BOOK REVIEWS

International Perspective on Voluntary Action.
Reshaping the Third Sector
Editor: David Lewis
Reviewed by Shailendra Kr. Dwivedi

Complex Responsive Processes in Organisations.
Learning and Knowledge Creation
Author: Ralph D Staecy
Reviewed by Sonal Surange

Participation of the Poor in Development Initiatives.
Taking their Rightful Place.
Author: Carolyn M. Long
Reviewed by Mandakini Pant

New Roles and Relevance.
Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change
Editors: David Lewis and Tina Wallace
Reviewed by Kaustuv K Bandyopadhyay
PRIA is at the threshold of completing 20 years of its developmental existence. Our commitment to facilitate citizens’ participation in development and ensure democratic governance has been a hallmark of our history. Strengthening a rich and vibrant civil society, thus, is an integral component of our intervention, which focuses especially on participation and empowerment of the oppressed, poor, women, dalits and tribals.

In recent years it is increasingly being recognised that the role of the state in bringing about growth and development and solving societal problems, is limited. Similarly, the role of market for organising society and economy is restricted. Citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), including voluntary development organisations (VDOs), thus are emerging as important development actors. Citizens gaining voice and contributing to the construction of a strong civil society are some of the emerging challenges of today.

Since its inception, PRIA has aimed at enhancing the capacities of civil society to innovate, negotiate with and monitor the state and the market for ensuring effective development and promoting good governance. We have worked with a diverse range of civil society actors, ranging from grassroots groups of forest dwellers, landless poor, workers, women producers to intermediary organisations like VDOs and trade unions. Responding to the recent emphasis on project initiated participation and local self-governance, we have built capacities of project initiated committees such as forest protection committees and village bodies like gramsabhas. Academic associations, media, religious groups and socio cultural groups like the Rotary club, are other important civil society actors with whom PRIA has been engaged in a dynamic and creative manner.

Our mobilisation and capacity building engagements with the CSOs and citizens has been on diverse yet interrelated issues. These include natural resource management, economic empowerment, occupational and environmental health, sustainable industrial development, local self-governance and citizenship. Capacities and innovations in civil society have been facilitated through experiential learning and participatory methodologies, which include participatory research, participatory training, participatory evaluation, organisational development and strategic planning interventions. Knowledge building and creation of an enabling environment have assisted these efforts.

Building on our rich history and our current interventions in the field, this issue of the journal is a window to some emerging innovations in civil society. It will provide insights to organizational innovations in formal and informal CSOs, like Baisi in Jharkhand. It explores innovations in civil society for ensuring good governance, effective delivery of development interventions, addressal of poverty issues and enhancement of community participation. These include processes like social development monitoring, participatory impact assessment, and participation in policy formulation, implementation and reform. It further explores innovative means for encouraging interface between practitioners and researchers, two important constituents of civil society, for fostering social transformation.
Influencing Public Policy: Civil Society and Governance Interface in India

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Abstract The potential of civil society in affecting the state and citizens' lives is beginning to be recognised all over the world; at the same time it is also being increasingly realised that governance is not the sole responsibility of the government. Hence, civil society has an important role to play in promoting "good governance". This paper examines the role of civil society initiatives in influencing public policy in India. It is based on the findings of a research study PRIA conducted as part of a multi country research project on civil society and governance, co-ordinated by Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK.

Context

The Indian state, since independence has formulated a large number of legislations, policies and programmes concerning the welfare of the citizens. Many of these have been directed towards the benefit of the poor and the marginalised. However, the nature of the state as it evolved during the 1950s-1970s created a situation where many of these well intentioned policies and programmes were undermined. The state, which was constituted on the basis of liberal-welfare principles, over the years became a mechanism to serve the affluent. The appropriation of benefits by the affluent sections and the nature of policy formulation has alienated the common people. Both at the national and provincial levels the bureaucracy is vested with the power to formulate the policies which are expected to benefit the common people. This process which does not involve the opinion of the common people in decision making fails in many cases to take cognizance of their needs.

In this paper we focus on three dimensions of public policy from the vantage point of the marginalised - exclusion of the interests, priorities and concerns of the marginalised sections such as pavement dwellers and casual workers in elaboration of public policies; inadequate implementation of the policies related to land allotment to tribals and compensation to textile industry workers suffering from byssinosis; policies related to development which are perceived as oppressive by certain segments of the marginalised- which civil society interventions have tried to influence through inclusion of interests, concerns, and priorities of the marginalised in policy; proper implementation of existing policies, and reform of policies which are considered oppressive by a section of the marginalised.

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With the help of selected case studies, the paper examines the contexts and background which create conditions for civil society intervention on public policy; nature of this intervention; processes of civil society intervention such as – form of intervention, resources civil society actors mobilise, strategies they use, leadership within civil society, and alliances civil society actors form with state, political parties, private sector, and other civil society actors; factors which are responsible for facilitating or obstructing the impact of civil society intervention; outcome of the intervention; and implication of this intervention for both civil society and governance.

Civil Society

Though the term has existed since early times, civil society as an intellectual construct gained clarity and lucidity with the advent of modernity in the western world during the 17th century. Many events like the growth of the institutions of private property, spread of urbanization, replacement of the despotic state by the liberal state etc. contributed immensely to the meaning of the term ‘civil society’. However, it is the rise of capitalism that led to a clearer distinction between political and non-political and thus prepared the ground for the emergence of civil society as a separate domain, to be seen independent from, yet vis-à-vis the state, as an intermediary layer between individuals and families, on the one hand, and state institutions on the other.

Since then the concept ‘civil society’ has been bestowed with many meanings and has undergone many revisions. Some theories of civil society position it as a ‘space’ independent of the state and the market; others equate it with the voluntary sector. For Seligman, civil society is an ethical ideal which holds the public and the private in a balance; for Tandon, civil society initiatives represent those achieving common public good. For Tocqueville and Putnam, civil society is a network of associations and applications which safeguard democratic space between the state and the family.

The contemporary interest in civil society has arisen out of the collapse of the communist regime in East-Central Europe. Resurrection of this concept and its use in the past decade was necessitated, as significant shifts in the roles of the state and the market began to be articulated.

In the contemporary interpretations of civil society, therefore, three distinctive approaches can be noted. The first approach is essentially derived from the Anglo-American tradition and builds on the work of Tocqueville, and more recently of Putnam who saw solidarity among people expressed through associations, helps in curbing the authoritarian tendencies of the state and promoting democratic culture. The representative form of democracy creates a distance between state institutions and their decision making from individuals and families who are relatively powerless. Building solidarity and associations across citizens helps them to mediate and negotiate their aspirations and interests with the state.

The second meaning of civil society has arisen from the challenge posed by people to communist regimes in Eastern Europe and military dictatorship in Latin America, Philippines and South Africa. The thrust of these people’s movements was to democratize the state and create fundamental freedoms and liberties for their citizens. In such a formulation, civil society began to be equated with the process of democratization in political structures and systems.

A third approach to the notion of civil society has its roots in the rise of neo-liberalism and spread
of free market and private enterprise all over the world. Public Sector (the state and its institutions) and Private Sector (the for-profit business enterprises) have been undergoing realignments and shifts in their roles and relative contributions to societal development. In this formulation “Third Sector” formations (which include community based organisations, voluntary organisations, philanthropic endeavours, religious associations etc.) now being reconceptualized as civil society, are seen as having the potential to augment social development.

**Governance**

Historically, particularly after the second world war, it was assumed that the job of governing nation-states was the responsibility of the governments. Democratic political frameworks of governments suggested three independent and related functions: legislative, executive and judiciary. In different societies over the past fifty years, these functions have been organised differently, though still carrying a common aspiration.

With the growing disenchantment of ordinary people with institutions of the government, the declining capacity of these institutions to respond to diverse interests and expectations of their population, the increasing gap in the policies of governments and their practical elaboration, the concept of government has now begun to be changed to the concept of governance. In its elementary meaning governance, however, is equated with the functioning of the state and consequently good governance is equated with efficient functioning of the state and its institutions and promotion of democracy, equality and social justice.

It is the World Bank which first brought the concept “good governance” into the development discourse in recent years. The failure of the Bank’s economic policies in African countries led the Bank to attribute the failure to “bad governance” i.e. administrative inefficiency, corruption, lack of transparency etc. in these countries. The conceptualization of “bad governance” then led to the conceptualization of “good governance” which includes parameters like administrative efficiency, rule of law, accountability, transparency. The Bank however, did not associate “good governance” with any particular political regime. This association between “good governance” and democracy is vigorously pushed into the development discourse by the bilateral aid agencies, by making aid conditional to promotion of regular elections, promotion of human rights and rule of law.

It is not difficult to derive from the above discussion, that the rise of interest in civil society and governance and their association is intrinsically linked with the rise of neoliberalism. A vibrant civil society is now seen as promoting democracy and rule of law through fair election, protection of human rights, and in the context of inefficiency of state institutions it is seen as promoting administrative efficiency.

**Civil Society Intervention in the Arena of Public Policy**

This section will focus on civil society initiatives which have in the recent times influenced public policy to include interests, concerns, and priorities of the marginalised; proper implementation of existing policies; and reform of policies which are considered as oppressive by a section of the marginalised.

A. **Inclusion in Policy**

The two instances where civil society initiatives have helped in bringing the interest of the pavement dwellers of Mumbai and the casual
workers of Chhatisgarh into the ambit of policy illustrate the strength of collective action  

Nature of Governance Issue: The important issue for the pavement dwellers in Mumbai is undoubtedly shelter. However, since their shelter or homes are not located on the government maps and therefore are not legally recognised, there is a series of entitlement benefits from which the pavement dwellers are deprived. Not being entitled to shelter means the pavement dwellers do not find a place in the entitlement network for electricity, drinking water, ration card, banking facilities etc. The pavement dwellers are subjected to daily indignities and harassment which get magnified when their houses are declared as illegal encroachment on government land and they are demolished by the municipal corporation.

Like the pavement dwellers in Mumbai, the rights of informal workers in the Chhatisgarh region in Madhya Pradesh, particularly in the Bhilai Steel Plant (BSP) and its ancillary industries are not recognised by the industry management and the state. While the regular workers have the right to avail the wage fixed by the government regulations and enjoy other benefits like a share in the profit called bonus, security of the tenurail job; the informal workers are not only paid low wages, they are prevented from availing other benefits available to the regular workers. Being casual workers they neither have any security of employment nor are they paid fixed wages - their recruitment, employment, and wage depend upon the management, the labour contractors, and the co-operatives of the trade unions - all of them working in collusion to exploit the cheap labour available in the region. The official trade union AITUC does not take up the case of unorganised workers because, for it they are unorganised contract labours and therefore, can not become its members.

Nature of Civil Society Intervention: Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), which addresses the case of pavement dwellers in Mumbai was set up in 1984 to support women pavement dwellers in their own empowerment. Mahila Milan (MM) is an outcome of the interventions of SPARC, which is an association of women pavement dwellers. It is a membership association of the self-help variety, primarily engaged in savings and credit for access to housing and livelihood on the pavements of Mumbai. Within a period of time, SPARC begun to work with National Slum Dwellers' Federation (NSDF) which began as a membership association to represent the aspirations and interests of slum dwellers, not only in Mumbai but in different parts of the country. Therefore, the primary civil society actors involved in this case are a coalition of SPARC, Mahila Milan and National Slum Dwellers Federation.

SPARC played the role of initial empowerment of Mahila Milan both in terms of building their awareness as well as in terms of enabling them to engage with the Municipal Corporation and other government agencies in Mumbai. Use of census and related research to systematically document the needs and priorities of pavement dwellers in Mumbai by SPARC added further strength to this coalition in influencing the government through a variety of public education campaigns in the media. This coalition was able to put pressure on the government and the Municipal authorities not only through demonstrations and ‘dharnas’ (public protests) but also through sustained meetings and dialogues structured to articulate the interests and needs of pavement dwellers in the city of Mumbai. One of the outcomes of this sustained endeavour, was the recognition of pavement dwellers in the formal policies of urban development and rehabilitation of the poor in Mumbai.
Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM) which addresses the issues of workers in the Chhattisgarh region in Madhya Pradesh is a mass based movement of the workers. Chhattisgarh Mines Shramik Sangh (CMSS), an earlier incarnate of CMM, was an organisation of labourers and peasants to address the issues of inequality and injustice. Under the leadership of a charismatic and dedicated Shankar Guha Niyogi, CMSS could successfully bargain for adequate wages for the workers. This success however, was not an instance of co-operation between CMSS and the industry management. It was a successful resistance to the industry management which resulted in the management conceding to the demands of the workers.

After a series of strikes by the workers in the mills and industries and their resistance to police violence, Niyogi realised the need for a larger and broader framework to address the injustices. CMSS thus was merged with about twenty other organisations and CMM was formed with the ideology of struggle and reconstruction, the twin terms around which the philosophy and action of CMM is woven. That is, people must question and resist the injustices, and at the same time they must actively strive towards practising the values of equality and dignity in their everyday existence to recreate a society in which they would like to live. CMM in its effort to transcend the immediate question of adequate wage and bonus has embraced a holistic concept of social change. It has instilled in people the realisation that challenging of the state alone, without challenging the existing social structure and necessitating changes in it, would not alter their situation.

**Impact of Civil Society intervention on Governance:** In 1985, the attitude of the government agencies was apathetic and largely hostile towards the pavement dwellers, as is evident from the demolition of their houses and the supreme court judgement passed in the same year. This judgement recognised the problems faced by the pavement dwellers, but did not declare the demolition unreasonable, unfair and unjust. In 1995 the study group constituted by the Maharashtra government to report on the slum rehabilitation, included the pavement dwellers within its purviews and recommended that all people living in slums and on pavements are fully eligible for housing schemes and should be relocated on nearby vacant land and that all households will be allocated 225 sq.foot of land free of cost. The process is slow, yet the fact that SPARC has successfully acquired government land and begun construction of houses to rehabilitate 7,000 families celebrates the strength and agenda of civil society to foster sustainable changes in matters of policy decisions.

Initial success for CMM pressurised the industry management to increase the wage of the casual workers from a meagre 3 rupees 50 paisa to 71 rupees and finally to 80 rupees. In addition, contract workers were given guarantee of work for 20 days a month, 20% of profit as bonus and other benefits. However as mentioned above, CMM transcended the immediate issue of wage and embraced a wider and holistic approach towards social change. Hence it brought within its ideological fold and action programmes, not only workers, and peasants, but adivasis, dalits, women and children. As CMM believes that every individual must be provided with the preconditions to have a life with dignity, it works towards providing education and health care facilities, gender justice, and raises the issues of mechanisation, alcoholism and sustainable development.

**B. Implementation of Policies**

The cases of struggle of the Kol tribals to get
legal title to their land and the workers in textile mills of Ahmedabad to get compensation for byssinosis represent situations where an elaborate policy was in place, yet due to inadequate implementation, people were deprived of the benefits, until civil society intervened.\textsuperscript{11}

Nature of Governance Issue: The Kols have been traditionally dominated and oppressed by the higher Hindu castes like Brahmins and Thakurs. The oppression often took place in the form of dispossessing the Kols from their land with the consequence that they either retreated to the forests or became bonded labour to the feudal masters. With the forests becoming inaccessible due to the extension of state control over forests, the Kols have no other way left for survival than serve as bonded labourers. Accepting the fate of bonded labour means accepting the use of brute force, sexual harassment of their women, and many other indignities which a master-slave relationship entails.

To uplift the conditions of the Kols, the government, as a part of its land reform legislation in the 60’s and 70’s gave the Kols right over the ceiling surplus land coming under of the purview of village Panchayat. The fact that despite these rights and preferences, exploitation of the Kols continues reveals that the policies have merely remained on paper and the feudal powers in collusion with the local administration, have manipulated the legal provisions in their favour. The Kols were seldom given possession of their lands; in most of the cases the lands allotted to them were rocky and not capable of being irrigated unirrigatable; and in many instances the land allotted came under dispute, resulting in the dispossession of the Kols from the land allotted to them. The subversion of an emancipatory legislation by the high caste people and the local revenue officials illustrates that any such socio-economic transformatory policy programme will face tremendous resistance.

In the case of the workers in the textile industries in Ahmedabad, the policy granting workers compensation on health grounds did not get translated into action because the mill management, the Chief Factory Inspectorate (CIF), the Industrial Hygiene Laboratory (IHL), the Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESIS) and the registered trade unions such as Mill Mazdoor Sangh (MMS) all responsible for the implementation of the policy, ignored the prevalence of the fatal disease, byssinosis, for many years.

