

CHAPTER – 28

VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN RAJASTHAN

Background and Evolution of Voluntary Sector in Rajasthan

28.1 Rajasthan has been a pioneering state in the development of voluntary sector. Voluntary sector organizations have played a meaningful role in addressing issues relating to the life of the poor, disadvantaged & underprivileged class in Rajasthan. Today, there are innumerable voluntary organizations in the state with different perspectives, expertise, understanding of the local constraints and opportunities and perhaps most important, the capacity to conduct a meaningful dialogue with communities working on key sectors such as Education, Health, Women Empowerment, Watershed, Facilitating Community based Natural Resource Management such as Water, Forest, Agriculture and Livestock development in the state.

28.2 In the decade of 70s, NGO sector emerged in Rajasthan with the objective of welfare combined with 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.

28.3 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 personnels, 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.

28.4 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 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

28.5 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.

28.6 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.

28.7 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*.

28.8 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.

28.9 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.

28.10 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 Rajasthan 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.

28.11 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 level and can be co-accompanier in carrying out development processes in the state.

Establishment of ARAVALI

28.12 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 Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI) by the State of Rajasthan. The idea of establishing a facilitative environment wherein collaboration between the 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.

28.13 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."

28.14 An attempt has been made to explore the space for growth in this 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.

28.15 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. There is a need to actualize this idea at ground level. In Rajasthan, 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.

Formulation of State Voluntary Sector Policy

28.16 The State Government has recently promulgated a policy for involving NGOs/Voluntary Organizations in various government programs. This has been formalized in the form of the State Voluntary Sector Policy, passed by the cabinet in 2010. The State Voluntary Sector Policy seeks to 'regulate' and, at times, 'control' more so facilitate the participation of NGOs in specific Government Programs on a departmental and area basis. One important dimension that the Policy emphasize the issue of accreditation of NGOs and capacity building. The real space given to NGOs is at the apex level wherein an Apex Strategic Council is proposed to be set up, headed by the Chief Minister and members from the Voluntary Sector. This attempt by the State Government to formally acknowledge the contribution of the Voluntary Sector by formulating and announcing a Voluntary Sector Policy is a forward looking step, albeit overdue.

28.17 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.

28.18 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.

28.19 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.

28.20 Swaranjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) is one of the key Government schemes in which small and local NGOs play a vital role in the implementation process, throughout the State. While 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, of late, the role of training and developing SHG members as swarozgaris under SGSY is being handed over to technically competent, training institutions in the State. Starting 2011, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) is set to replace SGSY and a formal and structured engagement of NGOs is envisaged in the NRLM design. The State is to work out the details of a State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) and the role of NGOs therein.

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

28.22 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

28.23 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.

28.24 Special focus would to 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.

28.25 State would take initiatives in developing partnership with NGOs with a meaningful role for them to strengthen the National Flagship

Programme such as MGNREGA, NRHM and National Rural Livelihood Mission.

28.26 In last three years, ARAVALI has been working through its partner organizations for establishing process for identification of poorest of the poor families and working to strengthen their livelihoods and ensuring entitlement linkages of these families with various schematic programmes in six districts of the Rajasthan. This support to the families has been facilitated by the group of Local Livelihood Facilitators as we call them, they are the local youths working with Voluntary Organisation and capacitated intensively by ARAVALI. In the Twelfth Five Year Plan, we can have operational plans for working on these initiatives in the state for reaching out to the poorest communities in the state.

28.27 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 Chairmanship of the Chief Minister. Such dialogue between GO-NGO would be made a regular feature in the State for the facilitating the development process and getting feedbacks from the experiences of the grass-root level.

28.28 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.

28.29 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.

28.30 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.

Challenges

28.31 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 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 human resources in NGO

under various multilateral donor projects. However, with the increasing pool of tax revenues and increased allocation of resources for development initiative by the State Government, the space for NGO action has actually been reducing at a fast pace.

28.32 ARAVALI on its own with the support from donor agencies have been working towards building capacities of small and medium size NGOs in the State for last 15 years focusing on organizational and institutional development process, human resource capacity building, governance aspects and strengthening systems and procedures of the organizations. Support from the state could help reaching in scale for capacity building initiatives for Voluntary Organizations. However, the bigger challenge before small and medium NGOs is to become self sustaining entities.

Increasing Social Accountability

28.33 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.