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The problems of economic slump, environmental degradation, and social disintegration have escalated poverty, human insecurities, and violence the world over. The current scenario urges us to reflect on values of sustainable development. The concept encompasses concerns of economic growth, human development, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. These concerns affect each other in an interlinked and synergised manner, thereby enabling people and their community to find meaning and dignity in their lives. Such efforts are not just about finding alternatives but about looking for common ground to share common aspirations and creating a humane, just society. It is time to differently conceptualize community: as a milieu where values of democratic governance, sustainable development, cooperation and partnership are society's organizing principles; and where people are stakeholders and partners in deciding their own fate. It is indeed a daunting challenge for the civil society to ensures a meaningful voice and active participation of every citizen in the ownership of productive assets and towards the pursuit of common public good. Individually, civil society organizations have always played crucial role in social reconstruction by advocating the concerns of the marginalized. Now the need is for strong and compelling partnerships to build a coherent civil society identity based on explicit common values and ideals of public good. This is the essence of active citizenship.

This issue of Innovation in Civil Society brings together the diverse thematic papers, each highlighting the significance of collective initiatives and collaborations for common public good. The key thematic paper, ‘Emerging Global Trends: Challenges facing Civil Society’ (Rajesh Tandon) implores the need for change in the civil society's perception of itself in the light of the current global scenario of despair and confusion created by the trends of globalization, terrorism and dwindling resources for development. Ensuring democratic governance, releasing narrow parochial and ghettoized ideology and forging a coherent civil society identity based on common values and ideals of public good are some of the formidable tasks facing the civil society today. The paper on ‘Coalition Building - An Alternative to Problem Solving’ (Malini Nambiar) emphasizes the contributory and collaborative role of each stakeholder in accelerating the pace of sustainable development. While examining the forms of coalitions, and experiences within the process of coalitions, the paper also reflects on the challenges to sustain such fora. An essential pre-condition for active citizenship is the ability to express and assert interests and demands to seek and claim one's rights. Vaijayanta Anand in her paper on ‘Multiparty Accountability for Environmentally sustainable development: The challenge of Active Citizenship’ contends that informed collective assertion of rights from the marginalised stakeholders to seek accountability can allow them to stake claims in the development process. Anju Dwivedi in her paper on ‘Social Development Monitoring: A Process to Ensure Accountability’ upholds that social development monitoring as an accountability mechanism can strengthen and deepen inclusive democracy by giving meaning and visibility to people's voice and concerns.

A key point of PRIA's work is capacity building, helping to build effective institutions that are based on democratic participation and accountability at all levels. The Practice section of this journal provides case studies on capacity building initiatives. The development sector in India has a long history of interventions in the field of literacy, livelihood, savings and credit with a view to empower,
in particular, women. Women’s Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development (WELLD) Project is different in that it integrates and relates education, livelihood and asset building through savings and credit to women empowerment. The paper by Sonal Surange and Jyousula Lakshma highlights PRIA’s experiences in implementing this integrated model of empowerment in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Effective citizen engagement in ‘good governance’ for a broader social good assumes a circumstance of active citizenship. In such a situation, people develop awareness of their citizenship identity, individually and collectively, and mobilize to make their claims. The voluntary development sector can play a crucial role in actualizing good governance and activating citizenship. The strengthening of the capacities of voluntary initiatives is, therefore, a vital requirement. In this context, PRIA undertook state specific studies to understand the capacity building needs of voluntary development organizations. This paper, ‘Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations: A Study in Andhra Pradesh’ (Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay & M. Kamal) is based on the findings of one such study.

Book reviews conclude this issue, each one in their different way, linked to the theme of active citizenship and sustainable development.
Emerging Global Trends: Challenges Facing Civil Society

Rajesh Tandon

Abstract Poverty, human insecurities and violence the world over have created the feeling of despair and confusion. Author urges that civil society needs to look at itself, the world around and redefine its course of action. This article is adapted from Dr Rajesh Tandon's opening address at 'Developing Local Roots', Third International conference for Sustainable Resource Mobilization, Agra, March 4, 2002.

Trends

We are living in difficult times today. Less than two years ago, various festivities, conferences, get-togethers celebrated the turn of the millennium. The new dream was likely to be realised in the new millennium. Recent months have demonstrated a sense of despair, directionlessness and confusion prevalent throughout the world. In this context, civil society everywhere needs to look at itself, look at the world around it and define a path that it could walk upon. In this paper, I have identified three broad global trends. In light of these global trends, the challenges facing civil society are explored.

1. The promise of globalization remains just that – a mere promise. Only ten years ago, globalization was seen as leading to the greater well being of all. With the reduced barriers for trade across countries, use of new information and telecommunication technology for transfer of capital instantaneously to any market, increasing private foreign investment in different parts of the world, greater acknowledgement of free market economy as a driver for economic development in all societies, it was proclaimed that globalization was the way to be.

However, the reality on the ground in ten years has become quite different. Expansion of markets has taken place, but primarily for consumption in the developing countries of the South. The production market has not expanded in these countries. There is greater integration of the elite in the countries of the North and South and
they share a common lifestyle, perspective and way of functioning. The bubble of the new economy burst at the turn of the millennium leaving many in the Silicon Valley and their counterparts elsewhere in the world “disconnected”. Constant pressure for growth in GDP has let distortions in many economies (like China) while North America and Europe continue to experience deep recession.

There is an increased questioning of the model of globalization in different parts of the world. Direct and aggressive street protests and demonstrations have raised the issue in front of the global elite. But there is little evidence of reform in the thinking of those who are continuously pushing for greater globalisation.

2. Terrorism has a face now - though masks everywhere else.
September 11, 2001 put a distinct face on terrorism. The consequent war against terrorism has seen the defeat of Taliban in Afghanistan but very little else has changed. Neither the leaders of Al Qaida or Taliban have been arrested, nor the sources and roots of local and global terrorism have been adequately analysed and addressed. By giving terrorism a face, it has taken away the critique from everywhere else. The conditions and forces which unleash terrorism continue to remain masked elsewhere.

It is obvious that there is growing complexity around the issue of identity. Human beings define themselves in relation to a place, a home, a domain, a terrain over which they can wander, resources which they can access and people they can trust. These are the building blocks of identity. In today’s world, with growing confusion and despair, with increasing inequality and injustice, people everywhere are retreating into their narrow, parochial identities. National or global identities remain a myth. Language, religion, culture, race, ethnicity are historically as well as contemporarily significant bases of defining identity.

Secondly, the process of dealing with these conflicts has become increasingly violent. The differences of perspectives, language, religion, ethnicity, and race are being resolved through violent means. Accommodation, co-habitation, tolerance of different ways of living lives are losing out to a forced, violent submission of “different others”. This global trend is expanding and increasingly influencing larger sections of the global population.

3. Development has run its course.
“A little over five decades after its “invention” by the then American President, the ‘paradigm of development’ is almost extinct. This paradigm of development implied external technical and financial inputs to “develop” a community, in accordance with pre-determined northern/western standards. Official development assistance (ODA) was seen as the vehicle to accomplish that. There is now a well-established pattern of decline in ODA, far below the UN standard of 0.7 per cent of GDP. The forthcoming conference in Monterrey (Mexico) this month notwithstanding, ODA as a vehicle for improving the lives of people in southern societies is almost a “failed experiment”.


Despite these trends, the international donor community seems to have developed new goals. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been adopted with heroic statements to accomplish the same. There is also an increasing consensus on using Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans (PRSPs) as basic strategies for accomplishing MDGs. Occasionally there appears to be some concerted attempt to revive development. In recent months, there has been a special focus on sub-Saharan Africa, but bulk of the effort in the last decade has centered on dealing with countries facing internal as well as trans-border conflicts. In some significant way, the limits to “enlightened self-interest” have been reached among the rich of the world. Growing problems in their own backyard, continued conflicts within and across countries and large scale mismanagement of resources (including corruption) in the countries recipient of ODA have created a sense of suspicion among the ruling elites of the North.

There is now less interest, despite rhetoric to the contrary, in contributing resources, or even attention, to the well-being of ‘distant others’. While some amount of ODA is likely to be repackaged to respond to local crisis in different parts of the world, it is unlikely that concessional, grant-based flow of funds from the North to the South will be a significant instrument in the years to come. Loans, credits and private investment may be the only tools left.

Challenges

What then are the challenges facing civil society? I have identified three broad sets of challenges facing civil society at this juncture.

1. First the challenge of promoting democratic governance in society.

   Historically, democracy was seen merely as a political system and focused upon periodic elections of representatives, who made policies and laws for the well-being of others. Governance became a concern less than ten years ago as it became obvious that transfer of knowledge and resources did not result in transformation of societies and communities. Developing political consensus and ensuring efficient use of available resources were far more important factors contributing to sustainable transformation of communities and societies. Governance needs to be now focused upon the society as a whole. Society, as a whole now needs to focus on governance.

   I would define governance as the structure and process of public decision making about mobilisation and use of public resources towards common public good. Democratic governance implies that the process of decision-making is such that it enables participation and representation of voices of different segments of the community. Decisions are made in accordance with the agreed priorities and resources are efficiently and transparently applied towards those priorities. Democratic governance, therefore, not only focuses on agencies and departments of the government, but also to judiciary, military, market institutions, academia, media, trade unions, political parties and civil society organisations themselves.
Four sets of questions become relevant in this regard.

(i) Whose interests does governance serve? It cannot be focused on elite interests alone, it should serve the interests of all without discrimination. ‘Public good’ should be defined in an inclusive manner.

(ii) Who decides? It cannot be left to a few experts or representatives. All people should be enabled to participate in a process of deciding. This would help build consensus and result in an increased commitment to those decisions.

(iii) Who monitors? External evaluators, experts and technical consultants do not monitor the progress towards public good. Every citizen is an actor in the process and contributes towards assessing the progress made.

(iv) And finally, who benefits? If it benefits only a few, with the majority ignored or in fact, harmed in the process, then this is antidemocratic. This is the first challenge for civil society.

2. The second challenge is ‘liberating the ghettos’.
Our societies have become inward-looking exclusive ghettos of the rich and the poor. A vast section of the poor people are entrenched in poverty. In particular, this entrenchment has structural and historical factors. The dalits, tribals, Muslims and women in India, for example, represent this section of entrenched poverty. These ghettos become self-fulfilling and create a process of inbreeding, inward-looking, antagonism towards the outside world.

Ghettos are also emerging due to social ostracisation. Forces of history and discrimination have created class, caste, racial and ethnic “ghettos”. Historically, civil society organisations worked inside these “ghettos” and became “ghettoized” themselves. We have seen the problematic associated with such “ghettoisation”. The new challenge is to liberate these “ghettos”, to make deliberate interventions that would bring in exchange of ideas and experiences. Two particular interventions which could contribute towards this include a focus on quality of education, in particular basic education, and access to healthcare. This is extremely relevant in today’s context because of the possibility that important forces of liberation can be unleashed from these ghettos.

3. A third challenge facing civil society is to help build its local and national identity.
Various types of civil society actors co-exist almost in isolation of each other, occasionally in antagonism to each other. Traditional associations of tribals, women, youth etc. have had a strong history in the past. They may have become less visible in the contemporary context. Modern professional associations like trade unions, lawyers, journalists etc. maintain their own inward identity. Religious institutions have all been very important, historically and one has seen their revival today. Therefore, modern civil society associations, particularly, development organisations, have a role to play in initiating a process of building a common identity of civil society. The
difficulty arises because of the language of discourse.

The development organisations in the voluntary sector are now "victims" of their own discourse. Nobody else among other civil society actors understands our clichés such as "strategic direction", "results orientation", "best practices", "rights-based approach.". In a way development organisations in the voluntary sector have become alienated and distanced from more local, traditional associations. Informal citizen associations and community-based associations continue to be disconnected with the more modern variety of formations. In a recent survey (PRIA 2002) conducted in West Bengal (India), sixty per cent of the associations are neither formally registered nor part of the national or international "development industry". A large percentage of the balance comprise of formal schools. Development related voluntary associations in West Bengal are less than 10 per cent of the more than one hundred and fifty thousand such civil society actors.

The question of building a coherent and common identity for civil society needs to be addressed with humility and openness. It cannot be a partnership for mere tactical reasons; it cannot be an alliance to achieve a mere temporary objective. The only basis of building a coherent civil society identity at local and national levels is through explicit recognition of common values and ideals. Truth, spirituality, mutuality, empathy, care and love as vehicles of civil society need to be articulated, publicly stated and unashamedly defended. Only then a common and coherent identity for civil society is possible. This reiteration of a set of common human values may, to our surprise, even expand our present outreach to many other sections of the society; in a way, paving the way for realizing our common dreams, as opposed to our 'exclusive' programmatic goals.
Coalition building –
An Alternative to
Problem Solving

Malini Nambiar*

Abstract This paper is based on the experience of PRIA and partners in search of alternatives in citizens participation in Local Governance. Coalition Building was one such alternative that was reviewed and discussed during the Annual Programme review, in February, 2-3, 2002. This discussion held during the review forms the core of this paper.

Introduction

The future of our society depends on how concerns and issues today are resolved. The pace at which new concerns or issues are generated is rapid and individuals or organizations are hard pressed to make effective and timely responses. As a result there is a backlog of issues that need to be addressed and new keep ones cropping up. The backlog of such issues and the inability of individuals or organizations, working alone, to attend to them, reflect the state of disarray in our society. There is a growing need to search for an alternative, which provides the means of addressing concerns or issues and move forward to take on new ones. One such alternative of increasing value has been the building of coalitions.

The Oxford dictionary and the Encyclopaedia of Britannica (1768) spell out the origin of the term coalition from the Latin word from coalesce, meaning to grow together or a combination of bodies or parts into one body or whole. The term is used, especially in a political sense of an alliance or a temporary union of distinct parties, persons or state for joint action or to achieve a common purpose. Today the term continues to be found within the political realm, but it also has been finding prominence in the functioning of civil society actors. It has been well observed by social scientists that 'the civil society incorporates a “network of voluntary, self governing institutions in all walks of life”' - people centric institutions; forums in which people participation is direct in managing their own affairs. Since their focus is on people participation, voluntary associations and Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) of all kinds are regarded as agencies of civil society that strengthen democracy. What brings these diverse institutions together is the fact that they stand outside the state, offering an alternative to the state sponsored forms of development'. Hence, coalition is seen as the

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linking horizontally or coming together of people for the purpose of self or community well-being. In developmental terms, it would be called a space wherein information, sharing of experiences, and learning for action could ensure.

**Rationale for forming a new body**

Consider the parable of the elephant and the blind men. As the story goes, several blind men in the jungle come upon an elephant. Each approaches the elephant from a different angle and comes into contact with different parts of the elephant's anatomy—the elephant's leg, tail, ears etc., declaring that the elephant is like a tree trunk, a rope or a fan respectively. Clearly, each man from his vantage point has perceived something important and genuine about the elephant. Each one's perception of the elephant is accurate, though limited. None of the blind men through their own enquiries, have a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon called “elephant”. Together, by sharing information they have a much richer and more complete perspective.

Similar instances have been sighted in reality where individuals (elected members of the local government body in the rural areas) or organizations (voluntary organisations or community based organisation) work parallel to one another with an aim to strengthen governance—the elephant (here I will call it the issue or concern). Yet, each of them can tackle only a part of the large problem, be it discrimination against Dalits, enhancement of women’s participation, lack of information and so on. Where do they all converge in order to tackle the issue /problem (the elephant) together? Where do they search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible?

Coalition is seen as a process through which parties who see different aspects of an issue or concern, can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. Coalition is based on the simple rule that “two heads are better than one”.

**Forms of Coalition**

Coalition brings together different kinds of individuals or organizations concern over an issue. To be able to form a coalition, the first and foremost hurdle is managing differences. Respect for differences is an easy virtue to champion and a much more difficult one to put into practice in our day-to-day affairs. Yet, differences are often the source of immense creative potential. Learning to harness that potential is what the body of coalition is all about. The opportunity for coalition arises because the different stakeholders recognize the potential advantages of working together.

In their experiences of strengthening governance at the grass-roots, PRIA and its partners have facilitated the building of coalitions among individuals (community members or elected leaders at the grass-roots) or organisations. Coalitions have been made for strategic purposes.

**Co-operation strategy**: Building coalition for a specific task to be accomplished calls for co-operation among individuals or organisations. From experience of working towards strengthening grass-root democracy, it is
observed that a single organisation or institution often does not have the political space within a region or are new to the field and do not have any legitimate visibility in that area to gain citizens' acceptance. Also they might not have adequate resources (tools, manpower or money) to solve such problems. Forming a "Coalition" of organisations or individuals, of different capacities, who have a common concern within a region, can accomplish what is impossible for any of them working by themselves. The coalition, in time can develop into a viable space wherein information, experiences and learning could be shared that enables the coalition, together to address various causes or work to raise the voice of the voiceless (marginalized section such as Dalits or women).

In Andhra Pradesh, India, the Local Body elections provided an opportunity for small and big NGOs, working on various aspects of strengthening local governance, to come together to address the concern of political education of voters and candidates. The occasion saw the building of a coalition, named "Forum for Panchayats", among dalit networks like Dalit Bahujan Front (DBF) and DAPPU, networks working for Muslim women like Confederation Of Voluntary Organisations (COVA) and other organizations working for political awareness like LOKSATTAA, Deccan Development NGO Network (DDNN), Centre of World Solidarity (CWS) and PRIA.

This coalition focused on issues of participation in the campaign for political education and decreased the level of duplication as well as increased the possibility of innovations and scaling up to cover the state.

Advocacy strategy: Some coalition building was a direct outcome of organisations and individuals working together, sharing learning and acting as pressure groups for advocacy purposes.

In western Rajasthan, UNNATI, began a campaign for the rights of Dalits (marginalized community). This was called the 'Dalit Adhikar Abhiyan', to curb and challenge discriminatory practices prevalent in the region. This campaign took up mobilisation and capacity building of the Dalit community in order to enable them to fight against discrimination, as well as sensitising other people such as government officials, the police, media, other civil society actors and the judiciary machinery. This gave rise to a coalition that brought to light one hundred and seventy five cases related to discrimination against Dalits and set the ball rolling on an inquiry about them by the National Commission of Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribes and other civil society institutions.

Such organised campaigns for the cause of dalits (marginalised group) have been few and documentation of such efforts has been lesser still, but emphasis on and the constant voices raised against untouchability has put such issues back on the agenda of civil society and also ensured recognition by the government.

Monitoring strategy: The concept of micro/bottom-up planning, that stresses on people's
participation has been in vogue right from the days of implementation of community development programmes. Yet, in practice putting people at the centre of the planning process has remained a dream. Increasing participation, especially of women and marginalised sections of the community, is another arena where the efforts of civil society have been concentrated. Facilitation of people to make their plan and implement it was the strategy that encompassed the building of coalition in Kehar panchayat of Mandi District in Himachal Pradesh.

The Village Development Committees (VDCs), was a coalition comprising of members from different castes and gender (school teachers, retired army officers others) of the villages in that panchayat. They were made responsible for preparing and implementing the panchayat plan. These VDCs, ensured accountability of the Gram Panchayat to make and implement the plan. They pressurised (and assisted) the panchayat to negotiate with villagers, block and the district level officials to mobilise internal and external resources for implementation of the plan.

The civil society facilitation thus enabled local bodies to engage in participatory bottom-up micro-planning processes to determine priorities and design programmes which address locally appropriate needs of different segments of the community. This capacity building intervention also enables greater engagement of different sections of the local community in the planning process through the VDC coalition, thereby enhancing ownership of plans and programmes implemented by local bodies.

Voices/Pressure strategy: Creating spaces for peoples’ voices, took the form of coalition building within the local government itself. That is, to bring the elected members of the local bodies in the rural areas (Panchayati Raj Institutions) together in the advent of supporting or raising voices against issues hindering their functioning as self governing institutions. The members of these bodies, being new to the working of the institution, are often at a disadvantage in negotiating with bureaucrats, politicians, higher castes/dominant castes.

Sangathan of Barwala, is a coalition of 35 sarpanch’s within the Barwala block of Panchkula district in Haryana. This coalition has solved 17 pressing problems by themselves rather than waiting for the state to take action. Of these problems, the problem of flies arising due to negligence of the poultry farm owners was noteworthy. On their application of pressure by lodging a PIL, the District collector (DC) fixed a meeting with the Poultry Farm Owners’ Association giving them one month to solve the problem. This ensured that every poultry farm was cleaned and bird feed mixed with a chemical so that the faecal matter did not produce flies. With the members monitoring the process along with support from the government officers within a month the prevalence of flies had reduced.

The above case of coalition is a direct outcome of the orientation, which PRIA Haryana conducted for newly elected Panchayat members in March 2001. It was a felt need among the elected members of PRI, that issues have not
been addressed in the block of Barwala and the Government functionaries were not responsive to the queries. Hence, the coalition was formed as a pressure group.

Support strategy: Very often support structures are not in place for individuals to stake claim to their rights as a citizen or as elected members. This is especially true among women and other marginalized groups that have come to occupy the political arena through the quota system given by the Constitutional Amendment.

The Sangathan of Mukhiya and Ward Members has been facilitated by CENCORED in Madhubhani, Bihar. This network consists of 461 members, with an executive committee of 33 members, one member from each Panchayat. The coalition was facilitated in an orientation programme arising from the groups need to overcome the pressures from the Panchayat Samiti and from the government officials. The coalition meets once a month. One of the impetuses seen in this coalition is the drive in defending themselves against external threats.

The Politicians and the government officials pose an external threat to the coalition of ward members by not sharing information and super imposing agendas. Hence both the political and the personal forces are acting /sustaining the coalition of the ward members.

Experiences within the Process of forming coalitions: Methods/ tools of building coalition (steps, facilitation, discussions)

1. Catalyst: Catalyst could be in the form of an idea or an event or a person that provokes, stimulates and creates the possibility of an actual coalition/collaboration unfolding. In all the cases cited above either orientation or informal discussion with elected members or organisations has helped form coalitions around concerns and seek solutions.

2. Clarity on Issues to be addressed: As stated earlier, an organisation or individual alone does not have the necessary capacity to address issues on its own. This is when the organisation seeks others to work on similar issues of concern. For the purpose, the individual or organization initiating the building of a coalition needs to be clear as to what the issue is – be it lack of political awareness or human rights of dalits. This would provide clarity with regard to the mission of the coalition.

3. Creating the environment: Once the issue/problem is identified it is easier to put forth the case in front of other actors or organisations in order to reach an understanding that the issue concerned is pivotal to work on at present. For instance, the purpose of coalition building in Andhra Pradesh, the local government or the state was consulted. They got a whole list of the organisations working in the state. The staff visited some of the organisation working on capacity building of citizens'. Face-to-face meetings with the organisation were held in order to discuss positive outcomes that have been tried in other states through similar interventions, in order to reach a shared understanding of the issue concerned and a willingness to work together for the cause. Rapport building and trust formation through face-to-face interactions were the
methods of facilitating coalitions among elected members of local bodies.

4. Collective decision making (Objective) Participation (with the view to arrive at a collective decision), of all the members in the coalition is necessary but difficult. A challenge that was faced by the ‘Forum for Panchayats’ in Andhra Pradesh, where the members, in the early months were active through contributions/suggestions. These energies slowly dwindled in the end to just a few. Yet, communication was open and when decisions were taken the majority voice was there. Similarly, the coalition of Dalit leaders assembled in the beginning of every month to plan their course of action after receiving inputs from the various villages. These meetings also provided a platform to share interventions that have worked and also the failures.

5. Co-ordination and building of steering committee (Leadership): Selection of a core group or person that would steer the coalition to its rightful goal. Taking into consideration that all members of the coalition cannot be present at all occasions, a few could be given the responsibility to share issues, help link and communicate strategy or information. For the purpose, selection of a leader or committee is ideal. A steering group was constituted among the “Forum of Panchayats”, to take decisions regarding the media strategy, the number of posters and coverage. The steering group of the coalition also liaised with the administration and the State Election Commission to enlist their co-operation. While the coalition of Barwala has an executive body, a representative of the larger coalition was selected. The due representation of women in the composition was ensured.

6. Commitment/ complementarity’s and division of labour: Division of work on the basis of aptitude, skill and experiences is the stage when the strategies are finalized and the work is ready to be implemented. Through the “Forum of Panchayats”, each organisation took on various districts to intervene in building awareness. Some were given two districts and others two blocks within a state according to their manpower and resources.

7. Future working together: Followup in any intervention keeps the coalition alive and active. It must be indicated that there will be a further use for the coalition. For instance in the coalition of Barwala, the members went on to take up and solve as many as 17 cases. Similar steps were also taken by the Dalit leaders’ coalition wherein they dug out 170 cases of atrocities to work on and monitor.

What did not work: The coalition, be it that of community based organisations or elected leaders of local bodies, has underlying causes that influence the feasibility or non-feasibility of coming together of diverse actors. A few are highlighted below -

- Formation of an identity (exclusion): The Barwala coalition of Sarpanchs was initially built with a composition of both the Panchs and the Sarpanchs within the coalition. As the number of panchs were few in the beginning and the coalition failed to bring in more panchs a coalition that was
exclusively “Sarpanchs” oriented resulted. It became an identity of the Sarpanchs, thereby excluding the Panchs. The Panchs felt left out. This caused some friction among the elected members of the Panchayats.

- **Time use for the coalition**: Coalitions are built around issues. Once the issue is tackled, the coalition’s purpose is met, resulting in a breakup of the coalition. For instance, the coalition of community-based organisation coming together for spreading awareness prior to the Panchayat elections. Once the task was over the coalition was not utilized for follow-up plans like capacity building of newly elected members.

- **One party giving more than the other**: Many a times the participation of members is limited to seeking other members experiences and ideas, but not sharing one’s own. Participation therefore, becomes a one way process rather than a two way process of involvement and learning. This creates conflict within the coalition. Formalisation of who should do what within the coalition would bring the person or organisation within the coalition accountable for his/her action. Similarly, the coalition of Barwala, wherein the leader of the coalition took it upon himself to solve most of the issues.

- **Priority (Own problem bigger than the coalitions problem)**: The case of the “Forum of Panchayats” in Andhra Pradesh for building awareness prior to the Panchayat elections found that though the members continued to participate, attend meetings and receive information from PRIA office, they were unwilling to take up responsibility in follow-up procedures in the final stages.

One reason for such a withdrawal was seen as interpersonal conflict. While agreement around broad ideology and purpose existed, there were differences in style of functioning and mutual recognition.

- **Resources**: the elected members of the coalition have also expressed a lack of resources, therefore their inability to afford the travel expenses to attend the coalition meetings.

**Challenges –What needs to be done**

Sustaining the forum needs extensive communication, sharing experiences, disseminating ideas and resources. It is a dynamic process. Sustainability needs material resources, hence, initially these coalitions are process driven which through linkages and concretisation of relationships may evolve into a formal structure. Facilitation of the organisations in the process is seen as pivotal along with the willingness and importance given to the coalition by the members themselves. The following is not an exhaustive list but are pointers that need to be kept in mind when working towards sustain coalitions.

**Effectivity**: The coalition of individuals or organisations must be seen to be of use/value for the members. A lot depends on the capacity of each member and how they complement and supplement their roles as seen in the course of addressing issues of concern. It is precisely this synergy that gives the coalition its vibrant and effective character.

**Multi-purpose coalition**: Coalition building could be sustained if the coalition is used for
multiple issues or is a multi-purpose coalition. For instance, the Sarpanch sangh in Barwala, Panchkula, Haryana took up 17 cases. This would also ensure consistent follow-up action that would keep the coalition functional.

**Leadership**: The coalition needs a core team or leader to steer the group towards its goal. The leadership required in a coalition is one that is flexible, non-hierarchical, communicative, visionary, innovative, sensitive and participatory. These are capacities that are very hard to find in the current situation. A coalition can only find impetus to continue if there is initiative, drive, push and leadership in action. The challenge is to find such leadership or promote these qualities within the coalition.

Ultimately, we are discussing about alternatives in addressing issues of concern and the ability to work in union towards solving them. Building coalitions is not the only means of addressing concerns, but a viable alternative for individuals and organisations to address concerns on their own without waiting for the intervention of the state or other external agencies. However, there is no blue print for building and sustaining coalitions. The sense of direction will emerge only when those paths are treaded. The cases highlighted in this article make it increasingly clear that when coalitions among individuals and organisations develop, the necessary capacity and collective will needed for effective addressing issues of concern are created. The need of the hour is to promote and capacitate the engagement of many more individuals and organisations in taking up issues of concern through coalitions. This calls for a mission and sustained drive. Once the coalition is formed, the results will surely follow.

**Endnotes**


2 ibid.


5 ibid.

Multi-Party Accountability for Environmentally Sustainable Industrial Development: The Challenge of Active Citizenship

Ms. Vaijayanta Anand

Abstract Sustainable development implies inclusive, informed and collective participation of citizens, dis-empowered and marginalized citizens in particular, as equal stakeholders in the ownership of productive assets. Within the context of industrial development process, implicit contracts exist between various actors/stakeholders in terms of rights and responsibilities that they are entitled to and expect of one another. But often these remain unarticulated. As a result, the responsibilities of the institutions towards the rights to safe and healthy living and secure livelihood for workers go unfulfilled. Information, evidence and an enabling space for open and transparent public debate are powerful tool for creating culture of accountability. This article is based on PRIA’s study on stakeholders in the late Parsuram Chemical Industrial Belt, Chipulun, Maharashtra (May 2002).