Any recommendation to improve the work environment of the mills is made by the CIF. IHL is the medical wing of the CIF whose main responsibility is to conduct clinical examinations of the workers and bring the suspected cases to the notice of the management and labour office. Conducting medical check ups of the workers and granting them compensation for occupational disease is the responsibility of ESIS. After ESIS completes the process of medical check up and diagnosis, the worker has to wait for ESIS located in Delhi to send the special medical board to study the problem and confirm the diagnosis. MMS neglects the health concerns of the workers because its interest is confined to securing provident fund benefits, retrenchment compensation and gratuity for the workers. It never made any investigations into the deaths of workers due to byssinosis; it accepted in good faith the managements version that the deaths were caused by asthma and TB.

Nature of Civil Society Intervention: Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Seva Sansthan (ABSSS) which initiated collective action around the issue of non-implementation of the policy of allotment of land to the Kols is based in Chitrakoot. ABSSS began
to address the issue of land allotment to Kols in its unidimensional struggle for proper implementation of the policy. It has been able to mobilise the Kols to question social and political oppression, injustice, and demand their rights. Their mobilisation has taken place through raising the awareness of the Kols about their legal rights and formation of Patha Kol Adhikar Suraksha Manch - an organisation which the Kols themselves run. Difficult as it is to break the nexus between social structure and administration, within a short span of a decade, the Kols have been bearing the brunt of feudal atrocities and their administrative allies which support these atrocities. Nevertheless, perceptible change in their situation has taken place, due to the assertion of their rights and the support structure provided by ABSSS though legal aid camps, publicity in the media and involvement of eminent people in their struggle.

ABSSS has not come into an overt conflict with the administration, instead has found a few sympathetic allies in the administration to work together with. The administration has been pressurised to acknowledge its faults and rectify them. The public hearing organised by ABSSS in Delhi in which many eminent lawyers, educationists, human rights activists participated in, is one such instance, which, by bringing the Kol women into the public sphere to highlight their plight has forced the administration to take action against persons known to be exploiting women. The realisation that mere possession of the land will not uplift the social and economic status of Kols, has led the ABSSS to formulate its social reconstruction programme which works towards providing education to the Kols, making available health care facilities, making them self-reliant through the formation of women’s self-help groups. Simultaneously, the Kols are also taught the values of soil conservation social forestry and conservation, of water resources.

Kamdar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal (KSSM) which took up the issue of bysonissis and compensation to the workers, is an organisation formed by the workers in textile mills. Its emergence reflects the inability and unwillingness of an already existing Trade union, Mill Majdoor Sangha (MMS) to address the issue. MMS, which ideally should have taken up the case, preferred ignoring it and prioritising other issues in its agenda. The leadership of KSSM was provided by H.P. Mishra, who believed that workers must have an organisation of their own to address the issues which were important to them. Mishra, like Niyogi was himself a worker and was well aware of the plight of the workers and the callous attitude of the management. Following the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) findings that the workers in the textile mill were suffering from bysonissis and the apathy of MMS and the mill management to address the issues, Mishra formed KSSM.

The first step KSSM took was to educate the workers about the fatal disease and make them aware of the compensation schemes. KSSM widened its scope further by holding meetings with ESIS, mill management, CFI and NIOH. Mishra’s election to the joint management council, which is a representative body of management and workers, helped KSSM in negotiating with the management. However, it was a slow and difficult process. Management accepted the prevalence of the disease but delayed the process of compensation by putting up many hurdles. KSSM continued putting pressure on the ESIS for medical check ups and on the Special Medical Board for regular visits to Ahmedabad.

Impact of Civil Society Intervention on Governance: Due to the sustained effort by ABSSS Kols have been given the land pattas-legal title to their land. The tough task
nonetheless for ABSSS is to ensure that the land remains with the Kols. Along with the possession of legal title to the land, ABSSS through generating awareness and constructive actions which helps the Kols to be self sufficient in their livelihood pursuit, has made it possible for the Kols to end their dependency on the big landholders and fight for their rights. As the Kols assert their rights and take control of their lives by engaging themselves in social and economic reconstruction activities, the public arena gets filled with the vigour to alter the existing social structure and make administrative agencies responsive towards the needs of the Kols.

KSSM's intervention has not only resulted in ensuring compensation to workers suffering from byssinosis and in the event of the death of a worker due to byssinosis, dependent benefit to his widow, but also measures which help in ensuring the occupational safety of the workers. As a result of the workers demand, an occupational health centre was started in Bapunagar General Hospital by ESIS and the government took steps to include occupational disease in the medical curriculum, and made provisions for the training of ESIS doctors on occupational health. After KSSM made the health and safety of the workers a visible and important issue, a divisional bench of Gujarat High Court directed NIOH to enquire into the prevalence of bysinosis among the textile workers. KSSM's successful alliance with the labour ministry, CFI, mill management, ESIS, NIOH, IHL, and other civil society organisations working on the issues of the workers, resulted in the formation of safety committees - which include representations from the labour department, mill management, NGOs and workers- in all the textile mills.

C. Reform of Policy

The cases of fishermen in the Chilika region in Orissa, and the people facing displacement by the Subarnarekha dam in Bihar are instances of developmental policies of the state turning oppressive, ironically for those in whose name the state legitimises its development agenda. In such situations civil society interventions put pressure on the state to reform the policies.

Nature of Governance Issue: Big dams have been the source of discontent for a large number of people who have faced displacement and without any adequate scheme to resettle them, have become victims of development. The displaced people are invariably poor and resourceless, except, for the resources which are locally available to them and which they lose by leaving their habitat. To make matters worse, the displaced people do not even become part of the profit network from the project. While, they bear the brunt of development, electricity, drinking water, irrigation facilities go to another section of people.

Subarnarekha Multipurpose Project (SMP) is another instance of big dams in independent India. It has two dams, two barrages, and seven canals on the Subarnarekha river and its tributary Kharkai. Irrigation, water supply to the people and industries, flood control, and electricity are the rationale on which the project is based. While the beneficiary states are Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal, the people displaced are from Bihar. SMP promises to benefit 1,65,000 families and provide irrigation to 2,55,000 hectares of land. However, it would displace 116 villages in the Chandel area and 66 villages in the Icha area. Altogether 97,000 families are to be displaced by the project. Most of the construction work in the Chandel area is completed. Many villages are submerged in dam water and many during the rains. The Icha dam is yet to be completed. The people, both tribal and non-tribal, face displacement and an
unknown future as the construction work continues and the resettlement lags behind. The Resettlement and Rehabilitation policy (R&R) appears promising on paper but when it comes to implementation, there is a series of obstacles—lack of finance, bureaucratic apathy, corruption, appropriation of resources by middlemen. All these work together to deprive the displaced of their rightful share.

At times the development projects run by the state are viewed as oppressive because they deprive people of control over their resources by using the resources commercially. Take for instance the granting to the business house of Tata, a lease of 1400 hectares of land in the Chilika lake for prawn cultivation and export, by the Government of Orissa which justified the project in the name of increasing the financial strength of the state and benefiting the local people through updated technology and a ready market for their catch. What it failed to take cognisance of or ignored deliberately, is the fragile ecosystem of the lake and the further threat the artificial harvesting of prawns on a large scale would be to the fish and prawn population in the lake; consequences of the dwindling fish stock for the livelihood of thousands of fishermen whose main occupation is fishing; and the shifting of control over the lake and its resources from the local people, to the corporate house.

The process which reached its climax with the granting of land to the house of Tata, had already began with the opening of the fisheries to the non-fishermen in the year 1989. Fishing rights in a limited scale were given to non-fishermen and those villages, which, were not members of the fishermen primary co-operative societies. Taking advantage of the ambiguities in the policies, non-fishermen from outside began infiltrating the lake and there was a widespread sub leasing of the fisheries and without any mechanism to stop it, the interest of the fishermen came under severe threat. The non-fishermen in Chilika are mostly the big business and industrial houses or those having political alliances and capital to invest. It is in this backdrop of conflicts and competition, increasing poverty and cornering of profit by a handful of people that the business house of Tata was given entry to harvest prawns exclusively for export purposes.

Nature of Civil Society Intervention: The movement against SMP initially started with a ‘no-dam’ ideology, but later moved in two directions - the movement in the Chandil area shifted its demand to proper resettlement of the displaced people, and the movement in the Ichha area continued along with its old stand of ‘no-dam’. The earlier movement did not have any organisational form - there were individual leaders who occasionally mobilised the people against the project. In the later years, Vishapti Mukti Vahini (VMV) was formed to take the movement forward.

VMV was an extension of Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini, formed by late Jai Prakash Narayan who led the total revolution in the early 1970’s. As the construction of the dam was progressing rapidly, VMV took the decision to turn its demand to proper resettlement. In the Ichha area after the murder of its leader Gangaram Kalundia, Ichha-Kharkai Bandh Vishapti Sangh, emerged to take the case forward. It works as an open organisation with support from other civil society organisations like Sampoorna Kranti Manch, a joint forum of many organisations, Mahila Sangharsh Vahini and Jharkhand Mukti Andholan, which are loose and informal banners of interested persons. The persistent struggle against the dam in Ichha has obstructed the construction of the dam. In Chandil, the empirical rehabilitation was different.
emphasis has been on proper resettlement and rehabilitation.

Both the movements have adopted mass mobilisation of affected people in the region as their dominant strategy. Understandably, they have attracted the wrath of the ruling provincial government which periodically has used force to resist the movement. Even Janta Dal, the political party ideologically closer to the Chhatra Yuva Vahini found VMV challenging the developmental logic of the state and tried to suppress the movement many times.

The interest of fishermen in Chilika were represented by different civil society organisations working towards the some goal-withdrawal of the Tata prawn project- but running parallel campaigns independent of each other. Chilika Bachao Andolan (save the Chilika Movement) - an extension of Chilika Matsyajibi Mahasangha (the representative body of fisherman in Chilika) was active at the village level, organising fishermen as well as those non-fishermen whose interests are threatened by the project. It was given leadership and support by Meet the Students (MTS) group, an informal group of students who took active interest in social change, from Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. It believed in keeping the struggle localised and mobilising the people on a large scale to resist the administrative authorities and the project people at the local level, to put pressure on the provincial government.

Orissa Krushak Mahasabha (OKM), an advocacy organisation based in Bhubaneswar, on the other hand, carried the advocacy campaign at the provincial and at the national level on the basis of the Ramsar Convention held in Iran, where Chilika lake was declared as an endangered wetland in need of protection and to which the government of India was a signatory. It tried to combine the environmental issues with livelihood struggle, but the campaign could not percolate down to the village level. The movement was vigorously supported by the Janta Party which was in opposition and criticized the ruling Congress Party, though ironically when it came into power it too tried to resist the movement.

Nevertheless, it was the combined effect of the two which led Kamal Nath, the then Cabinet minister for Environment and Forest, to issue orders for the suspension of the construction work at the project site, until, an environment impact assessment study of the project was conducted. The resistance to the Tata project, even when it was not directly related to the High Court judgement (which was in response to a case filed by some fishermen primary cooperative societies against the illegal encroachment on their land), did influence the Das Committee Report (related to the plight of fishermen due to growing prawn cultivation in Chilika lake) on the basis of which the High Court banned intensive and semi-intensive prawn cultivation in Chilika lake. The order of the High Court thus barred the Tata prawn project.

**Impact of Civil Society Intervention on Governance:** As a response to the movement against the Subernarekha dam in the Chandil area, the government revised the R&R policy relating to the SMP in 1990. Yet the implementation of the revised policy has not taken place and VMV now works towards the proper implementation of the new package the revised policy offers to the displaced people.

The struggle of fishermen in Chilika has dissipated after the Tata project was barred. The issues of illegal encroachment on the lake by non fishermen for commercial cultivation of prawn though still looming large, could not
be addressed by the movement. The strategic alliance the fishermen built with the non-fishermen whose concerns temporarily matched with those they otherwise exploit, led to the barring of the mighty commercial Tata project, but the alliance, for obvious reasons, could not raise the broader issue of every day exploitation of fishermen by the influential non-fishermen.

**Conclusions**

From the foregoing analysis, a number of operational and conceptual conclusions can be drawn about the interface between civil society and governance in promoting good governance.

**A. Forms of Interface**

Civil society interventions can take various forms. It can take the form of mass movements, which are less formally organized; it can also in the form of more formally organized efforts. It follows that civil society interventions may offer a fundamental critique of the polity and society from the vantage point of the disprivileged to reform the state; they may strive to create a minimum space for people to engage with the state. The movements are found to be putting pressure on the governance mechanisms by building a critique of the state. Organizations like KSMM, ABSSS, and SPARC can be seen working towards engaging the people with the government mechanisms to solve their problems. For civil society to impact on the governance mechanisms both types of interventions are important. The state needs to be interrogated, as well as be made to respond to the needs of the marginalised through more collaborative interventions. That is, people may raise their voice and seek solution within the parameters set by the state; they may challenge these parameters as well.

**B. Intermediation**

Instances of civil society interventions reveal that the interests of the subaltern groups was articulated only when an individual/organization intervened to addresses them as a collective and raised their concerns vis-à-vis the state. Civil society initiatives played a crucial role in bringing people into the public sphere where their voice can be heard. The ability of the leaders to articulate the issues in a language with which the state is familiar, helps in bringing the issues to their notice. We therefore, find people raising their demands in a familiar language of people's inclusion in policy network, their participation in decision making, distribution of developmental benefits, transparency in decision making, social justice, violation of democratic rights, right over local resources, etc.

**C. Alliances**

During their interface with the state civil society actors build alliances with other actors - sympathetic allies in the state structure, political parties, other civil society organizations. While the overall state structure may ignore the cause taken up by civil society or may be outright hostile to it, there are individuals in the government structures / institutions who may extend support to civil society. SPARC, ABSSS, Chilika Movement, could find allies within the government. This limited, but significant alliance helps civil society in many ways. It opens a space for them in the state institutions thus making it easy to share their views with government agencies. Secondly, if the local administration is hostile, but the provincial or national government is supportive, the pressure emanating from above makes the local state pay attention to the people's voice. Thirdly, this alliance with the government officials helps in reducing the overtly conflictual relationship with the state and
a more balanced relationship between civil society and the state is forged.

While the alliance of political parties helps civil society to influence governance by opening a space for civil society in the legislature, the backtracking of the parties when they assume power, works to the disadvantage of civil society. That is, the mainstream politics have found to be largely unsympathetic to civil society, while the party in opposition compelled by electoral politics rather than with real sympathy for the cause of civil society supports it. The case of the Chilika Movement illustrates this.

In all examples of civil society engagement on governance issues, various civil society actors worked together. This helped to perform diverse types of interventions necessary in engaging with governance in India. Thus, civil society coalitions are simultaneously able to use methods of protest and public demonstration, with carefully conducted research and policy documentation. However, the ideological differences between civil society actors, as happened in Chilika, can damage the cause of civil society.

D. Conflicts within civil society

Another kind of conflict within civil society which hinders collective action results from the social and economic inequalities among people. For instance, the traditional antagonism which the fishermen in Chilika have towards the non-fishermen limited their vision to the fact, that for the poor non-fishermen fishing is also a livelihood pursuit. The point is that while assertions in civil society raise critical questions regarding “public good/collective good” among unequally placed marginal groups, there may not always be an unanimity of opinion and interest with regards to “collective good”. Civil society, therefore, becomes a space where the debate on public good is carried out. Hence, civil society must guard its own sphere and save it from becoming undemocratic as it simultaneously engages with the state to make it democratic.

E. Sustainability

For effecting sustainable change in society and governance, efforts in civil society need to be sustained beyond the fulfillment of the immediate goal. Rectifying the immediate situation, as illustrated by the Chilika Movement, is by no means a mean achievement. Nevertheless, in instances where there is a continuation of action in civil society after the immediate goal is fulfilled, we find glimpses of long term change taking place. ABSSS, KMSS, SPARC, CMM, all continue to work among the people and have widened their scope of action. Firstly, this has resulted in continuous addressing of the problem. Secondly, it has helped in engaging people with the government agencies on a long-term basis, which in turn has built their capacities to deal with the apathetic bureaucracy and public institutions.

F. Relationship between civil society and the state

Civil society shares a dual relationship with the state. On the one hand, a framework of the state defines acceptable public arena for civil society action. State policy, legislation, statutes, institutions are necessary for creating a legitimate space for civil society. On the other hand, civil society interface with the state on issues of governance begins to challenge the boundaries of that playing field and this is the very act of influencing governance which attempts to redefine policies, laws and nature of institutions.

