

CHAPTER – 24

VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Voluntary Sector in Rajasthan

24.1 Rajasthan has been a pioneer state in the growth and development of voluntary sector in terms of its contribution in different sphere of development and in spelling out a roadmap in the form of Voluntary Sector Policy by the State Government for strengthening the sector. Its undeniable fact that the voluntary sector organizations in Rajasthan have played a meaningful role in addressing issues relating to the life of the poor, disadvantaged and underprivileged classes.

24.2 The efforts of voluntary sector were well recognized by the state to a great extent. This resulted in an increase in the legitimate space for voluntary organizations in the state supported development initiatives. Today, there are innumerable voluntary organizations in the State with different perspectives, expertise, understanding of the local issues and opportunities and perhaps most important, the capacity to conduct a meaningful dialogue with communities on key sectors such as Education, Livelihoods, Health, Women Empowerment, Watershed development, facilitating Community Based Natural Resource Management such as Water, Forest, Agriculture and Livestock development in the state.

24.3 The voluntary sector of Rajasthan today consists of a range of organizations including the charitable and welfare organizations, development NGOs, grass root NGOs, social action groups, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and the relatively new professional groups in the form of development firms and presence of individual development consultants.

24.4 In Rajasthan, ARAVALI (Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement) was established by the State Government for facilitating, the phenomenon of GO-NGO collaboration which now has evolved gradually in the State. The idea of establishing a facilitative environment wherein collaboration between Government and NGOs takes place was the core motivation behind ARAVALI's conceptualization. ARAVALI was set up in 1994 with a start up support from the state and subsequently developed as an autonomous organization. A variety of programs have been undertaken by ARAVALI to strengthen capacities of voluntary organizations especially small and medium size NGOs in the state 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 committed to benefit the poor and the disadvantaged, ARAVALI has been disseminating its learning across agencies engaged in development facilitation. ARAVALI

has built capacities of more than 150 NGOs in the State, who are working for empowering rural communities.

24.5 ARAVALI has already done an experiment in selected districts in terms of developing district level forums called GO-NGO-PRI forum. Aimed at creating a facilitative environment at the district level for collaboration, these forums can be revitalized and needs to be established and strengthened in all the 33 districts of Rajasthan.

24.6 Civil Society Organizations have an important role to play in partnering with local governments to empower the people to actively engage in formulation and implementation of plans. 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. The role of the civil society to ensure transparency and participation of the stakeholders in a partnership framework also needs to be emphasized.

24.7 The deepening of the decentralized process through the Panchayati Raj structure has thrown up new challenges of capacities at the district, block and gram panchayat levels in the State. The planning function of the PRIs set up across sectors requires capacities to develop sectoral plans taking into account the local needs. However, apart from developing physical infrastructure, the departments find it challenging to visualize and plan other development interventions for better servicing and addressing livelihood challenges of communities.

24.8 To integrate livelihood related interventions, the Rajasthan Mission on Livelihoods (RMoL) was established by the State Government in 2007, in association with a professional agency, BASIX. Today, RMoL is the 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 skill-based training programs in collaboration with the government departments, NGOs, technical institutions and companies. As a professionally-gearred agency run in a mission mode, RMoL performs more of the role of a planner facilitator; using the latest management tools and working against a focused, time bound plan.

24.9 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana (SGSY) was one of the key government schemes in which small and local NGOs played a vital role in the implementation process, throughout the State. The community mobilization role of NGOs is recognized by the government and SHG-formation is carried out by both GO and NGO entities in Rajasthan. Since 2011, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has replaced SGSY and a formal and structured engagement of NGOs is envisaged in the NRLM design.

24.10 Similar collaborative spaces are being explored under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) with NGOs, for planning of ecologically sustainable works and strengthening of Social Audit process.

24.11 However, in the case of other programs, the collaboration space needs to be negotiated by both the State and the NGOs for better outcomes on both planning and implementation fronts. 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.

Challenges of Transformation for the Voluntary Sector

24.12 The rapid rate of economic growth and the diversification of opportunities available to communities have led to a shift in a way that communities respond to traditional modes of working of the voluntary sector. The expansion of micro-finance sector over the years has led to many NGOs diversifying into various models from pure Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) to community based micro-finance. Sectorally focused NGOs are today witnessing a fast-changing institutional environment. The state is once again expanding its outreach through para-workers and entitlement-based development programming. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) are some of the key state funded interventions in the recent time. The need for organizing target community into institutions and generating awareness were two main focus areas of voluntary efforts have been substantially reduced with the family entitlement-based efforts of the state programs. Increasing connectivity through road and telecommunication network has rapidly reduced the information gap amongst communities in the State.

24.13 The focus on improved governance at the level of the State has again brought in major changes in the way that community requirements and demands are addressed. Under the present situation, the Voluntary Sector with its sizeable presence is at the crossroads. Having seen their past efforts resulting in a transformation of government programs and their delivery, the Voluntary Sector is undergoing a transformation from a change innovator to a growth innovator.