Introduction

According to the World Commission on Economic Development (WCED) Report (1987), ‘Our Common Future’, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- The concept of “needs”, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- The idea of limitation imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs.

These two key concepts are over ridden by the notion of development synonymous with

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industrialisation leaving many countries with the worst consequences for the poor and the environment. The most popular model of development pursued by the majority of countries is industrialisation and technological excellence. The under-developed and developing countries follow this route of industrialisation and more-industrialisation to reach the development pinnacle.

Technological development or industrialisation is not value free or neutral to the socio-economical structures in which it operates. It inevitably leads to the strengthening and enrichment of the social segments that are already strong and rich and to increasing exploitation and marginalisation of those who are poor and powerless. This happens both within and across countries. It also has the effect of tearing apart the fabric of societies. The rich, powerful and technologically dominant section of the societies in different countries, both developed and developing, becomes a single distinct global segment acting together to their mutual profit and moving further away not only economically but also socially, culturally, intellectually and ideologically from the rest of their own societies.

This mode of development leaves behind a trail of damaged environment, polluted air, water and ecosystem, destructed forests and diverse species of flora and fauna. The displacement or destruction of the habitats of large masses of people is also one of the products of such a development model.

The fruits of such development may be the increase in GDP of the country and economic growth but the cost paid for the development is too high. Millions of the poorest are forced to pay the cost by letting go their land, get ejected from their habitat or suffer the bad effects of industrialisation.

In the present scenario the benefits of industrialisation cannot be equated to that of development. The people in the area demarcated for industrial growth cannot be seen as mere beneficiaries, customers, displaced people or victims, they are stakeholders and thus equal partners in deciding the fate of their area. The idea of sustainable development includes participation and inclusion of people of the area as equal stakeholders. Thus, their role cannot be relegated to being mere spectators mutely suffering the consequences without control on the process.

**Stakeholders, Participation, Accountability and Sustainability**

In a 1993 USAID document consisting of a formal statement of principles on participatory development (Lo Voy 1999) there was a shift from the term 'beneficiary' to 'customer' carrying with it a cluster of associated meanings. From the implications of a 'customer service' ethos for development practice to the ironies of viewing recipients of aid as active consumers, USAID's statement of principles captured the shift from the project to the broader terrain of participation in development. Arguing that there is nothing more basic to the development process than participation, the statement highlighted broad access by people to their country's economy and participation in their society's decision-making processes (Attwood 1993:1).

With echoes of the recent World Bank rhetoric on 'country ownership' USAID's statement puts
forward a vision of participation in which ‘the country’ and ‘the community’ are firmly in the ‘driving seat’.

The World Bank statements since have emphasized on ownership, accountability, strengthening the capacity of the poor for self-reliance and partnership.

The word ‘accountability’, thus, takes the centre stage where the major actors in the development process are accountable for their acts to the stakeholders. If the actors and stakeholders are the same, the development process cannot be sustainable without the accountability of the multi-parties involved in the process.

To strengthen the concept of democracy and civil society and to evolve the idea of good governance, informed collective assertion of rights from the marginalised stakeholders could be the only solution to seek accountability and stake their claims in the development process. This issue of participation of marginalised stakeholders takes a new meaning if the development process involves setting up of industries. The parties involved here are of so many hues that accountability is a moot point.

This study attempts to look at one such industrial zone where the Government and the industries have started the process of development with specific goals and objectives. Where do the people of the area, especially marginalized, fit in this process? And what is the accountability of the various parties involved? These are some of the questions attempted to be probed. The study also tries to seek a glimpse into the minds of the various stakeholders in terms of their understanding of industry and development. It also highlights their experience in the industrial development process and more important their role as stakeholders in seeking, negotiating for accountability from the dominant groups.

Industrial Development and Multi-Party Accountability in Lote Parshuram Industrial Area, Chiplun

In the year 1988, the Government of India announced a scheme for development of Growth Centres and selected five growth centres in the state of Maharashtra at Akola, Chandrapur, Dhule, Nanded and Ratnagiri. Under the scheme, about 600 to 800 hectares of land was to be acquired for each Growth Centre. In November 1988, the State Government decided to set up 65 Growth Centres covering each District of the state. The State Government also announced a programme of establishment of 140 mini industrial areas at the taluka level. To carry out all the work, the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) was entrusted with some major responsibility.

MIDC is the primary industrial infrastructure development agency of the Maharashtra Government constituted under the Maharashtra Industrial Development Act 1961. MIDC was established on 1st August 1962 with the basic objective of setting up industrial areas with a provision of industrial infrastructure all over the state for planned and systematic industrial development. MIDC believes in its motto ‘Udayamat Sakal Samruddhi’ (Prosperity to all through industrialisation). MIDC is also a ‘Special Planning Authority’ for all its industrial areas for various functions such as selection of land, planning, development and management of industrial parks. MIDC has played a major
role in developing separate chemical zones. MIDC describes chemical zones as industries having chemical process as part of manufacturing activity and involving storage of chemicals, use of chemical, solid, liquid or gaseous – emissions, air pollution, emitting odours, dust, smoke, etc. are treated as chemical industries and preferably located in the separate zones. In such zones, MIDC claims to have arranged for collection of treated effluent from the industrial units and its disposal at a suitable point stipulated by Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), a State Government body for keeping a constant check on the effluent treatment and disposal. Uptil now coastal locations were preferred for setting up chemical zones because of availability of creeks for disposal of treated effluent.

**Industrial Development in Lote-Parshuram area, Chipun**

Lote-Parshuram Industrial Area (LIT) is located in Ratnagiri District of Konkan Region of Maharashtra. In 1978, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) appropriated 570.73 hectares of land of Lote, Awashi, Sonegaon, Dhamandevi and some other villages for setting up a Chemical Industry Zone. The development of the industrial belt was part of the government’s plan to develop the Konkan region and provide better survival opportunities for people.

Lote Parshuram area is surrounded by the Sahyadri Mountain area in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west. This area is bestowed with abundant natural resources. The unique feature of this area is the confluence of two rivers- Jagbudi and Vashishta joining at the Dabhel Creek and further into the sea. The area receives more than 340 centimeters (cms) of annual rainfall and is endowed with fertile soil suitable for horticulture and rice cultivation. The major produce of this area is the Alphonso mango. There is a strong fishing community settled around the creek surviving on fishing in the creek.

The setting up of an Industrial Zone in this area has brought in drastic changes in the lives of the people. The major purpose of MIDC for setting up the industrial belt was the availability of the creek for letting out treated effluent water. The consequences of setting up this industrial belt were multidimensional. There are many stakeholders in the whole process of development of the industrial belt. It is essential to understand how these stakeholders perceive the whole process of industrial development. The participation of stakeholders in the process also needs to be studied. The major stakeholders also owe accountability to each other, which needs to be looked at.

**Rationale**

This study aims at understanding the perception of various stakeholders with regard to the positive and negative experiences of industrialization, the various dimensions of their stake holding in the industrial development and the relationship have been established during the process. The study has tried to look at the marginalisation of certain groups in the whole process and the results of such a marginalisation.

**Major Objectives**

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the villagers.
2. To study the perception of the village people with regard to their experiences, both positive and negative, of industrial development.

3. To understand the informal and formal methods used by the villagers to influence and negotiate for their stakes.

4. To understand the perception of the village people about aspects like accountability and responsibility, development and citizenship.

Methodology

Research Design
The research study is quantitative and descriptive in design. This study has been conducted in seven villages situated in the proximity of the Lote-Parshuram Industrial Belt.

Source of Data Collection
The primary sources of data collection were the village people living in the proximity of the Lote-Parshuram Industrial Belt, the representatives of Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, Lote-Parshuram Industrial Association and one representative of each industry. Focus group interviews were also conducted. Discussions were also held with the NGO (Parivartan) activists.

The secondary source of data collection included newspaper clippings, documents of the earlier studies and public hearing and policies.

Sampling Design
The universe of the study with regard to village representatives covered 15 villages situated in the proximity of the Lote-Parshuram Chemical industry belt. The sample for the study consists of 7 villages selected from the above 15 villages.

The criteria for selection of villages were:
1. Close proximity to the Industrial Belt.
2. Representing major caste communities of the area affected by industrialisation.
3. Representing marginalised and minority communities.

Each village comprised of 4 to 5 wadis or cluster of houses, consisting of one homogenous caste group or occupation group. Attempt was made to take at least one wadi representing one caste group, so 4 to 5 wadis per village were selected for the study.

The sample consisted of 97 respondents of which 53 respondents were men and 44 were women.

The other people interviewed consisted of:
MIDC representatives: Two executive engineers and one clerk.
Pollution Control Board: One representative.
NOCIL: One executive engineer (project manager)
Doctor: 1 (Primary Health Centre).
Lote-Parshuram Chemical Industries Association: One representative.

Focus Group Discussions:
Men - 2 groups each consisting of 15-20 men.
One group belonged to the agricultural community and one group belonged to the fisherfolk community.
Women -- 2 groups each consisting of 10-15 women.

One group belonged to the agricultural community and one group belonged to the fisherfolk community.

*Tools of Data Collection*

1. An interview guide was prepared in consultation and discussion with the local people to be involved in data collection. The interview guide was pre-tested in the field and improvised prior to its finalization.

2. A separate format was developed for the focus group interviews.

*Plan of Analysis*

Since the data was very descriptive and gave specific characteristics of each village and each occupation group, the data was analysed manually and at the initial stage village narratives or case studies were drawn to give the study enough depth.

*Major Highlights*

The respondents represented 7 villages. In all, the number of respondents was 97. Each village consisted of various wadis characterised by one dominant caste group. The 7 villages were Sonegaon, Kotivili, Asgani, Lote, Pirlote, Awashi and Lavel. Sonegaon and Kotivili represented the issues related to the fisherfolk community. Lote, Pirlote and Awashi were the villages affected by MIDC in the first phase -- whereas Asgani, Lavel were taken in the expansion phase of MIDC.

Many of the respondents (80.3%) belonged to Hindu religion. Around 10.3% belonged to Boudh religion originally part of scheduled caste. 92% respondents belonged to Muslim community. The 80.3% respondents belonging to Hindu religion were further represented by caste groups like Bhoi, Kunbi, Maratha, Brahmin and other backward caste groups.

The age group of respondents varied from 16 yrs to 72 yrs. The respondents were fairly divided into various age groups. The younger age group (16 yrs to 39 yrs) respondents represented the present generation familiar with post MIDC chemical industrial belt setting era. Whereas the older age group (40 yrs to 72 yrs) respondents could relate to the times when the MIDC took over the land and set up the chemical industrial belt.

The educational background of the respondents indicates that although industrialisation arrived in this area 15 years back yet the education scenario seems to be grim with hardly anybody reaching up to post graduation level. Around 14.4% respondents are illiterate and another 14.4% respondents have studied only up to primary level of education. Majority (60.8%) have studied only up to secondary level of education. Industrialisation has not contributed much in the provision of better educational facilities or increase in higher education facilities, which is affordable.

Traditional occupations, like fishing and agriculture, although disappearing are still followed by majority of the respondents. However, the respondent's family seems to have combined other forms of occupations like working in industries or setting up small shops. It is significant to note that around 30% of the respondents do not follow any traditional occupation indicating slow deterioration in the base required for traditional occupation.
Around 27% respondents have been absorbed by the chemical industries. They entered these industries through individual efforts and mostly on contract job engaged in skilled or semiskilled work. All of them are men respondents except for one woman respondent working as a health worker in an industry related hospital. All of them are working in major industries like Gharda Chemicals, Rallies India, D’NOcil and others. All respondents belong to a younger age group (18 yrs to 40 yrs.) absorbed in the job just 5 to 8 yrs. back. Industrialisation has not meant increase in job opportunities. The data also indicates that as expected by people, industries did not provide jobs readily to the local people. The absorption of people in industries seems to be a recent phenomenon.

The average annual income in a majority of the families is not much (Rs.40,000 - Rs.50,000). Majority of them have given the quantity of rice they produce as annual income. The rice produce is again dictated by season, land quality and other factors, which are unstable. One can say that industrialisation has not led to a drastic increase in the standard of living or increase in income.

Around 25% respondents own land and many of them have lost land to MIDC. All of them have agricultural land used mainly for growing rice or for horticulture. It should be noted that the Muslim community owned large tracts of land ranging from 10 acres to 70 acres. All the land acquired by MIDC was agricultural and under cultivation.

The land acquisition process did not yield immediate compensation amount for many respondents. There were problems like the issue of tenancy land where the owner has leased land for cultivation for generations so the tiller could not claim the compensation amount. The litigations for compensation or tenancy land are still going on. The compensation amount in the first phase of MIDC was very nominal (Rs.50 per Guntha). However, the organised efforts and lessons learnt from the past have led to negotiations and resulted in an increase in the amount in the recent land acquisition attempts in the expansion phase of MIDC. The amount offered recently was Rs.600 per Guntha and raised to Rs.1200 per Guntha after the struggle put up by the affected people.

The key events described by the respondents have brought out some interesting factors. Similar occupation caste groups irrespective of villages have narrated similar events whereas in a village itself different wadis have narrated different events. This has led to fragmentation in the efforts taken up by villagers against the pollution and other issues. The events suggest that the letting out of pollutants in natural resources like creek, ground water, air has devastated the village ecosystem leading to destruction of marine life in creeks - a major lifeline for the fisherfolk community, routing of crops, spoiling of cultivable land and destruction of all natural drinking water sources. The air pollution seems to have affected children and women leading to severe health problems. The cases of death of cattle due to consumption of polluted water have become a growing phenomenon.

All the respondents have clearly indicated that MIDC and industries have not shown much accountability. The accountability was expected with regard to many issues.
(a) Provision and information about the type of industries set up on the land acquired by MIDC and possible consequences to the village ecosystem.

(b) The owning up of responsibility in fulfilling promises made to the people like setting up of CETP, provision of job opportunities to affected people, own up responsibility in the case of accidents.

(c) The respondents also indicated lack of accountability from the MIDC and chemical industries when there is absolute disregard for different natural drinking water sources and other natural resources like agricultural land, creek, forest land and air.

Sustainable development was defined by a majority of the respondents as development, which leads to improvement in infrastructures and services like transport, education and health without destroying the traditional style of living including traditional occupation. Respondents felt that industrialisation was always equated with all the above but they did not expect the devastating impact of industrialisation.

The respondents could see their role in development limited to the family and village levels. They seem to be content in deciding the course of development at the village level only.

They defined their participation as attending meetings at the village level and joining agitations conducted by other organisations.

All the respondents felt that they were stakeholders not only of land but also of the creek and natural resources. They felt that even after losing land to MIDC they had stakes in the types of industries to be set on their land and impact it had on their lives.

All the respondents have participated in one or the other form of protest against the industries. They have taken up issues like death of cattle, pollution of agricultural land at the individual level. At the group level various similar caste groups like the Bhoi community from 42 villages have come together to take up the issue of creek pollution. The NGO - Parivartan has also played an active role in holding public hearings where all the parties or stakeholders came on one platform and discussed the issues. However, the thrust has been mostly on getting compensation or increase in the amount of compensation. The issues like common property usage and its destruction like creek, grazing land, mangroves and also the common responsibility of all stakeholders in safeguarding the village ecosystem seems to have been missed out or disregarded.

The response of the MIDC very strongly indicates that their role is just acquisition of land, development and upkeep of infrastructure necessary for industries. They did not see their role in the development of villages or local people once the land is acquired. They also did not perceive villages and village people as stakeholders in the development of area. Their focus was sustaining the industries only.

The industry representatives clearly indicated that their presence in the particular geographical area was solely due to availability of cheap land, water sources and less legal problems. They did not perceive their role in consciously bringing about development of the villages nearby. Provision of facilities like schools and hospitals were part of their charitable work and not responsibility. They only felt accountable in the case of flouting of pollution control rules. They felt that industries need affordable CETP.
The Pollution Control Board saw its role limited to enforcing of law and felt handicapped without much support by the industries. The peoples' agitation, they felt, can go a long way in enforcing pollution control rules.

Issues Emerging from the Study

The interviews with the villagers and the focus group discussion brought out a few aspects, which were subtle but significant indicators to marginalisation occurring in the process of development and also the protests and negotiations used by people.

Women seem to be the single largest group marginalised in all areas. They were also major victims of loss of traditional occupation. It was mentioned in the focus group discussions by both agricultural based women and fisherfolk women that loss of land and loss of fishing were not major issues compared to their loss of self worth and self sufficiency. Both in agriculture and fishing, women were active participants in earning for living. The industrialisation has relegated them back to the kitchen and the role of housemakers. Fisherfolk women spoke of loss of decision-making capacity and also loss of opportunities to associate with people from other villages. They missed their independent economic status and feared subjugation by men.

Women also suffered a lot as they had no choice of an alternative earning source in industry. No women, except one, were absorbed in any industry. Many women did take up work as domestic workers in the industrial residential colonies but did not like or could not sustain it. They also did not have any say in the struggles and negotiations struck up by villages as they were used by the villagers only as a mob.

The other marginalised groups were Dalits who were not even seen as affected population. They were small land holders or landless agriculture labourers. They also lost land or now have uncultivable land due to soil pollution. They have not come together as a group due to fragmentation and lack of any single dominant issue connecting them. They cannot work as agricultural labourers and do not have enough educational or skill background to seek jobs in the industry. The family members are migrating and others are seeking petty jobs in the nearby towns.

The second issue emerging out of the study has been the varying concept of development and accountability. There seems to be an implicit understanding in the villages that industries will bring development automatically. The bitterness and disillusionment and a sense of betrayal is very strong due to this understanding. The MIDC, industries and government do not seem to have the same vision. Their concept of development is not the village development but the development of industries. Nowhere have there been attempts by the MIDC, industries and the government to see their role in developing the villages or the area. It is assumed that if the industries develop, village development will follow.

The village people, industries, MIDC, and the government have not considered the village ecosystem as also having a stake in the development process. Each traditional occupation, if brought together, forms a mosaic of the village eco-system where water, land and air are important ingredients for survival. Each occupational group has looked at a part of the
ecosystem only. Pollution of creek, ground water pollution, soil pollution and air pollution all put together are major responsible aspects for negative impact on village people. However, industries have used all these, that is, water, land and air as major sources of letting out effluents with not much resource of letting out effluents with not much resource of letting out effluents, blatantly destroying the village ecosystem.

The major struggle, negotiations have been to seek compensation in monetary forms. The industries have opted for these monetary options as they do not then remain accountable after paying compensation. This cycle needs to be stopped. The accountability of industries needs to be seen more holistically. The industries and MIDC are accountable to the entire ecosystem and social systems existing in the area. Safeguarding natural resources and provision of a healthy sustainable ecosystem is also the responsibility of the industries. They have to see their stake holding in the development of the area, villages and local people.

The different occupational or caste groups though organised in their own caste groups, are working in fragments and achieving very little. All fragments need to be joined together into a well-informed assertive organised group to seek solution to prevent the situation from further deterioration and prevent the future mess.

Conclusion

Any development process is complex and multidimensional. The multiparty involved in the process need to have a common vision or they function at counter purposes. The silent and invisible stakeholder is the ecosystem of the area, which sustains the stakeholders. Unless and until this ecosystem is not safeguarded and prevented from destruction, the stakeholders will not achieve much. Their very survival will be threatened. This study has brought out some pertinent facts that industrial development in itself cannot lead to sustainability. The industrial development can contribute to sustainable development only if the industries, and the government recognise the rights and importance of various stakeholders and decide the process of development in unison.

References

citizenship is not only demanding rights but also fulfilling responsibilities as desired or expected in a community by participating in processes, for the larger public good. Citizenship is closely related to democracy, and citizen is a person who governs and is governed. Therefore, it is important to note that participation and citizenship are the two sides of the same coin.

Participation is about the involvement of all stakeholders, the state and the non-state, through a process of communication and negotiation to influence the decisions that affect their lives. Participation leads to the creation and sustenance of accountability. A sense of the right to accountability provides the basis on which citizens can act. It leads to openness and transparency in policy making. Such accountability builds up social reciprocities characterized by equity, inter group tolerance and inclusive citizenship. Responsible and active citizenship results in meaningful participation. Citizenship, participation and accountability together form the basis of a governance wheel. This wheel moves in an integrated, interlinked and synergised manner and affects each of the three in a dynamic relationship.

**Meaning of Social Development Monitoring**

The social development signifies some kind of positive action in the society. It clearly demonstrates ‘change and transformation’ from the current situation to an expected situation of a society characterized by justice, equality, freedom, participation of marginalized groups, signifying empowerment.

In this context, monitoring implies checking and examining the information about the
current project/programme development to improve implementation, performance and results. In essence it means comparing the actual situation with the expected or planned situation and then taking action to match the reality and expectations. Action is a very important part of monitoring, carried out at the local level or at the higher level of making referrals, which ensures accountability, transparency and responsibility.

Unfortunately, a cloud of myth surrounds the term monitoring. It is generally associated with a body of skills and tools, which only ‘experts’ in the development sector possess. These experts are the project managers or the programme managers of the government or the NGOs. The general impression is that the community is not experienced in handling a technical component like monitoring on its own since this requires special skills. This narrow view of monitoring stifles people’s active contribution in solving their own problems. It is very important to demystify this view of monitoring if people’s participation has to be ensured in projects and programmes.

In fact, without being aware of it, everyone is engaged in monitoring all the time. A school going child will definitely check that all her books and notebooks are kept in the bag, her dress is appropriate for the day, or her shoe laces are tied. The parents may also be interested in checking that the uniform the child wears for the day is clean, the buttons are in place, her shoes are polished and the child is carrying the books and notebooks according to the schedule of the day. If the child finds something wrong, she may fix the problem herself or may ask her parents to do so. This common example from day to day life debunks the concept and meaning of the term ‘monitoring’ which does not require special skills but interested actors (in this example, the child and parents) and a relevant issue (preparation to go to school) to collect data on, carry out analysis and proper action.

Social development monitoring (SDM) is a process of inclusion of citizens in checking, observing, collecting information on the development plans, policies and programmes, taking actions on the gaps that might exist for achieving the desired results/outcomes by holding the higher authorities of the state, bilateral and multilateral agencies accountable with the purpose to promote effective and robust governance. SDM is a process, which focuses on people’s rights to ascertain that their interests are not compromised. On the other hand it ensures that people in protecting their interests do not jettison the larger ‘public good’. In another words, social development monitoring is a process of strengthening accountability and governance by offering space for the excluded and marginalized to influence decisions in their favour. The social development monitoring aims at improving a situation, empowering people who have real interest in the issue by engaging them in the process and bringing sustainability by inclusion of poor and marginalized in the process.

PRIA has been involved in facilitating social development monitoring with the perspective to empower the community by enabling them to demand their rights, which they deserve as citizens and strengthen their skills as key actors in the development process by enabling them to take up actions at their level. Social development monitoring was facilitated by PRIA with the support of local partner NGOs.
in India and Sri Lanka. In India, SDM interventions in Dharali village in Uttarkashi focused on improving the functioning of the Village Water and Sanitation Committees constituted under the rural water supply and sanitation project of the World Bank. In Golapalli village in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh, the interventions focused on increasing accountability of Water Users’ Association. In Jharkhand, SDM interventions were channeled into improving the functioning of schools responsible for providing non-formal education to working children in three blocks of Jarmundi, Saryahat and Jamtara in Dumka district. The Sri Lankan site, Thuruvilla village in Anuradhapura was about ensuring accountability from the government and Asian Development Bank on a water project which aimed at extracting water from the tank on which livelihood of people of Thuruvilla has depended for centuries.

This article is based on the experiences that have been generated from all the sites where the process was undertaken.

**Key Steps Involved in SDM**

1. **Identification of the key issue and problems:** Since monitoring focuses on an issue, concern or a problem, it is essential to know what is the problem by consulting various stakeholders in the community belonging to various institutions present within the community. Other partners who are part of the development interventions should also be consulted in order to know the concerns and issues that the people face. In the social development, monitoring interventions in India and Sri Lanka, the concern surrounding water problems emerged in three out of four sites. The problems varied from ineffective water and sanitation committees, poor quality of water, lack of accountability of committees and panchayats, the marginalized not getting the benefits to lack of responsiveness of state authorities in implementing the projects. In Sri Lanka, the cause of concern for the people in Anuradhapura was their livelihood, which was about to be affected by the government’s decision of extracting water from the Thuruvilla tank for supplying it to the city dwellers. People feared that such an action would affect their crops drastically and they may not be able to raise two crops as the water in the tank would recede fast and there seemed no provision of replenishing the tank. In Jharkhand, a process of mapping of service delivery projects assisted in focusing interventions on providing non-formal education to working children in three blocks of Jarmundi, Saryahat and Jamtara. During the consultations in the community and with the various state authorities, it was revealed that parents of the children were unaware of basic provisions of the project and were rather concerned about the functioning of the school.

The process of identification of issue involves very intensive consultations and meetings with the community members. This should happen on an ongoing basis as during the project cycle, fresh concerns and problems emerge at various stages. The results of these consultations help in providing the information on a list of concerns, list of those who are concerned and have a vested interest in the issue, detailed information about the expectations...
ecosystem only. Pollution of creek, ground water pollution, soil pollution and air pollution all put together are major responsible aspects for negative impact on village people. However, industries have used all these, that is, water, land and air as major sources of letting out effluents with not much resistance, blatantly destroying the village ecosystem.

The major struggle, negotiations have been to seek compensation in monetary forms. The industries have opted for these monetary options as they do not then remain accountable after paying compensation. This cycle needs to be stopped. The accountability of industries needs to be seen more holistically. The industries and MIDC are accountable to the entire ecosystem and social systems existing in the area. Safeguarding natural resources and provision of a healthy sustainable ecosystem is also the responsibility of the industries. They have to see their stake holding in the development of the area, villages and local people.

The different occupational or caste groups though organised in their own caste groups, are working in fragments and achieving very little. All fragments need to be joined together into a well-informed assertive organised group to seek solution to prevent the situation from further deterioration and prevent the future mess.

Conclusion

Any development process is complex and multidimensional. The multiparty involved in the process need to have a common vision or they function at counter purposes. The silent and invisible stakeholder is the ecosystem of the area, which sustains the stakeholders. Unless and until this ecosystem is not safeguarded and prevented from destruction, the stakeholders will not achieve much. Their very survival will be threatened. This study has brought out some pertinent facts that industrial development in itself cannot lead to sustainability. The industrial development can contribute to sustainable development only if the industries, and the government recognise the rights and importance of various stakeholders and decide the process of development in unison.

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Social Development Monitoring: A Process to Ensure Accountability

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Abstract As the debate on active citizenship is growing and responsiveness from institutions is becoming a concern, the process of social development monitoring can enhance the accountability mechanisms and therefore lead to good governance and active citizenship. This article is based on the experiences drawn from facilitating a process of social development monitoring in three sites in India and one site in Sri Lanka. The article examines the steps involved in facilitating such a process with some key challenges that one may encounter in the process. The article draws out some key lessons from all the four sites and highlights the strength of such processes in empowering people for better governance.

Background

Owing to failure of a number of policies and programmes that were designed by the government, the decade of 1990s experienced a new wave of people centered development, which popularly began to be called Participatory Development. With increasing emphasis on decentralized governance, the projects initiated by the government, bilateral and multilateral agencies began to mainstream the element of ‘participation’ by creating space in the projects for the people in designing and implementing the programmes. This however was a great shift from an approach, which had eschewed those people from planning programmes whom it was meant to benefit the most.

In 1990s, the projects worldwide began to bring in the focus of participation of the community. Soon, community participation became an integral part of development projects implemented by the state. Under the provisions of the project, village level institutions (in the form of committees) were constituted to involve people in the village for their participation in the projects.

Village level institutions, the representative body of people residing in the same village, are initiated by the project through people’s mandate. The purpose of forming village level institutions is to provide people ownership of the project by making them integral part of decision making, giving them control over their
resources, and giving them the autonomy to implement the project their way. \(^1\)

Despite strong emphasis on participation, many experiences have shown that meaning of participation in the development projects has been interpreted in various ways. Participation has been either seen as a voluntary contribution by the people in the public programmes, or their involvement in decision making processes, in implementing programmes. Participation has been concerned with the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control. Community participation has also been seen as an active process by which beneficiaries or clients influence the direction and execution of a development project. \(^2\)

A study on effectiveness of village level institutions in the state of Uttarakhand, undertaken by PRIA in 2000 demonstrated that the meaning of participation has been reduced to an instrumental function (where the project goals have to be fulfilled) as opposed to power functions, which implies reversal in power equations and turning the powers in favor of poor and excluded. The study revealed that encouraging people’s participation has been reduced to a means to achieve an end, in this way it suffers from being reduced to assume importance in ritualistic ways where people’s involvement in participatory rural appraisals and planning is sought to ensure participation, even in those projects which are pre-designed. If participation is seen as a value, the process becomes important where the focus lies on integrating the powerless and excluded in various ways into a project or programme.

Though the representation of poor and excluded as members in VLIIs points towards the inclusion of marginalized as members of the committee, but it is difficult to establish that in reality how much say the members of excluded groups have in the decision making and how successful they have been in changing the decisions in their favour. The issue of sustainability of the projects has also been raised in many ways. By establishing committees, projects make assumption that the ownership and control would be with the people. Various kinds of capacity building efforts during project implementation stages also explain that the committees constituting villagers will take up the development in their hands once the project winds up and will be capable to sustain the projects.

