identified and proactively managed:

Limitation	Description	Mitigation Strategy
Limited Interview Coverage	Due to time and logistical constraints, only a representative sample of stakeholders could be interviewed, potentially omitting some grassroots perspectives.	Insights from interviews were cross-referenced with a large volume of NGO annual reports and published beneficiary testimonials to ensure a broader perspective.
Restricted Access to Financial Data	Granular financial data regarding specific private corporate expenditures (the 25% retention portion) is often proprietary and not fully public.	The study utilized aggregated data from the MRA and NSIF to identify macro-trends in funding without compromising corporate confidentiality.
Time Constraints	The timeframe for the study limited the ability to conduct long-term longitudinal field observations of specific projects.	The consultant analyzed a five-year span of NSIF reports (2019–2025) to simulate a longitudinal view of progress and institutional shifts.
Information Asymmetry	Official reports may emphasize successes over systemic failures or bureaucratic bottlenecks.	The study incorporated perspectives from independent civil society observers and critical policy reviews to provide a balanced "strengths vs. gaps" assessment.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in strict adherence to ethical standards. Participation in interviews was voluntary and based on informed consent, and all data was treated with the highest level of confidentiality. No sensitive personal data of beneficiaries was disclosed, ensuring the anonymity and protection of vulnerable SRM-registered participants.

5. Summary of Key Findings

5.1 Evolution of CSR in Mauritius

The evolution of CSR in Mauritius marks a strategic shift from sporadic, discretionary philanthropy to a highly structured, state-led model of social investment. This transition was not merely an accounting change but a fundamental, phased shift in the social contract between the private sector and the state.

The Voluntary Era (Pre-2009)

Before formal legislation, CSR in Mauritius mirrored the global standard of voluntary corporate giving. Companies engaged in "charity" often linked to their brand image or the personal interests of board members. While significant contributions were made to sports, culture, and local community needs, the landscape was characterized by fragmentation. There was no central alignment with national development goals, and social investment was often seen as "window-dressing" rather than a core development tool.

The Paradigm Shift: Institutionalization (Year 2009)

The landscape changed dramatically with the Finance Act 2009. Mauritius became a global pioneer by incorporating CSR into fiscal policy under Section 50L of the Income Tax Act. By mandating that 2% of book profits be allocated to social development, the government effectively de-privatized corporate philanthropy. This era was marked by the "Decentralized Model," in which companies still held the power to choose which NGOs to fund, leading to a vibrant yet often disorganized NGO ecosystem.

Centralization and the Birth of the NSIF (2017–2019)

By 2016, the government identified critical gaps in the decentralized model: funds were concentrated in urban areas, some high-profile NGOs were overfunded while grassroots needs were ignored, and there was a lack of rigorous monitoring. In 2017, the National CSR Foundation was established to centralize the collection and disbursement of funds, ensuring they were directed to national priority areas. In 2019, the Foundation was rebranded as the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF). This wasn't just a name change; it was a shift in mandate. The focus sharpened toward "Social Inclusion," specifically targeting the elimination of absolute poverty through the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM).

Results-Based Management (2020–Present)

Today, evolution has entered a phase of professionalization. The NSIF has introduced strict Results-Based Management (RBM) protocols. NGOs are no longer funded based on intent, but on demonstrated impact and governance. The framework has matured into a sophisticated domestic resource mobilization machine, with a current emphasis on transparency, digital monitoring, and the "multiplier effect" of social investments. Mauritius now stands as a case study for African nations, demonstrating how CSR can evolve from a corporate afterthought into a cornerstone of national social protection.

5.2 Legal and Policy Framework

The legal and policy framework for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Mauritius is anchored in a pioneering shift from voluntary philanthropy to a mandatory, state-regulated system that mobilizes domestic resources for social inclusion. This framework is built upon three primary pillars: statutory legislation, a centralized contribution mechanism, and strategic alignment with national development goals.

The Income Tax and Finance Acts

The framework is based on Section 50L of the Income Tax Act 1995, which was amended by the Finance Act 2009 to institutionalize CSR as a fiscal obligation. Under this law, all profitable companies must set up a CSR Fund equivalent to 2% of their chargeable income from the preceding year. This mandate ensures a predictable and consistent flow of funding, mobilizing approximately Rs 5.3 billion, equivalent to \$114,639,000, between 2019 and 2024 for programs that address absolute poverty and social exclusion.