Secondly, there is no clear-cut boundary between the state and civil society. While civil society retains its autonomy from the state, that autonomy is rarely absolute. Civil society can
be seen as a relatively autonomous sphere, as the boundaries of state and civil society in many instances get blurred.

G. Redefining governance

Current conceptualizations equate good governance with administrative efficiency of the state – thus it is assumed that once the elections are held, corruption is checked, transparency in the dealing of the state is maintained, human right is promoted, good governance will result. It does not take into account the social sphere where inequalities of various kinds exist and affect not only the functioning of the state, but which also influence the chances of groups placed in the low socio-economic hierarchy such as low castes, tribals, women to benefit from the state policy and programmes. As becomes clear from the discussion of civil society interface with governance, merely a framework of political democracy is not sufficient. It may provide necessary conditions for good governance to emerge but does not guarantee the same. Conceptualization of good governance has to include both democratization of the state and democratization of the social sphere. Secondly, good governance will entail not merely reform of the public service, and efficiency and cost effectiveness of public agencies but also participation and voice of the poor, the marginalised, the under-represented and inclusion of all citizens in debating public policies and choices.

H. Defining the agenda of governance

Finally, the defining agenda of governance is also a matter of concern in a country like India. Given the context of entrenched inequalities of Indian society where people are often invisible and lack voice, mere articulation and amplifying the concerns is also a step towards affecting governance, even if no visible impact is discerned. Secondly, a well understood dimension of governance agenda demands its pursuit, as defined initially, till its logical end. What is rarely appreciated, is the evolving nature of that governance agenda. This is particularly so in a dynamic democratic polity where forces and counter-forces coalesce and governance agenda gets transformed. The case of Subarnarekha brings this out eloquently. In many protests against oppressive state policies, civil society interventions have contributed to extend, elaborate and expand the governance agenda through its persistent and sustained interventions.

End notes

1 Cohen and Arato, 1992
3 Seligman, 1992
4 Tandon, 1999
5 Tocqueville, 1900; Putnam, 1999; also see Keane, 1988, 1998 for a discussion of the role of civil society in reforming and transforming the state
6 In his book, Democracy in America, Tocqueville discusses the dangers of modern democratic states. The state, by controlling education, health care, social security, extends its grip over the individuals. As individuals are brought more and more under public administration, they loose more and more their individual freedom. Tocqueville gives importance to the associational life of the individuals and sees it as an effective means to check and balance the state power. Self-organised, vigilant civil associations can keep a watchful eye on the state and prevent it from becoming the sole agency to regulate its citizens' lives. In his book making Democracy Work, Putnam establishes the link between the existence of civic associations and the strong tradition of democratic institutions in Northern Italy.
7 Bernhard, 1993
8 Tandon, 1991
10 For details see Mohapatra, 2000, Chandhok, 2000
11 For details see Joshi, 2000; Moriss, 2001.
12 For details see Mohanty 2000; Manthan, 2001

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Challenges of Leadership in Voluntary Development Organisations

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Abstract This article is based on the discussions that took place in the workshops, organised by PRIA, for the leaders of voluntary development organisations (VDOs). It examines the meaning and functions of leadership in the context of VDOs. It also highlights the challenges that leaders face and the ways to overcome those in order to play an effective role in development.

Rapid and unprecedented changes have been taking place in the national and international contexts that affect the functioning of voluntary development organisations (VDOs). As voluntary development organisations' roles in the development sector have gained recognition, the expectations have also increased considerably. This calls for greater accountability, effective governance mechanisms, and adequate strategies to manage the programmes. Many voluntary development organisations also experience internal and institutional changes in light of the growing size and complexity of their operations and therefore, institutional management becomes essential. Besides this, macro level policies at the national and international levels as well as other actors affect the functioning of voluntary development organisations. Management of external relations, as well as internal changes in the organisations poses challenges for leaders of voluntary development organisation leaders.

Meaning of Leadership

In order to understand leadership challenges, it becomes essential to understand what leadership actually means. Leadership has been voluminously written and spoken about in the past. ‘The word leader is derived from the word “lord” which in Old Norse meant the course of a ship at sea. The leader was the captain who was normally the steersman and navigator merged into one’.

Leadership has been understood in many ways. Some define it on the basis of certain characteristics present in the person and some opine that leadership is present in every human being and leadership skills emerge with favourable opportunities. In the words of Reber, to function as a leader is to manifest leadership and a leader is anyone who holds a position of dominance, authority and influence in the group. Some popular theories regarding leadership have been described.

- The great man theory based on Darwinian concepts related to the evolutionary theory indicates that leaders are determined biologically because of certain traits that render them superior to those around them.
- Anthropological studies also endorsed this view that those at the top or “leaders of the pack” had greater skills at hunting, fighting or food gathering, making them ‘natural

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leaders'. The assumption was that the traits remain constant over a period of time.

- **The trait approach** highlights certain unique traits present in the leaders. Stodgill reviewed all the studies on the traits of leadership between 1904-1970 and he found that personal attributes—intelligence, verbal facility, judgement; accomplishments—knowledge, scholarship and sports; responsibility—persistence, desire to excel, self-confidence, initiative; social status—socio economic standing, popularity; participation such as co-operation, adaptability, humour, sociability; situational factors—needs and interests of followers, are some of the traits that differentiate leaders from the non-leaders.

- **The behaviour approach** takes into account the behaviour of an individual when s/he helps and facilitates the group to further their interests. Studies in behaviour approach demonstrate that groups were found effective when task and maintenance performances were carried out in the groups. Studies also revealed that leaders had to take hard decisions to preserve the character of the group by becoming a role model. Lewin and Lippit’s study shows that a democratic style of leadership is more beneficial for the group. Other studies also showed that style depended upon particular situations and circumstances. The effectiveness of the style, also, depended upon the expectations of members from the leader in that culture.

- **The holistic approach** paints a broad picture by identifying certain characteristics leadership has to do with enthusing people, to help them develop to their full capacity and beyond. Unlike authority, leadership can not be conferred upon someone from above. The followers choose their leader, in the sense that there is a spontaneous reaction to him/her which is acceptable. A leader is process oriented and performs an enabling role. A leader, looks for the strength of the people and not the weaknesses alone.

- **The Indian studies** have revealed that a nurturing style of leadership is more appropriate for the Indian situation, as a more personalised relationship develops between the leader and the follower which is more productive². All these theories and studies have analysed leadership on the basis of social aspects i.e. traits, qualities and attributes, behaviours and styles. Therefore, these do not reflect leadership in an organisational context. Some traits and behaviour theories have been applied in the organisational context as well. Other than these theories, leadership may also be viewed from the two dimensions of acquired and ascribed. The ascribed leadership is given or provided to the person, who by virtue of being born in the family or society is destined to be the leader. Monarchy is an example of ascribed leadership. While the other dimension of acquired leadership, is one whereby the leader demonstrates the competence to influence.

Leadership is defined as a process of influencing others to willingly act towards a purpose. Leadership is when someone is trying to influence the behaviour of others. Influence, willingness and purpose are three key elements of leadership. Leadership comes in question, when the influence of the leader is unacceptable to the people. The definition given above could be in the context of society, family and organisation. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ram Mohan Roy and Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
are significant examples of leadership, where by, they influenced millions of Indians to willingly act towards a common purpose. In recent times, Medha Patkar and Sunderlal Bahuguna have displayed leadership by being accepted willingly by the people. Similarly, in an organisation, leadership is demonstrated by the influence of leaders, which is willingly accepted by the people to achieve larger organisational goals.

Personality has remained a dominant criterion for the people who are asked to attach meaning to this word. The personality of an individual is a conglomeration of attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviour that one is anointed with during the socialisation process. Society and the environment shapes the personality of individuals, therefore, every individual differs from each other. The debate whether women lead differently than men, also, finds its base in personality. Even the women in different caste and class groups can have dissimilar leadership styles owing to their nurturing in different environment, which results in different personalities and different leadership styles of individuals in organisations.

The dimensions of ascribed and acquired leadership can also be applied to organisations. The founders who have established organisations are aware of the struggle, they have gone through, and have acquired leadership in a process of demonstrating influence over a set of people. They are willingly accepted as leaders, as compared to an ascribed leadership which is imposed. There have been cases where the leader has been nominated to take up the leadership in the organisation and is controlled by the people who have nominated him/her. The process of communication and decision making in this case gets complex, as some decisions which might be urgent could be delayed due to the control the others have over the leader.

Leadership functions in Voluntary Development Organisations

To understand the leadership functions, it becomes important to understand what other functions exist in the organisations and who performs those. Very often the term leader, is interchangeably used with manager, but in reality there are many differences in the functions of a leader, manager and doer. In simple terms, the leadership is about what to do, while the managerial function is how to do and the function of doer is when to do. Undoubtedly, all functions are important in an organisation, and a leader sometimes has to perform all three functions. But some functions which are exclusively performed by the leaders cannot be taken up by the manager.

The table demonstrates the characteristics of leaders and managers and attempts to point out the differences between the two. Many in the voluntary development sector may argue that since the table is borrowed from the corporate sector, it does not hold true in the context of voluntary development organisations. A careful look at the distinction however reveals considerable similarities, to be able to qualify for application in the voluntary sector as well. The purpose is not to undermine the functions of managers in an organisation but, to highlight differences between managers and leaders.

Certain functions become indispensable for leaders and require a farsighted, anticipatory and futuristic outlook. Other functions such as managerial functions however, can be delegated to the staff. The chief leadership functions listed below have an outward looking nature:

Thinking Ahead: Being anticipatory and futuristic is one of the functions that leaders have to perform. A leader has to establish the long-term
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leader Characteristics</th>
<th>Manager Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Innovates</td>
<td>Administers</td>
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<tr>
<td>An original</td>
<td>A copy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develops</td>
<td>Maintains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses on people</td>
<td>Focuses on structures and systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inspires trust</td>
<td>Relies on control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long range perspective</td>
<td>Short range view</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks what and why</td>
<td>Asks how and when</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eye on the horizon</td>
<td>Eye on the bottom line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Originates</td>
<td>Imitates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges the status quo</td>
<td>Accepts the status quo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own person</td>
<td>Classic good soldier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the right thing</td>
<td>Does things right</td>
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goals for the organisation. The leader has to have an ability to sense the occurrences in the environment and the implications of those occurrences on the organisation.

*Inspiring the team:* The motivation of the people in the organisation, their guidance etc. are other functions that a leader needs to perform. Building systems and procedures whereby the inspiration and motivation is accentuated, is one of the crucial functions of leadership. Assigning roles according to people’s interests and competence is essentially performed by leaders.

*Public accountability:* The leader has to be accountable to the people for whom the organisation is working and also to a variety of other actors in the environment. The NGOs need to have multiple accountabilities - ‘downward’ to the partners, beneficiaries, staff and supporters; and ‘upward’ to donors and the host government. Effective accountability, also looks at the internal mechanisms of the organisations to deliver outputs. This means, transparent decision making and relationships, honest reporting of what resources have been used and what has been achieved, an appraisal process for the overseeing authorities to judge whether the results are satisfactory and concrete, as well as other mechanisms to hold accountable those responsible for performance.³
Creating a favourable orientation: Positioning the organisation favourably in the environment, the ability to act as an environmental buffer in order to screen the organisation from any damages that could happen outside in the environment, forging linkages with other stakeholders and getting resources for the organisation are some crucial leadership functions.

A voluntary development organisation leader has to necessarily perform all these functions. Besides these, he/she can also undertake the functions of doers and managers as and when the need arises. In fact, many leaders in voluntary development organisations manage and implement the programmes, in addition to the larger functions that leadership demands.

In differentiation of functions, size of the organisation is an important variable. When the organisation grows, there is need to divide management and leadership functions since different capacities are required to perform those. The evolution cycle of any organisation includes the stages of birth, growth and maturity. At the time of birth, the tasks of the organisation are not differentiated, as there are not many people in the organisation. As a result those who are present in the organisation, including the founder leader perform all kinds of functions. As the organisation begins to grow, the tasks get differentiated and demand more capacities and skills. This necessitates recruitment of people who are the doers and managers, while leaders focus more on leadership functions and recruiting people. In the absence of clarity of an understanding, on the functions in an organisation which has attained a certain level of maturity, conflicts could result which in turn can create a different set of problems for the organisation.

Leadership vis a vis Internal and External Environment

‘In most voluntary development organisations, a person or small group of persons set up the organisation and are influenced by the vision and commitment, the style of functioning and the competencies of the founder leader. The emotional investment of the founder leader provides the driving force in the early years. The founder leader of a voluntary development organisation is like a social entrepreneur, similar to an entrepreneur in a for profit business firm. The ‘sweat equity’ and investment made by the founder leader makes her stand apart from any other member of the organisation. In a way, the founder leader takes the risks in the early years through the entrepreneurial function.”

Organisations are created to fulfil certain missions or purposes. The mission statements give rise to the strategy, which defines whom to work with, in what relation and how. The strategy enables an organisation to define the programmes and activities. Therefore, it becomes imperative for the leaders to articulate the mission of their organisations and adopt effective strategies to fulfil the mission. The strategy defines the programmes, enables a focused approach and prevents the organisations from temptations of taking up all kinds of programmes. A mission driven organisation has a very clear understanding of what it wants to achieve. The programmes give rise to some activities, for the performance of which certain inputs are required, which need to be converted into outputs for fulfilling the mission of the organisation. All these demand resources (human, physical, and material) and tasks. A leader has to envisage the inputs and outputs. For ensuring that, the leader has to make people in the organisation to perform some tasks. Gradually, depending upon the organisation’s
position and ability to perform and be relevant, the demands begin to grow and an organisation increases in size and complexity. Depending upon the nature of processes, over a period of time, the organisation develops its own unique culture which includes shared values, norms, beliefs, expectations, and implicit aspirations and understandings that shape and give meaning to relationships and behaviour within the organisations. Leaders play an important role in determining the culture of the organisation.

Besides the internal mechanisms and structures, the organisation has to cope with external environment. The environment consists of individuals, organisations, groups, institutions, agencies, suppliers, vendors, donors, social forces, competitors (organisations with similar products and services operating in the similar market) etc. All this exists outside the organisation but, has a considerable influence over the organisation’s functioning. The environment may make demands, or place constraints, or provide opportunities, to the organisation.

Together all these, provide a stage for an array of leadership roles to be performed. On one hand, the leadership has to provide directions to the organisations’ programmatic work, recruit the staff, create systems and procedures, consistently motivate the staff, introduce values and cultures in the organisation, and make processes facilitative. On the other hand, the leadership functions transcend the boundaries of the organisations, to look at the external environment, the actors, policies which could benefit or harm the organisation, to adopt ways to adapt to the dynamic environment and produce results to which the organisation is committed; but, in doing so the leadership may face both internal as well as external challenges.

Issues and Challenges

To demonstrate effective leadership and perform functions, VDO leaders confront many challenges and issues from the environment outside and inside the organisation.

A. Dealing with the external environment

One of the leadership functions is to deal with the external environment, which is usually under emphasised in voluntary development organisations. Perlmutter, Heimovics and Herman have highlighted the critical role of the external environment as it affects executive performance. Perlmutter suggested that “the environment can no longer be viewed merely as a context or backdrop; it must be viewed as organically linked to the internal system . . . . The increasingly complex demands placed on agencies require that administrators acquire a broad array of knowledge and skill in dealing with the environment”5. Heimovics and Herman have similarly emphasised “A major leadership responsibility in non-profit organisations, is to work outside the boundary of the non-profit organisation, to position it in relationship to the environmental factors that affect it, particularly its resource base.”6

Many actors play important roles in the development arena and considerably impact the work of voluntary development organisations. If confrontations with various actors in the environment are not foreseen, the outcome could drastically affect the organisational goals. The external environment has political parties, government, donors, bilateral and multilateral agencies, media and other voluntary development organisations whose policies and functioning impinge on the work that one tries to do. Some actors and policies can be very favourable for the organisation, giving it opportunities to function effectively. On the other hand, the actors
and policies can pose threats which an organisation should be prepared to face.