In the communities, many kinds of institutions operate which can be traditional, project initiated or statutory like the panchayat in India. All these institutions serve some functions within the community and affect the lives of the people in many ways. The accountability of these institutions towards the people is not very clearly established and often not taken up under the broader perspective of participation. Unfortunately, the interpretation of participation does not get extended to ensuring accountability from the institutions present in the villages or outside.

The committees formed under the projects fulfill the conditions laid out in the projects and do not vanish when the project ends. In fact, all the projects have provisions for committees to last for a longer duration. Therefore their existence as institutions within the community remains since they have to perform roles and responsibilities as enshrined
in the project documents. These institutions do not necessarily have all the information about the project, since much information appears in very technical languages, which the committees may not be able to comprehend. The situation aggravates when the projects conclude and the outside agencies also go away. Most of the problems related to operations and maintenance emerge after the project implementation ends. Due to lack of information on where to get support from, the committees also fail to respond to the demands of the people.

There has been increasing disillusionment of citizens with the state and governance structures created under decentralization policies. The charges of corruption and lack of responsiveness have often been placed on such institutions. These incidents are ironic, since on the one hand efforts to strengthen participatory processes are going on and on the other hand, growing attention has been paid to strengthen the accountability and responsiveness of the institutions; yet the link between participation and accountability remains unclear.

As participatory approaches are scaled up from projects to policies, they inevitably enter the arenas of governance and find that participation can only become effective as it engages with issues of institutional change. As concerns about good governance and state responsiveness grow, questions about how citizens engage and make demands on the state also come to the fore. 4

The development interventions in the form of projects must aim at strengthening the voices of the excluded and marginalized to demand their rights as citizens. Citizenship encompasses rights/entitlements and responsibilities/practice dimensions; meaning thereby that citizenship is not only demanding rights but also fulfilling responsibilities as desired or expected in a community by participating in processes, for the larger public good. Citizenship is closely related to democracy, and citizen is a person who governs and is governed. Therefore, it is important to note that participation and citizenship are the two sides of the same coin.

Participation is about the involvement of all stakeholders, the state and the non-state, through a process of communication and negotiation to influence the decisions that affect their lives. Participation leads to the creation and sustenance of accountability. A sense of the right to accountability provides the basis on which citizens can act. It leads to openness and transparency in policy making. Such accountability builds up social reciprocities characterized by equity, inter group tolerance and inclusive citizenship. Responsible and active citizenship results in meaningful participation. Citizenship, participation and accountability together form the basis of a governance wheel. This wheel moves in an integrated, interlinked and synergised manner and affects each one of the three in a dynamic relationship. 4

Meaning of Social Development Monitoring

The social development signifies some kind of positive action in the society. It clearly demonstrates 'change and transformation' from the current situation to an expected situation of a society characterized by justice, equality, freedom, participation of marginalized groups, signifying empowerment.

In this context, monitoring implies checking and examining the information about the
current project/programme development to improve implementation, performance and results. In essence it means comparing the actual situation with the expected or planned situation and then taking action to match the reality and expectations. Action is a very important part of monitoring, carried out at the local level or at the higher level of making referrals, which ensures accountability, transparency and responsibility.

Unfortunately, a cloud of myth surrounds the term monitoring. It is generally associated with a body of skills and tools, which only ‘experts’ in the development sector possess. These experts are the project managers or the programme managers of the government or the NGOs. The general impression is that the community is not experienced in handling a technical component like monitoring on its own since this requires special skills. This narrow view of monitoring stifles people’s active contribution in solving their own problems. It is very important to demystify this view of monitoring if people’s participation has to be ensured in projects and programmes.

In fact, without being aware of it, everyone is engaged in monitoring all the time. A schoolgoing child will definitely check that all her books and notebooks are kept in the bag, her dress is appropriate for the day, or her shoe laces are tied. The parents may also be interested in checking that the uniform the child wears for the day is clean, the buttons are in place, her shoes are polished and the child is carrying the books and notebooks according to the schedule of the day. If the child finds something wrong, she may fix the problem herself or may ask her parents to do so. This common example from day to day life debunks the concept and meaning of the term - monitoring, which does not require special skills but interested actors (in this example, the child and parents) and a relevant issue (preparation to go to school) to collect data on, carry out analysis and proper action.

Social development monitoring (SDM) is a process of inclusion of citizens in checking, observing, collecting information on the development plans, policies and programmes, taking actions on the gaps that might exist for achieving the desired results/outcomes by holding the higher authorities of the state, bilateral and multilateral agencies accountable with the purpose to promote effective and robust governance. SDM is a process, which focuses on people’s rights to ascertain that their interests are not compromised. On the other hand it ensures that people in protecting their interests do not getuson the larger ‘public good’. In another words, social development monitoring is a process of strengthening accountability and governance by offering space for the excluded and marginalized to influence decisions in their favour. The social development monitoring aims at improving a situation, empowering people who have real interest in the issue by engaging them in the process and bringing sustainability by inclusion of poor and marginalized in the process.

PRIA has been involved in facilitating social development monitoring with the perspective to empower the community by enabling them to demand their rights, which they deserve as citizens and strengthen their skills as key actors in the development process by enabling them to take up actions at their level. Social development monitoring was facilitated by PRIA with the support of local partner NGOs.
in India and Srilanka. In India, SDM interventions in Dharali village in Uttarkashi focused on improving the functioning of the Village Water and Sanitation Committees constituted under the rural water supply and sanitation project of the World Bank. In Golapalli village in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh, the interventions focused on increasing accountability of Water Users’ Association. In Jharkhand, SDM interventions were channelized in improving the functioning of schools responsible for providing non-formal education to working children in three blocks of Jarmundi, Sarjayat and Jamtara in Dumka district. The Srilankan site, Thuruwilla village in Anuradhapura was about ensuring accountability from the government and Asian Development Bank on a water project which aimed at extracting water from the tank on which livelihood of people of Thuruwilla has depended for centuries.

This article is based on the experiences that have been generated from all the sites where the process was undertaken.

Key Steps Involved in SDM

1. Identification of the key issue and problems: Since monitoring focuses on an issue, concern or a problem, it is essential to know what is the problem by consulting various stakeholders in the community belonging to various institutions present within the community. Other partners who are part of the development interventions should also be consulted in order to know the concerns and issues that the people face. In the social development, monitoring interventions in India and Srilanka, the concern surrounding water problems emerged in three out of four sites. The problems varied from ineffective water and sanitation committees, poor quality of water, lack of accountability of committees and panchayats, the marginalized not getting the benefits to lack of responsiveness of state authorities in implementing the projects. In Srilanka, the cause of concern for the people in Anuradhapura was their livelihood, which was about to be affected by the government’s decision of extracting water from the Thuruwilla tank for supplying it to the city dwellers. People feared that such an action would affect their crops drastically and they may not be able to raise two crops as the water in the tank would recede fast and there seemed no provision of replenishing the tank. In Jharkhand, a process of mapping of service delivery projects assisted in focusing interventions on providing non-formal education to working children in three blocks of Jarmundi, Sarjayat and Jamtara. During the consultations in the community and with the various state authorities, it was revealed that parents of the children were unaware of basic provisions of the project and were rather concerned about the functioning of the school.

The process of identification of issue involves very intensive consultations and meetings with the community members. This should happen on an ongoing basis as during the project cycle, fresh concerns and problems emerge at various stages. The results of these consultations help in providing the information on a list of concerns, list of those who are concerned and have a vested interest in the issue, detailed information about the expectations.
2. **Identification of interested actors and their roles**: The next step in the process of social development monitoring is to list down the actors within the community who have a real interest in the issue. The ownership of a monitoring process can only be taken up by those who have a direct stake in the issue. Within the community also, specific concern may be most relevant to a particular group than another. Based on the issue, such groups need to be identified. In Jharkhand, the parents of those children who were studying in the schools were interested actors in checking that schools functioned properly. There was no reason to organize those parents whose children did not attend the schools. Similarly, in the case of Uttarakhal where the whole community was affected by the issue, the men and women from the poor families were more interested in getting the water regularly and were concerned about the conditions of pipes as they were sharing one stand post amongst 5-8 families than those slightly better off families who in any case were benefited by having their individual connections. In Andhra Pradesh, the villagers (men and women) were concerned about the regular supply of irrigation for their crops. Even in Srilanka, the whole village was getting affected by the government’s decision to extract water from the Thuruvilla Tank in Anuradhapura.

These interested actors were put in groups and committees to be leaders in the social development monitoring process. The parents’ committee in Jharkhand, core group and monitoring committee in Uttarakhal and Andhra Pradesh and Thuruvilla Tank protection society (TIPS) in Srilanka emerged out of this process, which played important role in taking the process forward. Except the TIPS which had the membership of the whole village with a small executive body, the other groups and committees had 6-7 members drawn from the community for monitoring.

3. **Making indicators and action plans**: Once the actors are prepared to take up monitoring, each issue should be discussed further and small sets of indicators could be built around an issue. In Uttarakhal, the issue of ineffective water supply was further broken down into the small sets of indicators such as - irregularity of water supply, dysfunctional stand posts, quality of water (mud and silt composition), conditions of pipes. Similarly in Jharkhand, the functioning of school was further elaborated and categorized into presence or absence of two teachers during school hours, serving of mid day meal scheme, health check ups of children by local health department.

In Andhra Pradesh and in Srilanka, the indicators were not outlined, rather causes of the problems were identified such as in AP, the identification of issue on irregular supply of water in the village for irrigation was owed to insufficient depth of the tank in the village. In Srilanka, the over extraction plan of the government had to be thwarted if livelihoods of inhabitants were to be saved. In these two cases the action plans emerged out of the solutions directed towards addressal of the problems.
This step aids in developing clarity regarding the objectives of monitoring viz. to evoke responsiveness and accountability from the concerned authorities.

4. **Collection and analysis of information:**
The indicators preparation has to be followed step-wise on how to collect data and evolve the mechanisms of analyzing it. In the case of Jharkhand, with the facilitation of PRIA and local partners, the parents committee developed a pictorial format; while in Uttarakhand, the written format was developed by the core groups with all indicators listed. The data was collected three-four times in a month and presented before the teachers, and other concerned authorities in the case of Jharkhand and before VWSC and panchayats in the case of Uttarakhand.

The meetings of teachers, parents and community members with VWSC and panchayats would lead to analysis of the reasons of the problems. In the case of Uttarakhand, poor quality of water was reported due to low positioning of the tank where water used to get stored and deforestation. An action plan emerged from the analysis on what should be done to check the problem and who could help in solution of the problem.

5. **Taking actions at the lowest level and demanding actions from the higher authorities:** The analysis of information would lead to certain steps and actions to be undertaken to check the problem. In the case of Uttarakhand, the meetings would lead to steps and from where the support could be accessed to solve the problem.

Certain actions were possible by the local community such as raising the height of the tank, while certain actions such as afforestation near the water resources and training for VWSC members on operations and maintenance were referred to the project authorities at the district level. In Andhra Pradesh, the committee decided to refer the deepening of the water tank to the project officials while they too get involved in providing labour to de-weed the tank.

In Jharkhand, the parents held a meeting with concerned government authorities, circle and medical officers to apprise them of the facts and petition them for redressal or corrective actions. For instance, slackness on the part of doctors in conducting routine medical check-ups of students, difficulties to run centers owing to teachers’ post being vacant were put before them.

In Srilanka, people organized themselves into various sub-committees based on task under the tank protection society. Some played a role in collecting information on the project; while some played the role of organizing people in the village; some others played the role of ‘watch dogs’ to disallow entry of any project officials to commence work in the village; while some with the local partners took the responsibility to garner support from other organizations like Movement for Defense of Democratic rights (MDDR), Human Rights Commission (HRC) and media to support the cause of the people. The case was filed in HRC, which directed the project staff to share the documents with the HRC and the people of Thuruvilla, who had no
access to them initially. Simultaneously, a case has been filed in the court and a stay order has been obtained through people's efforts.

Personal visits, letters to the project officials and other government authorities, invitations to attend various meetings organized in the community, and sending petitions were carried out to establish contact with the higher authorities. Agitations, poster campaigns, religious activities were undertaken in Sri Lanka to influence the project authorities. Religious functions served two latent functions - organizing the whole community and conveying strong messages of unity and strength to the government officials.

Key Lessons

1. The term monitoring conveys negative connotations: The term monitoring evokes fear and resentment and therefore a non-threatening environment needs to be built to get the support from other stakeholders. In the beginning itself, the process should not appear to be threatening otherwise the powerful groups in the community and in various government departments can hamper the process. Building trust and confidence are pre-conditions for an effective monitoring process. If this is seen as an empowering tool for the poor and marginalized to demand responsiveness from the higher levels and other institutions, establishing a process of communication and understanding the purpose of the monitoring process helps in dissipating doubts and fears. Where the doubts prevail, it is unlikely that a smooth process can sustain itself for long. Greater reluctance from the higher authorities might do more harm than good to the confidence of people and can seriously injure the process of ensuring accountability.

2. Monitoring provides opportunity for citizens' action: Since monitoring is accompanied by an action, it gives spaces for the people to act and be responsible as well. While ensuring accountability from the higher authorities is essential, it is also important that the citizens demonstrate responsibility to the state and other institutions. In this way, citizenship processes can be strengthened in the community. In all the cases, citizens demanded their rights but were also convinced that citizenship does not mean only 'demanding' but 'acting' as well. Theft of parts of the stand posts, stealing pipes or clogging the pipes were some incidents that the community in Uttarakhand felt responsible for and agreed that they needed to put a check on these incidents themselves. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the people initially did not compromise on the extraction issue since their livelihood was getting affected, but through the process of social development monitoring they realized that they as active citizens should not be so rigid in fulfilling their own interests but should acknowledge that others also need water. Their demands began to focus on ensuring that Mahaweli authority (largest water project in Sri Lanka) replenishes the source.
Low participation of the citizens and non-availability of the information to the community weakens the process of accountability: It was observed that although projects aim to benefit the community and integrate the participation of the community right from planning stage, in practice very limited efforts go towards true participation of people. The participation of the community remains confined to their acquiescence on pre-conceptualized and pre-designed projects, involvement in rural appraisal exercises and representation in the committees. Institution building efforts remain very weak which further brittle the process of strengthening software components of the projects like participation, leadership, communication, conflict resolution and decision-making. Often, it was seen that most of the people in the community including the committee members who work closely with the project officials during the implementation stage do not comprehend the project in entirety. This situation proves disastrous when the committees who later have to manage the project do not have many answers to provide to the community members on various issues related to the project. This leads to conflicts within the community across various institutions. Instead of sharing the information and taking actions, the members begin to resort to the 'escapist' approach where they run away from responding to the demands of the people and evade the pertinent issues.

Sometimes some crucial information is hidden from the community deliberately by the project officials or government officials, as seen in the case of Srilanka. The people in Thuruvilla were not informed or shown documents which had the provision of extraction of water from the tank. These incidents not only reveal an ugly side of the efforts of mainstreaming participation in the development projects and programmes but also put a question mark on how 'participatory' the projects are in real sense.

Multiparty accountability can be established through a process of social development monitoring: In a community, there might be a variety of institutions present, which may function independently of each other. Through social development monitoring, a process of mutual accountability can be established amongst all the institutions present within the community. During facilitating the SDM in India and Srilanka, it was observed that whether it was death assistant society (a community based organization in Thuruvilla village responsible for providing support to the bereaved families by offering materials for cremation and performing other rituals associated with death ceremony), religious institutions in the case of Srilanka or panchayats in case of India, their linkages with the community to some extent grew stronger as they all in the process of monitoring were held accountable by other community based institutions. The community in Uttarakhand began to question even the panchayat’s role in checking the effectiveness of VWSC. VWSC in turn challenged panchayat’s non-transparency and lack of accountability to the community. The SDM enables in
establishing multi party accountability, which is essential for strengthening the democratic processes within the community.

5. SDM as a process can be empowering for the voiceless and marginalized: The process of social development monitoring gives an opportunity to the people to explain things as they see them, help them to analyze, to plan and to carry through a course of planned action. The focus here is on equipping them with the analytical and action oriented skills necessary to become actively involved in the development. Skills of monitoring gained during the process get extended to other areas and sectors as well, if some good results begin to show in the community and the people realize that their efforts can result in some concrete outcomes. In case of Jharkhand, the parents after getting little confident about their endeavors as leaders in the social development monitoring, began to make demands that were in the nature of just socio economic rights of the poorest of the poor sections such as demand of recognition as below poverty line families, they be provided loans against the self employed guarantee programme for small earning opportunities.

Obstacles to Social Development Monitoring

Social development monitoring as a process is susceptible to be influenced by some factors, which can affect it negatively.

1. Structural and administrative: In places where the political environment does not promote or encourage openness or citizens voices, and decision making is controlled and administrative structures are too rigid to allow any space for participation to occur, it is unlikely that people would raise their voices to demand their rights and even if they would do so, there are barely any chances of responses from the higher levels. Persistent non-responsiveness can lead to further disillusionment of citizens. In controlled administrative structures, the information is also not imparted to the people and people remain largely ignorant about their rights. The administrators tend to have a negative attitude towards the whole notion of active citizenship and participation in those places and countries where the control lies in the hands of bureaucrats and administrators.

2. Social: Even the rural people do not constitute homogeneous groups. The interests of the people vary from each other. The problems faced by the disadvantaged and excluded are often very different from those who are advantaged owing to their socioeconomic conditions, political affiliations etc. Since SDM attempts at including the marginalized, therefore the process has a bias stronger towards those who are voiceless. The process of facilitating people to be empowered to demand their rights is fraught with resistance from the advantaged and powerful groups. The support to a kind of political ideology also comes in the way in facilitating a process of social development monitoring. Those who represent a particular political party often tend to blame those who do not belong to the same political party with the sole purpose of defaming them by
highlighting the non-accomplishments of each other. In this way, social development monitoring faces the danger of being reduced to a blame-shifting forum than an action-oriented process.

Another problem is that marginalization and exclusion is deep rooted that dependency of citizens on others is so much that they are accustomed to leaving decisions and actions to the higher authorities than initiating some which are possible at their levels. This attitude of dependency frustrates efforts of promoting participation and accountability through a process of social development monitoring.

**Conclusion**

Despite the provisions of institutionalizing participation and accountability in development projects and programmes, the reality suggests that these often do not yield desired results. The inclusion of poor and marginalized in the committees initiated under projects has been a key emphasis in all the programmes, yet their voices do not get amplified often. Reluctance of the powerful within the community to transfer the power to the marginalized and voiceless, political interests of the communities, village conflicts which further intensify when the benefits aimed in the projects do not reach the people, lack of information and non transparency, negligence of project authorities and implementing organizations place barriers to people’s participation towards ensuring accountability of the institutions for good governance.

Social development monitoring is a process, which can strengthen accountability by enabling people to raise their concerns, find solutions to the concerns by holding the powerful institutions of state and civil society accountable. This process promotes inclusive democracy by integrating the voice of those who are usually left out in the development process. SDM leads to improvement of the situation as people take responsibility to solve the problems, which can be dealt with at the local level and simultaneously exert pressure on those institutions from whom the adequate responses to their problem should come. This process can be very liberating especially when the pressure and demand lead to appropriate actions; people realize the capacities within them which can empower them as citizens.

In democratic decentralization, when the panchayati raj institutions and other VLIs take responsibility of the development interventions, the accountability mechanisms can strengthen the democracy which can only take place when the monitoring by the community is recognized and integrated in all the development interventions carried out by the government, NGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies.

**References**


4. ibid
Abstract

Women’s Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development (WELLD) project is about developing an integrated educational and asset building model for women in India that contribute to their empowerment. This article highlights PRIA’s experiences in implementing this model in Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Lessons derived from such experiences can give insights in the replication and/or upscaling this model elsewhere in the country.

Background

Over the years, the popularity of women’s savings credit groups has risen. Efforts have been made within projects by grassroots organisations to encourage more women to form join village level savings and credit groups, in which they deposit savings and obtain loans for their consumption needs or other productive purposes. However, many of their efforts are constrained and fall short of becoming self sustainable because they lack literacy skills that are essential for the women to maintain proper records of their accounts, read, negotiate & transact and improve chances of alternate sources of livelihood. Merely acquiring savings, livelihood and literacy skills cannot be considered an achievement unless women are able to create a more conducive environment for themselves and their communities in terms of not only having more choices and taking informed decisions, but also in creating better employment opportunities for themselves to ensure a stable source of income.

Literacy is considered an essential skill for women in their efforts to improve their livelihood options and quality of life. However after the experiences of many literacy campaigns and programmes, a different approach to literacy was envisaged - one that involves not only literacy but also learning how to improve livelihood options, enhancing awareness over a range of social, political and economical issues prevailing in the environment. Therefore, following the above, a programme that delivered much more beyond rudimentary literacy skills that are easily lost and forgotten without (any) follow-up efforts, was envisaged.

In Nepal, World Education (WE), an organisation involved in developing literacy
curriculum for women in a way that it integrates literacy with the concept of savings & credit, followed by an educational plan for developing skills for women to improve their livelihoods, implemented the ‘Women’s Economic Empowerment Literacy’ (WEEL) Project. Based on WE’s experience in Nepal and PRIA’s vast experience in capacity building and institutional strengthening of VDCs and basic education in India for about two decades, a strong foundation was created to launch a similar initiative in India in the form of a Pilot Project. The project was called ‘Women’s Empowerment through Literacy and Livelihood Development’ (WELLD). It was funded by the Ford Foundation.

**Objectives of WELLD**

- Women increase skills and knowledge in literacy, savings & credit and livelihood improvement.
- Local partners strengthen their capacity to run the programme and to participate in its eventual expansion.
- Developing effective participatory monitoring and evaluation systems developed with local partners and women learners.
- Policy makers and resource providers increase their knowledge of innovative integrated approaches to educational asset building models for women’s empowerment.

*Source: WELLD Proposal to Ford Foundation, PRIA, 1999*

At the pre-planning phase, a field assessment throughout India was conducted. Based on the findings of this exercise which included shortlisting of interested NGOs, with the vision and mission to take WELLD forward, two states Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP) were selected as sites for implementing this pilot project. In each of the states, two partners were selected to implement the project. They had an exposure to the WEEL project in Nepal to be able to better understand the model.

**Project Structure**

The four partner implementing this project were Pradeepan and CEROWC in Betul and Bhopal districts in Madhya Pradesh; RADS and PEACE in Rangareddy and Medak districts of Andhra Pradesh. Each of these four implementing organisations were working with 10 women’s self-help groups consisting of maximum 20 women learners. The 10 groups emerged at different time frames and are referred to as Phase I and Phase II groups. PRIA and World Education played the role of technical support organizations. To sum up, the responsibilities of the four WELLD partners were:

**Roles & Responsibilities of WELLD Partners**

**PRIA**: engaging in institutional strengthening and developing programme management capacities of implementing organisations.

**WE**: Developing and piloting the basic and post literacy materials and the training curricula for improving livelihoods.

Partners (AP & MP): Implementing and managing the project in the field.

All the partners were engaged in monitoring the project at their respective levels of intervention.

*Source: WELLD Proposal to Ford Foundation, PRIA, 1999*
WELLD Project: The Integrated Model

A critical and innovative component of WELLD has been to try and develop capacities of the women learners to make informed decisions about the choices they have, raise their awareness, enhance their ability to articulate their opinions and viewpoints and improve their quality of life.

WELLD pilot project is a holistic education package that integrates three components viz. literacy, savings & credit and livelihood with the overarching aim as women’s empowerment as shown by in Figure 1. This is an approach that integrates literacy learning through the word approach with specific information regarding savings & credit and improving livelihood choices. As the figure above suggests, this integrated model follows an approach where all the three components are interlinked. Literacy skills would enhance women learners’ knowledge on a number of issues like importance of going to the village panchayats and making the right choice during elections in panchayat, curbing corruption in the village, raising awareness about rights / duties, market feasibility in case of livelihood opportunities, participating in decision making within the family and many such issues that have a direct implication on their life within their social milieu. It was presumed that literacy skills, if enhanced, will aid further in making better choices regarding savings, access to credit and livelihood opportunities eventually leading to empowerment of the women learners.

The whole issue of empowerment was envisaged in such a manner as not to get into the definitional aspect of the word. Empowerment, as such, may not have a tangible visibility, but may be sensed in different ways in different cultural contexts. For instance, at the Betul site, women learners’ idea of their being empowered is that they can speak confidently and can articulate well; or that they have been able to put a ban on liquor consumption in their village. Similarly in Rangareddy district of AP, women feel that ability to talk to strangers and to officials is their greatest empowerment that they have been able to achieve. Elsewhere, this may be reflected.

![Figure 1: WELLD Integrated Model](image_url)
in a different manner depending upon the socio-cultural context of the region.

Thus, in the integrated model all the three components were seen as effective mechanisms to empower the women learners so they can take better control over their and their family’s lives by being articulate and aware.

As mentioned above, PRIA’s contribution to WELLD has been in the form of Institutional Development & Capacity Building of the partner organizations (i.e. CEROWC, Pradeepan, RADS and Peace). The following is a broad outline of PRIA’s interventions during the project.

1. Capacity building & institutional strengthening

PRIA’s efforts to build capacities of the key stakeholders of the project i.e. women learners, facilitators and partner organizations followed a three pronged approach:

- programme management, monitoring and documentation
- sectoral issues
- institutional capacity

Capacity building was done by organizing on-field structured events like trainings and workshops on a range of project related issues like project orientation, preparation of reporting formats, savings and credit orientation, gender sensitization, improving facilitation skills, participatory training methodologies and adult learning principles.

Apart from this, ongoing informal support to the organisations was also built-in in the capacity building interventions. Where necessary, exposure visits to other sites were organised for women members and facilitators to help them understand the nature of livelihood initiatives undertaken by other rural women (like poultry, alternate farming, mushroom cultivation etc.).

Different systems were built in developed within partner organisations for more effective organizational management like - financial management, monitoring system, and reporting systems to monitor and track ongoing work progress were established at staff and organizations levels. This ensured better coordination and communication between partners; with the help of partners, PRIA also initiated developing of Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS), an effective participatory monitoring tool with a view to incorporate self-monitoring for sustainable impact.

2. Research, Documentation and Publications

Documentation of processes within the project as well as a number of studies on SHG’s, sub-sectoral analysis and the capacity building interventions were carried out. These provided insights and learnings during the course of the pilot. Training reports of all the capacity building interventions that have gone into this project have also been disseminated. CBMS booklets (Meri Pragati, Hindi, Naa Pragati Soochika Pustakam, Telugu) have been developed in MP and AP in which women learners record data periodically so they can monitor their progress on various aspects of this project. WELLD brochure, a manual on Participatory Programme Management, literacy
primers and other study reports are other prominent publications.

3. Policy Advocacy

Lastly, but importantly, ongoing dissemination of experiences, interventions and impact of WELLD were shared at various levels i.e. district, state and national levels, jointly by all the partners. The experiences of this project were shared at the state and the national levels where government agencies, VDOs, funding agencies, members from the academia, media etc. were invited. This platform helped all WELLD project partners to share their experiences of this integrated model and even discuss possible expansion and up-scaling strategies. Efforts to link the already literate learners with other existing projects are also being made.

Community Based Monitoring System – Empowerment of Women Learners

One of the impacts of PRIA’s capacity building role in WELLD is the development and implementation of a Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS). In today’s development context, it is widely felt that for development interventions to be sustainable and effective, the community’s (or target group’s) involvement in the intervening process is essential as it helps the community in ‘owning’ the process and responding better; besides, chances of sustainability of the intervention increase considerably.

Broadly, participatory community based monitoring would follow this cycle:

- Analyzing the current situation & reality
  - "Where we are?"
  - Initiating monitoring
  - Checking
  - Re-monitoring of the indicators
  - Observing change
  - Regular ongoing assessment
  - Discussions, Collective analysis
  - Evolving Action points
  - Feedback

CBMS Booklet in Telugu: Naa Pragati Sovochka Pustakan

CBMS Booklet in Hindi
The process of CBMS in WELL D was initiated by holding discussions with the community members (women learners in this case) about the whole concept of participatory monitoring and issues of Why? When? By Whom? How? were addressed. This was time consuming as the process could not begin until the community was prepared to carry it forward. After discussions, the women learners identified some aspects about literacy, savings and empowerment that they strongly felt were 'ideal' and must be reflected in themselves or in their groups. These aspects were the 'indicators' based on which women learners then monitored their progress and growth. This was the starting point from where a system participatory community based monitoring was established. Through regular monitoring, women learners would be able to keep a 'track' of their 'individual' and 'groups' progress. Keeping track of their (or the groups) progress would enable the women to improve their and the group performance.

Women named numerous aspects that they felt should be 'monitored' and were the most 'indicative' of empowerment and effective literacy and savings & credit activity. These Indicators were then classified into Individual level, representing the progress of one woman member and Group level indicators that were indicative of progress at the group level. In the case of in AP, a distinction was made between individual and group level indicators only on the issue of empowerment. All the other issues give individual indicators of progress.