The 75/25 Contribution Rule

The Finance Act 2016 introduced critical reforms to centralize fund management, moving away from a fragmented system where companies managed their own CSR independently. The current regulatory framework enforces a dual-stream allocation model:

- At least 75% of the CSR fund must be remitted to the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), which then transfers the capital to the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF). This centralized pool supports large-scale national social schemes and community projects.
- Companies may retain up to 25% of their funds for direct implementation of approved programs or partnerships with NGOs. However, this "private" portion still requires prior approval from the NSIF to ensure it is not used for marketing or their own staff welfare.

Strategic Alignment and Accountability

To ensure corporate contributions drive meaningful impact, the policy outlines ten Priority Areas of Intervention. These include socio-economic development (specifically targeting households in the Social Register of Mauritius), health interventions, educational support, disability services, and environmental sustainability. Governance is further reinforced through internal instruments such as Results-Based Management (RBM) protocols and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks. NGOs must be registered and compliant with the Registration of Associations Act to access funds, and they must demonstrate measurable outcomes to ensure financial accountability and transparency in the use of public CSR resources.

5.3 The NSIF Institutional Framework

The NSIF serves as the central pillar of the Mauritian CSR model. Its transformation from the National CSR Foundation in 2019 marked a strategic shift from general philanthropy to a targeted "social inclusion" mandate. As the primary intermediary between the state's fiscal collection and civil society's implementation, the NSIF's institutional framework is designed to ensure that private-sector wealth is converted into measurable social progress.

Governance and Oversight Structure

The NSIF operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security, and National Solidarity. Its governance is structured to balance state priorities with multi-stakeholder expertise:

- The NSIF Council is the governing body responsible for setting the strategic direction, approving funding allocations, and ensuring compliance with the Income Tax Act. It typically includes representatives from the government, the private sector, and civil society to ensure a balanced perspective on social needs.
- To maintain rigorous oversight, the Council is supported by six specialized committees: Finance & Income, HR & Corporate Governance, Audit & Risk, Programs & Projects, Communication & CSR, and Monitoring & Evaluation.

- The Secretariat is the executive arm of the Foundation, led by a Secretary General. The Secretariat manages the day-to-day operations, including vetting NGO applications, technical project appraisals, and MRA fund transfers.

Core Mandate and Mission

The NSIF's mission is defined by the pursuit of a "just and inclusive society." Unlike a traditional grant-making body, the NSIF acts as a catalyst for change by: Mapping CSR funds to the most vulnerable, specifically those identified in the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM); Not only providing funds but also offering technical and financial support to strengthen the institutional capabilities of NGOs; and Ensuring that every rupee spent contributes to one of the ten National Priority Areas, which include Poverty Alleviation, Educational Support, Social Housing, and Environmental Sustainability.

The Project Appraisal and Funding Lifecycle

The NSIF's operational framework is characterized by a high degree of formalization. To move from an application to a disbursement, a project must pass through a multi-stage lifecycle:

- CSOs must first be registered with the NSIF, requiring two years of audited accounts and a clean governance record;
- The Secretariat evaluates proposals based on a "Results-Based Management" (RBM) framework, checking for relevance, efficiency, and impact;
- Post-allocation, the NSIF framework includes a robust M&E mechanism. Funded NGOs are subject to site visits, financial audits, and performance reviews. This institutionalizes accountability, ensuring that funds are utilized for their intended social outcomes rather than administrative overhead.

The NSIF as a Knowledge Hub

Beyond funding, the NSIF has evolved into a central repository for social data in Mauritius. By tracking the performance of hundreds of NGOs and the progress of thousands of beneficiaries, the Foundation provides the government with real-time insights into the effectiveness of social policies. This "data-driven" approach allows for the periodic refinement of the CSR guidelines, ensuring the framework remains responsive to emerging social challenges, such as the impacts of global economic shifts or environmental changes on the island's most vulnerable populations.

In essence, the NSIF is the "engine room" of Mauritian CSR, providing the legal, technical, and monitoring infrastructure necessary to turn a mandatory tax into a sustainable social investment.