24.14 Being the largest of all the agencies of development and by far the most legitimate constitutionally, government owns the most in terms of trained human and financial resource. In the decade of 2000-2010, the overwhelming pace of economic growth has transformed static development ideologies and actions into more Rights based Policies in the Government. Several small and scattered efforts of the Voluntary Sector

in the State have consolidated into National Movements advocating for structural changes in the State Policies mandated by Laws. In this context, the Right to Work, Right to Education, and Right to Information Acts are some of the transforming actions from the Legislature.

24.15 Implementation of these laws have now become the defining framework for action at the community level wherein the government finds itself striving hard to address the challenges of managing high economic growth with the concurrent challenges of highly exclusionary impact of this growth. For the Development Agencies, largely in the Voluntary Sector, this change is offering challenges both in terms of the ways they work and also what to work upon. Many decades of voluntary sector-experiences are now reflected and embedded in the manner of the State's working.

24.16 As elected representative bodies of the people at the lowest rung of the democracy, the PRIs have had a mixed track record of performance, credibility and real people's involvement after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment which empowered 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 local administration, no substantial financial powers, and lack of trained and professional human resource support that is people oriented. This has been somewhat rectified by the orders of the Rajasthan Government by devolving control of funds, functions and functionaries of key departments like Primary Education, Medical & Health, Women & Child, Agriculture and Social Welfare to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

24.17 In the present scenario, the Panchayati Raj system, being the foundation stone of grass root democracy, exudes tremendous potential for community-based development. But the PRIs have had a mixed relationship with line departments that they deal with on the one hand and with NGOs that work in their areas on the other, which does not always yield healthy outcomes where promotion of development agenda and collaboration efforts are concerned. NGOs can play a significant role in building capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions at all the three tiers right from Gram Panchayat, Block and District levels and can be co-accompanier in carrying out development processes in the state.

Strategy

24.18 In the Twelfth Five Year Plan, greater focus is being given on strengthening of voluntary sector and building partnership with voluntary organizations to work towards focusing on Rural Development programmes such as access to health, education and more so on livelihood initiatives for targeting poorest of the poor communities in the State.

24.19 Special focus is being given to districts having low human development index. Strategy would be to reach out to the remote tribal and desert districts to achieve improved coverage in essential health care and nutrition. Emphasis is being 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.

24.20 State has taken initiatives in developing partnership with NGOs with a meaningful role for them to strengthen the National Flagship Programmes such as MGNREGA, NRHM and NRLM.

24.21 A GO-NGO dialogue named as Vikas Samwad was initiated in 2011 with the facilitation support from ARAVALI; one such dialogue between NGOs and GO was also held by the Department of Rural Development as an initiative for pre-budget consultation with NGOs in the State under the Chairpersonship of the Chief Minister. Such dialogue between GO-NGO is now a regular feature in the State with the onus to organize pre-budget consultations has been shifted to the planning department for facilitating the development process and getting feedbacks from the experiences of the grass-root level workers.

24.22 Also adequate focus is being given for partnership space for NGOs in various sectors such as education, health, watershed, agriculture and livestock development etc. and build on their strengths.

24.23 Focus would also be on Voluntary Organizations working in the urban areas especially with disadvantaged communities such as HIV positive, homeless and pavement dwellers, people affected with chronic diseases, disabilities etc. Many organizations are also working on solid waste management issues. These issues would be addressed adequately in the Twelfth Five Year plan towards achieving the inclusive growth in the State.

24.24 The government would make endowments for the innovations by voluntary sector in the State for learning in development and exploration of possible approaches in addressing the community issues and concerns.

State Voluntary Sector Policy

24.25 The State Government has promulgated State Voluntary Sector Policy for involving NGOs/Voluntary Organizations in various government programs. This policy aims at securing contribution of the voluntary sector in formulation of informal policies and programs which are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of people particularly people in the bottom of the pyramid. It also aims at creating enabling environment where voluntary sector can grow strength to strength and to strengthen collaboration between voluntary sector and the government.

24.26 One important dimension of the Policy is that it emphasizes the issue of accreditation of NGOs and capacity building. The real space given to NGOs is at the apex level wherein a **Voluntary Sector Development Council** has been set up under Chairpersonship of the Chief Minister. Ministers & Secretaries to Government of various departments and representatives from the Voluntary Sector are the members of the council.

24.27 To operationalize the policy; **Voluntary Sector Development Center (VSDC)** has been established as an autonomous society under the Rajasthan Societies of Registration Act, 1958. This Center acts as secretariat to Council and an accreditation agency on behalf of the State Government.

24.28 The Voluntary Sector Development Centre has initiated the process of accreditation of voluntary organizations in the State. The applications from voluntary agencies are being invited for accreditation and meetings of State Level Accreditation Committee are being held regularly for deciding the matters of accreditation to VO's.