The whole purpose of this process and rationale of having separate individual and group level indicators also is to promote collective analysis and strengthen well feeling among group members. For instance, when women members rank their group on the indicator Rules and Regulation, they discuss the present situation of the group’s rules, then together rate their group. This whole process enables a collective dialogue and thinking, apart from encouraging feelings of mutuality. For the women to undertake the monitoring in their class room, they would be undertaking this exercise in a group ensuring that they compare the data as well as compete to improve. The facilitator would be facilitating the process of analysis.

On the other hand, an individual level indicator like 'my participation' helps a woman member to reflect and analyse her own level of participation within the larger group. Even though this is an individual level indicator, yet a collective discussion on this is also encouraged so the group acts as a guiding mechanism for change and improvement.

The indicators were represented pictorially from pictures already used in the literacy curriculum developed by World Education. In the case of AP, pictures were developed based on the ideas expressed by the learners and the facilitators. The rationale for pictorial depiction is that women learners would not be able to understand written indicators but could identify the indicator which has a pictorial representation.

Regularly monitoring of these indicators would help women to keep a 'track' of their 'own' and 'groups' progress; this would enable the women to improve their/groups and performance. The expected outcomes of discussions during the consolidation session are that women members learn to collectively reflect and analyse issues of their concern. This enhances awareness about themselves, their rights and responsibilities. For
instance, Kunti, a woman learner has noticed her poor attendance compared to that of her group members. This has adversely affected not only her abilities to read and write well, but she also hesitates in speaking in front of her group members. While discussing this, she reasons that her husband is non-cooperative and is unhappy about her coming to the center. Here the group can play a proactive role to try and educate the learners’ husband and also motivate the learner to keep trying her best.

Efforts were made to make the process participatory throughout. Comments and suggestions from the women learners were solicited throughout the process of developing the monitoring formats that were repeatedly field tested. Pictures were changed, formats tested and re-tested in the groups. Finally, the formats were printed and put in the form of a booklet called ‘Meri Pragati’ (my progress) for women learners and ‘Meri Pragati’ Instructional Guidebook for facilitators in Madhya Pradesh. The same book is called ‘Pragati Souchika Pustakam’ in Andhra Pradesh.

Monitoring helped the women learners not only to collectively reflect and analyse, but also take a concrete step towards ensuring ‘sustainable’ growth & development apart from leading to collective action which is an effective mechanism of empowering women and bringing about positive change.

**Insights from the Project**

WELLD has been a unique example where partner organisations have endeavored to integrate three sectoral issues viz. literacy, savings & credit and livelihood as well as aimed towards the empowerment of the women members. This in itself, as many have commented, is a vast goal to achieve. Moreover, the integrated nature of the WELLD model suggested that literacy enables women to see the benefits in developing livelihoods for which savings and credit abilities would be prove valuable.

Our experiences in MP and AP have suggested that women learners may be persuaded to learn to read and write, but are apprehensive about initiating livelihood activities. The reasons for this go much beyond non-availability of livelihood options.

The interior areas of Betul district (a site of the WELLD project populated by Gond tribes) are almost untouched by development. Tribal here have a few ‘higbas’ of land, enough only for their own consumption. They rely on the minor forest produce (MFP), often collecting ‘mabua’ and ‘Tendu Patta’ (tobacco leaves) in exchange of small sums of money. The topography is such that often during rains, villages are cut off from each other. In such circumstances, women prefer to migrate to neighboring states in search of work. They are skeptical of investing money in a livelihood endeavor.
In the case of AP, with both the districts of Medak and Rangareddy being proximate to the state capital Hyderabad, a common family decision to improve livelihood is to migrate to the capital city. Moreover other factors like failure of monsoons and the resultant drought in the area do not leave much option for these poor agricultural workers.

However, the WELLD intervention has enabled to a large extent, the rural poor women who are slowly becoming receptive about the ideas relating to livelihoods. Experience of this project has suggested that merely debating about women members participation in the group activities is an empowering process for a woman member. She learns the benefits of participation within the group and applies the same within her family in the course of time. This is evident from some of the cases of learners in AP and MP (refer WELLD Brochure). Empowerment may not always be seen as a tangible outcome of any intervention. Acceptance (regarding women’s learning attitude, savings etc) among their family continues to increase which itself speaks volumes about the improved domestic state of these women who never mustered courage to speak to the forest officials, or the MDO, or the school teacher, or for that matter, adopt family planning measures.

There are instances of how women in their collectives have been able to make a positive difference; they have negotiated prices of their forest collection, are able to get the wage prescribed for them, intervened in domestic problems of group members, demanded fairness at anganwadi’s at local village schools and overall have been exposed to the idea of thinking about their own development in a structured framework. Literacy classes have brought awareness to the women on a range of issues mentioned earlier, savings and credit has inculcated thrift awareness and helped to break away from moneylenders and livelihood component opened newer possibilities that rural women have now started considering venturing into. It is the inter-relationship between these three components along with also institutionalising diverse capacities of all six partner organisations that will be considered a unique contribution of WELLD.

This project has witnessed an assortment of issues at partnership levels also. With the involvement of seven different partners across two states of Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh as well as at the national level, there have been many learning experiences. Within the perimeters of the WELLD project, partners learnt to value and respect each others’ ideology and work leading to mutual respect as well as lessons in enhanced cooperation and coordination. Moreover, the project was enriched by diverse experiences of different partners who worked together by trying to maintain a shared perspective with emphasis on a participatory approach.

Challenges faced during the course of the project have helped to give insights to plan similar initiatives in future:

- There were obvious time constraints within which the basic and post literacy curriculum had to be produced and covered.
- Project staff found it tough to maintain constant attendance of women learners in the literacy class.
- Both the above challenges spring form
structural / cultural aspects of the regions where the project was located. Festivals, ceremonies/rituals had big impacts on the frequency of attendance. Agricultural practices (harvesting, sowing, weeding etc.), migration also influenced the learning schedule. However, there was little that could be done about these, but in future these factors must be taken into consideration for planning such initiatives.

- The specific village contexts also were challenging wherein there were some villages where the learning atmosphere was more conducive than others.

- It is a challenge to execute all the three components together, as there are chances that one may gain more priority over the other e.g. women learners may feel they want to concentrate only on livelihood development and NOT on literacy.

These learnings gave us a better opportunity to undertake newer initiatives that could be either replicated on the lines that have already been tried out, or for expanding the existing integrated model, to ensure sustainability of efforts for the rural women.

Endnotes

*The reader may obtain more information on Community Based Monitoring from PRIA Delhi and PRIA Hyderabad*
Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations: A Study in Andhra Pradesh

Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay* and M. Kamal*

Abstract PRIA undertook state specific studies to understand the capacity building needs of voluntary development organizations. This paper is based on the findings of one such a study in Andhra Pradesh. It highlights the scenario of voluntary development sector in the state and capacity building needs of voluntary development organizations from the perspective of providers and local VDOs.

Introduction

Civil society organizations in Indian context have created a space in the development practice on their own rights. It has been possible through relentless struggle that civil society organizations have engaged in to amplify the voice of hitherto excluded, voiceless and marginalized people. However, the complexity of modern day development requires enhanced capacity of civil society organizations to engage with a variety of development actors in meaningful ways. It will also depend how these vast number of civil society organizations working at the grassroots organize their internal functioning and leaderships.

The purpose of the present study was to assess the capacity building requirements of local Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs) in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The study covered broad development scenario in the state, voluntary sector scenario in the state, perspective of providers and local VDOs in relation to capacity building needs.

Methodology

(i) Selection of Districts: In order to get a comprehensive picture, three districts each have been selected from the four regions of Andhra Pradesh i.e. South Coastal region, North Coastal region, Telangana and Rayalaseema for this study.

(ii) Selection of VDOs: The unit of observation and analysis for this study was VDOs, networks of VDOs and

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support providing agencies. For in-depth study more than 50 VDOs were selected and interviewed from an initial list of about 300 identified VDOs. The study also included some networks of VDOs and donor agencies. On an average five VDOs were selected from each district. Similarly at least one network from each district was identified. A few active support-providing agencies were also selected for the study.

For the purpose of this study the VDOs were divided into three categories as small, medium and big. It was decided to focus more on the medium sized VDOs in the study. However, some big and small VDOs were also covered as well to get a comprehensive understanding. The study included about eight percent small sized VDOs, eighty per cent medium sized VDOs and twelve per cent big sized VDOs. The classification of VDOs was done taking into consideration of two factors: (1) the number of staff working in the organization, and (2) the number of villages in which the organization is working at present. The details of the methodology has been discussed elsewhere (PRIA, 2001)

(iii) The Process of Data Collection and Analysis: Secondary literature, interviews and focused group discussion were used for collection of data. Efforts were made to interview the leaders of organizations. Where VDO leaders were not available, the second line staff were interviewed. Field visits to observe the operational area and office were done wherever it was possible.

Development Scenario in Andhra Pradesh

Key Development Actors in Andhra Pradesh
At present, the government is the biggest development actor in Andhra Pradesh. Various government agencies are implementing many multilateral, bilateral and government (Central and State) sponsored projects in all over the state. Some of the major programmes of the government of Andhra Pradesh are District Poverty Initiatives Programme (DPIP), Watershed Management, Joint Forest Management (JFM), Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (APRLP), Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme (MAANEEHRU), Desert Development Programme (DDP) – Anantapur, DWACRA, Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP), Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP) and Janmabhoomi.

The multilateral agencies like the World Bank, UNCEF and UNDP are supporting some big development projects in the state. DFID and other bilateral agencies are involved mainly with the government of Andhra Pradesh.

At present, VDOs are mainly involved in watershed and natural resource management related programmes. In addition, they are also involved in micro finance and micro enterprise development, women, dalit and tribal development, health, water and sanitation and child labour rehabilitation. Involvement of VDOs in human rights related issues and local self-governance is rather limited in the state.

In recent years, involvement of some international donor agencies (primarily northern NGOs) has been reduced and limited.
to a few selected VDOs only. The present funding strategy is very much structured around some common projects. This has led to less opportunity for innovation and experimentation. As a result the process of people's involvement in the development project has negatively affected.

During 60s and up till mid 80s Panchayati Raj Institutions were involved at the village, block and district level planning and implementation of various development programs in the state. However, the bureaucratic administration started playing a more active role from mid eighties in the planning and implementation. As a fall out the elected panchayat bodies became less important. At present, the role of panchayat in the development has been truncated by the bureaucratic administration. In most cases the resources are routed through other channels like Jannabhoomi programme and the nodal officers and other district officials make most of the decisions. In many villages the village sarpanches are not even invited to the development initiatives in their own village. Usually the government officials and local ruling party leaders are the decision-makers.

**Voluntary Sector Scenario in Andhra Pradesh**

1. **Historical Background**

Historically the voluntary sector was never a homogeneous one. However, at any point in time one or two trends have dominated the sector. The sector was dominated by social action during the 70s and 80s where many youths came with ideological commitment to seek structural changes in the society. At the grassroots, many innovations and alternatives were experimented and promoted. Many People’s Organizations were promoted as pressure groups. These organizations were trying to put pressure on the government by placing demands of the people to get their rights achieved. Organization of struggles and movements on human rights, dalit, women, and child rights through unionization and conscientization were the main focus to bring structural changes. VDOs were actively involved in dealing with the issues including land rights, wages and atrocities against women, tribals, dalits and other marginalized groups.

Some VDOs took a leadership role in providing conceptual, financial and moral support to other smaller VDOs. The support agencies used to provide necessary capacity building assistance and training suitable to the situation.

During this period the stream of community development was also in progress, which is older than the social activism. Many people who were active in the social action came out of this stream of development. Their main contention was that this conventional approach would not bring changes in lives of the people. The community development approach evolved from the roots of charity approach. This stream of development was covering large areas and sections of people.

Both these two approaches continuously underwent many changes due to many reasons. The donor agencies also played important role in promoting many changes in light of the changes in global scenario. However, many voluntary leaders think that both these approaches could not bring qualitative changes in the process of development. They have argued
that not enough has been done to promote value-based volunteering.

2. The Contemporary Scenario

The bigger VDOs in the state have maintained their growth and expansion through their experience, contacts, resources and infrastructure. Many local small sized VDOs equate some of them with 'mini government' in terms of number of development projects and programmes that they handle. Many smaller VDOs feel that these organizations have been taking maximum share from the government projects and programmes as Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) by using their clout.

The small and medium sized VDOs are playing active role in the development programmes. But many of these VDOs, especially the small ones, are struggling for resources to sustain their activities. Many VDOs are now searching for government funds due to the reduced funding from some international donors. In many government programmes VDOs are involved as PIAs. Some VDO leaders see it as strength as it provides opportunities to cover larger areas and access to more resources. While others, however, feel it as serious concern.

For last five to six years partly due to government encouragement to involve VDOs as PIAs, many politicians, contractors, retired government officials, unemployed youth, and even in some cases journalists have registered many organizations. Many Mahila Mandal and youth associations have also transformed themselves into VDOs. This has resulted in not only increase in number of VDOs but also the quality, image and character of voluntary sector has undergone changes. However, understandably not all these organization have been successful in sustaining their existence. As a result, in recent times the growth has come down. In recent times, a corrupt practice has been evolving in that some VDOs involved as PIAs are getting their work done by paying regular bribes to the government officials. This practice has tarnished the whole voluntary sector.

The legal regulatory aspects of relationships between the VDOs and district administration have added a new dimension. Since all the applications including FCRA etc, have to go through the district administration, VDOs need to approach the local administration and sometimes political leaders for recommendation. Now PIAs are worried because district collector's opinion about VDOs and how he/she relates to PIAs varies greatly from person to person. Some district collectors are very much interested to involve VDOs but some collectors would rather keep VDOs away.

Now the relationships between the local administration and VDOs, especially with those VDOs who are receiving money have changed to that of donor and implementing agency. Other VDOs also need to go through the district administration, thus giving control over to the district administration and also to the ruling political bodies and leaders. In addition, in cases of emergencies, VDOs are invited to get involved in relief and rehabilitation work. For example, the government of Andhra Pradesh received tons of rice to distribute through Food for Work programme in a very short time. The government invited VDOs and their networks to implement this scheme on war footing. This has larger impacts on the work of field level activities of VDOs and their relationship with the people and government officials.
Some VDOs are caught in the cycle of “project-fund raising-implementing-reporting-project”. In the process they have been drifted away from the long-term vision, mission and strategy.

In addition to state and national level networks, there are at least one or two networks in each district. The government officials are promoting networks for various projects. The funding agencies have also encouraged forming their own networks. Many of these networks are mainly involved in facilitating the work of the donors and the government. In most cases the discussion is limited to the project management related issues. Since most of the networks are formed for attempting fund raising, many networks become defunct after the completion of common project funding or once trail to raise funds is failed. However, there are some issue-based and area-based networks, which are functioning successfully. Many attempts to start new networks or to continue the existing network could not succeed because of leadership and other internal issues. The major problem is lack of understanding of the need and importance and the ways to develop inter-organizational relations. There is lot of potential and need to promote networks.

The organizations that have been extending quality capacity building support are now charging heavy course fee and other service charges primarily to respond to the pressure from international donors for self-sustainability. Hence, small and medium sized VDOs are unable to participate in these courses. Only large VDOs and government departments can afford to attend these capacity building programmes.

Over the years the VDOs have been able to develop a partnership with the poor people through their interventions at the grass roots level. The VDOs have been actively promoting community-based leadership. This partnership and closeness have also attracted many international donors to support the activities of VDOs. However, in recent years there has been a perception that the focus of the VDOs towards the poorest of the poor or socially and economically oppressed is loosing priority.

VDOs have been creating many micro level examples through experimentation and innovation. Many government projects and programmes have adapted these innovative experimentations. However, by nature most of these government projects have been large scaled with wider coverage. If these projects are proved to be successful it will definitely lead to better results at the macro level. However, on the contrary in recent years the innovation and experimentation by the VDOs have been reduced to a large extent.

The bigger sized VDOs have been efficient enough to manage their size, resources and infrastructure in a professional manner. These VDOs could adjust to the changed environment and they have better chances to grow further. There is great demand on the VDOs for professionalism, new skills, visible achievements and success stories. Many voluntary leaders feel that in due course many smaller sized VDOs and even some medium sized VDOs may disappear as result of this pressure.

The approaches towards the process of empowerment particularly for the women and dalit, its definition and activities have undergone a sea change in recent years. Earlier an activist oriented approach was in vogue. At present, it is part of general development
process with particular focus on economic development. The issues of women or dalits are dealt in different ways by the VDOs. Earlier the pressure groups used to demand for their rights and try to get government facilities in order to bring about changes in their situation. Now, many VDOs are forming SHGs through income generation activities and collaborative activities with the government and other forces. Even now there are some civil society agencies, which are trying to bring changes through community mobilization around the issues of oppression. There are groups and networks that want to organize particular communities separately. Changes in the relationships and functioning are also influencing the process. There is need for conceptual clarity and capacity building intervention specially to deal these important issues in the changing scenario.

Staff quality in the voluntary sector is changing, with more educated professional youth coming in to the field. There is greater mobility within and outside the sector in terms of human resources. The government is also absorbing many people in their multilateral and bilateral projects. The relationship between the staff and the VDO leader is also changing. Previously there used to be some kind of comradeship, now it is mainly ‘employer and employee relationship’. Many VDOs expressed that developing efficient staff to meet today’s demands is a big challenge.

Earlier the relationships between some of the international donors and implementing partner VDOs were for longer duration. However, this trend is slowly changing due to the uncertainty of funds. On the other hand, number of bilateral, multilateral and government funding has increased. However, the support is mainly for programme activities. The project does not take into account the institutional or administrative expenditures.

In the state, both central and state resource agencies are actively involved in capacity building activities (in some cases attending training by the VDO heads and staff is mandatory otherwise they may be removed from the PIA work). But in the field many VDOs expressed that they could not relate what they learnt in these trainings to the field situation. The VDOs who can provide capacity building support should take active role in strengthening the sector by providing quality learning opportunities, facilitating sharing through interactions, strengthening networks and by lobbying with other actors on behalf of the sector.

A large number of VDOs expressed that it is becoming difficult to implement common projects, as there is lack of programmatic and administrative flexibility. Since most of the activities are given within a project framework, the VDOs are unable to respond to other needs and issues of the community in a comprehensive manner. It is leading to changes in the planning and decision-making process and democratic culture of the VDOs involved.

In recent years there has been more demands from the donors for transparency, social auditing and accountability from the VDOs. As a response to these demands and to satisfy donor formalities VDOs are improving their accountancy and record maintenance. Many a time the VDOs are being asked by the donors to adjust with the changes in priorities of the donors.
Assessment of Capacity Building Requirements

The capacity building requirements of VDOs were categorized under four broad areas namely, (1) capacity related to organizational management and renewal, (2) capacity related to programme management, (3) capacity related to inter-organizational relationship and (4) capacity related to sectoral and thematic areas.

1. Capacity Building Needs Related to Organizational Management and Renewal

The capacity building requirements in relation to organizational management and renewal for the combined sample of VDOs reveal that the capacity for information management is the highest priority. It includes accessing relevant information from the appropriate sources, storing information, which can be easily retrieved and made use in appropriate time. At present the system enabling these functions are uneven in different organizations. It is therefore to be strengthened in a way so that the information gap is addressed. The next three most prioritized areas are organization development, strategic planning and organizational management. While the first two are related to managing planned change within the organization in light of the external and internal changes, the latter is more related to strengthen the existing systems and procedures within the organization to become more effective in functioning. The VDOs have also rated financial management and mainstreaming of gender in the organization as priority areas. Interestingly, the area of VDO governance and human resource development is not seen as high priority areas. Perhaps these areas are included under organizational management.

The size wise capacity building requirements shows that organization development, strategic planning, and information technology are the priority areas for capacity building support as the VDOs are growing in size. Human resource development has been expressed as an area of capacity building need mostly by the small and the medium sized VDOs. Mainstreaming gender in organization has been expressed mainly by the medium sized VDOs. VDO governance is the need for medium and big sized VDOs, whereas VDO management, financial management and information management are the needs for all the VDOs.

2. Capacity Building Requirements Related to Programme Management

The capacity building requirements in relation to programme management for the combined sample of VDOs show that the area of community mobilization in the form of group formation, ensuring democratic functioning of the groups, building linkages with other actors etc. is the highest priority. In addition, the areas of participatory planning, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment have been considered, as priority needs. Enhancing the perspective on participatory development has also been rated as high priority by the sample VDOs.

Size-wise capacity building requirements show that capacity related to perspective building on participatory development and community mobilization is the most important needs for small VDOs. Process documentation has been expressed as the priority need primarily by the medium sized organizations. Capacity related to addressing the issues of gender in programme is the priority need for mostly small and medium size organizations. Participatory
planning, monitoring and evaluation are the needs of all the VDOs. However, participatory impact assessment is the need expressed by mostly the bigger VDOs.

3. Capacity Building Requirements Related to Inter-Organizational Relationships

The VDOs have prioritized two primary areas as strengthening networking abilities and building partnership with other actors like government, other VDOs and groups. Policy advocacy has also been seen as priority area. Size-wise analysis generally reveals that networking and building linkages is important for all the VDOs. The capacity related to policy advocacy is expressed as a need, primarily by the medium to big sized VDOs.

4. Capacity Building Requirements Related to Thematic and Sectoral Areas

Capacity building requirements related to thematic and sectoral areas for the combined samples of VDOs reveal that micro enterprise development has been expressed as the highest priority by the VDOs. In addition, the areas under natural resource management and health are other higher priority areas. The other sectoral areas (like education) or thematic areas (like local self-governance) have been mentioned by some VDOs. However, the expressions on sectoral choices have been primarily determined by the present sectoral focus of the organization.

Size-wise analysis shows that the capacity related to micro enterprise development has been expressed as need primarily by the medium to large sized organizations. Whereas that for local self-governance has been expressed as need by the small to medium sized VDOs. Natural resource management is the priority of mostly medium sized organizations.

Issues Related to Capacity Building

There is a general feeling among the VDOs that on the whole capacity building intervention for the VDOs is declining and particularly the grassroots VDOs are getting fewer opportunities to participate in the capacity building activities.

In the recent years the international donors and the government have been increasingly organizing training programmes, workshops and exposure trips for the VDOs. However, these interventions are very much in relation to the projects that the VDOs are implementing with the support from these donors and the government.

According to some voluntary leaders course fee for the participants as charged by the support organizations is quite high, especially for the small and medium sized VDOs. They cannot utilize many capacity building events and programmes primarily because of their inability to pay the course fee and to manage the travel costs. The opportunities are being generally utilized by the larger VDOs.

The voluntary sector as well as the whole development scenario is changing very fast. The context, relationships, activities, issues and the learning needs are also changing. However, in many cases the capacity building interventions are not changing to meet the emerging demands. There is need for redesigning the capacity building interventions on the basis of interaction, analysis and feedback.

Though there is usage of certain jargons and methods, many capacity building interventions especially run by some organizations and
government institutions are yet to equip themselves with participatory learning methodologies.

There is an inability to use many capacity building opportunities because of language barrier. Most of the training programmes are done in English. Whereas many staff of the VDOs who are involved in the field based work and are in need of support are not conversant in English. Hence, capacity building interventions in local language is very important. In addition appropriate learning material in local language is also crucial for learning.

Conclusions

In recent years, the civil society sector has been growing in the state. Their numbers are increasing, along with expanding resources and coverage. Due to recent collaboration with the government as PIAs, VDOs have got acceptance in the wider society. Previously many VDOs limit themselves to a section of the society.

VDOs are trying to prepare themselves to meet the new challenges and demands. In the process they are trying to enhance their professional skills, capacities and efficiencies. Young people with professional educational background are joining the sector. A large number of trained committed staff is working at the grassroots for the voluntary sector. This number is growing due to the expansion of the sector.

As a respond to the donors’ need the VDOs are moving more towards specific project and target-oriented approach. This may lead to more tangible results and achievements. In addition, larger areas are being covered with the support from the government.

Due to long history and experimentation, and learning from both failures and successes in networking, the VDOs have gained lot of experience. It is leading to better inter-organization collaborations and skills to build successful networks.

In recent years, the participation of the people in decision making of the projects and programme have reduced primarily due to the adoption of blue print approach to the projects as planned by the government and donors. The same has resulted in less field level innovation and experiments by the VDOs.

The government is implementing large projects with the support from the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies. They are covering almost all the districts in the state. Earlier the VDOs were involved in these large-scale projects. Of late, the government has replaced this role of VDOs. Wherever a few VDOs are involved, IAS officials mostly head them.

In many cases democratically elected Panchayat Raj Institutions are almost bypassed by the nodal officer system and various committees in the village. A handful bureaucrat controls the centralized decisions making processes.

The changed relations between the VDOs and the government, the VDOs are slowly moving away from the civil society. The civil society on the whole is loosing space and opportunities to negotiate with the state.

The sector is in need of facilitation to develop vision, mission and strategy, skills and capacities to meet new challenges and opportunities. Visionaries, development practitioner, senior VDO leaders, support institutions need to interact, share and analyze the context and develop appropriate strategies in this direction.
Citizenship and Identity

Isin, Engin F. and Wood, Patricia K., Sage Publications: New Delhi, 1999, Pages 189

The view that citizenship refers membership of a nation-state by virtue of which one is entitled to a set of rights and duties is being seriously challenged in the era of globalisation and post-modernisation. Without simplistically assuming that the nation-state is on the decline, it is important to recognise that post-modernisation and globalisation have imposed severe upward and downward limits on modern citizenship not only as a form of political and national identity but as a legal status that has the ability to mobilise and accommodate the fragmented identities and groups that have emerged in the contemporary era. New cultural politics have effectively questioned the understanding of citizenship as a master identity. At present a most important challenge for democratic societies is to recognise diverse group rights in their constitutions.

In a refreshing look at citizenship, the book under review proposes citizenship as a set of multiple, intersecting and overlapping identities or as an 'ensemble of subject positions.' Drawing on key debates in sociology, and social and political theory on globalisation and post-modernisation it attempts to transcend the conflict between the often contested but interrelated concepts of citizenship and identity.

Usually the focus is on the tension between the universalistic claims of citizenship and the particularistic connotation attached to the concept of identity. However, the book argues that citizenship is operationalised in a context where differences, inequalities and inequities are a social fact. Herein the homogenous understanding of citizenship masks underlying discrimination, oppression based on class, gender, race, ethnicity etc. In this context, politics of identity and difference and the struggles over representation can be viewed as a means to achieve equality and recognition. In other words, formation of new identities for promoting group rights help marginalised groups challenge this underlying discrimination and inequities.

The focus is on the process of citizenship and citizen struggles from which such rights draw legitimacy. As such, citizenship is viewed as a set of practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights. The emphasis herein is on rights that are granted to groups themselves rather than rights granted to individuals on the basis of their membership.

Taking the debate beyond essentialism vs constructivism, the authors look at those elements, which connect different identities, the tensions, complementarities and conflicts between these overlapping identities as well as the circumstances where certain identities become dominant. Using Marshall's concept of political, social and civil rights as a starting point, it deepens the understanding of
citizenship by advocating for ethnic, sexual, diasporic, ecological, consumer, cosmopolitan and technological forms of citizenship. Herein, the attempt is to detail the potential strengths and constraints in the different forms of citizenship both at a theoretical level as well as in practice.

It effectively provides an interdisciplinary conceptual framework for understanding the complex and diversified problems of citizenship. Secondly by moving from theoretical views of citizenship to politics and practices of different types of citizenship and by identifying possibilities, problems and dangers in each, it provides a path for further work, especially in terms of identifying problems in taking the multi-layered concept of citizenship forward. For example, what are the problems when the possibility of ecological and technological citizenship is accepted simultaneously.

Finally the book advocates for radical democratic citizenship, which includes ethnic, social, political, sexual, ecological and diasporic dimensions, embodies an ethos of pluralisation and requires discipline and principles to cultivate an appreciation for difference and identity.

Essentially for specialists and scholars in the field of social and political theory, the book requires basic familiarity with theoretical debates in these fields. Topical and relevant, Citizenship and Identity is a thorough attempt to analyse the contemporary realities in the West. It would be more interesting, however, to contrast this with the Indian reality where granting of group differentiated rights while maintaining a national identity has always posed a tension in the post independence period, and has in some ways led to a freezing and essentialising of certain identities.
Holding the State to Account
Citizens Monitoring in Action

Samuel Paul,
Books for Change, Bangalore,
2002, Pages 196

*Holding the State to Account* describes a pioneering citizen monitoring initiative in Bangalore, capital city of Karnataka, India that stimulated the improvement of city’s governance. It is the result of a ten-year process of using report card method - an innovative way to gather a systematic feedback from citizens on a variety of services to rate their quality and effectiveness on a citywide basis. The book embarks upon the use of the report card method to ascertain the delivery of public services to the people by directly asking the users about the quality and value of services. It begins by addressing the callousness and lack of accountability of public offices in the delivery of services. The state, overloaded with numerous commercial and developmental enterprises, has traditionally been dominant in providing basic services that are far from satisfactory. The service delivery is pathetic. What exacerbates the situation is the majority of people with low levels of literacy, restricted awareness of rights and entitlements with apparently no mechanism to overcome the limitations. While it addresses the state's murky situation, it cites examples of developed countries whose history is replete with similar problems at early stages of development and how they metamorphosed into current mighty states. It seeks to identify the reason for unsatisfactory delivery of public services namely resource constraints, incompetent and unmotivated service providers, corruption, civil society's weakness and productivity of services not being a priority.

