

CHAPTER – 24

VOLUNTARY SECTOR

Background and Evolution of Voluntary Sector in Rajasthan

24.1 Rajasthan has been a pioneering 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. It is 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. 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, Health, Women Empowerment, Watershed development, facilitating Community Based Natural Resource Management such as Water, Forest, Agriculture and Livestock development in the state.

24.2 In the decade of 70s, NGO sector emerged in Rajasthan with the concept of welfare of needy which encompassed mainly adult education and social development. Seva Mandir, in Udaipur, started working to promote literacy and better agriculture practices among the small and marginal farmers and the poor. Another NGO, Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC), Tilonia worked to provide basic infrastructure and resources to poor families of the rural communities. The implementation approach adopted by these organizations in the 80s was active community involvement in development efforts. During the same time, several other organizations like Urmul Trust were set up with the focus on community participation in empowering marginalized communities and backward regions.

24.3 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. The Women Empowerment Programs and Shiksha Karmi Pariyojana were inspired by NGOs' interventions with women and children in focus. In these programs, NGOs were involved as partners in planning and implementing the schemes, capacity building of program personnel, community mobilization and in monitoring and evaluation of these development initiatives. During this period, many bilateral donors also insisted that the Rajasthan Government must involve NGOs as partners in implementation of development schemes and programs that they agreed to fund. Active and substantial partnership with NGOs into the implementation process flourished in the early 90s with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)-funded Lok Jumbish Program.

24.4 The increase in legitimate space for voluntary organizations resulted in proliferation of voluntary organizations in Rajasthan. In the late 80s and the 90s, Rajasthan experienced a flood of NGOs in several of its backward and under developed districts. This included a vast range of organizations such as religious and charitable, formal schools, recreation clubs, welfare institutions, besides developmental organizations, which had all been mainly registered under the Societies Registration Act and continue to be covered under the broad term 'NGOs'. The voluntary sector in the state is, thus, 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 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.

Challenges of Transformation for the Voluntary Sector

Development to Growth

24.5 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 past decade has led to many NGOs diversifying into various models from pure 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) and 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 are two main focus areas of voluntary efforts so far, which have been substantially reduced with the family entitlement-based efforts of the state programs. Increasing connectivity through road and telecommunications network has rapidly reduced the information gap amongst communities in the State.

24.6 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. The campaign mode of delivering development programs on scale has resulted in outcomes which benefit communities.

24.7 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*.

24.8 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 State and 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 and the Central Government. 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.

24.9 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 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 some what rectified by the orders of the State Government recently devolving control of funds, functions and functionaries of key departments like Primary Education, Medical & Health, Women & Child, Agriculture and Social Welfare have been transferred to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

24.10 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.

24.11 As suggested in the National Voluntary Sector Policy, the Planning Commission at the National level, State Planning Departments and line departments at the State and district levels should be responsible to

facilitate collaboration between the Government and civil society groups in the direction of reinforcing mutual development objectives. Towards this end, GoR has formulated a State policy for Voluntary Sector 2010.

24.12 In Rajasthan, ARAVALI was established for facilitating, the phenomenon of GO-NGO collaboration which now 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 (Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement) by the Government of Rajasthan. 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 a professional autonomous organisation. 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 build capacities of more than 150 NGOs in the state of Rajasthan, who are working for empowering rural communities.

24.13 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.

24.14 ARAVALI also takes up various pilot initiatives through its partner Voluntary Organizations across the state to strengthen rural livelihood support system and is currently working on a unique concept called "Family Livelihood Resource Centre" approach in six districts of the state namely Karauli, Ajmer, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Banswara and Barmer by identifying the poorest vulnerable families through participatory poverty assessment process and is working with more than 3000 identified poorest families to strengthen their livelihood opportunities and facilitating linkages to various Government entitlement Programmes and Schemes. The engagement with the poorest families is done by trained local volunteers from Rural Areas and is called Livelihood Facilitators. ARAVALI intends to work with this approach with more than 500 NGOs and reach out to one lakh poorest families in the state.

24.15 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.

24.16 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.

24.17 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.

24.18 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was one of the key Government schemes in which small and local NGOs has played vital role in the implementation process, throughout the State. While the community mobilization role of NGOs was recognized by the Government and SHG-formation was carried out by both GO and NGO entities in the State, of late, the role of training and developing SHG members as swarozgaris under SGSY was also assigned to technically competent, training institutions in the State. In the year 2011, SGSY was replaced by the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) and a formal and structured engagement of NGOs is envisaged in the NRLM design.

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

24.20 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.

Strategy

24.21 In the Twelfth Five Year Plan, greater focus will be 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.

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

24.23 Pre-budget consultation was initiated in 2011 with NGOs in the state under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister. Such dialogue between GO-NGO is now a regular feature in the State for the facilitating the development process and getting feedbacks from the experiences of the grass-root level.

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

24.25 Focus would also be on Voluntary Organizations working in the urban areas especially with disadvantaged communities such as HIV positive, homeless and pavement dwellers, and people affected with chronic diseases and disabilities etc. Also many organizations are 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.

24.26 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.

Increasing Social Accountability

24.27 Looking at the wide set of traits and heterogeneity displayed by NGOs in the State, it is important to develop a framework for categorization of organizations and rights movements. 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 experiences with the social audit process under the MNREGS. 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. We hope that the institutional framework developed and promoted under the State Voluntary Sector Policy will be able to resolve some of the issues, if not all, facing the voluntary sector of Rajasthan.