

CHAPTER - 25

VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN RAJASTHAN

Background and Evolution of Voluntary Sector in Rajasthan

25.1 Rajasthan has always been a home for voluntary efforts and voluntarism. The voluntary sector organizations have played a vital role in addressing the issues concerning to the life of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged. Today, there is an impressive number of voluntary organizations in the state offering alternative perspectives; committed expertise; an understanding of the local opportunities and constraints; and perhaps most importantly, the capacity to conduct a meaningful dialogue with communities.

25.2 It would be appropriate to have a critical look on evolution of the voluntary sector in the state. Considering the “organization” as an important part of voluntary efforts, it was the decade of the 70’s when some NGOs emerged in Rajasthan, with the objective of welfare combined with adult education and social development. Seva Mandir, in Udaipur, worked to promote literacy, and better agriculture practices among the small and marginal farmers and the poor. The Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) Tilonia, worked to provide basic infrastructure and resources to poor families of the rural communities. The approach of these organizations in the 80’s was to do all these activities with the active involvement of the concerned communities. In the 80’s several organizations like Urmul Trust were set up with the focus on community development and addressed their concerns and issues with their participation, rather than imposing some development projects/schemes as such.

25.3 The efforts of voluntary sector get recognized by the state to a great extent. This resulted as increase in the legitimate space for voluntary organizations in state run development initiatives. The Women’s Development Program and Shiksha Karmi Pariyojana were inspired by the NGOs intervention with women and children. In this program, the NGOs were then involved as partners in planning and implementing the schemes, in training the personnel and mobilization of the communities, and in monitoring and evaluation. From this period, it was seen that many bilateral donors also insisted with the GoR to involve NGOs as partners in development schemes that they agreed to fund. In early 90’s the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded Lok Jhumbish Program instituted active and substantial partnership with NGOs into the implementation process.

25.4 The increase in legitimate space for voluntary organizations was resulted as proliferation of voluntary organizations in Rajasthan. In the late 80’s and the 90’s Rajasthan experienced a flood of NGOs in several of

it's backward and under developed districts. These included a vast range of organizations such as religious and charitable, formal schools, recreation clubs, welfare institutions, besides developmental organizations, which have been mainly all, registered under the Societies Registration Act, and are broadly termed NGOs. The voluntary sector in the state is diverse in terms of philosophy, approach, outreach and size. Particularly, the number of voluntary organisations those are small in terms of size and annual outlay is significant in the state. the voluntary sector of the state today consist of a range of organizations including the charity and welfare organizations, development NGOs, grassroots NGOs, social action groups and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Need for Development Collaboration

25.5 The main agencies facilitating development at the grassroots are the Govt. line departments, the Panchayati Raj Institutions, and the field based NGOs. Each of these stakeholders has their significant characteristics that afford some strengths and some weaknesses that have implication for development processes and thereby collaboration. In the last decade the scope of involving NGOs in development schemes at various levels has theoretically increased and practically too this has brought in a flux of NGOs in to the development arena.

25.6 Being the largest of all agencies for development and by far the most legitimate constitutionally, the government owns the most in terms of trained human and financial resources. With elaborate, well-defined, hierarchical and relatively inflexible structures, and processes, it fails to elicit wider participation and is rarely able to support developmental innovation within the existing set-up – a necessity for creative approaches to the ever changing development scenario.

25.7 As mentioned earlier, it is only very few of the registered bodies, as societies under the Societies Registration Act, that actually work for the development of the poor in a real and sensitive way. But the range in terms of size, experience, scope, orientation (conceptual / ideological) and the human and financial resource availability of such organisations is wide and varying. These determine their inclination, preparedness, readiness, and capabilities to forge partnerships and enter into collaborations.

25.8 As elected representative body of the people at the lowest wrung of the democracy, the PRIs have had a mixed track record of performance, credibility and real people's involvement after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment empowering them for developmental decision making. The strengths of this process has been the inclusion of more women and the *dalits*, while the limitations relate to lack of real control over the local administration, no substantial financial powers, lack of trained and professional human resource support that is people oriented. This has been somewhat rectified by the recent orders of the Rajasthan

Government devolving control of 29 subjects and the local administrative and government service personnel of 16 departments.