The second chapter characterizes the use of report card as a modest endeavor to gather citizen feedback on various public services, launched as a civil society initiative in 1994 to monitor the government's failure in provision of services. The objective was to see whether aggregated citizen feedback could be used to generate greater public awareness on the issues involved and take remedial action. It was intended that adverse publicity such an activity might generate would embarrass the civil servants who managed these services. This activity revealed the low levels of satisfaction among the people and also other amoral practices like inadequate supervision and lack of proper management systems, the presence of non-transparent practices, absence of incentives to perform well, inability of citizens to access information and to undertake collective action are some of the forces at work.
In the third chapter, the book deliberates the consequences of the report cards findings through media, seminar and other public forums, regular features of Resident Welfare Association (RWA) and useful information about different agencies on a regular basis through media. The release of the report card findings led to the formation of a non-profit society, Public Affairs Center (PAC) to generate an agenda on governance, beginning with report cards on public services, support to citizen action, advisory services, and networking with other civil society institutions. Bangalore Development Agency and Bangalore City Corporation were the first of agencies who sought assistance from PAC to tackle problems highlighted by the report card. What followed was a forum of partnership between the civil society groups and public agencies (BDA, BCC and active NGOs of the city) to encourage the transfer of ideas to enable civic groups to play a monitoring role. The forum, Swabhimaan launched experiments in solid waste management, formation of ward-level committees, and decentralization of service related activities with active participation of local neighborhood groups.

Subsequently, in 1999 a second report card was conducted against the public services to assess the improvement or degradation of services over the years. The dissemination of information that this card generated was shared through discussions and presentations with BCC, KPTCL, BWSSB and BT, one agency at a time with the view to give its leadership a better understanding of the problems its consumers are facing. This was thought to improve the consumer-user interface. During the same period, the new Chief Minister, keen on upgrading the infrastructure and services, set-up Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) which constituted people from industry and civil society. Civil Society initiatives in Bangalore, media protests about services and activism of network of RWAs, saw the Chief Minister’s response as a vindication of their efforts.

A single initiative has proliferated into various other form that extend and reinforce PAC’s work. The Bangalore report cards have demonstrated that when civil society institutions are empowered they can play a useful role in monitoring public service providers and demanding improvement in services. However all the motion generated was not positive. Experiences reveal that some agencies are unable to do much even when the leadership is willing to change. In such a situation, civil society groups with interest and capacity to demand change can put in place the method of using report cards such that the system then runs on an auto pilot to keep the issues of accountability and responsiveness to citizens alive.

Holding the state to account basically thrusts upon the use of report cards as a diagnostic tool for systematic monitoring. Nevertheless it also etches the limitations that its use was beset with the problems. For instance it did not cover feedback from the public officials and did not cover commercial and industrial enterprises. PACs experience shows that a mix of research and generation of knowledge relevant to the improvement of governance, dissemination and advocacy, capacity building and networking can provide a firm foundation for strengthening independent civil society initiatives to monitor service providers and mount campaigns to improve the governance of public governance closest to them. Experience provides ample
evidence to prove that strong leadership is the goading factor, "Once a leader gives strong signals, bureaucracy for most part tends to fall in line." Leaders can and do make a difference.

Annexure I describes the various steps involved in planning and organizing a Report Card study giving comprehensive details about the sampling procedures, basics of instrument design, frameworks for analysis and dissemination of findings and advocacy that take the form of a users manual. The book is a sample of well-articulated, lucid piece of work on the service delivery of public services with the report card method as a suggested alternative to build on the situation. The book caters to the understanding of a wide range of audience engaged in development: the civil society leaders and bureaucrats as well.

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Pankaj Anand and Bhinish Shakeel PRIA, New Delhi.
A Quest for Dream Cities

J.S. Mishra
Har-Anand Publications Pvt. Ltd.
2002, Pages 246

As per 2001 census, 285 million people (27.8 percent) of the 1027 million total wrong figure population of India, is residing in 3768 cities and towns in the country, whereas in 1991, 25.7 percent population lived in urban areas. Besides there are 35 million plus cities in the country as compared to 23 in 1991. The emerging scenario of enhanced urban population, globalization, advent of information technology, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, and others have highlighted the need for effective management and governance of urban centers. The present concern is to do with issues related to institutional capacity of the urban local bodies and ways and means to enable them to handle governance matters.

This phenomenal urban growth with its concentration in bigger towns, has created tremendous challenges, which appear beyond the capacity of present-day urban governance. Against this backdrop, this book tries to outline the strategies needed for strengthening urban governance, keeping in mind the expectations and aspirations of the people for a good civic life. It also highlights the financial situation, especially the existing gap between the requirement and availability of resources and the general apathy of various interest groups and citizens towards the problems of urban local bodies. The author, an I.AS officer (Secretary, Urban development, Government of U.P) has shared his experiences and beliefs as an urban development administrator, which maybe of relevance to others. Having had an opportunity to work at the apex level of decision making for the urban sector in the state, Mr. Mishra had the tasks to identify the key issues and attempt their solutions. According to the author, “Today the challenges of urban governance are not only confined to the adequate provision of basic civic services but also concern the creation of enabling environment to ensure overall development of the cities and towns.” These issues were uppermost in his mind while writing this book.

The book is divided into twenty-one chapters, covering different aspects, ranging from rapid urbanization and problems of absorption to urban development and five-year plans, resources, expenditure, revenue gaps, issues and strategies for balanced urbanization, sustainable urban centers and municipal administration in Uttar Pradesh, innovations in Mirzapur model, expectations of citizen’s and concept of a dream city and ways and means to achieve it. There is an informative chapter on the important urban legislations of India. This includes salient features of the Constitution Seventy-Fourth Amendment Act. Another chapter traces the provisions in the five-year plans on urban development and the role of various stakeholders in the process. A substantial portion of the book deals with municipal revenue, expenditure pattern and fiscal
requirements and the role of the State Finance Commission. Case studies to illustrate the various facts are provided from the author’s experience of working with urban government bodies in Uttar Pradesh.

The author effectively combines information from both secondary as well as primary sources. Various books, journals, research papers, UN publications and other materials have been consulted and also the aspirations of the people for a good civic life and existing gap between the requirement and availability of resources have been highlighted. A chapter is devoted to people’s understanding of a good city and their expectations from urban administration.

The book is useful for practitioners, administrators, policy makers, municipal managers and those interested in urban affairs. Very useful suggestions are provided in the concluding chapter to ensure better civic life and sustainable development, for which an integrated and human centric development strategy is needed. According to the author, efforts are needed of all the stakeholders, including proactive involvement of civil society. Strong citizen’s forum are necessary to encourage civic engagement to convince the central and provincial government as well as local government, private sector, civic and cultural organizations to work together to ensure a sustainable city with strong economy, clean environment and social equity. Moreover, strategic visioning and planning involving the various stakeholders need to be developed.

This is a well-researched and well-argued book with a balance of theoretical concepts and practical examples. It is informative and interesting to read. This is more so because of the simple style of writing in an easy to understand manner, for those interested in the issues of urban governance. Since it is based on reliable sources of information, it is a valuable reference guide for research scholars and students.

\[\text{A Quest For Dream Cities}\]

J.S. Mishra

Reviewed by:
Sobini Paul
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Concerns for ‘governance where people matter’ mandate inclusion of citizens’ interest at the center of public decision-making. The emphasis is on participative, accountable and responsive public institutions that are geared towards the broader concerns of social equity, justice and sustainable development. Meaning thereby, that all public institutions operating in society in a public manner are key stakeholders in ensuring good governance. The government or governing institutions, which have legitimacy to impose collective decisions; for profit oriented private sector institutions, which use public resources; the third sector institutions - civil society organizations and NGOs, which work for the common public good; and intermediary institutions including the media, academia, trade unions, religious institutions and social movements, which act on public issues - have a role in the equitable distribution of power, the effective management of public resources and the efficient handling of societal problems.

An agenda for good governance suggests that citizens participate actively and meaningfully in all the matters that govern their lives. The important questions that follow are: How do we promote empowered inclusive citizenship? How do we ensure the quality and depth of people’s participation that go beyond the traditional and established processes of representative democracy to the governance of their own affairs? What steps can guarantee institutional responsiveness? The current issue of the journal reflects on the challenges for deepening governance: ways in which the citizens’ voices could get articulated, the creation of new forms of meaningful engagement between citizens and public institutions and ensuring institutional responsiveness to democratic governance mechanisms.

The thematic section critically reflects on the role of public institutions towards making governance meaningful. The focus is on exploring the interface between citizens’ voices and governance institutions in terms of linkage, partnership and networking. The bottom line is that proactive interfacing between the voice of the citizens and the response of various governance institutions can significantly alter the balance of power and result in effective utilization of development resources in favour of the marginalized.

The key thematic article “Governance Where People Matter” (Rajesh Tandon and Malini Nambiar) draws on PRIA’s experiences in responding to changing contexts and anticipating emerging trends to shape its strategy and interventions to link the voices of the citizens to governance. The authors argue that civil society building can provide a meaningful perspective for deepening democracy. It pursues the agenda of democratic governance by addressing the issue of exclusion in participation and enabling conditions for the meaningful participation of the excluded and the marginalized citizenry in public decision making.

The realization of the vital role played by institutions in organizing people and initiating grassroots developmental endeavors has resulted in the creation of new spaces, and places for citizen engagement, particularly the marginalized and weaker sections such as women in local decision making. Invited spaces for participation vary from the traditional to the more deliberative and inclusionary institutions.
such as project development committees and statutory decentralized local bodies. Participation in multiple institutions, however, runs the risks of creating a dangerous complacency by diverting from the issues related to local networks of power and resource use. Ranjita Mohanty’s paper, ‘Institutional Interface and Participation in Local Forest Management in Uttarakhand’, depicts the interface between institutions created for forest management in the Kumaon region of the state and the dynamics of participation of women at the local level.

Civil society organizations, by playing a significant and complementary role to other public institutions, particularly the government and market institutions, can promote accountable, transparent and democratic governance. However, they can play their role effectively only when their own institutions also follow the principles of good governance. Governance in civil society organizations implies the totality of functions that are carried out in relation to the internal functioning and external relations of organizations. The governance functions are generally regarded as the responsibility of voluntary governing boards. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay’s paper on ‘Governance in Civil Society Organizations’ is about the key issues related to the roles and functions of the governing board from an organizational point of view. The author raises the issue of the training of the members of the governing board to enable them to pursue democratic forms of internal governance.

The Practice section of this journal showcases PRIA’s initiatives on building transparent and accountable self-governing institutions and the effective voice of new citizen leaders. The paper on ‘Strengthening Citizen Leadership: Experiences with Women Leaders in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand’ (Nitika Pant) draws attention to the fact that with proper facilitation and a focused approach even weaker groups can progress and systematically work to access their rights and entitlements through collective engagement with various institutions. PRIA’s program of strengthening citizen leadership in women aimed at building the capacities of women office-bearers of various groups and strengthening the groups to which they belonged so that they could voice their demands and work for their economic upliftment.

The growing demands of local self-governance through a variety of legislative and constitutional provisions of devolution and decentralization have drawn many local informal citizens’ collectives into active roles. These citizens’ collectives have played a crucial role in supporting the new leadership of women, dalits and tribals in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Their contribution and active participation has enhanced the accountability of local elected representatives. Binu Arickal in his article on “Civil Society Organizations in Gram Sabha Mobilization: Case of Haryana”, describes one such citizens’ collective initiative. Nari Network a community-based organization in Ratia, Haryana, participated actively in the gram sabha mobilization campaign with a view to improving governance. This issue concludes with book reviews each one in its own different way, linked to the theme of ‘Governance, Where People Matter’.
Governance
Where People Matter

Dr. Rajesh Tandon and Malini Nambiar

This paper is the outcome of a series of consultations and reflection amongst PRIA’s staff, partner organisations, donors, the governing board and a variety of stakeholders that has helped PRIA explore its current practices and its long-term visions under the aegis of “Governance where people matter”. It also draws on PRIA’s experiences in responding to changing contexts and anticipating emerging trends to shape its strategy and interventions to link the voices of the citizens to governance thereby nudging governance towards where people matter in India. This new strategic plan, is tailored around two broad themes of Strengthening Civil Society and Reforming Governance Institutions, which is PRIA’s own road map of its journey over the next five years.

Introduction

Governance has seized a pivotal space in the modern discourse of the development process. It is now being acknowledged that institutions of governance have a directly proportional relationship to the development process in any country. The new definition of governance, that emerged in the 90s, is not merely restricted to institutions of national governments but extends to a wide ambit based on processes of state-society interactions and partnerships. This includes a range of institutions, public and private, as well as the complex relationship between them. Institutions of local government (such as panchayats and municipalities); civil society organisations (ranging from social movements to non-governmental organisations and from cooperatives to civic associations) and private corporations as well as other markets institutions are all relevant actors in the new lexicon of governance. In a nutshell, governance is defined by its task - what it does? Governance is the process and system of making decisions in mobilizing and utilizing resources for common public good.

The effectiveness of governance institutions vis-à-vis clients, consumers and citizens alike pose the questions of accountability and transparency. If we agree that governance is a process of interaction and relationship then the concept of participation of the people is pivotal. Participation of all citizens, including the poor and the marginalized, in public spheres on an ongoing basis is the sustainable way to effective democratic governance. When tribals have access to and control over forests, when workers have influence over technology and organisation of the work place, when women have control over their...
bodies and assets, when dalits can live in physical safety, self dignity and economic justice, then, and only then, participatory development can contribute to the general wellbeing of society.

Historically, India has had a centralized system of decision-making, resource mobilization and allocation. It has inculcated a dependent syndrome among the ordinary citizens, relegating them to mere beneficiaries or voters. Those who have been elected as the people’s representatives do not even come back to the people till the next elections are due. The citizen as an active agent in democracy has been lost sight of. In a country of one billion people, where nearly half are illiterate, about two-thirds of our girls and women are illiterate, nearly one-third do not even have access to a decent meal, mal-governance has become a crisis that we face. As a result of merely focusing attention on democracy on rules and institutions, has resulted in decision making coming into the hands of a few who have acquired powerful hegemony over the lives, and slowly the minds, of the ordinary people.

Looking over the past decade, free market economy has been promoted with the new wave of liberalization and privatization. Recent scandals in the stock markets, among regulators, multinational companies and accounting firms have wiped out all sense of confidence in effective governance of the market institutions. Most owners and promoters of corporate firms own and control enormous enterprises without any sense of accountability. Market institutions have tried to behave as if people are passive, accepting, grateful consumers, without questioning quality or price; where workers accept management practices or compensation systems, in the face of high employment; where communities remain grateful to industry because it boosts economic development of the region, without asking questions about water and air pollution, control over common property resources and degradation of the natural environment.

The phenomenal growth of voluntary development organisations and NGOs in the country, whose values resound of social work, of selfless service, are increasingly being replaced by many fly-by-night, self-serving, short-term oriented NGO “shops”, set-up to access project funds of a government or international agency; a large proportion of these are being set-up by government officials, politicians, contractors and many others rushing to cash in on this growing ‘market’. Governance of such organisations needs to be questioned. They are also public institutions, operating with public resources for public good. Of course, institutions like universities and colleges, hospitals and clinics, media organisations, newspapers and television are also public institutions, whose governance leaves much to be desired in today’s context.

The systematic exclusion of citizens especially the women, dalits and adivasis to participate in and manage the development projects and resources, makes it imperative that the larger structures of governance need to be reformed. It is evident that democratic governance is more
than periodic elections in a multiparty system. The active involvement of people, citizens in the development process, of decision making about mobilization and use of public resources for common public good is the essential meaning of governance. Such concerns seek alternative forms of engaging citizens, fostering means for their inclusion and a voice in the domain of governance decision-making.

Since two decades, the Society of Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) has been promoting people-centred development initiatives with the perspective of participatory research at the local, regional, national and global level. Its vision of a desirable world is one where relations across individuals, families, communities and nations are characterized by values of equity, justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. At the core of its work has been the promotion of participation and empowerment of the poor and the marginalized. This paper draws on PRIA’s experience in responding to changing contexts and anticipating emerging trends which has shaped its strategy and interventions to link the voices of citizens to governance whereby nudging governance to where people matter in India.

Towards A New Strategy: Making People Matter

The crisis in the relationship between citizens and the state is seen in most countries. In India this arose out of two reasons - firstly with the growing apathy and alienation of the people from the government and secondly the attitude of the people towards the governing institutions (that of dependency - mai baap syndrome). There is a need to build the effectiveness of the citizens’ voice and the responsiveness of the state actors in the delivery of public services. Hence, it is imperative to ask as to what are the pre-conditions needed for the emergence of the citizens’ voice and effective forces of client-based service delivery.

The following are some of the basic elements required to move in the direction of making people matter -

- Valuing People’s Knowledge

Today in the national and international context, talk of citizens’ rights, is proof of foolishness. People in public positions have used, abused and misused their powers for personal gains. The classic case in point is the distribution of resources, which is clear evidence of not being citizens centric but of control by a few for their private gain. Awareness must be on the fact that people ‘can’ decide for themselves and the community. The fact that they are poor and illiterate does not mean that their knowledge and experience have no value. Our experience of working and interacting with various community groups across India - farmers from the Udaipur district of Rajasthan, the literacy workers in Bihar, or the cloth factory workers in Kanpur - has disproved the above statement.

Social scientists like Robert Chambers and Peter Berger have continuously propagated the importance of “reversal learning” and “cognitive respect” - that is respect on the part of the more
educated and more influential for the less educated and less influential. Education, status, authority, superiority and the roles of bearer and dispenser of modern knowledge are hindrances to learning from below.

In fact, the process of unlearning, the process of acknowledging what we do not know, is a process that has to go parallel to and hand-in-hand with the process of realizing what others know. Hence, empowerment entails the process of listening, learning and organizing along with the people, enabling them to take up and address their issues of discrimination and oppression.

**Partnership and Participation**

The pace at which development of society has accelerated, has thrown up concerns and issues of citizens that institutions of governance are hard pressed to make effective and timely responses. The result is a backlog of concerns that has emerged due to the inability of institutions of governance - be they private or public - to work in synergy or in partnership.

Since the early 1990s, it has been an accepted national consensus that the state alone cannot deliver on all aspects of improvement in the lives of our people. The free market economy as well as the 'civil society' could also contribute to the social and economic development of the country. What is lacking is a clear-cut role for the three sectors.

Partnership, as Fowler so well defined, is 'understood as mutually enabling interdependence interaction with shared intention'. It is a process wherein an alliance is formed not only for acquiring some end result but also for new innovations, to promote new ideas and bring them forward for the public good. There is a need for identifying and agreeing on areas which could entail joint action by voluntary organisations, private firms and the government. However, joint action does not imply the government formulating programmes on its own and asking voluntary organisations to implement the same. Joint action means taking advantage of the wealth of experience and knowledge of all the three sectors in framing policies and programmes as well and involving them in monitoring and evaluation. This can only happen when there is mutual respect for each other's actions; it will go a long way in building such a partnership.

PRIA's interventions are a set of relationships - horizontal and vertical. It is in collaboration with other institutions in society (like academia, media, private business etc), workers organisations, community based groups, that voluntary organisations and citizens associations can and do play meaningful roles in realizing "governance where people matter". Those relationships are the essence of nudging, negotiation, consensus building, for crafting agreements based on shared values and ethics. It implies building and nurturing that relationship, not just for benevolent leaders and patriarchs "doing good" for the masses, but also for ordinary, invisible and hitherto voiceless individuals and groups voluntarily playing active, informed and
sustained roles, to advance the mission, of governance where people matter.

- Governance Where People Matter: A Framework for Linking the Citizen’s Voice and Responsive Government

The challenge of ‘governance’ is to move towards a new set of standards - a shift from an emphasis on national coherence to local relevance and initiatives, from a system to a process of mutual accountability to citizens. This requires a total cultural shift in the direction of ‘governance where people matter’. In other words, to bring the issue of governance where people are and not only to take people to where institutions of governance exist. This reform in the processes and structures of governance in all different institutions of society today is far more pressing and urgent than before?

Framework

Just as we talk about the supply being driven by the consumer’s demand in a market situation similarly we associate the responsiveness of governance institutions (the supply of services) being driven by the citizens’ voices. Such a relationship is not a top - down, bottom - up or a delivery versus acquisition scenario, but it is a relationship of mutual dependence that is brought about by interfacing, including and influencing for good public.

Such an ideal is possible when the environment in which it exists is favorable to the voice (concerns, complaints, requests, protests and participation in decision making) of the citizens or civil society actors in being able to get the response (agency that listens to the voices and implements changes in order to deliver a more appropriate product). It has been viewed that the state or governance institutions create the environment for citizens’ voices and to a great extent determine the effectiveness of their voices - by virtue of the right they extend to the citizens and the access and participation opportunities they create. What are the mechanisms that need to be in place for such a vibrant linkage of citizens’ voices to responsive governance? What support linkages are needed for a sustained endeavor? In the past some of us who have worked on these issues have tended to take one approach or the other. Some of us said that strengthening participation will deepen citizenship and democracy. That is, strengthening the voice and the ways in which poor people articulate their voice, through participatory research, through knowledge, through demands, inclusion through organisation and mobilisation. While others said that the way to strengthen democracy is through reforming governance institutions, by making, these institutions more accountable and responsive. Hence, some work on strengthening citizens’ voices, others work on redesigning big institutions, but the ‘twain never meet’. The challenge today is how to simultaneously work on both approaches as well as facilitating an interlinking through consultation or interface. This would begin the process of setting new standards to govern as people matter, on the basis of people’s knowledge, on the basis of people’s traditions and people’s understanding of what democracy and citizenship mean. Such an approach requires new forms of
Fig. 1: Level of reforming governance, civil society building an interface

relationship, new forms of engagement between citizens and larger governing institutions; it involves a fundamental rethinking of the ways in which citizens’ voices are articulated.

The simultaneous twin process of a) Building and strengthening civil society organisations, b) Reforming governance institutions (RGI) along with constant interfacing would start the momentum towards enabling a democratic governance to take firm root in society. This process will have to take place at all levels from the local to the national/international or from micro, meso and the macro levels. Figure I gives you a pictorial representation of the levels of engagement.

It is in this context that the theme of civil society can perhaps provide a meaningful perspective and methodology of intervention. As a perspective, civil society is that socio-political space which is between the state and the family/citizen. As a space for engagements, civil society can also be seen as individual and collective initiatives for common public good. While the former provides the mandate for civil society to operate as a socio-political space for expression of citizenship, the latter provides methodological tools for promoting such expressions. Thus, individual initiatives take the form of village institutions, women’s group, youth groups, self-help groups, associations based on culture, sports and recreation, profession, as well as intermediary development organisations which promote the well-being of broader public good in a given societal context.

Viewed in this way, civil society has to be seen to be serving the common public good. It transcends the popular notion that the public sector is what the government does, claiming that public good is the business of all-public. Ensuring such public good in a democratic context can only be partially
mandated to democratically elected representatives, but the responsibility of the citizens and their associations in ensuring public good continues, and remains unabridged.

Hence, initiatives to strengthen and expand such a space occupied by citizens leaders, community-based organisations, small voluntary organisations, informal workers associations, gram sabhas, slum associations etc., takes the form of enhancement of their capacities through awareness generation, training as well as coalition building aimed at developing an effective citizens’ voice in decision making about the access and use of development resources for public good at the district, provincial, national and international levels. An effective, strong and vibrant citizens’ participation can assure a transparent and accountable self-governance of all these institutions in our society — be they village-based institutions, or panchayats and municipalities, or hospitals and schools, or stock exchanges.

While reforming governance institutions is the process of nudging towards people-centric, responsive and accountable governance. It is accepted that good governance is the joint responsibility of players in the public sector, the corporate private sector, and civil society at national, international, multinational and multilateral levels.

What is not clear is, “who does what?” what are the distinctive contributions of different actors in the governance of society? It is in this context that the phrase “good governance” has evolved. However, different interpretations of “good” are offered. In a narrow sense, ‘good’ means efficiency in public services, delivery of basic services, rule of law (efficient judiciary), efficient macro-economic management, etc., but, “good” should also include participation of people in policy-making and monitoring government performance. Hence, civil society’s role becomes multidimensional in promoting “good governance”. This would entail not only enabling the participation of those excluded, in decision making and monitoring government performance in service delivery, budget-making, policy implementation, etc., but also sensitizing and strengthening local institutions (municipalities, local bodies, community-based cooperatives, etc.) as a means to promote good governance.

For this, the challenge for civil society is to build links and relationships. The most crucial is to first and foremost establish an effective interface between citizens and institutions of governance in society. This interfacing needs to be facilitated, promoted, and strengthened at different levels of governance in the Indian context. It is not good enough that this interfacing is achieved at the level of panchayats or municipalities only. Interfacing at the level of district, provincial, national, and international levels will have to be gradually promoted. Here the issue of the intermediary arises, which can be well played by civil society. Taking the analogy of the market situation, interfacing between demand and supply is the only way that the market can be understood and developed. In fact, free market economy serves its distributive purpose through the efficient use of resources only when there is a balance between demand and supply. Where supply dominates demand, producers suffer; when the demand
outstrips supply, consumers suffer. And in the market place, matching demand and supply is achieved only through a series of intermediaries.

Likewise, in the development context, bottom-up processes of social mobilisation and civil society building must balance through the interface with the top-down processes of promotion of development projects and programmes. In the political arena, citizens' voice and leadership must interface in a balanced manner with the role of representative bodies in governance. Therefore, the challenge for civil society in India is to rearticulate and remodel the positive role of intermediaries. Such intermediaries need to have professional competence, principles of fair play, cost effectiveness, and accountable behaviour to both ends of their relationships. Intermediaries become exploitative when their interface relationship with one segment of the constituency becomes unequal and imbalanced.

Civil society networks and coalitions must find a method to bring about balance in power relations among themselves. It is only then that civil society intermediaries would be able to perform a meaningful role to promote efficient and sustained interface between associations of the poor and the marginalised and various spheres of governance in society.

Within this framework, the role of media and academia in reforming governance and strengthening civil society is pivotal as the former can assist in promoting active citizenship, particularly among the young people, who in the future can make a significant contribution in shaping social and economic priorities for the coming generations. Whereas the latter, while engaging with civil society can strengthen the processes and structures of good governance in society by means of public education and advocacy.

These are varied mechanisms within the framework that would make the shift in the direction of ‘governance where people matter’. We, as civil society, need to continuously renew mechanisms to deepen the roots of good governance by making it more transparent and accountable to multiple constituencies as well as be able to sensitise the not so poor sections of the society to work in tandem with this aim. In conclusion, the desire for development or transformation does not rely on the future. Many people state that first we need a revolution and only then would it be possible to improve society. First the workers have to be unionized and then the women's conditions will improve. In PRIA's experience, we have always believed that development waits for no one. So, wherever one is standing right now, that is where work should begin - that is in our neighbourhood, our family, our community, our groups etc- where ever we visualize development we must start it immediately. Transformation, of any kind comes with small initiatives and innovations towards the final goal. That is the greatest lesson that we drew from the diversity of initiatives that we have made in our endeavours. And we're convinced that collectively, we will be able to realize our dream of achieving governance where people matter.
References


Institutional Interface and Participation in Local Forest Management in Uttarakhand

Abstract: The paper talks about the interface between institutions created for forest management and how this interface impacts on peoples' participation in the management of their forest resources. These institutions operating in the field of forest management are of two types - the government institutions which are instrumental in shaping polices and programmes related to forest management and actually implementing them; and the other set of institutions responsible for forest management comprising of local people and operating at the village level. These village institutions have a direct linkage with the higher order government institutions that form and supervise them. The paper by focussing on the interface, both supportive and problematic, between these institutions operating in the field of forest management in the Kumaon region of the newly created state of Uttarakhand in India, reveals the dynamics of participation at the local level.

Forests have been an integral part of the lives of people in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. People are dependent on forests for a variety of reasons - fuel for cooking, fodder for the animals, timber for the construction of houses, medicinal herbs to cure ailments and forest products such as resin which have traditionally been a source of income for the people. Currently forest resources are managed by three types of local institutions which are formed, supervised and regulated by the higher order government institutions to function as participatory fora. The focal institution at the village level is the van panchayat (forest panchayat) which was created by the colonial administration to provide people with some autonomy to manage their local forests. People in the hills call van panchayats their traditional system of forest management. Whether a system introduced by the colonial administration can be called traditional can be a matter of doubt and debate. In this study van panchayats are considered traditional institutions because of the two essential elements of the organizing principles of the van panchayat - the nature of seeking representation from each hamlet called tok and the contribution of each household towards the protection of forests in the form of mawasa - a small monetary contribution - were retained from the earlier practices. This system still continues. However, in recent times with the introduction of the World Bank aided Joint...
Forest Management (JFM) project, the van panchayats have been converted into Village Forest Protection Committees (VFCs) for a period of four years. The third institution which is marginal to forest management, but central as a unit of local self-governance is the gram panchayat (village panchayat) and forms the third tier of the three-tier system of governance mandated by the constitution of India. These local institutions have a body of elected representatives who constitute the executive committee and are responsible for the administrative management of funds, records and meetings. The executive committees are also the centers for decision-making and have control over the financial resources. The general body of the institution comprises the village as a whole and thus all the households are members of the local institutions. Both the executive committee as well as the general body of the village therefore, has to be the focus of analysis in any understanding of the nature of participatory spaces. The coexistence of a variety of institutions operating in a criss-cross fashion makes the situation infinitely complex and has important implications for participation.