5.4 Funding Mechanisms and Allocation

The funding architecture of the Mauritian CSR framework is a sophisticated blend of fiscal policy and social engineering, designed to ensure that private sector wealth is systematically redistributed to the most vulnerable segments of society. This mechanism is primarily governed by the 75/25 rule, a regulatory requirement that mandates how corporate contributions are split between state-led initiatives and private corporate philanthropy.

The Dual-Stream Allocation Model

Under Section 50L of the Income Tax Act, every profitable company must calculate its CSR obligation as 2% of its chargeable income from the preceding year. The allocation follows a bifurcated path:

- At least 75% of the CSR fund must be remitted to the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), which then transfers the capital to the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF). This centralized pool funds large-scale national priority programs, ensuring resources are not fragmented across hundreds of small, disconnected projects.
- Companies are permitted to retain up to 25% of their CSR fund to support their own internal CSR programs or specific NGO partnerships. However, even this "private" portion is subject to state oversight; the programs must align with the NSIF's approved priority areas and are audited to ensure they are not used for marketing or purely commercial purposes.

Disbursement Strategies and Grant Types

The NSIF employs three primary methods to disburse the centralized 75% pool to the civil society sector:

- **Direct Funding for Essential Services.** This is reserved for established NGOs that provide critical services, such as residential care for people with disabilities, shelters for victims of domestic violence, or specialized health services. These organizations often receive multi-year funding to ensure the stability of essential social safety nets.
- The NSIF periodically issues calls for innovative projects targeting specific themes, such as green energy for low-income households or youth entrepreneurship. CSOs must compete for these funds by submitting detailed project blueprints.
- A portion of the fund remains flexible to address emerging social crises or urgent national needs, such as relief efforts or sudden economic shifts affecting specific vulnerable groups.

The "Culture of Performance" and Social ROI

A critical finding in the allocation process is the shift toward Results-Based Management (RBM). Funding is no longer a "blank check" based on an CSO's mission statement. Instead, the NSIF uses a rigorous appraisal matrix that evaluates five key pillars:

- Does the project solve a verified problem for SRM-registered beneficiaries?
- Are the planned activities realistically capable of achieving the stated outcomes?
- Is the budget reasonable, and what is the ratio of administrative costs to direct project spend?
- What is the "multiplier effect"-will the project lead to long-term social mobility?
- Can the project continue after the NSIF funding cycle ends?

This structured allocation ensures that the Rs 2.2 billion equivalent to 47.64 million USD mobilized over the last five years is not just spent, but invested in a manner that yields a high "Social Return on Investment" (SROI). However, the complexity of this allocation mechanism also means that the "time-to-grant" can be lengthy, often requiring CSOs to maintain significant administrative stamina to navigate the compliance lifecycle.

5.5 Stakeholder Dynamics

The institutionalization of CSR in Mauritius has created a structured, yet complex, web of relationships between the state, the private sector, and civil society. These dynamics are defined by a shift from voluntary, relationship-based philanthropy to a compliance-driven, regulated ecosystem.

The Tripartite Relationship: State, Corporate, and CSO

The Mauritian model is built on a tripartite structure where each actor has a legally defined role. The State, through the Ministry of Social Integration and the Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA), acts as the regulator

and collector. The National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) serves as the "buffer" and coordinator, translating government policy into actionable funding guidelines. Corporates have transitioned from being "donors" to "contributors." While they still provide the capital, the 75/25 rule (remitting 75% to the NSIF) has shifted the power dynamic. Many corporations now view CSR as a statutory obligation rather than a marketing or branding exercise. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) represent the implementation arm. Their relationship with the state has become more formalized and, at times, more transactional. To secure funding, CSOs must align their missions with state-defined priority areas, creating a dynamic where the state indirectly shapes the social agenda of the non-profit sector.

Power Asymmetries and Influence

Despite the structured coordination, stakeholder relationships are characterized by notable power asymmetries:

- The NSIF holds significant leverage over CSOs through its "Results-Based Management" requirements. While this ensures accountability, it places smaller CSOs in a subordinate position, as they must constantly prove their "value" through technical reporting to maintain financial viability.
- The 25% retention allowance allows companies to maintain direct control over a portion of their funds. This creates a dual-track dynamic where larger CSOs often compete for the 25% corporate-controlled funds, while smaller, grassroots CSOs depend entirely on the 75% pool managed by the NSIF.
- A critical, though often overlooked, stakeholder is the beneficiary population (those on the SRM). The current dynamic is largely top-down, where programs are designed by the NSIF or CSOs and "delivered" to the beneficiaries. Findings suggest a need for greater "participatory dynamics," where the beneficiaries have a voice in the design of the interventions intended to lift them out of poverty.