25.9 Presently, being the foundation stone of grassroots democracy, the Panchayati Raj system constitutes a tremendous potential for community-based development. But the PRI institutions have a mixed relationship with line departments that they deal with on the one hand and the NGO that work in their areas on the other, which undermine the development agenda and collaboration efforts.

Establishment of ARAVALI

25.10 As mentioned, the phenomenon of GO-NGO collaboration has evolved gradually in the state. Although some forms of collaboration have been part of the post independence and recent history of the state of Rajasthan, the critical input came with the formation of ARAVALI. The idea of establishing a facilitative environment wherein the collaboration takes place- was the core motivation behind its existence. ARAVALI was set up in 1994 with a start-up support from the state and subsequently developed as a professional body that is independent. A variety of programs have been undertaken by ARAVALI to strengthen capacities of voluntary organizations so that they can take-up the evolved roles in development. It has also worked significantly with different departments of the state to evolve appropriate mechanism for collaboration. As a development support organizations ARAVALI has tried out innovations for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged and disseminated it's learning to across the agencies engaged in development facilitation.

25.11 The *National Policy for Voluntary Sector*¹, which forms part of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, has accentuated the vital role of voluntary sector by stating that: *“The voluntary sector has contributed significantly to finding innovative solutions to poverty, deprivation, discrimination and exclusion, through means such as awareness raising, social mobilization, service delivery, training, research, and advocacy. The voluntary sector has been serving as an effective non-political link between the people and the Government. This policy recognizes the important role that the voluntary sector has to play in various areas and affirms the growing need for collaboration ... at the local, provincial and national levels.”*

25.12 An attempt has been made to explore the answers in the voluntary sector policy adopted by the government. The policy aims to create an environment for the Voluntary Organisations (VOs) in order to stimulate their effectiveness. The policy while recognizing the civil society initiatives as a key agency for development as a critical watchdog, also points towards greater accountability and transparency in voluntary sector governance.

¹ This section is based on contributions from various debates on voluntary sector policy.

25.13 As suggested in the National Voluntary Sector Policy the Planning Commission at the National level, State Planning Departments and line departments at the District level should be responsible to facilitate collaboration between the government and civil society groups in the direction of reinforcing mutual development objectives. There is need to actualize this idea at the ground level. In Rajasthan, ARAVALI has already done an experiment in selected districts in terms of developing district level forum called GO-NGO-PRI Forum. These forums were created to create a facilitative environment at the district level for collaboration. These forums can be revitalized to take up the collaboration facilitation role at district level.

25.14 A sector-wise Resource Institution Network of voluntary organizations and experts identified by government nodal agencies can be created to provide support to civil society organizations engaged with the implementation of programs. Currently, the eligibility barrier of volume of business and years of operations prevents even competent Voluntary Organizations from taking up operational roles in development works and programs.

Formulation of Procedure and Guidelines for involvement of Voluntary Organizations / NGOs

25.15 The Government has developed a procedure and guidelines for involving NGOs / Voluntary Organizations in various Government programmes. The criteria and procedures for involvement of Voluntary Organizations would facilitate meaningful public-private partnership. The guidelines focus on selection criteria, procedures, terms and condition of the partnership. The initiative has been taken up mainly by the Rural Development Department and Irrigation Department. The discussions with other departments are also in progress. These scattered guidelines are being examined for preparing a policy for Voluntary Sector.

Involving NGOs in decentralized planning process for Development Programs

25.16 Civil society organizations have an important role to play in partnering with local governments to empower the people to actively engage in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The role of the Panchayats and the Municipalities vis-a-vis the complementary and supplementary role of the civil society can be elaborated further in policies and programs of the state. There is no road map as yet on how the civil society may impact in ensuring the outcomes set by the Planning Commission for the 11th Plan in terms of monitor-able targets. That should be the basis for refocusing the role of civil society in the 11th Five Year Plan at the National Consultation. The role of the civil society to ensure transparency and participation of the stakeholders in a partnership framework needs to be emphasized.