The paper is divided into three sections. Section I talks about the history of forest management and the related institutional arrangements which came into existence with it. It touches three broad phases in the history of forest management: forests under the colonial period, state management of forests after independence, and the imbibing of participatory approaches to forest management in recent times. Section II discusses the power dynamics both between and within institutions and their consequent influence on the local institutional spaces. Section III explores the nature of participation promoted by various institutions.


In earlier times much before the establishment of the colonial regime, forests were managed as common property resources by the people. Through a variety of social and cultural sanctions the hill people were made to combine their subsistence-related dependency on nature with its conservation in a balanced way. By dedicating the hill tops to local deities people were made to venerate forests. Informal institutions of management were also in place to protect the forest – for instance in the patches of oak forests there were informal rules which prohibited the lopping off of leaves during summer months. These rules also specified the grass to be cut by each family which was determined according to each household’s need. People who violated these rules were subjected to social sanctions and often were denied entry into the forest. People were asked to pay the king for the medicinal herbs and other forest produce which was commercially valuable, but as far as access to and use of the forests were concerned there was hardly any restriction imposed by the kings.
It changed with the establishment of colonial administration in Kumaon. The forest management and institutional arrangements in British Kumaon not only restricted people’s access to and use of the forest, it also brought into practice formal institutions to regulate them. The British administration’s interest in the forest lay on two accounts - supply of timber to build railway tracks and war ships and supply of fuel to the administriative centers in Nainital and Almorah and the cantonment town of Ranikhet. Between 1815 and 1917 with a variety of measures the British administration brought the forests under state control and large patches of forests were declared “reserved” under the 1878 Indian Forest Act. State control of the forests regulated and restricted the access to and use of forests by people and there was severe resistance against the measures taken up by the British administration. As a result, the British administration decided to grant some control to local people on the less commercially viable patches, albeit with rules and regulation made by the state. Thus the \textit{van panchayats} (forest panchayats) - the local village institutions to manage the forests closed to the villages were created in 1931 under the Kumaon panchayat forest rules of 1931 (amended in 1976 and further amended in 2001). The revenue department was given the responsibility of forming the \textit{van panchayat} in a village, if one third of its residents put in an application for its formation. The forest department was given the responsibility of providing technical guidance to the \textit{van panchayat}. This practice continues till date in Kumaon. The revenue department is responsible for selecting a date for the election of the panchayat members, inform the villagers and conduct the election. The panchayat members are elected in an open meeting and then they select the sarpanch from amongst themselves, who is the head of the \textit{van panchayat}. Each hamlet called \textit{tok} has at least one representative in the \textit{van panchayat}. A \textit{van panchayat} usually has five to nine members and is given the responsibility of plantation and regeneration of the forest, regulation of access to and the use of the panchayti forest, the appointment of a watch man for the protection of the forest and levying of fines on offenders. The \textit{van panchayat} fund built out of the sale of forest products - timber, resin etc., are deposited with the deputy commissioner and can be spent only with his permission.

While until 1947, the chief motive for the state to extend its control over the forests and granting limited right to people was guided by the commercial exploitation of forests to serve the British administration, after independence the motive became revenue generation for the state. The state thus continued its control and a cadre of scientific foresters carrying the legacy of the British ways of managing the forest continued to administer the forests. The path to economic development which Indian leaders had
planned turned forests into prime targets for scientific management and control. Thus a well developed bureaucratic model after the British administration took control of the forests.

Things began to change in the late 1980s when the state control over forest came under criticism, when it was realized that the alienation of the people from the forests has damaged forests in a significant way and that people need to be brought into the management of forest in a more active way. These shifts in forest management reflected the shift in the development discourse towards participatory ways of delivering development. This required changes in the institutional arrangement of forest management as well as the orientation of the forest bureaucracy. Instead of concentrating on the commercial worth of forests they are now required to emphasize on the subsistence needs of people and ecological considerations and instead of taking on the entire responsibility for the management of forests they are required to share it with the people. This change was introduced with the World Bank aided Joint Forest Management (JFM) project in the Kumaon region in 1997. JFM reflected the element of community participation through the creation of village forest protection committees (VFCs) which are mandated to implement the project at the village level together with the forest department. Under JFM the existing van panchayats have been converted into VFCs for a period of four years during which the project is to be implemented. The van panchayats (turned into VFCs) are now given the responsibility of preparing the micro-plan for the work done under the project, taking steps to protect the forests, distributing forest products equitably, undertaking plantation and regeneration work. While the van panchayat fund still rests with the deputy commissioner, the financial resources coming under the JFM are to be utilized directly by the VFC. The sarpanch of the van panchayat and forest guard from the forest department are given the joint responsibility of utilizing the financial resources. Besides, the VFC is also required to build a village development fund (VDF) which is the village fund and can be utilized for purposes of village development including forest development. While JFM gives VFC the fund to implement the project, it also demands that people contribute to the cost of the project. It thus becomes the responsibility of the VFC to seek the peoples' contribution. Part of this contribution comes in the form of labor whereby people either contribute free labor and the wages are deposited in the fund, or they contribute part of their wage to the fund. Under JFM the van panchayats, in addition to the panchayati forests, are given the responsibility to manage patches of the reserve forest close to the village thus bringing, for the first time in the history of forest management, the state-controlled reserved forests under the joint management of the van panchayat and the forest department.
II. Power And Participation

A complex web of power relationships fills the institutional spaces for participation. These relations of power can be broadly categorized into four types:

1. Between the state institutions that form, supervise and regulate the local institutions.
2. Between the local institutions and the state institutions.
3. Between local institutions with overlapping membership.
4. Between the decision making body of the local institutions and the ordinary members (residents of the village).

The British administration for the first time established a horizontal relationship of power between the revenue department and forest department in matters related to local forest management by giving the former the power to form, supervise and regulate the van panchayats and the latter the power to provide technical guidance to the van panchayats. The relationship between the revenue department and the forest department, during the colonial period, serving primarily the colonial interest, did not become adversarial, but after independence their interests clashed as each of them tried to gain more power. The dimensions of power each department wielded in controlling the local institution became a point of contention between the two departments - while the forest department was and is, in principle, in command of the forest, it sees the revenue department's powers relating to the van panchayat as merely an intrusion in its domain of responsibility and authority. Interestingly though, since in the history of state bureaucracy the civil administration is considered superior to the forest administration, the revenue department implicitly claims to be more powerful than the forest department in regulating the van panchayats. For instance, while the forest department may advice people about the plantation of a particular species or particular ways of protecting them, the van panchayats can not utilize the fund unless the deputy commissioner gives permission for the same. The horizontal clash (with an undertone of vertical power) then transmits to the local level and the local institutional space does get influenced and affected by this.

With the coming of JFM the institutional landscape for forest management has been altered in a significant way. At the higher level the forest department which earlier controlled only the reserved forest and was to provide only technical guidance to the van panchayats, now has a larger role to play in local forest management. As implementers of JFM, it has not only the power to distribute funds for the project it also has to supervise the work done by the van panchayats who have turned into VFCs under JFM. Entrusting the responsibility of the management of funds to the forest guard along with the sarpanch, who is the head of the van panchayat, has also allowed the forest department to intervene in matters of local management of forests. This has tilted the
balance of power towards the forest department. At the higher levels of bureaucracy there is not much resentment against this shift but, at the lower rung the forest panchayat inspector, who is part of the revenue department and previously wielded a lot of power at the local level, and whose power has been substantially reduced under the new institutional arrangements, resents it. Whenever a suitable situation arises for the revenue department to exercise its power, it does take advantage of that. An incident illustrating this took place in the village Parwada where the levying of penalties on illegal encroachments by the VFC invited the wrath of the encroachers. In Parwada the VFC excelled in the protection of forests. Ironically it is the strict impositions by the VFC on the defaulters and the encroachers that disturbed the established practices and upset a group of powerful people who could lobby with the revenue department to hold fresh elections on the grounds that the VFC had become corrupt. The election however, took place very secretively with only a handful of people attending it. Later this VFC was declared illegal on the grounds that it was held two days before the date specified by the deputy commissioner. The old VFC thus continued working but with stiff opposition from this group of powerful people.

2. Under the colonial administration local forest management was directly and in a relationship of power linked with the higher order state bureaucracy, who formed them, supervised their work and controlled finances. The institutional space which was earlier created by the people themselves in response to their needs was replaced by an institutional space which the state created for people partly in response to their need and partly to avoid confrontation with the people. The British administration also laid the foundation for a legal framework for participation of local forest management. The ownership of the land which the van panchayats were given to manage remained with the revenue department, the people were merely to manage that land in order to fulfil their needs from these forest patches and not demand any further concessions to use the reserve forests. The space available for people to participate in the local forest thus became at once formal, legal and state-controlled and therefore subservient to the state. This continued unaltered even after the country gained independence and over the years the state institutions became more and more commanding in their attitude and repressive in their dealings with the people, of course with the exception of a few bureaucrats who could relate well with the local populace. The new approaches to participatory forest management and the joint forest management are attempts precisely to undo this relationship between the state and the people through a process - change in approach which requires the forest bureaucracy to change its institutional arrangement and attitude in favor of a partnership with people. The policy resolutions notwithstanding, not much change is visible at
the local level. The foresters at the higher rung of the forest bureaucracy have adopted the rhetoric of participation quite successfully, but when it comes to resolving any dispute between the forest officials and the people, they find it difficult to remain unbiased and their response tilts in favor of people in their own department. The village Soan Gaon is a case where exactly what transpired between the forest guard and the higher forest officials is still not known, but the forest department withdrew the project from Soan Gaon on the grounds that the VFC members were not active and could not mobilize the people to solve their personal rivalries. The VFC members on the other hand put the blame on the forest department accusing it of hiding the faults of the forest guard, who taking advantage of the trust of the sarpanch embezzled huge sum of money from the project account.

3. The spaces available to people for participation in local forest management get further affected by the presence of other institutions at the local level. Following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993, there is a lot of emphasis in current times to make the *gram panchayat* an effective unit of local governance. *Gram panchayat* (village panchayat) which is a body of elected representatives entrusted with the responsibility of local governance is the lowest level of a three-tier system of governance mandated by the constitution of India. In this three tier system, at the village level there is the *gram panchayat*, at the block level there is the *panchayat samiti*, and at the district level there is the *zilla panchayat*. In the current system of management of forests the *gram pradhan*, who is the head of the *gram panchayat*, is entitled to distribute the forest produce which people in each village are traditionally entitled to from the reserve forest. While no administrative or functional relationship is established between the *van panchayat* and *gram panchayat* at the village level, at the block level, the range level spearhead team constituted under JFM has two representatives from the *gram panchayat*. Similarly the district level spearhead team has the representation of the *zilla panchayat*. The ‘*block pramukh*’, who as the head of the second tier of the three tier system of governance, has the supervisory power to approve the work of VFCs as satisfactory for them to get further funds from the forest department. The revised *van panchayat* rules have provision for an advisory committee headed by the chairman of the *zilla panchayat* entrusted with the responsibility of reviewing the working of the *van panchayat*, issuing guidelines regarding the involvement of panchayati forests, helping the *sto* arrange funds from various sources, and assisting the *van panchayats* in discharging their duties.

In reality however, these administrative linkages do not result in any functional synchronization of the activities of the institutions at the local level. Though the *gram pradhan* is considered a higher authority in comparison to the sarpanch in matters related to the development of the village, when
it comes to forest related issues the sarpanch gains more authority. Earlier however, there was an attitude of neutrality between the \textit{gram panchayat} and \textit{van panchayat}, but JFM has altered that and filled it with rivalry, competition and conflict. It was found that particularly after JFM was introduced in the villages and huge amounts of money came to the \textit{van panchayats} through the project, an antipathy developed between the van panchayat and the \textit{gram panchayat}. The sarpanch, who was a non-entity in the village before JFM came, has suddenly become powerful. At some places this has given rise to a lot of jealousy, competition and even malice. Members of \textit{gram panchayats} in villages opine that they should have been given the responsibility of implementing the project. This rivalry has created factionalism in the village that gets transferred to the spaces created for participation. This has happened in the village Bannan where the \textit{gram pradhan} felt inferior to the sarpanch who began handling huge amounts of money coming through the JFM thus getting all the attention and respect in the village. The \textit{gram pradhan} lodged a complaint with the block administration against the sarpanch who she alleged was misappropriating funds. Following this the forest department stopped funding the project activities for a while and renewed it only after it was found that the complaint was more a result of malice than any real misappropriation of funds. Another serious consequence of rivalry between the \textit{gram panchayat} and VFC is the growth of factionalism in the village. This gives rise to feeding wrong information, suspicion, attempt to subvert work, thus obstructing any meaningful participation of people in forest management. There are panchayat representatives at the block and district level spearhead teams formed under JFM, but since the spearhead teams have remained largely cosmetic and have not been integrated with the forest management at the local level, mere representation from the gram panchayat at the block and district level does not forge linkage between the gram panchayat and VFC. On the contrary, the power dynamics between them restrict the local institutional space for forest management. The \textit{sarpanchs} in some villages have lodged complaints against the \textit{block pramukh}, the supervisory authority in matters related to the work done under JFM, who demanded a commission in the JFM fund given to the VFC and in the event of being refused certified the work of the VFCs as unsatisfactory.

4. The local institutional space in itself is a locus of power and can patronize actors who enjoy the decision making power. The actors who are in the decision making positions in the van panchayat, VFC or \textit{gram panchayat} are also close allies of the state. The power of the state is transmitted to them and through them to the space. The power to manage finances, write reports, maintain accounts, organize meetings, distribute work among people are the ways though which this power is manifested. Often
it is a closed door meeting where decisions are taken, or they are taken earlier with the forest guard, range officer or divisional forest officer and later approved in the village meeting. The sarpanch or the influential members of the van panchayat try to do the maximum amount of work related to plantation in their own tok’s so that people there can get the benefit. As the tok’s are geographically separated and located at a far distance from each other, in most cases it is not possible for people from one tok to go and work in another tok. The spaces of power within the institutional spaces thus have the potential to keep the ordinary people marginalised or even push them outside the purview of decision making, perpetuate discrimination, and patronize a version of participation which is diametrically opposite to what the new institutional spaces are created for.

III. Varieties of Participation

There is not enough evidence about the limits to participation during the regime of the native kings - the kings certainly levied cess on certain commercially viable products, but on the whole people were free to move in the forests and use forest products. Since forests were in abundance and there was no pressure from population on the forest we can assume that people enjoyed unlimited freedom over the forest produce. The colonial state, by turning forests into commercially a viable resource, restricted the engagement of people in the management of forest resources. As I mentioned earlier, the nature of participation was given a formal, legal and institutional shape when the British administration recognized certain rights of people over forests and constituted van panchayats. Participation of people thereafter was confined to voting in the elections of the van panchayat and abiding by the rules which governed the panchayati forest. The van panchayats took care to protect the forest from illegal encroachment and grazing, distributed the benefits from the forests to people and levied fines on the offenders. Participation thus remained confined to prescribed responsibilities. In this system of management of forests, women seldom participated either as voters or as members of the panchayat committee; they seldom attended the panchayat meetings. Many van panchayats over the years became defunct due to lack of funds (the restrictions imposed on utilization of the funds deposited with the deputy commissioner), lack of interest from the revenue department and forest department, and village conflicts which went unresolved. With the coming of JFM the van panchayats got a new lease of life and were activated and empowered in a variety of ways. I have already mentioned these but, how participation actually takes places in these new institutional spaces is discussed below:

Participation as Employment

One of the objectives of the JFM is to encourage communities to take a decisive role in forest management, not only based on a concern for the environment but also for food security and
employment. The JFM, following the general pattern of development projects, also gives emphasis on the contribution of people towards the project in the form of labour whereby a certain percentage of their wage goes to the revolving fund. This is done to bring a sense of ownership of the project among the people. However, in an economic setting where means of gainful employment are few, participation of the poor in the forest management under JFM has become synonymous with employment. Employment opportunities in the project work such as plantation, check-dam construction etc., are much sought after by poor people. In all the villages where the study was undertaken people overwhelmingly cited the period of project work as the actual time when a large number of them attended meetings more regularly than at any other time.

Given the economic reality of poor sections of the population, this does help them, but their sense of involvement like their employment in the project remains temporary. Hence, once the project is completed, there is no involvement of the people. Their consciousness regarding conservation of natural resources therefore does not translate into action. Since their involvement in the project and their understanding of the role of the VFC remain inadequate, their sense of ownership of the project lasts till there is employment. This is evident in the thin presence in meetings after the project work is completed and the disagreement between the VFC and people regarding the utilisation of the village development fund. In fact, and ironically so, a large number of people whose contribution has gone to build the village fund are not even aware that a portion of their wage is kept in the fund.

**Participation as Representation**

As I mentioned earlier the representation of women was almost absent in the *van panchayat*. The lower castes, because of their inhabiting a separate hamlet* tok*, got elected so that a minimum of one person from the lower castes was present in each *van panchayat*. How effective is their representation is again a debatable issue — it would vary from village to village. In a village Deeni with a predominantly lower caste population, their representation remains substantial as also their participation. In other villages particularly following JFM guidelines lower castes have got a chance to get representation in the VFC. However, the structure of the VFC is such that other members do not match the power of the sarpanch. And the sarpanch with all his/ her powers remains subservient to the government.

Where women (limited though such cases are) have been linked in a sustained and integrated manner with the project as in the villages Saladi and Deeni, new leadership has emerged in the village. This new found confidence is visible in many ways - in organizing meetings, in articulating issues, in dealing with the project authorities. The involvement of women has enhanced the quality of participation. The space that had hitherto been denied to women has become more open and participatory, though it
also remains restrictive given the work load on women who are primarily responsible for the collection of fuel, fodder and drinking water on a daily basis.

**Projectisation of Participation**

With the introduction of JFM, participation has been "projectised to a large extent, even though the policy resolutions and the forest officials emphasize that JFM is an approach and not a project. There are predetermined objectives, standardized procedures, specified ways to involve people, and a lot more emphasis on output which makes the institutions both at the state and village level speed up the process without particularly bothering about the consequences.

If we treat participation as a process we can not limit it to a specific time period. Nonetheless, the project has a time cycle, and much of the participation does get influenced by that. While the process of getting people to organise, participate, build institutions and enhance the quality of the space for participation takes time, the project does need to be implemented in its due course. This incongruence between social process and project duration reflects in the lopsided development of the space - though representation is sought the capacity of the weaker sections are not built to participate in the meetings, there is inadequate understanding among people regarding the role of local institutions, people’s involvement does not go beyond employment in the project and contribution of labour, the conflicts are not resolved because the project has to achieve the target rather than meddle in village conflicts.

Another consequence of the project driven forest management is that the accountability of the state as well as the local institutions formed under the project remains towards the project rather than towards people. Meeting project targets becomes more important than seeking meaningful participation.

One of the major issues in project initiated participation is negating the “willingness to manage” forests in favour of the “technical expertise to manage” it. In the recent versions of participatory management, the management of the fund, account keeping and above all understanding the complexities of the project such as JFM require people who have the technical expertise to be the managers of the project.

**Outside Spaces Promoting Participation**

It is found that where people are integrated in a positive way into a space which was available to them prior to the opening of the institutional space, the nature of their participation in the institutional space has been enhanced. Participation, particularly of women, has been enhanced in those villages where spaces created either by an NGO in the form of Van Suraksha Samitis (which are women’s collectives formed by an NGO, Central Himalayan Rural Action Group, to engage women in the management of local forests) or government in the form of
Mahila Mangal Dal (which are women’s collectives formed by the government to engage women in developmental work), have mobilised women’s participation much before the JFM was introduced in the villages. This has helped in spreading awareness and fostering a spirit of engagement in women. This already created space for social and participatory engagement, made it easy for VFCs to seek wider participation in the village. It is interesting to note that these spaces always remained outside the institutional spaces created exclusively for the purpose of forest management, even when they in many instances worked in collaboration.

Conclusions

An exploration of various institutions operating in the field of local forest management reveals the tensions and conflicts between them, but at the same time it also reveals the elaboration and expansion of participation, howsoever limited it may appear, in the new institutions.

We thus find VFC creating and opening up spaces for participation through many ways—formation of village based institutions responsible for planning and implementation of programmes of forest management, joint sharing of finances by the government department and village institutions and creation of minimum and necessary conditions for the inclusion of the marginalized and weaker sections in decision making at the local level. At the same time we also see how participation gets severely limited due to the lack of co-ordination among various institutions, cutting out a larger role by the forest department for itself through the control mechanisms of planning and inflow of finances, involvement of large number of people as laborers in the forest conservation, congruence between fixed project duration and time required to build sustainable village institutions, inadequate representation of the weaker sections from the village in the decision making and lack of clarity regarding the accountability of these institutions to people.
Governance in Civil Society Organizations

Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay

Abstract: Over the last three decades there has been greater recognition about the role of civil society organizations in development discourse. They are seen as one of the major instruments in promoting good governance in contemporary society. However, strengthening internal management and governance of civil society organizations has not been seen as a priority by many development investors. In recent years with the growth of the civil society sector and the unprecedented spread of a particular form of democratic governance throughout the world, a critique is mounting about the 'performance' of civil society organizations. Although a consensus is still awaited about the definition of the desired performance for the civil society sector (given the plurality of purposes), it is becoming clear that it will largely depend on the way these civil society organizations are managed and governed. It is also in the interest of civil society organizations to maintain their autonomy and self-governance that they address this question squarely.

Introduction

In recent years, significant attention is being paid to the role of civil societies in promoting a democratic, equitable and just society. This has been attained by the civil societies themselves through decades of struggle, contribution and establishing an identity of their own rights. As a consequence, greater public resources are being channelized through the civil society organizations particularly the Voluntary Development Organizations (VDOs). However, at the same time, civil society organizations are also exposed to scrutiny about the manner of their functioning and the consequences of their work by the larger society. One critical role envisaged for civil society organizations is that of promoting good governance through ensuring accountable, transparent and democratic functioning of other institutions in society especially, the government and the market institutions. To a large extent, civil society organizations would be able to play this role effectively only when their own institutions also follow the principles of good governance. Historically, very little effort has been made so far to strengthen the capacities of civil society organizations to improve their governance mechanisms.

Understanding Governance in Civil Society Organizations.

Governance is all about how different societal institutions distribute power; manage public
resources (how resources are mobilized and utilized) and societal problems. Hence, equitable distribution of power, effective management of public resources and efficient handling of societal problems are pivotal for good governance. Effective democratic forms of governance rely on the realization of social legitimacy through participation, ensuring accountability and transparency (UNDP, 1997; Tandon and Mohanty, 2002).

We are operating under the premise that effective institutions are a means to achieve an end - to promote an accountable and transparent governance system through sustainable human development. It is imperative for all the institutions in society including civil society to pursue democratic forms of internal governance. A sound system of governance is essential for creating an enabling environment in which to pursue this end. Strengthening and enabling environment towards this end depends not only on the state or the market that governs well, but also on civil society that facilitates political and social interaction and that mobilizes various groups in society to participate in economic, social and political activities.

Governance in civil society organizations implies the totality of functions that are required to be carried out in relation to the internal functioning and external relations of the organizations. It refers to the ongoing process in institutions by which guidelines for action are developed and adherence to them is monitored. It also includes ideas about the moral and legal accountability and organizational legitimacy. The governance function in civil society organizations is generally regarded as the responsibility of voluntary governing boards (Tandon and George, 1999; Harris, 1999). The term 'governing board' refers to the group within a civil society organization, which carries the ultimate responsibility for what the organization does. Although this definition is rooted in legal conceptualization, the role of the governing board and the concept of governance go beyond legal niceties. In fact the voluntary nature of civil society organizations resides with the 'voluntary' governing board. A number of factors have additionally made governance an issue for the civil society organizations.

1. Throughout the last three decades we have been experiencing an exponential growth of an ever enlarging space for civil society in defining the national and international development agenda. This extraordinary growth and enlarged space accompanied by burgeoning influence has led the sector to become visible in the public arena which necessitates increased accountability, effectiveness, credibility and viability of civil society organizations. The overall performance of civil society is being scrutinized by other stakeholders viz. the government and private sectors. It also necessitates that civil society organizations pay greater attention to their internal governance.

2. It is not only the sectoral growth of civil society but also a large number of individual civil society organizations which have been experiencing extraordinary growth. Many of
them are sitting in various public committees or policy influencing positions. They have become prime advocates for transparent and accountable governance in our contemporary societies. It is not surprising that questions would be raised about the manner in which these civil society organizations manage their own internal governance.

3. The astounding growth in civil society also necessitates a change in leadership requirements in order to play in a different plane. It is no more business as usual. The “leader-centric” functioning of many organizations needs to be replaced by a more consensus oriented leadership and organizational functioning. Managing the external environment on a day-to-day basis has become an integral part of organizational management and governance. It is, therefore, essential to have a vibrant governance mechanism to stay alive in this turbulent environment.

4. For the last three decades or so, there have been certain assumptions made about the functioning of civil society organizations. The civil society organizations are serving the poorest of the poor, they are promoting participation of the poorest and marginalized toward the cause of just development, they are cost effective and they are managing their internal affairs in a democratic, accountable and transparent manner (Clark, 1991). In fact for quite some time, nobody raised any question about all these so called “virtues”. Time and again, the civil society organizations themselves reiterated all these assumptions and became self-satisfied and self-convinced entities. However, these virtues can no longer be taken for granted. The VDOs have to prove their performance, which requires an accountable and transparent governance mechanism.

In recent years there has been considerable debate among the donors and the civil society organizations on the issue of accountability. However, as yet, there is no agreed definition of accountability. The question of accountability vis-à-vis its relationship with governance in civil society organizations has been discussed elsewhere (Tandon, 1995; Edward and Hulmes, 1995).

5. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, soon after the end of the Cold War and the demolition of the Berlin Wall official aid from the northern donors started coming to the southern governments with a new companion. Some people called it “New Policy Agenda” while others called it “Political Conditionality” (Robinson, 1993). Whatever the label of the package, this essentially meant a particular form of governance characterized by a particular form of democracy, transparency and accountability. This essentially means, for the southern governments, the more the dollar, the more the pressure to pursue a “preferred” form of governance. Many of us from the civil society sector rejoiced because some of the conditionalities were conducive to the pursuit
of our dream of 'people centred democratic and just development'. As a matter of fact, we became so intoxicated with our dream; we forgot for a moment that for each dollar we receive from our so-called preferred donors, the same definition of accountability, transparency and legitimacy might be applied to us. The symptoms are very clear. The northern donors have already started prescribing the kind of governance mechanisms the southern civil society organizations should have. It is, therefore, high time that southern civil society organizations pre-empt the imposition of distorted governance mechanisms borrowed blindly from other sectors or other cultures. The southern civil society organizations should define their own governance mechanisms which are based on the principles of accountability, transparency and social legitimacy as understood by them.

Roles and Functions of the Governing Board in Civil Society Organizations

The present experience and literature review suggests some key functions of the governance mechanism from an organizational point of view.

1. Ensure vision and mission is carried out: Civil society organizations are set up with some societal vision (a desirable social condition as opposed to the present societal reality) and organizational mission (the reason for the existence of the organization in order to achieve its societal vision). It is the role of the governance mechanism to nurture and sustain them, which means facilitating a shared understanding and articulation, working together, revisiting them with the changing context (Wilbur, Finn and Freeland, 1994; Tandon and George, 1999).

2. Custodian of values, ethics and moral dimensions: The governance mechanism within the organization is expected to be the custodian of those values and ethics, which inspire the purpose of the formation of the organization (ibid). These values and ethics are embedded in the 'culture' of the organization. It is the responsibility of the governance mechanism to strive continuously to minimize the gap between professed and practiced values and ethics.

3. Interface between organization and environment: The governance mechanism is expected to provide a link and to act as a buffer between the organization and its environment. Operationally it means the governance mechanism is expected to bring in knowledge, expectations and opinions from the outside world. The overall goal of the voluntary development organization is to bring social transformation - changing the environment in which it operates from the vantage point of certain categories of social groups like the poor, the marginalized, women, dalits, tribals etc. In the process the environmental forces also operate to influence the organizational functioning. This interaction goes on throughout the life of the organization and it is the
primary responsibility of the governance mechanism to manage (welcoming and making use of the favourable changes as well as offsetting the unfavourable changes) these interactions from the vantage point of organizational mission.

4. **Enhance public image of the organization:**
The governance mechanism is also expected to assume an advocacy role on behalf of the organization. The members often represent the organization and explain its purpose and achievement to the larger public. It is essentially to enlarge the social legitimacy of the organization and its professed mission. Many a time, the intermediary voluntary development organizations pay attention only to the primary stakeholder with/for whom they are working and to the resource providers. By and large, these organizations ignore the legitimate ‘stake’ of a whole range of stakeholders. The governance mechanism must take the responsibility to provide justification of its organizational mission and purpose to the ‘ unofficial’ stakeholders for enhancing the acceptability of the organization in a given society.