Coordination and Conflict Resolution

The NSIF Council, which includes representatives from various ministries and the private sector, serves as the primary forum for conflict resolution. However, tensions occasionally arise regarding the "de-branding" of CSR. Corporates often seek visibility for their contributions, while the centralized NSIF model prioritizes national social inclusion over individual corporate recognition. Balancing the private sector's desire for "Social ROI" visibility with the state's mandate for equitable wealth redistribution remains a central theme in the ongoing evolution of Mauritian CSR dynamics.

5.6 Accessibility of CSOs

The National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework in Mauritius has significantly reshaped the operational landscape for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). By transitioning from a voluntary model to a legally mandated system, the state has created a structured environment that provides CSOs with a more predictable flow of resources while simultaneously imposing rigorous standards for accessibility and performance.

Eligibility and Registration Barriers

Access to CSR funding is strictly governed by the NSIF, which requires CSOs to undergo a formal registration process to be eligible for support. As of December 2025, approximately 522 CSOs were successfully registered. To qualify, an organization must:

- Maintain a legal status with the Registry of Associations in Mauritius.
- Operate strictly on a non-profit basis with a governance structure that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and democratic principles.

- Demonstrate a solid track record by providing certified or audited financial statements and activity reports for the two calendar years preceding their application.
- Implement projects that fall within one of the ten priority areas, such as poverty alleviation (targeting the Social Register of Mauritius), health interventions, or disability support.

Technical and Administrative Hurdles

While the centralization of funds ensures that resources are directed toward national priorities, it has introduced significant administrative burdens that disproportionately affect smaller CSOs.

- The NSIF mandates a "culture of performance," requiring CSOs to use standardized project appraisal frameworks and results-based management protocols. This requires a level of technical expertise in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that many smaller, grassroots organizations lack.
- Smaller firms and CSOs often face "compliance barriers" due to limited administrative capacity and a lack of understanding regarding complex statutory requirements. This can create an "accessibility gap" where well-established, larger organizations with professional staff are more likely to secure funding than smaller groups working at the local community level.

Support and Mentorship Initiatives

To bridge these gaps, the NSIF provides some avenues for support:

- The NSIF is mandated to provide financial and technical support to strengthen the institutional capacity of its implementing partners.
- Organizations experiencing difficulties during project implementation may be provided with required assistance to address specific issues, ensuring that funded interventions meet their defined outcomes rather than facing immediate termination of support.

5.7 A Story of Success

The transition of Mauritius from a voluntary CSR model to a regulated, mandatory framework through the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) has provided more than just financial liquidity; it has created a structured ecosystem for targeted social intervention. The following insights illustrate the tangible outcomes of this model on the ground.

Targeted Intervention via the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM)

- A defining feature of the Mauritian case is the explicit link between CSR funding and the Social Register of Mauritius. By prioritizing beneficiaries who live below the poverty line (households earning less than Rs 14,650), the NSIF ensures that private sector wealth is directed toward the most marginalized.
- A critical case study involves a consortium of 10 NGOs funded by the NSIF to tackle adult illiteracy. These programs do not merely teach reading; they integrate financial literacy and vocational guidance.
- Data indicates that over 65% of participants in these literacy programs reported an increase in confidence when seeking employment, with approximately 30% successfully transitioning into the formal labor market within 12 months of completion.

The "Pathways to Employment" Initiative

- One of the most poignant examples of CSR impact is found in the rural districts of Mauritius, where youth unemployment was historically high. Through a partnership between the NSIF and local NGOs, a vocational training center was established specifically for SRM-registered youth.
- One young man, whose family had been supported by state welfare for two generations, enrolled in a

CSR-funded hospitality training program. Upon completion, he secured a position at a major coastal resort, of which he used his first year of earnings to renovate his family home and fund his younger sibling's education. This demonstrates the "multiplier effect" mentioned in the NSIF's evaluation criteria—where one CSR-funded intervention effectively breaks the multi-generational cycle of poverty for an entire household.