In a changing environment, it is very important to identify new stakeholders and the relationship that the organisation would like to maintain with those stakeholders. The VDOs must chalk out proper strategies to confront and collaborate with the stakeholders. Many organisations have established adequate strategies in the organisation to deal with the external environment and actors, for example, with government and academic institutes. Undertaking studies and sharing the findings with other stakeholders helps to keep them informed of organisations’ current and future work. Their feedback, in turn enables the VDO to get clues regarding the perceptions of each stakeholder and paves the path for further interactions.

B. Hierarchy within the organisation

Other than the external environment, internal pressures inside the organisation also pose challenges for the leaders. Evolution of tasks as well as statutory requirements begin to define a hierarchy of authority and responsibility in the organisation. Different people, occupying different roles and therefore discharging different functions are placed in different layers of hierarchy. As the organisation grows, the formal links in hierarchies help enhance, encourage and facilitate co-ordination between distinct groups in the organisation. The objective is to enable proper flow of communication. Linkage mechanisms that are not able to handle the necessary information flow will result in poor co-ordination. Likewise, over linking will hinder information flow and result in unnecessary cost.

Policies in the organisation for human resources, with relation to regarding their induction, orientation, performance appraisals etc. need to be outlined to place people according to competencies, skills and interests. Performance appraisal mechanisms keep alive the motivation of the people. It is absolutely necessary to upgrade the skills of the staff especially, the seniors, who sometimes remain untouched by the deluge of innovations and technology which juniors and younger professionals are exposed to. The leader in the organisation has to deal with the rising aspirations of the senior professionals who begin to feel stagnant in a position for long. In these cases, the growth of seniors needs to be planned by giving them opportunities which contribute to their development.

Rising professionalism in the sector throws many more challenges for the leaders who are often found complaining about receding voluntarism and decreasing commitment towards the organisation. Very often resignations of people cause worries and resentment and are considered humiliating. The need of the hour is to accept certain facts, for instance, nobody in the organisation is a real volunteer except the founders. Professionalism in voluntary development sector has grown because technical competencies have begun to find a place in voluntary development organisations. Now, the people in such tasks have a market value attached to them. Nevertheless, the rate of turnovers and the reasons for the same have to be analysed by the leaders in the organisations. An old adage aptly says, ‘there is nothing wrong with employee turn over as long as the right employees are turning over.’ However, it is important to know the reasons for the turn over in order to have proper mechanisms in the organisation to check it.

C. Organisational culture

Another set of issues facing the leader are those
regarding organisational culture. Different backgrounds of the staff, social status, value systems often pose conflicts as each person carries a baggage of values which are absorbed as part of socialisation process, and are difficult to discard easily. The culture in the organisation, which develops over a period of time, is created by the leader. This culture should be nurturing and should allow people’s capacities to blossom. The leader, in a voluntary development organisation has an important role to play in developing the culture in the organisation.

‘Culture and leadership when examined closely are the two sides of the same coin, and neither can be understood by itself. In fact, there is a possibility - underemphasised in leadership research- that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with the culture. If the concept of leadership as distinguished from management and administration is to have any value, we must recognise the centrality of this culture management function in the leadership concept. The culture incorporates- observed behavioural regularities, norms, dominant values, espoused philosophy, rules and feeling or climate’.

Organisational culture, is concerned with abstractions such as values and norms. Values refer to the important beliefs, while norms are unwritten rules of behaviour, providing informal guidelines on how to behave. The leadership is about influencing others around ideas and ideals. Leaders, reinforce values and principles, some do it deliberately and some naturally. Some mission statements of the voluntary development organisations, do reflect the values of the organisation such as freedom, social justice, democratic functioning, and empowerment. Other values in the organisation need to be imbibed by the staff. Values act as the driving force to achieve the mission of the organisation. Promotion of values should be an ongoing initiative and may require adoption of strategies such as:

a. Practices/Modelling: The organisations propagate some values by demonstrating and actively practising them. Such as, an organisation firmly committed to gender justice and respect for all may demonstrate the values by treating everybody as equal within the organisation, recognising the differences in cultural, social, educational backgrounds and following non-discriminatory policies. Some organisations give equal opportunities to men and women in the organisation. No discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and class is done as far as opportunities in terms of exposure and promotions are concerned.

b. Communication: Some voluntary development organisations adopt a strategy to continuously reaffirm the values of the organisation in order to reinforce them. Some values are written over the boards or posters placed in places that are visible to everybody. In many organisations, some values are circulated like service rules.

c. Rituals and symbolism: Some organisations believe in collaboration and collective work and undertake elaborate rituals which reinforce such values. Shram yagyas, performed by the staff in some organisations help in imbibing the values of collective strength. The organisations that believe in participation and respect diversity, have introduced ‘participatory lunch’ on the occasions of festivals (Christmas, Holi, Diwali, and Eid). These rituals help in propagating the values that the organisations espouse.
d. **Incorporating systems and procedures:**

Incorporation of organisational values in systems and procedures of the organisation helps in assertion of values. For instance, an organisation emphasising initiative, creativity, quality and learning use these as a yardstick to assess the performance of the staff. The people rating high on these values are rewarded. Some organisations which feel strongly about preventing sexual harassment in the organisation have laid down policies regarding the same. Violation of these rules of conduct, imposes negative sanctions on the guilty.

The leader has to constantly ensure that values of the organisations are not sacrificed and there is a balance in values and the formalisation of organisation.

**D. Dealing with succession**

Another challenge that the founder faces in voluntary development organisations is the issue of succession - a second line leadership. Second line leadership is often understood as the person or people stepping into the top position, the next successor, or second in command; a person who can guide a leader and the person upon whom the leader depends for advice. In reality, nobody in the organisation can entirely replace the leader. The concept of second line leadership thus appears to be a myth. Despite this, one has to understand that sustainability of the organisation requires a well thought out succession plan. In the absence of proper mechanisms, the succession plans may fail and lead to fierce conflicts among the first line managers. In order to avoid such situations, the leaders must evolve strategies to empower people, who are managers in the organisation to take up leadership roles. This needs proper planning and people need to be groomed to play leadership roles. Grooming requires honing up skills to inspire the team, take initiatives, forge linkages with external constituencies, have a futuristic outlook to be able to position the organisation in the external environment. There are advantages if people from within the organisation assume leadership roles. Being within the organisation they are accustomed to the organisation’s culture, policies, functioning and with proper orientation and grooming a higher chances of acceptance from the staff. A leader selected from outside has to develop an understanding about the organisational culture, its vision and mission, functioning, stakeholders etc. Both options could be relevant in a given context.

**E. Strengthening governance mechanisms**

The governing board has to play an important role in deciding who can take up the position of leader. An internal person, or a person from outside can be recruited to replace the leader in the organisation. It therefore becomes important to make the governing mechanisms accountable and functional. Ideally, the governing boards should perform roles of enshrining the values and ethics which inspire the purpose of voluntary development organisations’ formation, and in articulating the vision and mission of the organisation and its periodic renewal in the changing context. Formulating policies of programmatic interventions, financial management, personnel policies and ensuring accountability of the leadership in the organisation, to which it delegates authority and responsibilities are some other roles of the governing board. It is very important that chief executives take the responsibility of strengthening the governance mechanisms. Unfortunately some voluntary development organisations have an indifferent attitude towards the governing board. In
absence of adequate roles, procedures and systems, they thus become sleeping boards. These kinds of boards are detrimental for any organisation. The voluntary development organisations need to realise the consequences of having such kinds of boards, more so, in context of the increasing pressure from donors and other stakeholders on VDOs for accountability and sustainability.

The role of leader is to continuously empower the board by providing information regularly about the programmes and policies of the organisations. Meetings need to be convened where the board members provide feedback to the organisation on its work and future intervention. Before any external agency brings in the prescription of accountable governing boards for voluntary development organisations, there is an urgency to realise and make governing mechanisms active, to contribute effectively towards the larger goals of the organisations.

To conclude, internal and external pressures exist in voluntary development organisations. These exist in an environment which is in a constant state of flux. Any change outside affects the organisation internally and its linkages to the external world. There is a need to anticipate the trends in the environment, its effects on the organisation and develop strategies to deal with the same. This necessitates an aware, active and responsive leadership in voluntary development organisations to respond effectively to the challenges and pressures.

References:


either as “per capita” or “per household” expenditure for a period (i.e. month or a year).

The UNDP Poverty Report, 2000, has further subdivided income poverty into extreme and overall poverty. Extreme poverty refers to the lack of income necessary to satisfy basic food needs. Here, basic food needs refer to minimum calorific requirements. Overall poverty refers to lack of income necessary to satisfy essential non-food needs, such as energy, clothing and shelter required for human survival (UNDP: 2000). However, according to this definition, essential non-food needs do not include education or health care needs.

However, there are a number of conceptual and methodological critiques to this measure of poverty. According to this definition, human survival has a fixed nutritional requirement. The definition does not account for variations in age, sex, ethnic group, workload, etc. Secondly, by defining poverty in monetary terms, the definition disregards that most poor people belong to non-monetised economies. As for the relationship between poverty and nutrition, there is no evidence to show that by consuming the required number of calories one gets energy to undertake necessary daily activities. Studies have shown that the desire to achieve the calorific target often pushes people to consume more carbohydrates rather than take a balanced diet.

This definition also does not account for variations in purchasing power in different countries. For example the value of 100 US dollars in India (i.e. the goods that one can buy with it) is not the same as that of 100 US dollars in Bangladesh. The introduction of Purchasing Power Parity helped to adjust the income poverty lines in various countries.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, per capita income and income poverty continue to be the oldest measure of poverty. Poor people suffer from various kinds of disadvantages and deprivation, some of which can be measured and others that cannot. However, a unidimensional measurement of poverty like income poverty, fails to capture this multidimensional nature of poverty. Other measures such as access to safe water, sanitation, shelter, health and education need to supplement estimates of income poverty.

The concept of human poverty attempts to capture the complex and multidimensional nature of poverty. This is a broader concept that refers to the lack of basic human capabilities like adequate nutrition, education, primary health care, reproductive health, access to goods, services and infrastructure necessary to sustain basic human capabilities (UNDP: 2000).

The Human Development Index (HDI) developed by the UNDP, provides an alternative to income based measures of welfare. The HDI is based on three indicators: life expectancy, education and income poverty. This reflects the concern that human development is not only a matter of increasing income. HDI was first expanded by a gender related development index that described gender disparities in basic human capabilities. The 1997 Human Development Report introduced the Human Poverty Index (HPI) that provided a desegregation of HDI data (UNDP: 2000).

As is evident from the above discussion, no measure of poverty is free from methodological inadequacies. Notwithstanding this difficulty, these measures are widely used and have been applied to assess the poverty situation in this region.

**Poverty in South Asia**

In the year 2000, the South Asian region had a population of 5 billion, out of which 515 million people live in absolute poverty. Estimates of the
incidence of poverty vary widely in the region. Nevertheless, the region hosts 43.5 percent of the world’s poor (Human Development Report in South Asia: 1999).

Despite gains achieved in the past two decades, the region has high levels of illiteracy, infant mortality and maternal mortality. Over 3 million children die every year before reaching their fifth birthday. 79 million children suffer from acute malnutrition. About 50 million children do not have access to primary schools and 395 million adults are illiterate. Nearly 278 million do not have access to safe water and sanitation. Added to this, the top twenty per cent of the population consumes nearly 80 per cent of the region’s resources, while the bottom 20 per cent consume a mere 20 per cent of the resources (WDR: 2000-2001).

Poverty in South Asia is largely a rural phenomenon. Urban poverty is, to a considerable extent, a spillover of rural poverty and caused by rural-urban migration. Rural-urban migration is often the result of a combination of push and pull factors. Push factors include lack of employment, natural disasters like floods, caste and ethnic violence, which force people out of their homes and into urban areas. Pull factors include opportunities for employment, attraction to the glamour of the city and dreams of making it big. If the gap between urban and rural poverty continues to persist, then the present trend of rural-urban migration will not only persist, but also increase in the future. It is seen that poverty tends to remain stuck in certain pockets in South Asia. While there have been improvements in the overall poverty situations of these countries, there continue to exist pockets of intense poverty where the situation has remained unchanged. This kind of poverty is known as structural poverty. There are three key dimensions of structural poverty:

**Social Exclusion:** In the South Asian context, this refers to the social and cultural barriers that prevent groups such as tribals, dalits and ethnic minorities from accessing social, economic and political opportunities.

**Geographical Exclusion:** This refers to the inability of communities living in remote areas from accessing basic services provided by various government and non-government agencies. It is important to point out that remoteness refers to areas that are not accessible by road. It is ironical that areas that may even be close to urban locales, may become remote if roads cannot reach them. Thus, distance and outlying terrain provide only a part explanation for remoteness. Geographical exclusion also includes ecologically fragile zones like deserts, drylands, low lying flood plains, etc. which are prone to natural disasters.

**Assetlessness:** This refers to a situation where the individual does not possess any assets or skill except his physical labour. Thus, an assetless person is one who sells his labour in the market to alleviate his poverty.

The magnitude and complexity of poverty in South Asia provides a point of departure for understanding of the past development interventions and their specific consequences for the poor (SAARC: 1992). In the period immediately following freedom from colonial rule, South Asian states adopted the concept of a welfare state. Herein, the state played a dominant role in economic and social development to achieve equity and social justice.

In the 1940s and 1950s, development efforts revolved around theories of modernisation. This involved establishing a modern industrial sector supported by massive capital investment and building up of infrastructure. It was hoped that a fast expanding industry would absorb the excess labour from agriculture and other traditional
sectors and this would transform the entire economy. However, instead of fast expanding and subsuming the rest of the economy, industry became an enclave of rich industrialists, supported by a protective, overextended state. The poor remained, largely, confined to the traditional sector (rural - agricultural sector and the urban - informal sector), untouched by the developments in the new industrial sector. As a result, gaps in living standards and access to opportunities between the few who got into the organised sector and others increased.

The over expansion of the state in all spheres created its problems. Over time, policy making became increasingly centralised, opaque and the domain of “experts”. It became insensitive to different needs at the local level and succumbed to inefficient implementation. Opportunities for rent seeking and corruption increased. While the rich grew richer, the basic needs of the poorer masses remained unmet. This led to a serious problem of dualism and a vast gap developed between the rich and the poor, in the South Asian countries. The “two -state” or “India- Bharat” phenomenon refers to this dualism in the Indian context (Kothari: 1987). In the 60s, the focus was on modernisation of agriculture through the green revolution. The success of this programme largely depended on the pre-existence of rural infrastructure and particularly that of assured water supply. Hence, the programme was able to transform the rural economy mainly in areas where such conditions were present. The biggest drawback of this process was that it neglected the arid and semi-arid areas where a majority of the South Asian poor live and subsists. Development efforts in the next decade focused on a target oriented approach to provision of basic services to ensure growth with redistributive justice.

These development efforts had various shortcomings. They were top-down, bureaucratic, based on large-scale programmes that disregarded local conditions and requirements, and encouraged people to become dependent on the state for development inputs. Inspite of emphasis on community development and village self governance, village level institutions did not come into their own due to inadequate devolution of responsibilities and resources to local levels. This reinforced an elitist, centralised approach to planning even at local and village levels. Large, inefficient states, which consumed most of the revenue raised for maintaining its staff rather than on catering to the needs of marginalised sections of society compounded this further.

The “East Asian miracle”, as well as the severe balance of payments crisis starting in late 1970s-early 80s forced South Asian countries to open up their economies and begin privatising (UNDP: 1999). Most South Asian economies, limited by their managerial and technological capabilities, could not respond quickly to the opportunities available through liberalisation and deregulation of the economy or create a favourable environment for using foreign direct investment (Sivananthiran and Ratnam, V: 1999). The burden of stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes fell disproportionately on the social services sector and therefore on the poor and safety nets for the poor. While these processes have affected the poor on the margins of the poverty line, it has failed to affect pockets of structural poverty within these countries, which are largely non- monetised economies.

The Concept of Democratic Governance

The focus on governance in the contemporary era comes from two main directions. Traditionally citizens have participated in governance by voting. This is based on an
understanding that elected representatives have people's best interests in mind. However, governments are finding themselves with fewer resources and restricted capacities to cater to the well-being of its citizens. In view of this, forces in civil society are questioning the limited role of people in decisions that affect their lives. At the same, the role of civil society in affecting citizens' lives is increasingly being recognised throughout the world. Secondly, in the era of globalisation, market forces has gained an increasingly influential role in national decision making. While the state and its instruments of government continue to be of central importance, governance is no longer the sole responsibility of the state. Rather, it is the collective responsibility of citizens and all institutions in a given society along with the different wings of the state (Mbogori and Chigudu: 1999).