5. **Assure the accountability of the leadership:**
The governance mechanism is responsible for ensuring the accountability of organizational leadership. The leadership is to be held accountable to the governing mechanism with respect to the vision, mission, policies, ethical standards and statutory requirements. It is a critical arena in the governance mechanism of intermediary voluntary development organizations. In the Indian and South Asian context, often the governing board members are identified and invited to join the board by the organizational executive leadership. However, many a time this ‘invitation’ is equated with ‘hiring’ by the executive leadership which gives a distorted authority relationship between ‘governance leadership’ and ‘executive leadership’ in favour of the latter. This paradigm is contrary to the principle of ‘good governance’. A change in the mental framework and functional paradigm is required to ensure accountability of the executive leadership.

6. **Resource mobilization:** The governance mechanism is expected to secure and safeguard necessary resources - human (knowledge, expertise, time and labour) and funds to ensure the smooth and effective functioning of the institution. This function is consistent with the definition of governance as discussed earlier.

7. **Fulfilling the legal and statutory requirements:** The legal and statutory roles are derived from the organization’s legal incorporation. Each of the legislations (e.g. Society Registration Act or Public Trust Act or Section 25 of Companies Act etc.) defines the roles and function of its governance mechanism in a particular way. These responsibilities fall under two broad categories, one may be called ‘fiduciary responsibilities’ - sound financial management and auditing, and the other may be called ‘programmatic
reporting' responsibilities in line with the stated objectives of the organization. It is the responsibility of the governance mechanism to ensure compliance with the 'laws of the land'.

8. Ensure formulation and implementation of policies: The governing board is the highest policy-making body. The board is responsible for formulating, elaborating and ensuring the implementation of policies related to programmes, human resource development including gender, financial transactions and other managerial procedures.

9. The employer: The final responsibility of hiring and firing the paid staff, ensuring discipline and monitoring their work, promotions and many other functions rests with the governing board. However, in most organizations, these functions are delegated to the chief functionary on a daily basis. In voluntary organizations in which volunteers are involved in direct service provision, the governing board often carries an 'employer equivalent' function in relation to those volunteers (Harris, 1996).

10. Continuity of the board: It is the responsibility of the present governing board members to assess, recruit and develop future leaders of the governing board. A critical analysis of required capacities and qualifications to enhance the performance of organizations is as significant as other functions.

Issues Related to the Roles and Functions of the Governing Board

The roles and functions of governance as suggested for voluntary development organizations cannot be seen as static. The priorities change with the life cycle or stage of the organizations. While the governing mechanism for a nascent organization would focus on defining the vision, mission, strategy and programmes, those for an older organization would require attention on resources and environment. It is expected that the governing boards play multiple roles and have multiple functions, which are inter-related both conceptually and functionally. A critical analysis of the present stage of the organization and its requirements is a pre-requisite for prioritization of tasks to be performed by the governing board.

Often many voluntary development organizations operate under the assumption that whatever functions are given to the governing boards, they serve only a 'ceremonial purpose'. In reality, there is a huge gulf between the professed and practiced roles and functions of voluntary governing boards. Harris (1999) has done an extensive review of literature to explore the reasons for this gap. Many a time the gap is due to 'ignorance'. The governing board members are often unaware of the functions, which have been allocated to them (Ford, 1992; Siciliano and Spiro, 1992). In others, the boards are 'misled by the lure of the corporate model' (Hodgkin, 1993) with the assumption that the paid chief functionary can
be left to carry out all key functions. Still others assume that the functions officially allocated to the governing board are no more than a 'ceremonial conformity' (Meyer and Rowan, 1991). Some studies have tried to explain this gap from the viewpoint of the dynamic relationship between the chief functionary and the board members. The relationship between the chief functionary and board members is open to constant negotiation and re-negotiation (Conrad and Glenn, 1983; Harris, 1993; Middleton, 1987). The relationship may change over time, emerging issues or in response to shifting environmental influences (Alexander, Fennell and Halpern, 1993).

**Size, Structure and Composition of the Governing Board**

The size of the governing board largely depends on the legal incorporation as mentioned earlier. In the Society Registration Act the minimum requirement is seven whereas in the Trust Act it is two. The present practice shows that not much thought goes into the formation of voluntary organizations, when they need legal identity or recognition. However, at a later stage, with the growth of the organization different capacities and expertise are brought into the board to fulfill its various functions. A careful analysis will show that the size of a board depends on (1) the laws of the state of incorporation, which generally prescribe a minimum number, (2) the mission and philosophy of the organization, and (3) resources (Tandon and George 1999; Wilbur, Finn and Freeland, 1994).

There is also a great deal of variety in present practices about the size, composition and structure of the governing board. The organizations, which are incorporated under the Societies Registration Act, have a broad-based membership, called the general body. It elects an executive/management committee to function on behalf of the general body. The other type has a co-terminus general body membership and governing board membership very typical to the intermediary voluntary organizations.

There are a number of issues related to the size, composition and structure of the governing board.

First, one has to ask what are the capacities - individually and collectively, that the governing board should have in order to fulfill its responsibilities. Many a time the board comprises of professionals with various social backgrounds, experiences and philosophies. On one hand, this diversity provides a wide range of capacities to the board, on the other hand the same diversity may cause difficulties in reaching a consensus or decisions on key political issues, thereby, giving the board a 'corporate identity'.

The second issue is related to the representation on the board. Again, the first set of issues is related to the practice where members are appointed as representatives of other organizations like another local voluntary organization or any other organization which provides important resources. In a sense, this practice ensures the representation of other stakeholders or constituencies on the board; however, it may be difficult for these members
to identify fully with the interests of the organization without thinking about the implication of this interest on their own organizations. The second set of issues is related to the representation of beneficiaries, donors, regulatory authorities and staff in the governing board. In recent years there has been enormous pressure on the voluntary sector to include these stakeholders in the governing board in the name of transparency, resulting in many distorted practices. The beneficiary representation has boiled down to tokenism, the representation of donors is seen as an encroachment on the autonomy of the organization and representation of a regulatory authority is seen as mere control of the independent voice of voluntary development organizations. One can raise the question as to how many donor agencies have appointed their ‘recipient’ partners as members of the governing board. The practice of engaging primary and secondary stakeholders in participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation of programmes can accommodate the legitimate interest of stakeholders or constituencies in a better and more efficient way rather than giving them a berth in the governance mechanism. The same is true for the representation of staff in the governing board. Operationally it may be good if the board periodically sit with and listen to the concerns and suggestions of the staff. This may help them to assess the implications of various policies on the ground. Nevertheless, the formal representation of the staff members in the governing board may lead to confusion between day-to-day operational personnel practices and policy issues.

The third issue is related to the relationship amongst members of the governing board. Acceptance of membership in a governing board includes commitment to provide and share time, energy and knowledge. The regular attendance of meetings and making adequate preparation for the meetings is also respecting the value of other members’ time, energy and knowledge. The governing board members when working as a group should not be engaged in personal ego clashes. Organizational decision-making may involve confrontation of ideas but not of personalities. The issue of confidentiality is important in maintaining healthy relationships among the board members. Many a time disagreements within the boardroom cross boundaries resulting in disrepute for the whole organization. Confidentiality of the discussions and bear for decisions irrespective of whether or not one agrees with the decision is a pre-requisite for developing trust among the members. When the personal or professional concerns of a board member adversely affect his/her ability to champion the organizational goal before personal benefit, a conflict of interest exists. Conflict of interest not only includes financial accountability but also relates to moral and ethical behaviour. The best way to handle actual or potential conflict of interest is self-assessment by the board members themselves based on a well-defined policy. A related question is whether a board member can be paid for his/her professional services to the organization? The professional expertise that a board member brings to an organization is an important part of his/her service
to the board. Therefore, it is ethical to accept fees for such service. On the other hand, the Income Tax Act requires that all those who serve on the governing board are listed in the annual audit and any compensation received by them should be documented and certified by the chartered accountant. When an Income Tax officer sees that most or all the members of the governing board are regularly receiving compensation, it is justified in asking this question (Tandon and George 1999).

The fourth issue is related to the relationship between the staff and board members. Although, theoretically there is a distinction between governance functions and executive functions, there are considerable interdependences between the two and open to negotiation. However, there is an unequal power relationship between the two as for many important decisions the board is the final authority. At present, it is not very uncommon in the voluntary sector to marginalize the governing bodies and exclude them in actual practice from meaningful participation in major decisions. A self-fulfilling cycle is set up in which staff do not share information with their governing boards, who then lack the means to participate in a debate or understand the organization’s work. The staff take this as confirmation that there is no point in sharing information with their governing boards and the cycle of governing board exclusion is reinforced (Harris, 1989). In this context, the relationship between the chief executive and the board members is of uttermost importance.

Future Capacity Building Requirements for Board Members

In the earlier section we have examined the existing gaps between professed and practiced functions of the board members and the reason for the gaps thereof. If voluntary governing boards fail to perform the functions expected from them, we must take a more positive and developmental approach, especially after judging the importance of the functions prescribed for them. In this context, training and education are relevant; where members of governing boards are unaware of their prescribed functions, training could be useful. However, research suggests that the ‘target group’ for such training needs careful consideration.

Until now, training has generally focused on the staff of the organization in developing the skills on management and leadership. In some cases the chief executive has been included in trainings on leadership skills and behaviour. In the Indian situation there is hardly any effort made by any agency to provide training or a platform for discussion for the members of the governing boards. Since the members of the board are expected to perform their roles in relation to the staff of the organization; courses attended by ‘pairs’ of the chief executive and governing board members (preferably the chairperson), for example, may provide a better forum for open discussion and encourage a ‘partnership’ approach for tackling problems.

The content of training also needs careful consideration. Training should not only
concentrate on the technical aspects of being a member of a governing board - running meetings, conforming with laws, monitoring service quality, keeping accurate accounts, but also an explanation of the important broader functions of governing bodies including the values and perspectives of good governance. It is the understanding of this distinctive perspective and functions, which can motivate people to serve on a voluntary governing board.

Empirical studies and research also suggest that sensitivity is needed in approaching governing board members about training. Since members of voluntary governing boards give their time freely, we cannot lose sight of the fact that they have a choice about how they use their time. For example, insistence that members of governing boards attend courses, or an authoritarian approach to how they 'must' perform their functions, could demotivate them (Harris, 1993; Hedly and Rochester, 1992).

Thus, training - provided it is sensitive and appropriate with respect to target groups, content and approaches - would be an appropriate response to the practical problems surrounding the implementation of the voluntary governing board role. Yet, it cannot provide all the answers. When governing bodies fail to perform expected key functions, the cause may be deeper than ignorance about formal responsibilities. The underlying structure of some civil society organizations may be such that governing bodies do not have the power necessary to perform the prescribed functions (Harris, 1993).

In such cases, collaborative organizational development programme intervention involving all the key stakeholders of the organization may facilitate discussion within the organization about available organizational choices and the implications of each. This kind of intervention can provide a framework of collaborative efforts and a valued partnership between board members, different stakeholders and staff.

Conclusion

The functioning of the governing board is the core of the governance mechanism for civil society organizations. The principles of accountability, transparency and social legitimacy are practiced in civil society organizations to the extent as it is avowed and inculcated by the governing board through out the organization. It is important not only to function on the basis of these principles but also how the organization is viewed and perceived by other stakeholders in a similar situation. The governing board should take the ultimate responsibility of the organization - what it stands for.

References:


Strengthening Citizen Leadership: Experiences with Women Leaders in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand.

Niruta Pant

Abstract: This article aims to share the author’s experience of working with women leaders in the Naugan block of Uttarkashi district in Uttarakhand. It highlights how by proper facilitation and by adopting a focused approach even weaker groups can start progressing and working systematically. It is important to realize that women have enough capacities to manage and work in unison with others in a group and that with little support they can bring change in themselves and in the society around them. The program of strengthening citizen leadership in women was aimed at building the capacities of women office-bearers of various groups and strengthening the groups to which they belonged so that they could voice their demands and work for their economic upliftment.

Introduction

The progress in the status of women over the years has been uneven. Gender inequalities have persisted, major obstacles remain with serious consequences for well being of women. What is the need of the hour? To enable women participate fully on equality basis in all spheres of society including participation in decision-making process and access to power. This means that their role as a leader should be facilitated so that they become more efficient and able citizens of society. It needs to be kept in mind that awareness, knowledge and skill all have to be dealt with when we talk of building capacities of women. This can help channelise the efforts of the people in a particular direction for the fulfilment of a common goal. Women work day and night to make ends meet, right from cutting wood for fuel, bringing water and rearing children to also fulfilling social commitments. If they have access to natural resources and know their varied uses, the economic burden can be appreciably reduced and women can become self-reliant to some extent.

With this in mind an intervention in Naugan block of Uttarkashi was done by PRIA in collaboration with the Himalayan Action Research Centre (HARC). HARC is an NGO based in the area and has been working in the areas of community development, agriculture extension and REDP (Rural Entrepreneurship Development Program) for wherein the rural youth are provided training by a government agency/NGO to develop skills of the youth in the activity that will provide self employment to them later on.

The objective of the intervention was two-fold:

- Strengthening of community-based organizations, self-help groups and women leaders so that they could access and use natural resources productively.

Note: Niruta Pant is working in PRIA, Uttarakhand
To enable women to participate actively and effectively in the village-based planning and implementation of programmes through panchayats.

One reason for initiating this program in Naugeon was that there had been prior hands-on experience of working in one of the villages. Under a program called Social Development Monitoring (SDM), a core group of four villagers had monitored the functioning of the Village Water & Sanitation Committee (VWSC) there.

The intervention in the area began with an assessment of some of the self-help groups and VWSCs so that an understanding was reached of what the members, leaders and other villagers thought about the groups. One of the aims was

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>VWSC</td>
<td>- Presence of HARC</td>
<td>- Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Implementation phase over</td>
<td>- Construction (Implementation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- In most of the villages VWSC was included in the initial study</td>
<td>- Operation and maintenance (O&amp;M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>SGSY SHG &amp; SWAJAL SHG</td>
<td>- None or very little facilitation</td>
<td>- Economic development:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Groups above one year of facilitation</td>
<td>saving, inter loaning, income generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Understanding difference between the above two types</td>
<td>- Social development:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Swajal SHGs facilitated by implementing agency (NGO); after withdrawal they become inactive</td>
<td>community feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>MOTIVATORS</td>
<td>- Active motivators</td>
<td>- Facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Also leaders of Mahila Mangal Dals, Maiti groups and SHGs</td>
<td>- Information providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Emerging leaders</td>
<td>- Motivators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- As Catalysts to further strengthen the programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rawain Mahila SHG Federation</td>
<td>- Nascent group formed on 3rd Oct. 2002, so capacity building right from the time of inception is needed.</td>
<td>- Traditional crops are being marketed as cash crops helping in improving their economic status.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>- Federation has leaders of 17 groups that have moved towards income generation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Federation relates to a large number of people at the village level and directly promotes economic development</td>
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also to understand the issues emerging in the groups and suggest methods to make what could be done so functioning of the groups more effective. Following this, four types of groups were selected.

Following this, the intervention was begun in consultation with HARC. The first task was to conduct a training need assessment (TNA) for the respective groups so that planning for further implementation of the program could be done. TNA was carried out with the help of methods like informal meetings with the leaders/members of the group, profiling of the leaders. Orientation camps were organized for the leaders so that they could assess their capacities and identify their requirements to enhance their abilities. Some of the needs identified were:

(Motivators)
- Improve writing ability.
- Effective way of communication.
- Literacy; at least the ability to read.
- Increase confidence.
- Formation of networks.
- How to motivate others.
- Accounts management.

(VWSC)
- Orientation on the SWAJAL project.
- Managing the project.
- Monitoring the project.
- Increase in confidence.
- Record keeping.
- Communication skills.
- Decision-making.
- Knowledge of banking.
- How to organize oneself.

(SHG)
- Clarity regarding the SGSY scheme and the SWAJAL scheme for SHGs.
- Report writing.
- Effective leadership.
- Conflict resolution.
- Economic development - how?
- Increase in confidence.
- How to become effective leaders.
- Documentation.

(Rawain Mahila SHG Federation)
- How to make the federation strong.
- Increase in confidence.
- How to maintain the various registers.
- Literacy.
- Knowledge of sales & purchase.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Groups

While trying to understand the training needs of the leaders, we also aimed to observe and understand the strengths and weaknesses of these groups, as this would give direction to the program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>Weakness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1     | VWSC                         | - The people had elected the members of the VWSC so there was more ownership.  
     |                               | - In places where the villagers were concerned and aware the committee there was more accountable. | - The committees had not got enough support from the NGO associated with them.  
     |                               |                                                                          | - Improper functioning and less interest in work.                        |
|       |                              |                                                                          | - Unclear about the project / roles/responsibilities.                    |
|       |                              |                                                                          | - Lack of coordination among the committee members.                      |
|       |                              |                                                                          | - Conflicts in the committee regarding planning & implementation.        |
|       |                              |                                                                          | - Members did not participate in meetings & trainings.                   |
| 2     | Self-Help Groups             | - Rules and regulations were already made.                              | - The group meetings were not regular.                                   |
|       |                              | - Registers were there and monthly savings took place.                  | - Rules and regulations neither made nor followed.                      |
|       |                              | - In some of the groups the women were quite eager and confident to take new things in their stride. | - The groups lacked documentation. Roles and responsibilities of the leaders were not clear. |
|       |                              |                                                                          | - The group depended entirely on the government subsidy.                 |
| 3     | Motivators                   | - Attended their monthly meeting.                                       | - Some lacked confidence despite working for about five years.          |
|       |                              | - Helped in SHG facilitation & strengthening.                          | - Growth restricted as they only worked with women SHG.                 |
|       |                              | - They had also participated as volunteers in activities like farmer's fair, Mahila sammelan etc. |                                                                          |
| 4     | Rawain Mahila SHG Federation | - This was a new group and had been formed when 14 groups had come together and had already been groomed to take on more important work.  
     |                               | - The federation was directly related to the economic development of the women | - The selection of the executive committee had led to some conflict within a few members of the federation. |
A short-listing of the women leaders was necessary so that we could focus our activities on them and concrete results could be obtained. We selected 107 women leaders from the aforementioned groups. The profiling of these leaders showed that most of them could only sign their names, while a few were illiterate.

**Activities Undertaken**

To fulfill the objectives set under this program, intensive intervention was started in the area after the first week of November.

- One-day / two-day orientation camps were organised for the groups.

- Training was conducted to develop understanding and clarity about schemes (SGSY) and projects (Swaja); to induce the importance of leadership among the participants; to enhance the basic qualities of a leader; with the help of field exposure give practical training to the members; and motivate the groups towards income generation programmes.

- Interface of SHGs, VWSC and motivators with resource persons on panchayats and with local resource management was facilitated. Interfacing aimed at developing knowledge as well as making the leaders more confident so that they found their own voice.

- Workshops focused on: developing an understanding about the various rules related to bank linkage; clarity over the concept of self-help groups and activity selection; understanding of accounts maintenance & record keeping; group insurance scheme, and effective leadership. There was also a need to develop an understanding of the role of community-based organizations (CBOs) in village development. To bring this about, resource persons from nearby villages were called so that the participants could relate to them and they shared the work they done in their village through these groups and the help of the panchayat. Plans for further field intervention were also made in participation with the leaders so that the facilitation provided was not directionless or purposeless.

- Similarly, exposure visits were organised so that the leaders could observe and learn. Seeing the work done by others they could gain confidence and believe that they too could make the effort to usher change into their lives. Exposure visit to Kurnool to see the work of VWSCs, SHGs and their linkage with the panchayats was organised for 20 leaders. A similar exposure visit was made to Kanpur in collaboration with ‘Shramik Bharti’, with the objective of making the group leaders understand how SHGs were working as mini banks, how they were using credit in the groups, the work that the federation was doing and also the concept of micro-finance and the benefit that the groups derived from it. It was a learning experience for us too. It should, however, be remembered that when women leaders are able to put these lessons into practice then we shall be able to
know how much they have benefited from the exposure and such impact will only be visible in the long run.

- The issue of illiteracy could not be resolved, but as a follow-up literacy classes will be organised for women leaders with help from the government. Women have themselves shown interest in acquiring basic literacy skills.

With the help of structured, semi-structured events as well as field-based informal meetings and continuous interaction with the leaders, efforts were made to inculcate a feeling of belonging, accountability and the will to do something for one's self and others in society. Audio cassettes in the local language were also made use of as it attracts people and is an effective means of motivating people on various issues. It is believed that when a group is strengthened and made effective, strong leadership emerges. It becomes aware and is ready to accept challenges. Information on rights such as right over natural resources as well as other related social, political or economic issues is fundamental to women's holistic development. Informed citizen leaders can raise their voices against any malpractice be it corruption in the banks, in the market or in governments at the local level. Information disseminated through structured, semi-structured events as well as field-based informal meetings and continuous interaction with the leaders aimed to inculcate a feeling of belonging, accountability and the will to do something for one's self and others in society. Audio cassettes in the local language were also used to motivate them on various issues.

Training Women Leaders in Uttarkashi, Uttranchal

Achievements

Over a short period of 6 months we were able to achieve some goals. Still more sustained and continuous efforts are needed to strengthen leadership among women. The changes observed were:

- Some of the leaders started approaching us and demanding information about a number of things.
- Leaders began to share information; earlier this was non-existent.
- Some of them also showed interest in the programme and were observed asking questions during the training and interface, which they did not do earlier.
- The leaders of SHG groups under the block gradually started attending the training sessions and workshops. Their attendance was at a minimum earlier.
- Some leaders also emerged as panchayat representatives.
- Women became slightly more aware and expressed their desire to elect the panchayat members unopposed.
Women now want to unite, come forward and work for various common issues.

Constraints

Where there are enabling factors, there are also hindrances which one has to also work with. The hills are a difficult terrain and at times one has to walk to far-flung areas, as there are no means of commuting available. This is time consuming and not only affects the pace of work but it also makes one realise the hardships, which the people in the village have to face. The low participation of women leaders in training and workshops organised in the Centre was related to this and to overcome this we focused more on field based activities. Illiteracy was one of the major constraints as many times it became difficult to explain things. Efforts were made to make the sessions simpler and methods like drawing cards; role-playing, lectures (with lots of examples related to the lives of the people) and videos were used. Field exposure visits were also organised as mentioned earlier. Language too acted, as a constraint because some of the leaders had difficulty in expressing themselves in Hindi and therefore at times the message could not be communicated properly. Help from another facilitator was required who could speak the local language and translate the message whenever required. The Uttarakhand hills are considered to be the abode of Gods and Goddess thus making them sacred and sanctified. People are busy in rituals and festivals throughout the year because of this and, therefore have less time for such programs. Most of the workload is on the women so it becomes difficult for them to take time out for such activities and this also hampers the growth of the program.

Lessons Learnt

Every activity is a learning process and in the 6-month period, some lessons that were learnt are:

- While working with women and facilitating meetings with them it is necessary that one should be sensitive towards their needs. It is important to listen to the problems they want to share even if they are personal. This brings them closer to the facilitator and they can talk openly about different issues.

- It is difficult to keep the participants focused on a particular topic and if they digress it is difficult to get them back to the issue at hand.

- Inviting local resource persons is helpful and more relevant as people tend to relate to them.

- There is a dire need to involve the men/family members of the women with whom we want to work because without their encouragement it is difficult for women to participate in activities other than household work.

Challenges and Ways Forward

Empowerment of women can only come when they have a sense of worth and feel that their participation makes a difference. This can happen not by giving long lectures on empowerment but by working with them wholeheartedly so that they
develop a sense of achievement. Strengthening the leadership of women helps in uniting them and strengthening their collectives to work on social, economic and political activities.

This pilot initiative brings to light the fact that if women come to believe that they are capable of doing things other than bringing fodder, fuel, washing clothes and cooking food, they can practice other things as efficiently. A systematic and organised approach is needed. For example certain minute things like regularity in monthly meetings, punctuality, a fixed place for group meetings, penalty are of great importance, when we speak of group strengthening vis a vis leadership strengthening in groups. Herein lies the challenge as women fail to understand the importance of this work because of the manner in which they have been groomed.

Illiteracy among women is perhaps one of the biggest obstacles that leads to making women feel less confident. Consequently in most cases they depend on their men to do any kind of paper work. It is high time that something is done about this so that at least basic reading skills are developed among women. The state government is taking some steps in this direction and if it is proposed that monitoring of this project is done by NGOs working in this field it can emerge as a successful movement.
Civil Society Organizations in Gram Sabha Mobilization: Case of Haryana

Abstract: This article is about how a non-formal civil society organization comprising of women, participated in a gram sabha mobilization campaign. Nari Network (Ratia) is a community-based organization, which was developed during interventions with the PRIs in Ratia Block of Fatehabad district. Originally it was thought that Nari Network would play a supportive role to the Panchayat Network and the Panchayat Resource Centre based at Ratia. Over a period of a year, Nari Network grew in strength and its leadership started participating more actively in the area of improving governance. This article throws light on the process that the Network followed during the gram sabha mobilisation.

Introduction

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution was enacted in Haryana in the year 1994. The constitutional amendment provides provision for holding gram sabhas at regular intervals. In Haryana it is mandatory to hold gram sabha meetings once in every six months. The meetings are to be held in every gram panchayat (GP) within a time period of one month. The scheduled period for the gram sabha in the state is from 15th May to 15th June and from 15th November to 15th December. Even though the constitution has made a provision for mandatory gram sabhas, these were (and are still) being held as a mere formality. The idea behind the gram sabha is to involve the community in preparing development plans for the panchayat and ensuring transparency and accountability of the elected body. People are ignorant about the concept of these meetings and its importance. Even the panchs of the GP are often not aware of these meetings. Panchayats (read sarpanch) then formulate the plans at their own discretion. Often the sarpanch and the gram secretary form a nexus and because of the other panchayat members’ and the gram sabha members’ ignorance are in a position to swindle public money. An active gram sabha plays a major role in keeping a check on such practices.

Another issue concerning gram sabhas is the fact that the level of participation of women in such meetings is negligible. If at all women, come to these meetings they ask for assistance for a few government run schemes like IAY, old age pension etc.

Being a part of the community women should also be involved in developing plans for the panchayats.
Most of the work of the panchayat is measured by the infrastructure created by it. Any infrastructure that the panchayat develops with its funds has an equal impact on both men and women. Then why are women kept out of the planning process?

Like most other states in the country, Haryana has a patriarchal society. However, it is very evident that male domination in the community is much higher than in other states. If we look at the sex ratio of the state (861 as compared to the national average of 933) it reveals a gloomy picture of the status of women in Haryana. Fatehabad being a district of the state is no exception. Though among the districts of Haryana, Fatehabad has a better sex ratio (the sex ratio of the district is 887), yet the participation of women in public forum like panchayats, gram sabhas is very poor in the district. Most of the elected women in the governance institutions are proxy members with power virtually vested with the men around these women.

A series of discussions with various stakeholders led PRIA to focus its interventions in empowering women (both politically and socially) in the state. The interventions started in Fatehabad district in the year 2000. During the year 2002 a strong network of women, with nearly 600 members, was formed in the Ratia block with an aim of strengthening the Panchayat Resource Centre (PRC). It was thought that the issues (especially related to women) that arose from the grassroots would be addressed by the PRC. After setting up of the District Resource Centre (DRC) in Fatehabad, both the PRC and the Nari Network are being groomed as a programme partner for various interventions in the district.

**Gram Sabha Mobilisation in Ratia - Past Experience**

PRIA along with its network of volunteers and partners have been mobilising gram sabhas in the GPs of Ratia block since November - December 2000. In most places gram sabhas were (and are still) being organized as a mere formality. At times gram sabhas do not even take place and the panchayat secretary and the sarpanch complete the records and get the proceedings of these proxy meetings endorsed by people in the village.

The constitution has made provision for 33% reservation for women to various positions in the panchayat. However, very few women are aware of their rights and duties and even fewer exercise them. Caste, class and gender play a major discriminatory role in the proper functioning of the panchayats at all levels. Elected women representatives in Haryana do not even attend the panchayat meetings where the gathering of their men folk is much lower than what it is at the gram sabhas. The gram sabha being a public gathering is not considered a fit place for a woman to be. For women in Haryana attending a public gathering is taboo. Gram sabhas, panchayats, municipalities are all public institutions and women are not considered to be competent to address the public issues that emerge at these institutions. The society believes that women have no place in any sort of participation in ‘public affairs’.
Brief background of Nari Network

During the interventions in Ratia a network of sarpanchs was formed to negotiate with the local administration on various issues pertaining to devolution of powers to the panchayats. However, it was observed that the panchayat network had very few women members. It was then decided that a network of vibrant women also be formed in the block, which would ensure greater participation of women in the panchayats. The Nari network was formed in Ratia block on 15th February, 2002. The Network has nearly 600 women as members. Each GP has one or two groups with around 10 to 15 women. The network has its members in nearly 50 GPs of the total 61 GPs in the block. These members have a working committee, which is elected from the members of the network and they work voluntarily towards the cause of women’s empowerment.

