

## **CHAPTER - 25**

### **VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN RAJASTHAN**

#### **Background and Evolution of Voluntary Sector in Rajasthan**

25.1 Rajasthan has always been a home of voluntary efforts and voluntarism. The voluntary sector organizations have played a vital role in addressing the issues concerning the life of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged. Today there is an impressive number of voluntary organizations in the state offering alternative perspective; 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 of the disadvantaged groups with focus on 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 have been now recognized by the state to a great extent. This was reflected in form 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 these programmes, the NGOs were then involved as partners in planning and implementing the schemes, in training the personnel and mobilization of the communities, in monitoring and evaluation. From this period, it was seen that many bilateral donors also insisted with the Rajasthan Government 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 Jumbish Program which envisaged active and substantial partnership with NGOs into the implementation process.

25.4 The increase in legitimate space for voluntary organizations resulted into proliferation of voluntary organizations in Rajasthan. In the late 80's

and the 90's Rajasthan experienced a flood of NGOs in several its 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 registered under the Societies Registration Act. The voluntary sector in the state is diverse in terms of philosophy, approach, outreach and size. Particularly, the number of voluntary organizations which are small in terms of size and annual outlay is significant in the state. The voluntary sector of the state today consists of a range of organizations including the charity and welfare organizations, development NGOs, grass root NGOs, social action groups and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

### **Need for Development Collaboration**

25.5 The main agencies facilitating development at the grass root level are the Government 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 process at various levels has theoretically increased and practically too this has brought in a flux of NGOs in the development arena.

25.6 Being the largest of the all the agencies for development and by far the most legitimate constitutionally, the government owns the most in terms of trained human and financial resource. 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 organizations is wide and varying. These determine their inclination, preparedness, readiness and capabilities to forge partnership and enter into collaboration.

25.8 An elected representative body of the people at the lowest rung of the democracy, the PRIs 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 to the Panchayati Raj setup.

25.9 Presently, being the foundation stone of grass root democracy, the Panchayati Raj system constitutes a tremendous potential for community-based development. But the PRIs 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 organization for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged, it disseminated its learning across the agencies engaged in development facilitation.

25.11 The National Policy for Voluntary Sector, which forms part of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, has accentuated the vital role of voluntary sector by stating: "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 Organizations (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 toward greater accountability and transparency in voluntary sector governance.

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 a 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 forums called GO-NGO-PRI forums. 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 programs. 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 themselves in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. The role of Panchayats and 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 XI Five Year Plan in terms of monitorable targets. That should be the basis for refocusing the role of civil society in the XI Five Year Plan at the National Level Consultations. 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 decentralized process through the Panchayati Raj structure has thrown up new challenges of capacity at the district, block and gram panchayat level. The planning function of the PRI set up 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 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 Programs 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 planning facilitator; using the latest management tools and working against the focused time bound Plans.

25.19 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) is one of the key scheme in which small and local NGOs are playing a vital role in implementation process. Presently NGOs are involved 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 banks 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 the 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 advisers 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 Rastriya 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 program.

### **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 programs 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 very 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 organizations 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 segment on a long term basis.

### **Movement on State Voluntary Sector Policy**

25.27 Based on the National Voluntary Sector Policy an attempt to evolve a State Policy was made by the state government. As a process the state government consulted all the government departments and tried to understand the need for NGO services from the departmental perspectives. This was used as a basis for developing an operational guideline for engaging NGO services by the state departments. Obviously such a process and the final outcome have little acceptance with the NGOs in the state. The policy formulation process needs to engage with the stakeholders for whom the policy is being drafted. The lacunae in the policy formulation process will be addressed and the state will enable a favorable environment and procedural framework for effective development of a strong voluntary sector in the state.

### **Strengthening Social Accountability**

28.28 Looking at the wide set of traits captured under the NGO categorization, it is important to develop a framework for categorization of organizations. This will enable development collaboration spaces across various layers of the development process namely grassroots implementation, operational institutional mechanisms at the departmental levels and policy engagements at the level of the state. This has been also borne out by the recent experiences with the social audit process under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). The need to translate the strong movement against corruption into effective institutional mechanisms for positive outcomes needs further strengthening through robust social accountability mechanisms. This requires a combination of complementary strengths which can only be brought about by a corresponding set of institutions. The Voluntary Sector will need to be actively engaged in this at various levels of the development process.