The discourse on governance is rich and varied. The importance of creating a political will, efficiency of the state and human rights has not only been recognised since the nationalist movement for independence of undivided India but, provisions for protecting and promoting these-through fundamental rights and affirmative action, have been enshrined in some constitutions of South Asia. Therefore, though the World Bank and UNDP dominate the discourse on governance, vital components of 'governance' have long been a developmental concern (World Bank: 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994; UNDP: 1997). More recently, a study initiated by the Commonwealth Foundation has found citizens in 47 Commonwealth countries demanding a responsive, non-discriminatory and inclusive governance that allows citizens to play an active role in matters of governance (Commonwealth Foundation: 1999).

In this paper governance may be understood as the processes involved in public decision making about use of public resources for public good. The focus on public good brings out two important issues. It highlights the contestation and conflict involved in deriving a particular meaning of public good and in the selection of the methods used to define public good. This paper looks at public good from the vantage point of the poor and marginalised.

Public decision making is a complex process where different actors and interest groups, with different abilities and capacities to influence, act at different levels to influence this process. There are two points of note. First, public decision making occurs at different levels-from local to the global. Secondly, this view recognises that governance is not the sole function of the state, but a collective responsibility of other actors like the market and civil society. It also recognises the influence of global institutions in this process. What is most important, however, is that it provides a legitimate space for the state, market and civil society, to engage in establishing public good, monitoring use of resources and holding accountable those entrusted with the task of making such decisions.

Democratic governance refers to a system of public decision making where people responsible for public decision making are democratically accountable. Democracy not only implies pluralism, diversity of political system, transparency, periodically held free and fair elections, and a change of government through a constitutional process, but it highlights consistent and continuous participation of people in public decision making.

Different groups in society have different abilities to influence decision making. Also, they are not equally represented in the current system of governance. Given these conditions, democratic governance demands the creation of mechanisms by which marginalised groups
can be heard and influence decision making as much as the more powerful and well off. This can only happen when decisions are made in consultation with those whom it affects, and decisions once finalised, are shared with those it affects. As public decisions are made at various levels, it envisages that different levels of governance- from local to global, will play a role in public decision making. Democratic governance demands accountability or commitment to the relationship and tasks mutually agreed upon between the representative and those responsible for electing him/her. It requires that even the most marginalised person is able to question and demand accountability from such public officials responsible for public decision making.

**Governance in South Asia**

“South Asia has emerged by now as one of the most poorly governed regions of the world, with exclusion of a voiceless majority, unstable political regimes and poor economic management. The systems of governance have become unresponsive and irrelevant to the needs and concerns of people”.

*(Human Development Report-South Asia: 1999)*.

The region has a history of feudalism. After colonial rule came to an end, this region has been dominated by a series of dynastic rules whether it is the Nehru-Indira- Rajiv rule in India, Bandarnayake- Kumaratunge in Sri Lanka, Bhutto family in Pakistan and the two main party leaders Sheikh Hasina Zia and Begum Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh.

Colonial rule was replaced by rule of an elite group represented by landlords, rich industrialists, bureaucrats and military officers. State institutions were weak and in their infancy. As a result, certain powerful individuals and their families gained control over the countries and politics degenerated into a game of personalities and private interests, rather than achieving larger public good. Years of personalised rule have led to further erosion of formal institutions of governance. This is evident from the fact that the state is discriminatory in its practices, parliaments fail to represent people, civil services fail to provide adequate basic social services, and judiciary is unable to deliver social justice to all. The main reasons for South Asia’s intensive deprivation go hand in hand with social and political factors rooted in poor governance. The manifestations of poor governance are visible in every country.

India is governed by an unstable coalition, which is constantly threatened by charges of corruption and a constant reshuffling of political alliances. In recent times there has been a rise of parties with exclusionary agendas that threatens further division within the country. Nepal has seen eleven successive governments in it’s eleven years of democratic rule, and is constantly threatened with the prospect of violent insurgency by Maoist forces. Pakistan, with its long history of military rule and violent coups, is attempting to promote self-governance with a military government in power. In Bangladesh, there is an alternation of its two major political parties. Here, politics of ‘hartal’ (strike) or “hartalities” has replaced politics of representation (Ahmed, 2001). Here, long and crippling strikes have become the only way to get political demands met. Sri Lanka is torn by more than a decade long ethnic conflict, which is threatening to destroy years of developmental gains in education and health. All the nations are plagued with inequities, inequalities, social exclusion, endemic corruption, rise of fundamentalist forces and inefficient civil services.

Income disparities in South Asia are one of the largest in the world. While a substantial section
of the population remains unemployed or underemployed, the richest 10 per cent has six times more wealth than the poorest 10 per cent (WDR, 2000-2001). This is because economic systems in these countries have not allowed economic benefits to percolate to the lowest strata of society. Inequality has also resulted in crime and violence. The most vulnerable in South Asia remain the most abused, as evidenced from the presence of more than 100,000 child prostitutes in South Asia.

Not all groups in society feel equally represented in governance. Tribals, dalits, religious and ethnic minorities, amongst others feel discriminated and excluded. Women, as a group, have to cope with socially embedded exclusionary practices from their birth. While female infanticide is rampant, the female mortality rate is high throughout the region. Educational enrolment of girls lags behind boys and the dropout rate amongst girls is also high. While millions suffer from multiple deprivations due to insufficient income, creed, gender or religion, the formal institutions of governance have become apathetic to people’s wants and concerns. Some of the worst manifestations of such exclusion is evident from violent conflict, whether it is caste conflicts in India, or the Shia- Sunni conflict in Pakistan or the Tamil- Sinhalese conflict in Sri Lanka. The state has become distant from the people while local governments are new, weak and under the control of government bureaucracy. India, though federal in nature, has largely sought to maintain central control.

Such embedded exclusion has left the masses disenchanted and disinterested in the democratic processes that are still taking form in the region. In many states, democracy is fast turning into an empty ritual, where elections are the only connection between the elected representatives of the people and the people themselves.

South Asian governments, also suffer from being large but inefficient governments. Salaries of government servants itself consumes around 10% of the gross domestic product in South Asia (Human Development Report in South Asia: 1999). Military expenses form the largest head of expenditure, even as millions are deprived of basic services. Despite recent attempts to privatise under pressures of globalisation, governments dominate all areas of functioning. This has also increased opportunities for rent seeking and corruption.

Corruption has become endemic to the South Asian state. Corruption is anti-national, anti-development and anti-poor. It has diverted vital resources for development towards opportunities for rent seeking. There is a growing perception that corruption has floated upwards, from petty corruption in the 50s-60s, to middle level corruption in the 70s and 80s to corruption in the highest echelons of society and government in the 90s.

The economic consequences of poor governance are severe. While tax collection is poor, tax evasion is rampant and only 1% of the population pays income tax. In nearly all these countries, the black economy is equal or even larger than the agriculture sector, with its contribution to GDP. As indirect taxes form much of the tax revenue of the region, the burden of taxes falls heavily on the poor and the middle class rather than on the rich. Some sectors like agriculture are largely under-taxed or untaxed. In addition, the state provides an elaborate web of tax concessions, variously estimated between 2-3% in most South Asian countries.

The informal sector has no access to formal credit, even as the largest amount of the non-performing assets in public sector banks accrues to large business houses and politically influential borrowers. The low levels of revenue collected by the governments is diverted towards interest payments, payment of salaries of government
personnel, non-merit subsidies, making up losses of public corporations and for military expenditure, rather for pro-poor development. For every dollar spent on social sectors, Pakistan and India spend 4.32 and 1.70 dollars on defence and debt servicing respectively Asia (Human Development Report in South Asia, 1999). Wasteful and non-prioritised expenditures, and a weak tax base has led to the prevailing fiscal crisis. In recent years, South Asian countries have undertaken structural adjustments. Again the burden has fallen on the poorer sections of society as social and developmental expenditures have been cut under the SAP Asia (Human Development Report in South Asia: 1999, Dev: 2000).

Poverty Eradication and Democratic Governance: Ways Forward

Widespread poverty and poor governance are the two major challenges confronting South Asia in the 21st century. Years of narrow, elitist, personalised system of governance in South Asia have not only further eroded the institutions of governance created in the post colonial period, but have failed to cater to the needs of the deprived masses. As a result, the state has become distant to the people it claims to represent, and people have become indifferent to the processes and institutions of governance. If this situation is not addressed urgently, it may not only thwart democratic processes underway in these countries and any kind of development efforts that are made.

If poverty is to be eradicated within the next century, and if the deprivation of another is to be prevented, a bold pro-poor poverty eradication process must be set in process with a time bound action plan. This plan must necessarily take into account the lessons of the failed initiatives, whilst building upon the success stories. A key problem is that problems of poverty and deprivation have not been addressed as the poor have had no role in governance. Therefore, the strategy for poverty eradication must be such that marginalised sections can themselves participate in decisions that affect their lives. This will happen when such a strategy is linked to the values and knowledge of the poor as well as the diversity of local conditions faced by them. The paper suggests three strategies that might show a way forward.

A. Grassroots mobilisation

The capacity to form collectives for mutual caring and protection is inherent in human beings. Therefore the most important strategy would be to mobilise and organise the poor through their own organisations, to enable them to participate directly and effectively in decisions that affect their lives and prospects. Such social mobilisation efforts must revolve around those issues and problems identified and articulated by the poor themselves. This requires a recognition of people’s knowledge and potential as well as a belief in their abilities to resolve their concerns.

As repeatedly demonstrated, such grassroot mobilisation helps to fill the void created by the limited role South Asian governments has played in addressing the issues of the marginalised and in providing social services (SAARC: 1992).

B. Role of civil society in governance

Historically, citizens’ organisations like NGOs, community based organisations, social movements, religious groups, peasants associations, consumer groups, trade unions etc. have played a vital role in supporting the cause of the deprived by advancing political freedom, safeguarding basic rights, and furthering social development. In democratic governance, CSOs thus have a major role in establishing public good from the point of view of the poor and
marginalised. This not only requires advocating on behalf of the voiceless, but also involves, ensuring non-discriminatory treatment of the weaker sections of society and facilitating grassroots mobilisation.

Grassroots mobilisation, most often requires the support of facilitators and social catalysts. CSOs can play this role effectively by identifying and working with the poor, helping them secure information, helping them to analyse and articulate their problems themselves. This interaction promotes action-reflection within the community and helps to build the collective strength and bargaining power of the marginalised group. To be effective, such efforts also require a supportive policy environment. Therefore, besides advocating pro-poor policies, CSOs can play a major role in monitoring the implementation of these public decisions and demanding accountability from various actors. However, to do so CSOs must address their own governance issues and become more accountable themselves.

C. Devolution and decentralisation of state power

Poverty alleviation strategies must enable the poor to articulate and defend their interests. This implies an institutional structure of decision making in which the poor are directly involved. Devolution of state powers to decentralised, participatory institution of local self-governance is an effective step to bring hitherto marginalised sections into the mainstream of decision making.

Local self-governance is driven by two core ideas. First, it is envisaged that this will grant local communities' control and ownership over their resources and a chance to participate and control decisions that affect their lives. Second, it will make it easier for people to demand accountability from public officials responsible for making public decisions. Promoting such institutions is easier said than done. As the recent experience of most South Asian countries shows, attempts to devolve powers means coping with vested interests in the higher echelons of the bureaucracy and politics, and the need for financial authority and independent decision making power to become successful.

References:


Themes

Participatory Impact Assessment

Anju Dwivedi *

Abstract  Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) in South Asia, a pilot project, was initiated by New Zealand—VASS (Voluntary Agency Support Scheme). This article explores the concept and meaning of and the rationale for Participatory Impact Assessment in the development context. Illustrating the case of World Vision, Banswara, one of the South Asian NGOs where PRIA was closely associated with the facilitation process of PIA, the process and methods undertaken in this pilot initiative are highlighted.

Words like Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation have been in the development discourse for more than one decade now. As voluntary development organisations (VDOs) continue to play an important role in development, such words attain greater meaning. There has been increasing concern about VDOs' performance in social development. Questions like - how does one know what has happened is for public good, how can one measure the process of change, is it easy to trace the pace of transformation etc. have confounded many VDOs. More so when social development has assumed complex meaning in today’s context.

The meaning of development has undergone many changes in fifty years. In the fifties, development was synonymous with per capita growth, industrialisation and economic growth. Post World War II witnessed emergence of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Bretton Woods Institutes) to restructure the war ravaged economies. The sixties lay emphasis on human welfare and well being.

The mantra of participation gained prominence in the decade of seventies owing to failure of growth centred model which overlooked the growth of human beings and their involvement in development. Sustainability became an integral component of development debates by eighties. And for the first time, statements on participatory development began to be made by bilateral and multilateral development agencies.

Looking at this trend, social development attains a deeper meaning than being just economic growth, as perceived earlier. Social development signifies some kind of positive action to redress inequalities in the society. It clearly demonstrates ‘change and transformation’ from the existing situation to an ideal situation of a society characterised by justice, equality, freedom and participation of marginalised groups signifying empowerment. These qualitative attributes of development pose a big question of how the development can be assessed.

Social development is not a linear and predictable process, which can be understood by a supposedly causal input-output-impact relationship. Programmes and projects are the basic instruments of development intervention but we cannot base the evaluation of social development merely upon the supposed outcomes and impacts; they are not the only instruments.

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of promoting social change (Uphoff 1989; Roche 1994). Social development has to be understood more broadly and hence explanations of its outcomes and impact have to employ a number of quantitative and qualitative approaches and not merely seek to measure direct programmes and project outcomes. (Oakely, Pratt and Clayton, 1998).

**Meaning of Impact Assessment**

*Impact* ‘concerns long-term and sustainable change introduced by a given intervention in the lives of beneficiaries. Impact can be related either to the specific objectives of an intervention or to unanticipated changes caused by an intervention; such unanticipated changes may also occur in the lives of the people not belonging to the beneficiary group. Impact can be either positive or negative, awareness of the later being of equal importance’ (Blankenberg 1995a).

*Impact assessment* ‘refers to an evaluation of how, and to what extent, development intervention causes sustainable changes in living conditions and behaviour of beneficiaries and the differential effects of these changes on women and men. Impact assessment also refers to an evaluation of how, and to which extent development interventions influence the socio-economic and political situation in a society. In addition it refers to understanding, analysing and explaining process and problems involved in bringing about change. Understanding the perspectives and expectations of different stakeholders and taking into account the socio-economics and political context in which the development interventions take place are also a part of the process’ (Hopkins 1995 b).

*Participatory Impact assessment (PIA)* ‘is a process of evaluation of the impacts of development interventions carried out under the full or joint control of local communities in partnership with professional practitioners. In PIA, community representatives participate in the definition of impact indicators, collection of data, analysis of data, communication of assessment findings, and especially, in the post assessment design actions to improve the impact of development interventions in the locality.’ (Jackson 1995-96).

PIRA defines PIA as a process of continuous learning and studying the intended and unintended changes any development intervention tends to bring on the lives of different stakeholder groups (including communities) by engaging all the stakeholder groups in a process of constant reflection and action. This means involving each stakeholder group in defining objectives of impact assessment, developing indicators, identifying methods of data collection, involvement in data collection, analysis and in the reflection process to plan for future interventions.

The words like monitoring, evaluation and impact have been popular in development discourse and are often used interchangeably. Monitoring is a systematic and continuous assessment of the progress of work over time. In project cycle, monitoring is a process of surveillance till the project is complete. Evaluation on the other hand concentrates specifically on whether the objectives of the work have been achieved and is generally done at the end of the project. Impact assessment is a process which is embedded in the project cycle, therefore impacts can be assessed at all stages of the project cycle, including planning and designing.

NOVIB and OXFAM carried out a research programme on impact assessment and mentioned that, ‘It is important to highlight the fact that impact assessment is an activity that is carried
out throughout the project cycle. It should be present at almost every stage of the project. What changes, however, is the nature of the exercise. In the preparatory stage (identification, design and appraisal), before the project starts, impact assessment attempts to anticipate the consequences of the project. It is an exercise concerned with the consequences the project currently has on the beneficiaries. It is a continuous process of information gathering, which allows adjustments in the implementation of the project. Information should be relevant, timely accurate and usable. In the last two stages, the emphasis is on examining the consequences that the project had on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries.