Disability and Special Needs Support

- Before the institutionalization of CSR, many NGOs working with children with disabilities struggled with inconsistent funding, leading to high staff turnover and interrupted therapy.
- Under the current framework, established NGOs in the disability sector receive "Direct Funding" or long-term grants. This has allowed for the professionalization of care of which, the availability of predictable CSR funds has enabled NGOs to invest in specialized equipment (such as sensory rooms and mobility aids) that were previously unaffordable under voluntary, one-off corporate donations.

The Shift to Results-Based Management

The case study reveals a significant shift in how CSOs operate. To access NSIF funds, NGOs are now required to adopt Results-Based Management.

- While this initially created a "technical barrier" for smaller organizations, it has forced the sector to become more data-driven. NGOs are no longer just "doing good"; they are measuring social ROI
- Projects are now evaluated on five key pillars: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. This rigorous vetting process has increased the credibility of the NGO sector in the eyes of international donors and the local private sector.
- The insights also highlight that funding alone is not a panacea. The most successful case studies were those where the Corporate Contributor did more than just remit 75% of their funds to the MRA. In cases where the corporation utilized its remaining 25% to provide mentorship, technical expertise, or market access to the NGO, the success rate of the projects was significantly higher. This underscores the finding that "Mandatory CSR" is most effective when it is treated as a strategic partnership rather than a tax-like compliance burden.

5.7 Critical Gaps and Challenges

Despite these successes, the findings identify several persistent weaknesses:

- There is a noted lack of visibility in how funds are tracked and publicly reported, which can weaken civil society trust.
- Some corporations prioritize statutory reporting and annual disclosures over the actual depth of community impact.
- Smaller firms and NGOs often struggle with the administrative burden of compliance, results-based management, and complex application processes due to limited technical capacity.
- Funding distribution tends to be urban-centric, leaving rural or underserved communities with fewer resources.

6. Lessons Learned

Based on the case study, the transition from voluntary philanthropy to a mandatory, state-led CSR framework in Mauritius offers several profound lessons regarding human impact and institutional strategy.

1. Shifting from a voluntary "charity" model to a legal mandate ensures a predictable, sustainable flow of domestic resources that does not fluctuate based on corporate whims.
2. A central governing body like the NSIF prevents "philanthropic fragmentation," in which funds were previously overconcentrated in urban centers or "prestige" projects, leaving essential services underfunded.
3. Using objective tools like the Social Register of Mauritius ensures that aid is directed toward those in absolute poverty based on data rather than subjective or anecdotal requests.
4. The NSIF acts as a critical intermediary, translating high-level government policy into actionable implementation for the private sector and civil society.
5. Investing in vocational and literacy programs for marginalized youth can break multi-generational cycles of poverty. For instance, one young man's hospitality training allowed him to renovate his family home and fund his sibling's education, creating a ripple effect of stability.
6. Successful interventions for adult illiteracy integrate functional skills such as financial literacy and vocational guidance, leading to greater confidence and formal employment.
7. In sectors like disability support, long-term, predictable grants allow CSOs to invest in specialized equipment (such as sensory rooms) and retain professional staff, which is impossible with erratic, one-off donations.
8. While high standards (Results-Based Management) enhance the sector's credibility, they can create a "compliance barrier" for smaller grassroots organizations that lack technical expertise.
9. Mandatory CSR is most effective when corporations remain engaged. When companies use their retained 25% of funds to provide direct mentorship and technical expertise to CSOs, project success rates increase significantly.
10. A top-down approach can exclude the voices of the beneficiaries. There is a recognized need to shift toward a more participatory dynamic where the people being served have a voice in project design.
11. Success is not just about the volume of money (liquidity) but about creating a "structured ecosystem" where private sector wealth is systematically converted into measurable social progress

7. Conclusion

The Mauritian experience shows that CSR can move well beyond good intentions and occasional giving.

- What stands out is not just the volume of resources mobilized, but the deliberate effort to organize those resources into a system that is predictable, targeted, and tied to national priorities. By making CSR a legal obligation and linking it to a clear institutional framework, Mauritius has managed to turn private sector success into a steady stream of investment in social inclusion.
- At the same time, the case study makes it clear that structure alone does not solve everything. The same systems that bring order and accountability, centralization, compliance requirements, and results-based management, also introduce new pressures, particularly for smaller civil society organizations. For many grassroots actors, accessing these funds is not just about having a good idea, but about navigating complex procedures and meeting technical standards that can feel out of reach. This tension between accountability and accessibility is one of the defining features of the model.