25.17 The deepening of the decentralization process through the Panchayatiraj structure has thrown up new challenges of capacity at the district, block and gram panchayat level. The planning function of the PRI setup across sectors requires capacities to develop sectoral plans taking into account the local district needs. Apart from physical infrastructure, the departments find it challenging to visualize planned interventions for better service delivery or addressing local challenges.

25.18 To integrate livelihood related interventions RMoL has been established in association with BASICS. It is State level coordinating body for all livelihood related interventions. For increasing employability potential of the unemployed youth in the State, RMoL is carrying out various Livelihood Promotion Programmes in collaboration with Government departments, NGOs Technical Institutes and companies. It is professionally geared agency that is being run in a mission mode. Rajasthan Mission on Livelihood performs more of the role of a planner facilitator; using the latest management tools and working against the focused time bound Plan.

25.19 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) is one of the key schemes in which small and local NGOs are playing vital role in implementation process. Presently NGOs are involve in activities like SHG formation, counseling, skill up-gradation and entrepreneurial guidance for undertaking income generation activities in sustainable manner and also playing key role in SHG linkage with bank and credit mobilization.

25.20 The National Rural Health Mission provides an ample opportunity for partnerships between the government and NGOs. However, the number of NGOs with the desired level of capacity to collaborate under the Mission is very limited. Looking in to the capacity building requirement of NGOs in health sector. Medical & Health Department has initiated a NGO desk, to facilitate effective communication between the Government and NGOs. This would help us in addressing capacity building issues of NGOs as well enable us to understand the dynamics of partnerships in health sector. Some other government departments have also appointed NGO advisors to deal with matters related to NGOs.

25.21 The Agriculture Department and ARAVALI collaborated to develop a process of decentralized planning where in the District Agriculture Plans of all districts are being prepared under the *Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana* based on the evolved process.

25.22 Similar collaborative spaces are being explored under NREGA with NGOs for planning of ecologically sustainable works and strengthening of Social Audit process.

25.23 However in case of other programs the collaboration space needs to be negotiated by both the State and the NGOs for better outcomes on both the planning and implementation front. One critical program on this account is the Watershed Development program which provides the

state with high degree of flexibility under the Common Guidelines 2008. The state government and the NGOs need to sit across and see how the pressure of generating livelihoods around ecologically sustainable practices can be met through the watershed programs.

Strategy

25.24 In the Eleventh Five Year Plan, greater focus will be given on strengthening of voluntary sector especially in the remote tribal and desert districts, to achieve improved coverage in essential health care and nutrition. Special focus will be given to establish demand to improve service delivery system in implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes and other social welfare schemes through greater participation of voluntary sector in the state.

Challenges

25.25 The major challenge facing most sectors of the economy in the form of inadequate human resource capacities to address the requirements of institutions has impacted the NGOs the hardest. This has placed immense pressure on the supply of quality human resources to NGOs and as such there is a strong need to address this issue. The critical constraint around this is the low to negligible investment in the capacity building of human resources within NGOs. The state has been addressing this issue of capacity building of NGO human resources in multilateral donor projects.

25.26 However there is a larger segment of institutions and their human resources who find that investment in their capacity is difficult to come by. In contrast to this supply side constraint there is an ever increasing demand for NGO services. One of the implications of this has been the proliferation of “project management specialist” agencies that enter specific projects, carry out the tasks, and later move out. Though this model has its merit from a donor perspective it has resulted in acute shortage of institutions which are needed for a much larger variety and quantum of work that is done through specific state programs like watershed, education, health, and SGSY. These programs do not provide space and resources for capacity building processes of partnering NGOs. If a state funding for such critical processes is accepted as an institutional entitlement then there are organisations that can take up this challenge. The benefit of such an investment in civil society would allow the state to reap the benefit of having a large number of institutions working for the marginalized segments on a long term basis.