### Impact Assessment in the Project Cycle

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>TASK</th>
<th>WORK ON IMPACT ASSESSMENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Identify main problems, needs and potentials</td>
<td>Preliminary assessment of expected impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Define aims and objectives and how to achieve them. Establish the activities to be carried out and the institutional structure</td>
<td>Assessment of expected impacts of the project on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>Critical assessment of the relevance, feasibility and potential effectiveness on the basis of financial, social, technical and environmental analysis</td>
<td>Detailed review of the previous impact assessment study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>The project is set in motion</td>
<td>Impact monitoring: collection and processing of impact indicators to assist project management decision – making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion</td>
<td>The project ends</td>
<td>Analysis of the results of the project in connection with objectives and the livelihoods of beneficiaries</td>
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<td>After completion</td>
<td>A retrospective assessment of the impact of the project some time after the completion of the project</td>
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The Rationale for Participatory Impact Assessment

There are a number of reasons why assessment of impacts has become more important for VDOs. Peter Oakley, Brian Pratt and Andrew Clayton (Oakley, P., Pratt, B., and Clogan, A. 1998) have identified four sources that create pressures for impact assessment.

A. Increasing concern about cost effectiveness

As the development interventions become complex and resources get dry, there is a mounting pressure on development actors to continuously assess performance with an objective to document the impacts of the development interventions.

B. Growing concern for institutional learning

As the institutions carry out development interventions, it becomes important to get a feedback of what works and what does not so as to plan effective next steps.

C. Ensuring sustainability of programmes and projects

This can only be assessed if a complete understanding of the overall impact can be understood. Sustainability also implies withdrawal strategy which can only be achieved if and when there is some authoritative understanding of the social development which has taken place and of its durability.

D. Increasing recognition of development sector

This recognition brings in greater need to be accountable to the programmes and projects and the growing understanding that information on impact positively effects motivation and self-confidence.

Other than these four, Participatory Impact Assessment includes one more source- Increasing recognition of participation of primary stakeholders in development interventions. As people centred development approach gains prominence, greater emphasis needs to be laid upon people’s involvement in assessing the impacts any intervention may bring into their lives.

Relevance of Participatory Impact Assessment

A. Learning to enhance linkages between mission-purpose-objective

Impact assessment helps in building linkages with the organisational mission and the objectives. Adopting a programme or a project is related to the organisational mission of the VDO. An organisation with a mission of poverty eradication can choose to work for microenterprise and empowering women. The same mission can be shared by other organisations who may take up different interventions to achieve the mission.

For example, if an organisation is working on microenterprise, the impact of the interventions must be seen in relation to the achievement of the mission and not the achievement of the project’s objective. In this case, the real impact would be if the interventions helped in reducing poverty and not merely at promoting microenterprise. The diagram depicts the relationship clearly.

The inner circle depicts the evaluation at the level of the project while the impact circle is much wider and takes into consideration the effect on development problems. The evaluation will measure the empowerment process and whether the project will be able to promote microenterprise while impact will assess the poverty reduction in a particular context. Impact assessment helps in
relating to the development problem which is often not taken into consideration.

B. Generates range of impacts

Any development project is an intervention in the life of the people. Howsoever well it may be designed, it can not take cognisance of the complexity of reality. Participatory impact assessment process also brings out intended and unintended impacts which help in aligning the interventions on the ground. PIA helps tracks the changes and gives direction for future strategies.

C. Negotiation among stakeholders

This exercise helps in bringing all stakeholders together to discuss the issues from their perspectives. This also provides scope for negotiation among stakeholder groups on needs, expectations and interests. This approach emphasises on the participation of communities to speak for themselves. Different perspectives help in understanding the projects from different point of views and impacts could also have different meanings to different people affected by the project. Partnerships between different stakeholder groups are also strengthened in this process. By bringing stakeholder groups together, PIA has the potential to improve the use of the project as an intervention. It acknowledges multiple realities as seen by different eyes.

D. Empowerment of primary stakeholders

Involvement of communities / beneficiaries in
impact assessment is an empowering process. It is an attempt to redefine bottom up, people controlled process and not a top down or donor controlled process. This approach helps in including those who are powerless, voiceless and marginalised among powerful, visible and assertive actors. Analysis of impacts itself gives way to conscientisation and action. This helps in a greater sense of ownership, commitment to the purpose and enhanced faith in capacities to accomplish the purpose.

E. Capacity building of VDOs

This kind of assessment also strengthens the capacities of VDOs to take up impact assessment processes later in their organisations. It creates learning processes to build institutional learning. Participatory impact assessment also emphasises on organisational capacities: were the objectives clear, were they ambitious? what went wrong or right? was the community’s participation encouraged? what could be the possible ways to include community’s perceptions? This approach enhances effectiveness of the development efforts.

Case of Participatory Impact Assessment: ADP Banswara Integrated Watershed Management Project (Supported by World Vision)

Voluntary Agency Support Scheme (VASS) provides funds from New Zealand’s Official Development Assistance Programme for New Zealand (NZ) VDOs that are working with partners overseas to address poverty and promote sustainable development. It is based on principles of partnership, gender equality, self-reliance, community and beneficiary participation, capacity building and sustainability. The 1998 VASS evaluation found that the majority of these funds were used for appraisal and monitoring visits with a very limited focus on evaluation of wider impacts. It concluded that there was a need for a more comprehensive evaluation system with a focus on learning, that in turn would improve performance of the VDOs and the projects they support as well as provide accountability for funds spent. The evaluation recommended a number of changes and additions to current systems.

The findings of VASS were accepted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). The approach proposed the pilot impact assessment programme with an objective to develop knowledge and capacity in impact assessment of all involved. The most important criteria in selecting VDOs to be involved, was the level of interest and commitment to the process that can be demonstrated by both the New Zealand VDOs and their overseas partners. An existing rationale and strong desire on the part of a partner to conduct some aspect of impact assessment of their work (rather than seeing this as an ‘imposed’ evaluation process) was considered critical to the success of the exercise.

South Asia was identified as the geographical focus for the first stage of this work. Four New Zealand VDOs (World Vision, Caritas, Christian World Service (CWS), and Tear Fund) agreed to initiate this activity with their partners in South Asia. The VDOs who showed interest to be part of the process in South Asia were: World Vision, Area Development Programme (ADP) Banswara (partner of World Vision, NZ); Women Development Resource Centre, Madurai (partner of CWS, NZ); The Bridge Foundation, Bangalore (partner of Tear Fund, NZ); and Caritas, Bangladesh (partner of Caritas, NZ).

Four facilitators were identified to facilitate the process of participatory impact assessment in
four chosen sites. PRIA facilitated the process of participatory impact assessment for World Vision, Banswara. This article therefore highlights the case of Area Development Project of World Vision, Banswara, Rajasthan, India. This project is an integrated watershed management project supported by World Vision, New Zealand. Through this case, steps involved in participatory impact assessment have been explained.

A. The Steps undertaken

The participatory impact assessment pilot programme was divided under the following steps:


The first step in the process was identification of NZ VDOs and their partners in South Asia for impact assessment. VASS initiated discussions around impact assessment and its rationale with the NZ VDOs who later engaged their partners in South Asia (India and Bangladesh) for the process. The identification followed capacity building on the perspective of participatory impact assessment for NZ VDOs and later with their partner South Asian VDOs and identified facilitators.

b. Objective setting and formulation of indicators with different stakeholder groups

An intensive planning exercise was taken up with different stakeholder groups in the Delhi workshop organised at PRIA. PRIA was the facilitating organisation in South Asia on Participatory Impact Assessment. The objective of Delhi workshop was to identify the objectives of the impact assessment. All four VDOs involved were at different stages of the project cycle- some were in the beginning, some had progressed mid way and some were at the completion of the project. This case was mid way of the project cycle and therefore it focused on assessing impact of the Area Development Programme (ADP) on the Bhil communities in Sajjangarh block of Banswara district. Two villages - Choti Mandli and Bhuradaud were taken up for PIA exercise.

Some indicators were identified to measure the set objectives. After the workshop in Delhi, attended by NZ VDOs and South Asian VDOs, this process was taken up with communities. The list of indicators and objectives were redefined with the community and the field staff of ADP World Vision through negotiations and prioritisation.

Each indicator was explained and was broken down into different subindicators in order to clearly define each of the key words mentioned in the indicator. The initial list had seven indicators, which later got reduced to three key with sets of subindicators. The final list of indicators that emerged was as follows:

Increased self dignity
- Narrowing distances between Yadav and Bhil tribals (sitting together, accepting food from each other, and shaking hands)
- Women participating in public meetings, sitting with men on the same platform and being heard

Increased participation, management, control and implementation
- More members in meetings and more involvement in discussions
- Making plans, proposals and implementing the plans (how to do, when to do, who will do)
- Maintaining the water resources like dropping chemicals in the water, calling the mechanic for repairing handpumps.
- Ensuring quality in the work
### Objectives of PIA in TOR presented by WV - NZ (September 2000 - January 2001)

1. To find out the impacts of the planning process (findings of baselines, PLA and discussions with communities) in the design and implementation of the watershed project. (How the findings have been incorporated in the design and implementation?)

2. To identify indicators and the participatory process through which impacts can be assessed and analysed in the areas of material and non-material resources, critical awareness of problems, self management and leadership and self reliance during the life of the project and beyond.

3. To identify impacts of gender issues on land, water and soil conservation activities and how they have been incorporated in need identification, planning, design and implementation of the watershed management project.

### Objectives of PIA derived in Delhi Workshop (31 January-2 February 2001)

1. To assess the impacts of ADP towards empowerment of Bhil tribal communities, to own, control the resources with specific focus on watershed management.

2. To analyse gender aspects.

### Objectives of PIA derived in Banswara workshop (4February-10th February 2001)

1. To assess the impacts of ADP towards empowerment of Bhil tribal communities, to own and control the resources, with specific focus on integrated watershed management.

**Increased self confidence, awareness and action**

- Increase in mobility to bank, ADP office, government department and other departments
- Ability to negotiate with external agencies
- Inclination towards innovation, trying out new ideas.
Men realising women's participation as necessary, involving women as VDC members and becoming aware about women's membership in other groups

c. Core group identification

To gather data on impacts, a core team was identified with representatives from community and the staff of World Vision, Banswara. Their roles and responsibilities were identified via a vis impact assessment process.

d. Developing a check list and methods for data collection

Based on the indicators, a checklist was prepared by the core group since the impact assessment clearly focused on before and after ADP’s intervention. The indicator checklist was made in local dialect - Wagdi. Subsequently, data collection methods were identified. A family of methods were chosen ranging from experiential methods like role plays, participatory learning action tools like Mobility Mapping, Venn Diagram, Seasonality Analysis to focused group discussion and interviews. To assess wider impacts of watershed management project on the community, Knowledge, Practice and Attitude (KPA) surveys were adopted.

The capacities of the core group were built to undertake the data collection process by using the selected methods.

e. Data collection and analysis

The core group collected data and wrote a brief note, which was then submitted to the leader for preparing a draft report. The daily reports were prepared by the core group which were finally compiled and presented to the community to elicit their feedback. After receiving inputs from the community, the final case was prepared by the World Vision staff in Banswara.

B. Impact of PIA on the organisation

World Vision was very excited about this pilot initiative and its results and demonstrated an interest to adopt PIA in all the projects. Through the exercise, staff’s capacity could be assessed. The staff was provided an opportunity to enhance their skills on identifying indicators and the use of methods. During the process realization dawned on them that impact assessment and evaluations are not the domains of external agencies only - they themselves can be engaged in this process which is more rewarding. This exercise has also enhanced awareness of staff on some unintended impacts of their interventions resulting in greater understanding of different strategies to minimise such impacts in future interventions. The biggest realisation was the obliteration of certain stereotypes that had set in. Due to cultural barriers and the historical exclusion of women, the team always had inhibitions about involving women. But seeing their qualitative involvement during PIA, the team recognised that those stereotypes were the main barriers, which need to be abdicated in future.

C. Impact of PIA on the community of both villages

The community realised that their stake in development was very important. This exercise cultivated a sense of ownership amongst the community. There was earlier some resistance from some villagers in Choti Mandli about participating in various activities but during the involvement in data collection process, they were able to understand the development of the village and their role in it. Their involvement throughout resulted in increased awareness about the importance of women’s participation in public forums. Women realised that there was unequal representation of women and men in village development committees formed under the
D. Some Issues and Lessons

- The timing of the exercise was an important issue in PIA. To participate actively in data collection and analysis, the communities had to lose out on their daily wages.

- Building a climate of openness, trust sharing and reflection from the beginning provided strength to this exercise. The facilitator was not seen as the evaluator but was treated as a guide to the process.

- Structured training coupled with field action remained a positive factor. The opportunities to be able to practice learning enabled the process and helped in enhancing the skills, thereby reinforcing the ideals of learning by doing.

- The team and community felt empowered to get involved in PIA. Initially there were inhibitions but involvement demonstrated their competencies and skills which usually remain unutilised, especially in reviews and evaluations which is generally considered 'a field of experts'.

- The involvement of all stakeholders including World Vision, New Zealand from initial stages dissipated many doubts. Intensive process of planning and seeking collaborations with World Vision, India gave strength to the project. This exercise was never viewed as an imposed one. Sensitization of senior persons and their assurance of constant support to the exercise largely contributed to the successful completion of Participatory Impact Assessment.

Key Issues and Challenges in Participatory Impact Assessment

A. Power and powerlessness

Since PIA involves different stakeholders, from powerful donors and VDOs to less powerful communities, the question of control and ownership becomes crucial. Since the process involves different perspectives and views, the chances of taking over the process by powerful groups can not be denied. The choice of indicators, the choice of other parameters to assess the success, despite being participatory reflect in most cases, the views of donors and VDOs. Great deal of transparency is required in determining the criteria for assessing the success of interventions.

B. Methodological issues

The issue of relying on qualitative data to assess impacts reflects subjective interpretation which is context specific and locally relevant. There is growing debate on qualitative and quantitative data and the scientific rigour (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998).

C. Time consuming process

Since this process encompasses stakeholders, including beneficiaries, the time investment is high. Moreover, the communities are more concerned with the benefits than identifying indicators to measure the impact. Since the methodologies used take time, the community members are often not interested in sparing time. Comprehension of indicators by the community and their importance moreover, is a difficult process.

D. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems and documentation

The process gets compounded in the absence of
a base line. How one can measure the change when the relevant information before the interventions does not exist? Participatory monitoring and evaluations are considered preceding steps for participatory impact assessment process, especially when the project has reached an implementation stage. Most of the times, the systems are either not built or even if they exist, they are not necessarily participatory. Either the donors or VDO themselves or with the help of consulting organisations make the logical framework with pre determined indicators, which fail to be participatory in approach. Since in impact assessment, focus is on Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) and the process, the documentation and reporting system adopted do not clearly reflect the changes and transformation. The information which is very vital for impact, sometimes do not get recorded even in highly sophisticated M & E systems. On the other hand, sometimes the information is so much that it becomes difficult to use the information to assess impact. Minimum but effective may sound brusque but is relevant in this kind of assessment.

E. Institutionalisation of participation

Another related challenge is about the institutionalisation of participation in organisations. Many a times emphasis is laid on the participatory approaches to the projects and programmes while the institutions remain top down in approach.

In many cases, separate monitoring and evaluation departments are created to take up M & E and IA, which function independent of the project teams, thus building a gap between knowing and doing. In such situations, the implementers of the projects are not involved in monitoring, evaluations and impact assessment processes.

Conclusion

As the meaning of development acquires a complex nature and the environment poses challenges such as dwindling resources and problems in sustaining projects and programmes, there is a greater need by development agents to constantly reflect and act. PIA can look at desired impacts but also takes cognisance of additional impacts as one moves beyond.

Participatory impact assessment provides scope for the organisations to engage various stakeholder groups into a review and action process. Since each stakeholder group is involved in assessing impacts, and planning future interventions, the ownership becomes natural which can then lead to sustainable development interventions. The biggest strength of PIA is in the involvement of communities, which in itself is a very empowering process.

The case presented in this article very clearly elucidates steps and methods of data collection in PIA process. Depending upon the context, PIA allows flexibility for the development actors to innovate methods and incorporate additional steps.
To conduct PIA, sufficient capacities should be cultivated in the staff to view this as a learning opportunity and not merely an exercise of hiring expensive external consultants. PIA can be valuable only if it is organically integrated into the organisational processes and can be applied for planning effective development intervention.