Most of the villages in Fatehabad have groups of women called mahila mandals. The members of these groups were initially contacted so that a network of these groups could be formed. For some time Nari Network was a network of mahila mandal groups. However, these groups were under the impression that they would get loans for being a part of the network (as most SHGs under government programmes feel). The concept of coming together to address issues concerning women (without focusing on the monetary aspect) was not clear to the members. During December 2002 The Pradhan of the network Smt. Kuldip Kaur, took the initiative of making members understand this concept. She along with some volunteer members from the network went to each of these GPs and explained to the members how they can collectively address the issues pertaining to women. This was a phase when there was a major restructuring of the entire Network. Several members who did not like the idea of no material returns in the immediate future, opted out of the network. Yet, at the same time several others joined it. A conscious effort was made to involve the anganwadi workers, the ANM and other active women in the village so that the concept could be discussed during the meetings. The entire block was divided into 5 clusters with a cluster pradhan (leader), up pradhan and a secretary.

The major objectives of the Nari Network are:
- Social, economic and political empowerment of women.
- Fight against social evils like dowry and female foeticide.
- Develop a pool of potential women citizen leaders.

Nari Network and Gram Sabha Mobilisation

It was observed during the earlier gram sabha mobilisation campaigns that participation of women was particularly low. During November - December 2002, some members of the Nari Network volunteered to mobilise women for the gram sabha meetings. Their focus was specifically to bring the women out of their homes and make them attend the gram sabha proceedings. It was clear that one mobilisation campaign would not be enough for making women participate actively in these meetings. The gram sabha mobilisation
campaign also gave greater visibility to the Network within the Block. Earlier the members of the Nari Network had heard about gram sabhas but they had never attended any meeting. However, they understood that panchayats can play a major role in the overall development of the village. Apart from the motivation that the field workers provided to the Nari Network members, their curiosity to understand how a gram sabha might ensure proper functioning of the panchayats made them decide to be a part of the campaign themselves.

Gram sabha mobilisation by women volunteers from the Nari Network could ensure greater interaction of women from the villages during the campaign. Since the volunteers were from a similar background to that of other women in the village, it was easier to make the women understand the concept of a gram sabha.

During the campaign the volunteers mobilised women in eleven gram panchayats. The names of these panchayats are Rattakhera, Birabadi, Hadauli, Malwala, Ghanswa, Kavanagarh, Laghuwas, Rojwali, Mehampur Sotra, Sukhmanpur, and Kural.

Process

On reaching the village the volunteers from the network visited the sarpanch first and explained the kind of activity they were going to undertake. After this they visited as many panchas as possible in the village. A conscious effort was made to visit each woman panch in the GP. After meeting the elected representatives, the women made door-to-door visits in the GP and explained to each woman in the household the importance of gram sabha meetings. The volunteers distributed pamphlets with the message of gram sabha printed on it to educate the gram sabha members of their rights and duties. They also pasted posters, which mentioned the date, timing and venue of the gram sabha meeting. The village gurudwaras were also roped in during the gram sabha mobilisation. The volunteers requested the gurudwara committees to announce the timing and venue of the gram sabha on loud speakers on the date of the gram sabha.

During the campaign the volunteers also held a few ward level meetings with the women. During these meetings the women openly discussed the problems that they were facing. They were then advised to attend the gram sabha meetings and place their demands in front of the panchayat. Later it was observed that the ward level meetings had a larger gathering of women than the actual gram sabha. Often there was a certain level of curiosity among the women when they saw the volunteers educating people on the gram sabhas and moving from door-to-door.
Implications

Haryana has a patriarchal society and women live a more suppressed life than in most other parts of the country. A woman participating in a public gathering is still considered taboo in the society. The gram sabha mobilisation campaign provided a platform for those women who had chosen to change the existing situation (however marginally) to some extent. During the campaign people were anxious to know what these women were doing. Their curiosity brought them together during the small ward level meetings. More importantly women in the villages readily gathered around these women as they could identify with them.

Though on a noble mission, the volunteers at times faced problems during the campaign. Mostly it was the sarpanch of the GP who opposed this effort. The sarpanch often asked these volunteers not to go about village telling people about the gram sabha. It was particularly difficult for the volunteers to make the sarpanch understand how gram sabhas help the panchayat work better. There were also some people with an orthodox mindset who did not approve of women moving door to door in different villages.

Results

The mobilisation effort by the volunteers from Nari Network was a commendable one. This was the first time that women volunteers had taken up gram sabha mobilisation. The participation (at least in numbers) did increase in the GPs where the Nari Network volunteers mobilised the gram sabhas. The women in the villages could also identify with these volunteers. As a result of the mobilisation in the eleven GPs in Ratia, women started participating in such meetings. More than 23% elected women representatives participated in the gram sabha meeting. The participation of women gram sabha members also increased with this mobilisation effort by the Nari Network.

Cases of Some Gram Sabha Meetings

Alipur Barotha

At times gram sabha meetings become a platform for settling personal/political disputes between rival parties. Trouble often starts from a minor altercation and eventually leads to a violent brawl. In Alipur Barotha GP, the gram sabha meeting was scheduled to be held on 11th December, 2003. As an exercise in understanding the factual realities of an un-mobilised gram sabha, some Nari Network volunteers chose to observe the meeting in this particular GP. On the scheduled date some people from the opposition party to that of the sarpanch came to the meeting with loaded guns. The meeting had to be abandoned and was rescheduled for 18th December, 2003. This time, the sarpanch Chanderbhan (Alipur Barotha) said that he was also “prepared” (with lathis and sticks) to handle any untoward incident initiated by the people from the opposition party. This is the condition of gram sabhas in a large number of GPs in Haryana. The level of violence at the gram sabhas is also a constraining factor for people in general and women in particular to participate in such meetings.
Rattakhera

Rattakhera was a village, which the volunteers from the Nari Network had chosen to mobilise. The objective of the Nari Network during this mobilisation was to increase the presence of women in the gram sabha meetings and to encourage them to participate actively in the public meetings. The volunteers of the network went from door to door, meeting women in all the households (particularly from the dalit and economically poor community) and explaining to them the importance of the gram sabha.

As a result of the efforts made by the women volunteers, nearly 200 women (mostly from the dalit community) from Rattakhera attended the gram sabha meeting on 9th December, 2002. The meeting went on smoothly for nearly one and a half-hour when two people from the upper caste (Bishnoi community) came and started threatening and abusing the women who had gathered there. When the sarpanch tried to stop them they started abusing the sarpanch and even manhandled him. When the sarpanch could not control the situation the villagers complained to the police and the meeting had to be brought to an abrupt end.

Following this incident the sarpanch filed a FIR at the police station. The matter was also brought to the knowledge of the Deputy Commissioner, Superintendent of Police and the SHO. The incident also attracted media attention in a major way. The Nari Network took the initiative to take this matter to the concerned authorities. On 16th December, 2002 when the Governor Mr Babu Parmanand visited Fatehabad the president of the Nari Network Mrs Kulbir Kaur submitted a memorandum to him in this regard. Press notes were also circulated to the local media by the network. The sarpanch network also played a vital role in addressing this issue. The network helped sarpanch Sukh Chain Singh in lodging the complaint and in bringing the women from the village to meet the Governor.

Next Steps by Nari Network

Nari Network - Ratia is being groomed as a programme partner for the interventions that PRIA is doing in the Ratia block of Fatehabad district. An active civil society organisation can exert pressure on the administration and institutions of governance to function effectively. An issue identified as a bottleneck for the success of gram sabhas in Haryana was the late release of dates for gram sabhas. (During the ongoing gram sabha mobilisation campaign (May - June 2003), Nari Network negotiated with the block level officials and was able to get the dates 10 days in advance.) During the previous gram sabha mobilisation campaign, the focus was on increasing the number of women gram sabha members in the meetings. During May - June 2003, the Nari Network is mobilising women to take active part in the gram sabha proceedings. Apart from mobilising gram sabhas the Nari Network is also developing potential leaders among them who can contest the panchayat elections next time.
Conclusion

The case of Ratia in mobilising women in gram sabhas is different in the sense that it has a strong network of women. Not all members of the network are very active. However, there are at least ten to twelve members of the network who can address a gathering of people very effectively. It was observed that while there was almost no participation of women in the gram sabhas earlier, the participation levels did rise in the panchayats where the women volunteers mobilised gram sabhas. The campaign did result in increasing the number of women attending these meetings. During the recently concluded gram sabhas (May - June 2003), Nari Network members mobilised people (mostly women) in 33 gram panchayats. Women now have even started questioning the panchayats on various issues. CBOs in which there are vocal members can be very effective as far as such campaigns are concerned.

Photo: Sandeep Das
Gram Sabha Meeting
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: It's About Performing - Not Just Appraising

Prem Chadha  
MacMillan India Ltd. : Delhi,  
2003, Pages xix+467

Managing organizational performance, which is efficient, consistent over time and relevant to the constituency it serves has been a bewildering puzzle to managers. Over the years many practitioners and academicians have developed a huge body of knowledge on the subject. Some have contributed in the areas of developing appropriate systems and procedure whereas others have contributed in the areas of complex human psychology and behaviour in the work place. The author offers a unique framework for managing performance taking into consideration the balance required between the two. The readers will be able to identify ‘critical concepts, tools and steps for planning performance goals, monitoring performance, supervising the development of managees and appraising performance results’ as aptly put by L. David Brown in his foreword for the book. This book will indeed be equally helpful for the managers of ‘for-profit’ as well as ‘non-profit’ organizations. The concepts and tools presented in this book will also be helpful for many state agencies and government organizations wanting to be efficient. The book offers a critical review of contemporary literatures on ‘performance management’, which could be of immense help to researchers interested in organizational behaviour. The theoretical rigour and practical reflection presented in the book gives a holistic shape to the model on “Performance Management (PfM) Theatre” as it has been named by the author. Perhaps, one of the most noteworthy contributions of this concept would churn out innovation in leadership and organizational culture for the people and organizations that are aspiring for high performance through ‘care’ful management of its people.

The book consists of fifteen chapters distributed in five parts. The first part explains the underlying concepts like ‘performance’, ‘personalities’ and ‘work’ in a lucid manner. The philosophical interpretation of these concepts will give immense pleasure to the readers who look beyond systems. The linkage between Performance Management and Human Resource Management is presented in a manner, which helps readers to identify the differences between Performance Management and traditional ‘Performance Appraisal’. A critique of traditional Performance Appraisal gives immense insights into the topic. This part stresses PfM as people management and suggests the kind of human resource functions that need to be performed at the organizational level, and those that need to be done at the department/
group level to suitably empower the department/group level managers to become effective in managing performance. The second part covers topics like role description, role ambiguity, role stress, performance standards, system oriented and self development assignments, besides the process of setting mutual expectations and performance criteria such that these can be customized for maneges with different needs and competencies. The third part covers the topics like experiential learning, managerial leadership, supervision, communication, review discussions, feedback, managee development, training, delegating, coaching, counseling and mentoring and role efficacy. It deals with monitoring managee performance and mentoring managee development. It captures the true spirit of the manager’s role as a supervisor, a coach and a mentor. It emphasizes the coaching and counselling roles of a manager and also deals with the processes and methods of dyadic communication between manager and the managee. The fourth part attempts to elaborate the annual stocktaking of performance and potential. It also takes into account the performance and potential of individual employees as well as that of workgroups. It views annual stocktaking as a dyadic dialogue between managee and manager for reconciliation. This part devotes a chapter on institutional recognition and reward. Part five of the book attempts to define organizational effectiveness, quality of leadership for managing effective change interventions and understanding the causes of internal as well as environmental change. It discusses the implication of implementing and operationalizing PIM in organizations and dealing with the related changes. Several Annexures are given at the end of the book, which range from the statement of organizational values of various non-profit organizations to performance appraisal formats of for-profit financial institutions.

On the whole, the book is written in a lucid manner with a unique blend of Indian and Western contexts highlighting the supervisory and managerial role in an organization.

Veneklasen Lisa & Miller Valerie
World Neighbors : USA, 2002, Pages xii+346.

The impact of macro social policies on people's participation in public decision-making have compelled many supporters of the marginalized groups to add advocacy and policy influence to their agendas. The ongoing trends of globalization, economic liberalization, and related privatization policies, that have strengthened the role of the market and weakened the operations of the state to provide basic services on the one hand and the political trends toward more democratic practices, institutions and new political space, on the other have opened more room for them to operate and engage energetically with the marginalized citizens vis-à-vis the public decision-making system. However, as they work to scale up their activities and impact, they come across many other issues that affect their ability to expand their outreach. Engaging in advocacy demands that approaches to policy advocacy take into account the underlying realities of power and politics that exclude people from meaningful engagement in the policies and decisions, which affect their lives. It is important to understand not only the underlying power systems but also the ways to assess them as the simultaneous move towards globalization and localization are changing the terrains of power relations. Engaging in policy advocacy underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that would link it with broader concerns of building critical awareness for action, mobilizing and strengthening coalitions, dealing with conflicts across differences and embedding participatory practices in broader movements for human rights and social justice. Such links would go a long way towards improving the accountability of public institutions. Developing alternative tools and methods of advocacy for long-term visions and strategies to link to wider empowerment objectives implies that the capacities of both civil society groups and ordinary citizens to engage in advocacy work need to be strengthened. Advocacy is a value laden political process, which involves the coordinated efforts of people to change existing practices, ideas and distribution of power and resources.

right-based approach to policy change and concrete problem solving, they have combined the issues of constituency and organization building with the issues of leadership development, awareness building, policy research and policy analysis.

Lisa Veneklasen & Valerie Miller are co-directors of Just Associates, USA, a network-based organization promoting learning and action partnerships for social justice. They have worked on issues of advocacy, human rights, gender, popular education, and various capacity building programmes with women. Their association with activists, trainers, organizers across the globe and their collaborative work in actually doing popular education for democracy, human rights and social justice have formed the basis of this action manual. One can notice the core concerns guiding their work on this action guide. First, improve the lives and capacity of the marginalized groups to express themselves and make change happen. Second, understand the questions of citizenship, constituency building, social change and accountability in-depth. Third, promote concrete strategies and tools to influence policy decisions as well as make the decision-making process more inclusive and democratic. Fourth, forge connections between global, national and local advocacy efforts in the issues of power, politics and exclusion.

The authors locate wide range issues relating to advocacy and citizen participation in broader debates on themes of active citizenship, which is based on popular knowledge and experiences; inclusion and respect for differences and identities in different contexts. They have structured the action guide in three parts. In part I ‘Understanding Politics’ they explore concepts and assumptions to interpret social reality. The chapters in this section contain a framework for stepping back and exercising some of the notions, assumptions and values that shape visions of social and political change. The chapters in this section are: Politics and Advocacy, Democracy and Citizenship, Power and Empowerment, and Constructing Empowering Strategies. In part II ‘Planning Advocacy’ they see planning for advocacy as educating citizens, an organizing and consciousness raising activity. Planning for advocacy as a tool clarifies strategic directions and opportunities within particular political and organizational contexts; as an organizational strengthening process builds organizational and leadership capacities; and as a citizen empowerment strategy creates new knowledge, awareness, skills and confidence. This section includes chapters on planning tools, steps and the processes of advocacy planning that build citizen empowerment. In part III ‘Doing Advocacy’ they look at ways of doing advocacy. The chapters in this part are: Communication and Media, Outreach and Mobilization, Lobbying and Negotiation and Organization and Leadership. (Advocates all over the world to influence and educate the citizens and the decision-makers use these strategies.) check sentence. The authors provide examples with the objective of inspiring activists to be creative in their own contexts.
There are a variety of exercises, tools, resources, tips and stories. A special training and capacity building annexure at the end of the guide provides workshop and planning ideas for different users and needs.

This is a well-researched and well-argued book with a balanced interpretation of issues. The analysis, on one hand, reveals the vital concerns of marginalized citizens and on the other hand, it logically describes the mechanisms of planning and doing advocacy enabling the activists to analyze, plan and manage advocacy strategies with a clear understanding of the potential risks.

As the issues of inclusive citizenship of the marginalized citizenry and inclusion of their voice in governance is gaining currency, the need for creating and expanding the knowledge base and a simultaneous rethinking of the ways of intervention is pushing us to think of new ways of bringing practitioners and researchers closer. Methodologically, this book represents how meaningful practice research engagement can take place. It successfully combines the application of conceptual and experiential analysis. Since it is based on reliable sources of information, it is a valuable reference guide for research scholars, activists, trainers, organizers as well as professionals involved in donor institutions and development agencies. The simple, reflective and informative style of writing in an easy to understand manner is useful even to those who in general are interested in the issues of advocacy and citizen participation.

Reviewed by:

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Society, Politics and the Voluntary Sector

Ajay K. Mehra, Anil K. Singh & Gert W. Kueck (eds.)
VANI (Voluntary Action Network) : New Delhi, 2003, Pages i-vii+359

Voluntary sector organizations have been growing in number and significance within the Indian development scenario. They include organizations, which are involved in service delivery, mobilization activities, providing support to other organizations in different capacities, philanthropy or advocacy. These organizations very often fill in the gaps left by the planning and implementation systems of the state increasing the participation levels of a larger number of people, awareness and capacity building, project planning and implementation with better knowledge of local contexts, as well as bridging the gap between the state and the citizens are the strengths of this sector.

The voluntary sector, its role and functions and its over-all impact on the development process, are currently subject to much debate. This book has attempted to cover most of these issues and largely there is a balance of theory and study-based data analysis to support arguments. This book attempts to trace the growth of the sector and to throw light on relevant issues of sustainability and accountability as also on its future potential. It is comprehensive in its coverage of sectors where NGO interventions have been substantial, namely the health sector, gender issues and poverty reduction. The book also examines the interface of the voluntary sector, the state and market. A fair number of the thirteen chapters make recommendations for optimizing both the functioning of the voluntary sector, and the collaborative efforts of the state and this sector.

Mohit Bhattacharya’s paper provides a theoretical overview of voluntarism. Here, while in the Indian context the Gandhian and Tagorean views were predominant influences, Ezzioni’s, Korten’s and Milton Esman’s classifications and characterizations of voluntary agencies are referred to as part of organizational theory. The theories of Tocqueville and Putnam are elaborated upon and the author concludes on a note of caution about over-reliance on the voluntary sector, which essentially has a complementary role alongside the state. Balveer Arora uses the ‘new institutionalism’ approach in analyzing the relation between the state and the voluntary organizations, referring to both relations between the latter and the Panchayati Raj institutions and the bureaucracy. The interrelations between economic policies and the functioning of voluntary sector institutions are examined.
John Samuel examines the term ‘Social Action’ and the ambiguities associated with it. According to the author, social action crystallized during the pre-independence era. Internal and external challenges for social action are described as arising from firstly, a tendency to portray the process of social action as the only representation of civil society, and secondly, the emergence of ‘neo-fascist tendencies’ within the social and political spheres. D.Rajasekhar’s paper provides a classification of NGOs into operational/grassroots NGOs, support NGOs, umbrella/network NGOs and funding NGOs. He examines the strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and challenges facing the voluntary sector today. The author makes some recommendations for NGOs to follow, which would enable the poor to organize themselves in a more effective manner and to become self-sustaining in their programme implementations.

Neelima Khutan provides a strong argument for the methodology of participatory development as an indispensable measure for successful and sustainable poverty alleviation and equitable empowerment for the marginalized. The author examines the issue of funding and the implications of external funding for voluntary organizations. Bidyut Chakrabarty, in his paper, portrays the voluntary organizations as being significant contributors to wide-reaching and sustainable development. Their awareness building efforts and ability to both comprehend and work effectively within local contexts gives them an added advantage in carrying out development interventions. The author traces the growing importance accorded to the voluntary sector by the state, apparent in the progressive Five year plans. The theoretical significance of the increasing role of the voluntary sector is dealt with.

Vasanthe Raman’s paper on the gender issue in social processes, considers a number of significant parameters like the sex ratio, women’s work, property rights and their involvement in the political processes. The contention here is that while efforts in the last couple of decades have successfully made visible the gender question, substantial impact has not yet been achieved. A plausible reason, the author suggests, could be that gender has usually been considered in isolation from all other forms of inequity. A comprehensive picture of the health care system in India has been provided by O.P.Sharma. Due priority given to health in the planning policy of the government is reflected in improved health indicators like crude birth and death rates, total fertility rate, infant mortality and life expectancy at birth. The contributions of the private sector and the voluntary sector are also examined. At the end of this evaluative paper, the author makes a number of recommendations for both the voluntary sector and the government in order to promote a more optimal collaborative effort on the issue of providing health services.

Ajay Mehra thoroughly examines the associational nature of both political parties and voluntary organizations and their significance. He provides a detailed examination of the consolidation and establishment of the major
political parties in India beginning from the nineteenth century. Alongside this, he examines the growing importance accorded to voluntary organizations in the state’s policy framework and the current relations between the two major political parties, viz. the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the voluntary sector. The author contends that while the Congress has lost some support links with voluntary bodies, the BJP has not only retained it, but also continues to draw support from this base. Rajasekhar and Shobana provide a distinction between the terms poverty reduction and poverty alleviation. The analysis in this paper is based on a study (described in detail in this paper) of economic programmes by NGOs in a selected region in Tamil Nadu. The authors conclude from their analysis that while micro-finance might provide the means for poverty alleviation measures, it need not necessarily provide a means of women’s empowerment. The authors suggest that, if women empowerment is the aim firstly, men should be included in the intervention and interventions should not be restricted to the economic sphere alone.

PRIA’s paper on the role of civil societies in strengthening PRIs, examines the need for civil society organizations to take on the role of intermediation with respect to PRIs. As is apparent from a number of studies, NGOs help the local self governance bodies to develop a bottom-up approach of micro-planning. The types of interventions elaborated upon include, participatory local planning, capacity building initiatives, sammelans and information dissemination. The paper concludes with a number of suggestions for strengthening the role of Panchayats. Vijay Pratap and Thomas Wallgren deal with ‘Understanding Civic Action for Global Responsibility’. Here they examine the implications of external funding by northern NGOs to the southern NGOs. They focus on the Finnish movement for establishing solidarity with the south, the main actors involved in this movement and the issue of funding from the point of view of the southern organizations.

The book, therefore sticks to its agenda of including a number of arguments regarding the central issues of funding, sustainability and accountability, as also on NGO relations with other actors in the development process. It serves as a good source of information on the current discourse on the voluntary sector, specifically with reference to India.

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Sustainable Learning for Women’s Empowerment - Ways Forward in Microfinance

Linda Mayoux, (Ed) 2003,
Samskriti Publication Delhi,
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We do not only want a piece of the pie, We also want to choose the flavour, and know how to make it ourselves. (Ela Bhatt, SEWA quoted Rose 1992)

The passage mentioned aptly encapsulates the spirit of the book that seeks to empower women with an attitude of self-reliance and self-determination. The book highlights the nurturing of women’s credit collectives to reflect this character of mind, body and spirit. Powerful and moving case studies are used extensively to build faith in programs and also to indicate the need for organized, systematically planned microfinance for women’s participation.

On the face of it, microfinance, credit groups and cooperatives appear as vehicles for economic development but in a limited way. Evidence from India, suggests that women are not necessarily the actual users of loans accessed in their name. Where used, loans remain confined to a narrow range of ‘female’ low-income activities. Further, the women may have limited control over their income and household level decisions. Moreover, the impact of the household income may be limited. Though women may actively press for changes, without adequate support it may increase tensions and domestic violence in the household.

But such groups can assume other functions to make them a more credible institution of change - such as social and cultural transformation in a small yet definite way. The foremost being an improvement in women’s mobility and initiatives in forging inter-linkages with the panchayat, the people and securing their support. It also connotes political development for women, i.e., gaining legitimacy and power in the eyes of decision-making bodies and thereby a change in the status of the individual woman and group members in society. The successful case studies, compiled and quoted in the book, clearly illustrate the manner micro-finance groups have attempted to transcend mere economic empowerment of women and addressed the underlying social undercurrents (illiteracy, taboos on women particularly on their mobility and social unacceptability of women taking on larger roles in society) that impinge on their livelihood. These case studies are the result of innovative strategies, tools and methods; participatory in nature that have helped women to review and learn from their struggles to make changes.
The book maintains that micro-finance cannot be a panacea for all development problems as self-finance programs are plagued with diverse problems. Yet, with growing skepticism, rapid innovation is taking place at the programmatic and potential level and there is increasing focus on participation. The book through myriad papers, proposes a framework for sustainable learning, which will be empowering, and discusses the continuing challenges, which will inevitably have to be faced. A logical sequence is followed in presenting the papers. It systematically progresses from concepts and case studies to discussing the underlying factors for successful case studies: participatory learning systems and tools to effect changes in the functioning of groups.

The first part of the book deals with theoretical assumptions and approaches that pertain to women’s participation in micro-finance. Assumptions are made on the basis of existing models and frameworks and the fallout is analyzed at length. Analysis has been carried out through the prism of paradigms - Feminist Empowerment Paradigm, Poverty Alleviation Paradigm and Financial Self-Sustainability Paradigm. Within the paradigms, the basic definitions of terms such as “Empowerment,” “Sustainability” and “Participation” that impinge on program design have been examined. Further, with the help of empirical evidence, in the form of case studies, it establishes primacy for rethinking the practices that may form the essential elements of Gender Policy.

The second part of the book contains papers organized on the theme of Participatory Learning through Systems, Structures and Practical Tools. These have been espoused by different organizations - PRADAN, ASA and others. It provides a framework and innovative methodologies for participatory learning for the empowerment of SHGs and links learning to action such as: Internal Learning System; Participatory Learning and Action and Networking.

**Internal Learning System (ILS)** is a participatory monitoring, planning and impact evaluation system that is ‘internally-driven’. It is an empowering tool for the illiterate and poor village groups to track and analyze changes in their lives and to use this understanding to alter their strategies as they participate and interact with actors and institutions in the wider community. The structure of ILS comprises of pictorial diaries that illiterate women use with indicators, exercises and plan formats. It is flexible in accepting varying content decided upon by users including poor women and program staff. The importance is in integrating impact assessment with program learning. The participants learn what is working and what is not, why, and how to improve performance while sharing their learning, so that changes could be made in a timely manner. The process makes use of users at all levels in five tasks: the collection of data, assessment, analysis, planning and training, sharing and documenting. The system yields itself to advocacy on account of good quantitative data and qualitative understanding. In addition it helps to strengthen relationships among stakeholders as they share a common understanding of the program with regular reviews and solidifies the commitment to core values. Overall it
improves participant understanding and analysis skills.

Participatory Learning and Action / Participatory Rural Appraisal for poverty and livelihood analysis - are open-ended analytical exercises resulting in participant drawn maps, diagrams, ranking charts etc. As compared to ILS, it is more interactive and flexible in investigating underlying and complex situations and processes. With the help of diagrams, the understanding of complex inter-linkages between gender, poverty and livelihoods becomes fairly easy for women. The process is an eye-opener for the outsiders/facilitators as it gives them a chance to learn from participants while the latter act as information providers, analyzers and decision-makers who learn together. Further the reasons why particular changes are occurring, the stakeholder participation at all stages and the need to feedback findings to all these different stakeholders.

Another important grassroots initiative, Networking is to bring women together in an annual gathering to exchange experiences and ways of addressing development, gender and poverty concerns. Networking in Gujarat, for instance, is providing focus for ongoing learning and planning within and between SHGs as an important contribution to making it a democratic process at both the local and national levels.

The third part of the book illustrates experiences of innovations in gender training, enterprise training and literacy, which can be integrated in these structures. Participatory Enterprise training is of immense value in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of enterprises and the ways in which incomes can be increased. Two other strategies that merit special mention are the transformative gender training and REFLECT Literacy (Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques).

Transformative Gender is effective in challenging grave issues that women face. It has a special relevance in micro-finance. In the area of credit, it is being increasingly felt that access to credit must be accompanied with autonomy and control, ameliorating women's living conditions in the direction of changing gender relations. Gender transformative trainings need to step in and bring out informed changes to societal institutions, organizations and changes at the personal level. Emphasis is therefore placed on gender relations rather than gender roles as analytical tools. The essence of this training lies in stressing that women's oppression does not arise out of biology but is the result of the patriarchal structure of society. It has four specific objectives: Sensitizing the participants on the need for gender-relations perspective; skill-building; mainstreaming gender in development sectors; and contributing to strengthening women's movements. One of the most popular approaches is the Action-Reflection approach linking action agenda from reflection (analysis) on women's experiences. Hence, this training is a conscious use of concepts and tools to help women transform gender relations in a sustained process rather than it being a one-off event. It makes for interesting reading on this subject especially for mapping the impact of micro-finance movements in their personal thinking and life.
REFLECT is a radical new approach to adult literacy with central concern to: 'enhance people's capacity to have their voices heard - by whatever communication means necessary'. It is yet another empowering and participatory structured learning process, which facilitates people's critical analysis of their environment, placing empowerment at the heart of sustainable and equitable development. REFLECT aims at enabling people to assert their right to communicate, giving people space for analysis/reflection - defining what to communicate, developing people's capacity/competency to communicate by enabling access to appropriate 'media' of communication. The book outlines in detail the steps for adopting this stimulating technique.

In all this book serves as a guidebook - that is "how to" constantly evolve and customize the program. The difference would be that women themselves learn, use innovative tools (learning methodologies) to map changes in their lives, with the sense of ownership of the tools and the development agenda of the credit groups. Overall it is informative, lucid, illustrative and balanced in the presentation of contents - theory corroborated with empirical evidence. It is highly recommended for all practitioners and academicians engaged in contributing to discourses on gender, poverty, livelihoods. This is specifically for organizations that promote credit groups can harness this knowledge bank for creating organized, strong, self-determining and self-reliant women collectives.

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