- What is encouraging, however, is that the framework is not static. It has evolved over time, responding to gaps such as fragmented funding, weak coordination, and limited impact measurement. The introduction of tools like the Social Register of Mauritius has helped ensure that resources are not just spent, but directed where they are needed most. And the growing emphasis on outcomes rather than activities is slowly reshaping how both corporations and CSOs think about their role in development.
- For the rest of Africa, the Mauritian model offers a practical point of reference rather than a one-size-fits-all solution. It shows that domestic resource mobilization is not an abstract concept; it can be operationalized to reduce dependence on external aid and strengthen national ownership of development. But it also highlights the importance of balance: between regulation and flexibility, between efficiency and inclusion, and between national priorities and local realities.
- In the end, the real value of the Mauritian CSR framework lies in how it brings different actors into a shared space. Government sets the direction, the private sector contributes resources, and civil society translates those resources into real change on the ground. When that balance works, the results are not just visible in reports or funding figures, but in the gradual, often quiet shifts in people's lives, better access to opportunities, more stable support systems, and, in some cases, a genuine pathway out of poverty.

8. Recommendations

Based on the case study analysis, the following general recommendations focus on optimizing the institutional effectiveness of the National Social Inclusion Foundation (NSIF) and the strategic scaling efforts of the African Philanthropy Network (APN).

8.1 Recommendations for the NSIF

1. Implement a uniform Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework that utilizes standardized impact metrics to ensure consistency across all funded projects.
2. Streamline and simplify application procedures to reduce the administrative burden on grassroots Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that may lack high-level technical capacity.
3. Provide dedicated financial and technical support to strengthen the institutional capabilities of smaller NGOs, helping them overcome "compliance barriers".
4. Transition from a top-down delivery model to one that incorporates the voices of the beneficiaries (those on the Social Register of Mauritius) in the actual design of social interventions.
5. Address the lack of visibility in fund tracking by improving public reporting and disclosure of how funds are distributed and the depth of their community impact.
6. Develop strategies to ensure funding is not overly concentrated in urban centers, reaching underserved rural "pockets of poverty".

8.2 Recommendations for the APN

1. Use a phased approach to pilot and scale the Mauritian "Mandatory CSR" model in other African nations to drive domestic resource mobilization.
2. Encourage regional governments to move from voluntary philanthropy to legislative mandates, ensuring a sustainable and sovereign social development fund.

3. Advocate for the use of data-driven tools like the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) to ensure that philanthropic resources across Africa are targeted toward objective needs rather than subjective charity.
4. Create resources to help CSOs across the continent adopt Results-Based Management (RBM), increasing their credibility with both state and private sector donors.
5. Promote the "25% retention" philosophy, in which corporate contributors provide not just capital but also mentorship and technical expertise to implementation partners.

8.3 Recommendations for Corporates

1. Corporates should shift from viewing the 2% contribution as a "tax-like" obligation to a strategic investment in the nation's social contract.
2. Use the allowed 25% fund retention to build deep, long-term partnerships with NGOs rather than funding one-off projects.
3. Offer mentorship, technical expertise, or market access to NGOs, as these "strategic partnerships" lead to significantly higher project success rates than capital alone.
4. Actively seek out projects in underserved rural "pockets of poverty" to counter the current trend of urban-centric funding.
5. Prioritize the actual social outcomes and long-term community benefits over simple annual disclosures or brand visibility.

8.4 Recommendations for CSOs

1. Embrace data-driven protocols to measure "Social ROI," as funding is increasingly tied to demonstrated impact and governance rather than just intent.
2. Ensure project blueprints directly address the ten "National Priority Areas," such as poverty alleviation (SRM targeting), health, or disability services, to qualify for NSIF funds.
3. Smaller CSOs should seek technical training to overcome "compliance barriers" and manage the rigorous statutory requirements of the NSIF.
4. Maintain clean governance records and at least two years of audited financial statements to remain eligible for registration and multi-year funding.

9. References

- Government of Mauritius, Income Tax Act 1995 (Section 50L).
- National Social Inclusion Foundation Annual Reports 2017–2025.
- Finance Act 2009 and 2016.
- Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA) Guidelines.