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Experiences and Lessons of Strengthening Citizen’s Monitoring in Jharkhand: A Citizenship Perspective

Pankaj Anand*

Introduction

Over the past fifty years or so, public trust in government has waned. There is general agreement about disenchantment among citizens with the political process and the administrative machinery. At the same time, citizens are feeling anxious and insecure about the direction in which the society and polity is headed. This insecurity stems from among other reasons, disruption of connection to the government. For a democratic polity to remain healthy, it is a necessary prerequisite that citizens invest their time, energy and faith in the institutions of government and civil society.

A new understanding of government as an enabler of citizen initiative rather than a mere provider of services must accompany our notion of it. It is time that the relationship between the institutions of government and citizens is redefined. This shift alone can re-establish larger public trust in the institutions of government, provide an arena for citizen participation in their own governance, and reinvigorate the health of our democratic polity.

There has been a great deal of interest, recently about the role of citizens in relating to public services and public decisions. Citizens and citizenship have lately become part of discussions in myriad public forums. It is feared that democratic foundations of active and engaged citizens are eroding and that the task of engaging citizens in “governance” should not be taken for granted.

In India, the role of the citizen has long been seen as more active than merely abiding by the laws of the land and voting periodically. Engagement in public deliberation and civic action has long been strongly encouraged as part of the pursuit of the “common good”. The Indian view of a citizen – whether alone or in association with other citizens – is one who is more active and engaged in the issues of the day, rather than passive and disassociated.

Many recent studies have reported serious citizen discontentment with the political process and government’s failure to deliver the basic services. At the same time, however, some studies have vividly described citizens’ strong desire to participate in the public process by engaging public leaders and officials to give vent to their views, to seek information, demand accountability and monitor the policies and programmes of different government agencies and departments.

Rationale

The promotion of policies, institutions and capacities that strengthen the voice and participation of the poor and the marginalised and in enhancing democratic governance in society, is integral to PRIA’s mission. In its mission PRIA is also guided by an analysis of

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social exclusion, an effective challenge to which requires mainstreaming participation of the disadvantaged sections viz., adivasis, dalits, women and others. Through two decades of experimentation, innovations and varied experiences, PRIA has gained useful insights into mainstreaming participation of marginalised communities.

Social Development Monitoring (SDM) and Citizenship

In the development scenario in India, both rights and practice dimensions of citizenship are beginning to be recognised. SDM can be as a powerful medium in the hands of citizens as stakeholders. Based as it is on sound methodological foundations and processes, SDM can prove to be a good training ground for actualising the practice dimension of citizenship that is much debated upon in our times. Practicing citizenship requires some efforts at enablement through a series of capacity building measures. SDM, by strengthening the capacities of citizens, may be seen as an enabling mechanism of enhancing participation and thereby promoting strong and meaningful citizen action.

SDM entails periodic observation and action by socially disadvantaged groups or citizens who could be project participants or target beneficiaries. The process however is not necessarily limited to projects, programmes and schemes of any agency – government, non-profit or any other. Its scope clearly runs beyond structured interventions of the government or voluntary development organisations. It could also take the form of observation and action intended to enhance participation, ensure inclusiveness or articulations for accountability, responsiveness and transparency of implementing agencies or local institutions. SDM is done by citizens primarily with the express purpose of making an impact on their socio-economic status by seeking to achieve a series of desired results. SDM, like any other social action, purports to generate desired outputs or changes. There can be little doubt that by means of strengthening citizens monitoring, the responsiveness, accountability and transparency of government and its agencies could be enhanced or at least, attempted to be enhanced.

It was with these ideals in mind that an effort on strengthening citizen’s monitoring was made in Jamtara block of Santhal Pargana region in the state of Jharkhand. It would be pertinent to mention that Jharkhand was carved as a separate state in the year 2000. The newly carved state offered tremendous opportunities in promoting participatory practices owing to a significantly long history of all-round discrimination against the region and its people. It was also believed, that the efforts in promoting participatory methods among the weaker sections in Jharkhand would generate valuable learning experiences for development practitioners as well.

Strengthening Citizen’s Monitoring in Jamtara (Jharkhand)

A. Selection of project

The process began with a mapping of service delivery projects on drinking water, sanitation, health, formal or non-formal education or projects targeting special needs groups run by the government in some select districts of Santhal Pargana area. After extensive work, a project in Dumka district was identified. The selected project was on providing non-formal education (NFE) to working children in the three blocks of Jamtara, Saraiyhat and Jamtara (This block has since become a district). These three blocks have a high incidence of child labour in bidi-making,
restaurants, brick-kilns, rag-picking and other trades/industries. These NFE schools purport to educate working children up to class III and then mainstream them into government-run primary schools. The project was selected because the literacy level in Dumka is low, child labour is widespread and those intended to benefit from the project are extremely poor and socially disadvantaged. More importantly, it was perceived that participation of parents as stakeholders was practically non-existent to the extent that they have little or no idea about the basic provisions of the project. SDM was clearly viewed as a mode of enhancing citizen participation in this project and generating valuable learning experiences that could also be utilised by other civil society organisations in Jharkhand.

B. Understanding the project

On finding the project suitable for the purposes of SDM, a deeper exploration of the project was undertaken in two blocks – Jarmundi and Jamtara. This was aimed at understanding the nature, objectives, provisions and functional aspects of the schools. Here, it is important to understand that before a capacity building and indicator development exercise is attempted, it is worthwhile to have a clearer understanding of all aspects of the project, including its actual working. In this case, the exploration was carried out through personal and group discussions with project officials, staff members of the district and block administration, teachers, parents and members of civil society, in addition to a review of secondary literature. Personal visits to a number of schools were also undertaken for a deeper understanding.

The exploratory study of the Bal Shramik Vidyalayas yielded some useful insights into the actual working of the schools and it allowed an opportunity to understand the various concerns of the stakeholders.

a. Project highlights

An important objective of the project is to impact number of working children through intensive application of NFE in areas of high incidence of child labour, bringing them into the mainstream educational system and prevent them from becoming labourers again. For this purpose, a Child Labour Elimination Society (CLES) was formed in Dumka in 1995 and the CLES then prepared a detailed project plan. The project provided for running of 40 Vidyalayas in three blocks - 17, 12 and 11 in Jarmundi, Saraiyahaat and Jamtara respectively. The entire financial resources required for running the project is devolved on the CLES by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

b. Structure

A three-tier committee at the district, block and panchayat/village levels was formed. The district level committee is at the apex with the District Commissioner (DC) of Dumka as the ex-officio Chairperson. The day-to-day activities are looked after by a Project Director with other members of the committee drawn from different walks of life, including civil society organisations and academia. The district committee has been composed so as to have members who have some credible background in promoting or managing educational initiatives or literacy campaigns. In terms of decision making, the apex committee primarily works on planning aspects and garnering external support or facilitation. It also issues guidelines and directions aimed at better functioning of the schools.

The block level is the intermediate tier with the Circle Officer (CO) being the nodal officer entrusted with the responsibility of implementation and smooth functioning of school centres. On careful examination, it becomes clear
that the CO is mainly responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school.

The third tier at the panchayat/village level ordinarily comprises of members who were active during the literacy campaigns in Dumnika. However, it is amply clear that most of these committees at the lowest rung are either defunct, non-functional or not properly constituted. Visibly, this particular weakness has resulted in the diminution of an important forum of citizen interaction, reflection and action.

The project emphasises on seeking support from VDOs and promoting full participation of a cross section of society. However, there is no visible linkage with other civil society organisations and/or local governance structures, the sole exception being Jago Behena, a VDO.

c. Major provisions and activities under Vidyalayas

- To impart joyful learning opportunities to working children between 5 and 14 years of age with a provision for a monthly stipend of Rs 100/- to each student.
- Students are provided poshahaar (mid-day meal) calculated at Rs 2.50 per student.
- All school centres have two teachers each and an anusevika. The anusevika is responsible for the preparation of poshahaar, cleanliness etc. All three are paid an honorarium.
- Children are taught as per the syllabus approved by the district committee from time to time and examinations are conducted once a year in December.
- There is a provision for the periodic health check-up of all children by government doctors.
- Children who complete three years of study in the Vidyalayas are integrated into the mainstreamed in government schools usually in Class IV, by Vidyalaya teachers with support from the CO.

C. Capacity Building (CB)

It is abundantly clear that exclusion, discrimination and negation of rights are deeply entrenched social realities especially, in the context of the poor and marginalised sections of society. A reversal of this situation and consequent promotion of the ideals of equity and justice, requires sustained citizen effort rooted in informed analysis and an understanding of the existing social order. In this context, capacity building of citizens and citizen's groups occupies a crucial importance.

Capacity building strategy can involve one or a combination of methods - structured training, systematic reflection or others - to enhance or strengthen the potential of individuals and groups to engage in meaningful reflection and action for change. All capacity building efforts must take into account the context, space and time dimension and should be based on careful consideration of existing local realities. The thrust of CB efforts, in SDM process is to strengthen perspective of citizens on the project, assist them to develop indicators, collect data against those indicators, analyse it and building on the joint analysis take collective action for change.

D. Dissemination, perspective building and reflections

As part of the capacity building intervention, it was important to share the emerging findings of the exploratory study. For this purpose, a workshop was organised in Jamtara that was attended by a cross-section of society and stakeholders. These included government officials, teachers, parents, academia, media, civil society representatives and other members of citizenry. Based on the observation arising out of the study, all participants emphasised the
need for citizen participation. The government officials highlighted, that, citizens must not rely entirely on government agencies for proper implementation of the project and must take part fully in every possible manner.

While these words from the government officers enthused many, there were some who were skeptical about the government’s capacity to create space for citizen participation. In the same event some voices were heard from those who thought that citizen action is also about carving out spaces gradually in the midst of adversities and challenges from various quarters. Therefore, cynicism must give way to making small citizen-led efforts. The differing voices, far from being confusing, emboldened many parents and grassroots activists. The civil society representatives and academia expressed strong sentiments about the need for greater and meaningful participation by citizens. The teachers of Vidyalayas heartily welcomed citizen participation in the running of the schools and pledged all possible support to their initiatives.

The dissemination workshop was a useful event in many respects. The parents started a process of understanding the role they could possibly play in the functioning of the schools. This workshop was followed by a couple of follow-up meetings at the village level with many parents eager to explore the various options available to them.

It was from these capacity-building interventions that the SDM of the Vidyalayas emerged as a viable option for citizen participation. However, owing to the special conditions of the parents, it was amply clear that capacity building should be an ongoing process and should not be perceived as a one-time event. Notably, the parents are illiterate, extremely poor and without access to most government services or opportunities to have an interface with the officials. It was these circumstances that necessitated a closer interaction of the local partner as also the need to have a local facilitator conversant with the circumstances and having an ability to generate confidence in the community as well as other stakeholders. Careful selection and capacity building of local organiser(s) occupies an important place in SDM. Capacity building of local facilitators/group organisers was undertaken periodically through informed discussions and reflections.

E. Citizens in action

As mentioned earlier, a series of block and village-level meetings with the parents had evoked an encouraging response. Subsequent meetings with local civil society activists and teachers of Vidyalayas generated a lot of optimism that a meaningful citizen action could be facilitated. They had already pledged their support and were now keen to see the process move forward quickly before the enthusiasm of the parents could dissipate.

During the meetings, the parents of three Vidyalayas in Jamtara block namely Circledih, Pandedih and Supaidih had evinced keen interest in undertaking monitoring of the schools. The parents of respective schools formed a committee.
5 to 8 members each and decided on the indicators, modalities of the monitoring and roles and responsibilities of the monitors. The committee membership was kept small to ensure easy consensus and spontaneity of members. Women showed remarkable interest and were heavily represented in the committees.

F. Strengthening capacities for monitoring

The development of indicators preceded a long and informed discussion on the importance of various aspects of the provisions of the school and the larger purpose of elimination of child labour. Conscientization of citizens or their groups is to be seen in the context of enhancing their ability and willingness to take action for change.

Parents had varied arguments on one or the other aspects of the provisions. Parents had a firm belief that too many indicators would be difficult to monitor and collect data on. They wanted to keep the indicators to a maximum of three initially, to be able to generate sufficient data, be focussed and develop a better understanding for any future dialogue or negotiations with government officials. The women participants stressed that indicators must specifically relate to nutrition, health and education, which have a direct bearing on their children. They felt that all other aspects of the functioning of the schools or the scheme, should be treated as secondary for the children and therefore, should not be taken up at this stage. The payment of Rs.100/- per month as a stipend to the students, for instance, was seen as of little or no consequence directly for the children. Similar rigour was evident in the case of other aspects as well. The parents finally decided on three indicators for the purpose of monitoring:

a. Presence (or the absence) of the two teachers during school hours
b. Serving of poshahaar to children
c. Routine health check-up of children by local health department.

The committee was entrusted with the task of taking up monitoring work 4-5 days a month in the case of first two indicators and once a month in the case of health check-up, which is usually carried out on the last working day of each month. It was also decided to devise a suitable format to record the data, keeping in view, the limitations of parents in writing detailed observations. The committee decided to record data on ingeniously but simply designed worksheets having suitable pictures/drawings depicting the three broad indicators.

The parents decided not to pre-determine the dates of monitoring as it could lead to problems of commitment of time, as also pre-emptive response from the teachers, doctors and anusevikas. These were viewed as counter-productive to the monitoring that purports to generate reliable data. For optimum involvement and active learning of all members, a roster system was adopted whereby all members would act as monitors in rotation or at times the entire group would monitor jointly. The idea was to enable all members to ‘learn the ropes’.

One remarkable aspect of the indicator development exercise was the clarity in the minds of parents about the larger objective of the monitoring, that is, to evoke and ensure responsiveness, efficiency and accountability of teachers, doctors and block-level government officials. The parents who were initially concerned that monitoring could be viewed by other stakeholders as “encroaching upon their territory”, gradually began to realise that building an atmosphere of trust holds the key to their long-term objective.

A recurrent aspect of discussions was the articulation of concern that ‘citizen’s monitoring’
especially, in government parlance is a “bad word”. It is imbued with a negative connotation and therefore, could easily be misconstrued as intrusion or breach of space. Keeping all this in mind, the committee deliberated on the need to conduct monitoring in a “non-threatening” manner so as to muster support from other stakeholders without compromising the accuracy of data, in any way.

The capacity building support coupled with confidence-building initiatives started in concert with local partners and facilitators soon began to show results. A sense of alarm and skepticism had given way to confidence in the community's capacity to engage meaningfully in some meaningful action.

G. Interface with teachers and officials

The process of engaging themselves in monitoring the working of schools itself acted as a mechanism that not only built the confidence of the parents, but also imparted the necessary rudimentary skills of negotiating with government officials. The committee members would meet the First Medical Officer and the Circle Officer armed with reliable data and apprise them of the working of the schools along with their concerns and suggestions. The monitors would also discuss various aspects of the school functioning with the teachers of respective schools, on an ongoing basis, to understand their perspectives and problems and also suggest remedial measures, wherever possible and practical. The teachers of the three Jamtara schools extended complete support to the parents. It is based on their shared perception that the future of the school lies in working closely with other stakeholders. They acknowledge the fact that parents are a force to reckon with.

This has proved by an incident of temporary closure of a school centre in Mihijam area of Jamtara and dismissal of both teachers and the anusevika following an inquiry conducted by the Project Director. The parents in this particular case had taken determined action against the alleged acts of omission and commission of all three in the day-to-day running of the school. Importantly, the project officials were forced to take tough measures against the erring persons.

I think that you people are trying for the impossible. It would be such a waste of time and energy trying to make government authorities see our point. Even assuming that our poor sisters and brothers would muster enough courage to speak their hearts and minds out, who is there to listen and act without contempt or malice? Mere vichar se yeh batu mein se tel nikalne jaisa hai (I think it is like trying to extract oil from the sand).

Views of an agitated mother who walked out of one of the meetings

We are happy that parents are monitoring the working of schools. No doubt we are on tenterhooks. It is true that we cannot take the liberty of abstaining from the duty without duly sanctioned leave. But somewhere inside, we are very satisfied with the way it is being conducted. Our initial fears have gone. When they come to the school we share our concerns. Earlier we used to petition the authorities, now they are also approaching them which has taken some pressure off us. Also, the parents now have a better understanding of our limitations. They no longer blame us for everything that is wrong or lacking. After all, we too have a stake in the smooth running of the school.

Comments of two teachers of Shramik Vidyalayas
as a result of citizen action marked by an organised protest and sit-in.

Towards the end, after having a constructive dialogue with government officials and to share their experiences, the parents committee decided to organise some structured events. On the request of parents, one such meeting was presided over by the CO of Jamtara. The parents apprised him of their findings, concerns and suggestions for the improved functioning of the schools. For example, slackness on the part of doctors in conducting routine medical check-ups of students, difficulties in the running of the Pandedi cente due to a teacher’s post being vacant, construction of the roof at the Amlachatar centre, making sports goods available to all schools, and admitting students against vacant seats etc., were put before him.

The parents put up a number of demands before him that they argued would not only meet the overall goals of the district/state administration but, would also help in achieving the goal of elimination of child labour. Interestingly, some of these demands do not fall within the provisions/ambit of Bal Shramik Vidyalayas or the Child Labour Elimination Programme. For instance, the parents demanded that since they are recognised as BPL families, they be provided loans against the Self-employment Guarantee programme for small earning opportunities, like mat/basket making or preparing puffed rice. They also demanded that they be given priority under Rashtriya Parivar Labh Yojana (RPLY), Vridhha Pension Yojana & Indira Awas Yojana. Besides this they also demanded that drinking water facilities should be provided in all school centres through wells or hand pumps.

Responding to these, the CO not only acceded to some of the demands but also focussed on some other opportunities under government programmes available to the parents. He also utilised the event to take follow-up action on some of the concerns of the parents and the teachers. Viewed from a broader angle, this and other such meetings can help citizens to understand the way government business is conducted and the skills of negotiating with officials.

Reflections on Challenges and Opportunities

- Facilitating monitoring by a community which is disillusioned by the government’s responsiveness and its ability to deliver, is an extremely difficult task. Instilling in them the confidence to take action is a serious challenge for the facilitator(s). Some amount of resistance or skepticism cannot be completely ruled out. In fact, it should be seen as an inevitable initial response.

- Capacity building holds the key to citizens monitoring; it not only helps in the identification of problems and concerns but also helps the community to collect useful data, reflect on and analyse it.

- Capacity building should be an ongoing process rather than a one-time activity. This helps the marginalised groups to develop confidence in their ability to help improve the situation through meaningful action, as also, to take corrective action or innovate, wherever needed.

- A citizen’s initiative to be successful should be based on his or her own willingness to take up the challenge. Undue haste could only result in forced participation that may not produce the desired results or outcome.

- Continuous support to the citizens group is useful where marginalisation of the community is extreme and literacy is very low. Acquiring the services of a local
facilitator could smoothen the process by lending hands-on support to the group in carrying out participatory monitoring work.

- Monitoring for the sake of monitoring holds no value; community empowerment can emerge from informed reflection and discussion within the group and outside. Citizen-government interface could be an important element of action for change.

- The government officials (and the teachers in this case) could view the monitoring process as a potential threat. Building an atmosphere of trust between the stakeholders holds the key to result-oriented action. For the process to continue without hindrance, it is essential that all stakeholders must be acknowledged and given their due and the process should continue in a non-threatening manner.

- In this experiment it was seen that if the monitoring is done transparently and in a non-threatening environment, support from seemingly unexpected quarters is also possible. In this case, teachers have begun to understand the potential of citizens monitoring in strengthening the school and have begun to lend some support as well.

- The dissemination of learning and findings could be useful in replicating the experiment in nearby areas, if the monitoring results in some verifiable successes, or meaningful action for change.

## Future Possibilities

Every monitoring work throws up some challenges but it also has the potential of opening new windows of opportunities. These opportunities could be in the form of replication of experiences or in up-scaling the existing monitoring work.

Monitoring by citizens in Jamtara has provided both these opportunities, which need to be viewed strategically for the long-term. While up-scaling can further enrich our learning from the same set of community actors, on new indicators, and would ensure sustainability of our existing efforts, horizontal replication in other areas would mean that the acquired knowledge is passed on largely by those who themselves needed this support in the past. It could be interesting to work with citizens whose capacities have been strengthened, to build capacities of other citizens who are stakeholders elsewhere in the same government project or even a different government project.

## References:


Status of Baisis in the Contemporary Context: A Study in the Deogarh District of Jharkhand

Nandini Sen*

Context

Traditional institutions of self-governance are known to have existed and played an important role in indigenous or tribal communities. The baisi, which is part of the four tiered traditional mechanisms for self-governance and social justice in Santhal society, has historically held an important position in Santhal society.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the baisi was revived as a forum for political and social mobilisation during the movement for a separate Jharkhand state. In addition to social reform measures like education, anti-temperance movements and inexpensive dispute redressal, these ‘Adivasi Samaj Sudhar Baisis’ played a vital role in the ‘Dhankattiya Movement’ (a popular uprising against the oppression of the moneylenders) between 1972-74 (Singh K.S., 1982).

Today, VDOs like Madhupur based Lok Jagriti Kendra (LJK), are again attempting to revive the baisi, this time to use it as a forum for the community’s development.

In this connection, PRIA conducted a study to assess the existing status and the process of revival of baisi in the Deogarh district of Jharkhand, as well as to find points of action. The study was conducted in May- June 2001 with support from Lok Jagriti Kendra, Madhupur.

Baisi : An Element of Santhal Self Governance

The first tier of Santhal governance consists of the village administration, which is headed by a Majhi Haram. He is assisted by a Paranik (Deputy Headman), Nayake (priest), Godait (assistant priest), and Jog Majhi (responsible for youth affairs). Although these functionaries have distinct responsibilities, decisions can only be taken through the collective consensus of the community in a Kulhi Durup or village meeting. An optional second tier of administration is known as Chaurasi, which traditionally resolved disputes between two villages.

The baisi is the third tier of this administrative system. The exact number of villages in a baisi varies depending on the will of villages, which together constitute a baisi. The baisi is popularly known to be a speedy and effective justice dispensing system. The Paragana forms the highest level of this governance system. While members of the lower bodies are ex-officio members of the Paragana, a Paraganait heads this level. Traditionally the Pargana handled those disputes, which could not be resolved at any of the lower administrative levels. This institution is extinct in a large number of areas.

Collectivism is the central feature of the Santhal worldview. As such, the selection of functionaries and decision making is also a collective process.

* Nandini Sen is working at PRIA’s Centre for Civil Society and Participatory Development.
in which all adult males of the community participate. This entire system is an only male system where women have no role as far as decision making is concerned.

**Purpose of the Study**

- To review and assess the status of baisis in the Deogarh district of Jharkhand.
- To identify areas for future action.

**Methodology**

The study is a detailed review of the four currently existing Santhal baisis in the following locations.

Quick comparisons with non-functional baisis in surrounding areas and discussions with members of these erstwhile baisis like Jhalakdiha baisi in Giridih district, Jara Kherboni and Darve baisi in Deogarh District, helped in understanding the problems in the functioning of baisis.

The study was exploratory in nature and a combination of methods was used to collect and analyse data. These involved semi-structured interviews, participant observation, focused group discussions, workshop with key persons and review of available secondary data.

**Findings of the Study**

**A. Process of formation**

The baisi is constituted through a process of community discussion and open meetings. A process of consensus building amongst Majhi Harams and other community leaders is involved in the selection of functionaries and formalization of the baisi and its functions.

**B. Structure**

The baisi has three kinds of functionaries: office bearers, members of the executive or advisory committee and ordinary members. Each is interlinked with the next layer. All functionaries and advisory group members are members of the general assembly. All decisions are taken by consensus of the entire group.

Office bearers consist of a Chairman or Sabhapati, Secretary or Sachiv, Treasurer or

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Baisi</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>Functional Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adivasi Samaj Sudhar Vichar Baisi, Javagudi</td>
<td>Block-Madhupur District- Deogarh</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Functional since 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adivasi Samaj Sudhar Vichar Baisi, Navadih</td>
<td>Block- Koro, District-Deogarh</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Functional since January 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adivasi Samaj Sudhar Vichar Baisi, Salmandra</td>
<td>Block - Madhupur and Koro, District-Deogarh</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Partly functional (highly irregular). Started in October 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adivasi Samaj Sudhar Vichar Baisi, Karaiya</td>
<td>Block- Koro, District- Deogarh</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Partly functional (highly irregular). Started in December 2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Koshadhyaksha and Post Man or Patra Vahak. The advisory group is not involved in the functioning until the larger assembly is unable to take a decision. The general assembly of the baisi consists of the Majhi Haram as well as other informal leaders or opinion makers within the community.

C. Activities

Most baisis are engaged in the resolution of intra-community disputes. These may be petty fights, issues of trespassing, marital and pre-marital disputes, cases of eve teasing and disputes over land.

The Navadih baisi is also trying to start schools for tribal children to be run by educated members of the community. It is also mobilising support for the formation of school monitoring committees to monitor local schools. In addition, it has also initiated a process of strengthening the village Majhi system in its area.

D. Meetings, rules and records

Baisi meetings are open meetings and are generally held every second Sunday. Discussions on activities taken up by the baisi as well as discussions on the management of the forum are part of these deliberations. Baisis usually maintain copies of applications of cases registered with the baisi and a proceeding register. All the baisis also propose to maintain an accounts register detailing expenditure and income in the future.

Each baisi evolves its own rules through past experience and after assessing present needs. Although many of these norms are unwritten, baisis are increasingly trying to shift to a set of written norms and rules. Amongst other things, these norms pertain to the code of conduct during a baisi meeting, the quorum, and number of meetings.

E. Linkages of the baisi with other institutions

At present only the Javagudi baisi has significant linkages with the administration, police and local politicians. It has created the post of a Prakhand Adhyaksha to maintain and manage these external linkages. The baisi has used its links with the local MLA to pressurise the police to allow marital and petty disputes registered with the local thana to be taken back into the social forum. According to members, the mere presence of political bigwigs in some baisi meetings grants legitimacy to the baisi.

The Salmandra baisi has significant links with the local tribal political party. Most of the key functionaries of this baisi regard it as a forum for mobilising political support. All other baisis are currently functioning in isolation and have not developed any links with other groups.
VDOs like Lok Jagriti Kendra have been providing consistent support to all the mentioned baisis in terms of facilitating their formation and giving them advice about managing a baisi. They have also been trying to motivate members to try and use this forum to take up developmental activities.

F. Problems in the functioning of baisis

Poor and irregular attendance by members of baisis due to social commitments like marriages, is resulting in delay in decisions given by the baisi.

Inability to sustain mass interest in the baisi for a long period of time. In part, this is due to limited community participation, migration of members in search of livelihoods and a lack of trust in the functioning of the baisi.

G. Reasons for decline of erstwhile baisis

The problems faced by the revived baisis were often rooted in the reasons of decline of the baisis that were formed in the 60s and 70s. A review of these baisis revealed important internal and external factors, responsible for this decline.

One of the principal causes of the demise of this social institution was lack of need for the institution. Once the baisi had served its basic purpose of securing freedom from the oppression of the moneylenders, there was no incentive to be part of the baisi or engage in its deliberations. This was aided by a lack of leadership and direction. Other factors were misuse of funds, arbitrary rules of functioning, and favouritism in decision making.

An important factor was politicisation of this people’s association and its failure to keep political and social agendas separate. Although some of these baisis were successful in getting their candidates elected to the state legislature, the baisi weakened and got divided along partisan lines.

The study revealed two kinds of external pressures. Firstly, the function of baisis as alternate courts of justice was challenged in court by vested interests within the Santhal community. It was alleged that the baisi was an unlawful institution and community members had no right to engage in justice dispersion when there were formal courts to take up such matters.

Secondly, in some cases the administration pressurised the baisi functionaries to stop operating. The reasons were mixed. Threatened by the growing power of the baisis, vested interests within the community used their connections with the local administration to pressurise the baisi. In some cases, the administration advised the baisi functionaries to stop functioning in order to prevent communal tension between the tribal and non-tribal groups, regarding decisions of the baisi.

H. Value attached to a baisi

The value of a baisi for a Santhal can be understood only when the multiple meanings attached to it by the community are uncovered. The most commonly held view is that baisi is an indigenous and inexpensive forum for dispute redressal. For others, it is an indigenous vehicle for social reform and development, within the tribal community. An emerging view is that the baisi is a forum for political mobilisation. Opinion is divided on whether the baisi should be used as a forum for mainstream politics or function as a watchdog to the local government.

The Santhal community feels that the dispute redressal role of the baisi was of great importance in the past. However in order to retain its importance and relevance in the contemporary context, the baisi needs to move beyond this role.
and take on a more proactive developmental and political role.

In general, even though the concept of ‘baisi’ is still held in high esteem as an indigenous (adivasi) institution, but people have limited involvement and trust in the revived baisis. Hindus and Muslims living in the area view the baisi as a traditional dispute-solving forum solely for the Santhals. It is useful as it involves an inexpensive and out of court settlement. However they do not find themselves connected with these baisis in anyway.

**Implications for the Future**

Traditionally, the baisi evolved as a popular means of dispute redressal in a Santhal society that was not as complex, and relatively isolated from external influences, including that of the nation state. The contemporary context is vastly different. The Santhal community is no longer as isolated as before. It has come under the purview of the nation-state. Functions performed by traditional institutions like the baisi have been taken up by state agencies like the police and the court. With time, the needs, demands and aspirations of the Santhal community are also changing. Amongst these opportunities for employment, education and political representation have become priorities for the community.

In this changed context, there are a number of questions confronting traditional institutions like the baisi. What is the relevance of this traditional institution in the contemporary context? If state agencies have taken up its functions, is it still required in the present context? Given the changed context, can it still perform its traditional roles effectively? What are the limitations in performing this role? Does the baisi need to take up a new role in the future?

What roles can it take up? Does it have the required capability to do so? Can it take up these roles in its present form or is some kind of change required? Answers to these questions require a discussion on the baisi’s traditional role and its present role, if any, in the contemporary, changed context.

Implications of the presence of formal agencies of dispute redressal can be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, the existence of a formal space to challenge the decision of the baisi has reduced the legitimacy of the baisi. On the other, the presence of these institutions can be used to check exploitation or excessively harsh treatment meted out by the baisi.

Today, the Santhal community finds itself in increasing contact with non-tribal communities. However, the baisi finds itself constrained in addressing inter-community disputes. This is because it does not have social legitimacy in non-tribal communities and is viewed as a distinctly ‘tribal’ institution for settling intra-tribal disputes.

The newly constituted baisis are also affected by limited representativeness. As of today, there is limited participation of the wider community in the functioning of the revived baisi. By virtue of its very composition—this “all male” institution excludes the female of the community. Also, the baisi can only be considered to be representative of the community if the Majhi system at the village level is created through popular consensus. However, this system has considerably weakened and got fragmented in recent years. Thus, representativeness of this forum, even amongst males, is questionable.

The community believes that a baisi can sustain if it gives correct judgements and is fair and transparent in its practices. Formalization of
norms within the baisi, holding baisi deliberations in public view, scrupulous maintenance of records and allowing their public scrutiny can all help to make the baisi more transparent in its functioning, provided members have the will to do so. However, internal changes can only sustain when external pressures like low interest of the community, attempts to politicise the baisi, pressure from the administration and vested interests within the community are also addressed.

A greater challenge is countering external threats, given the limited legitimacy of the baisi. The need to gain social legitimacy has taken various forms. Some would like to get the baisi registered, to demonstrate its legitimacy. Some groups are trying to build effective linkages with the local administration, police, political institutions and political leaders. This step is necessary to cope with vested interests within and outside the community, who may try to disturb its functioning. The down side of this is a possibility of succumbing to external pressure. This is more so in the case of political connections. There exists a distinct possibility that the baisi will be politicised in the future. This is based on two emerging phenomenon. First, a certain section of the community is actively aspiring to use the baisi to enter the political mainstream. Secondly, local political parties are equally keen to gain political mileage by promoting such traditional ‘tribal’ institutions. In the event politicisation takes place at this infant stage of revival, the baisi will get fragmented along party lines and lose its social legitimacy, as is evident from the experience of the earlier baisis.

Despite all these limitations, the study shows that the baisi is particularly effective for resolving petty, family and marital disputes. By providing a quick, inexpensive and out of court settlement, it provides the common Santhal a simpler and alternate forum for seeking justice.

Another key question for traditional institutions like the baisi is its relevance in the contemporary context. In contemporary Santhal society provision of basic services like education, availability of a locally sustainable livelihood and active political participation have emerged, as priority needs. This augurs well for efforts made to promote the baisi as a developmental forum - as it builds on a required need of the community. There also exists a core group of socially conscious and widely recognised people from within the community who are willing to take this effort forward.

The feeling of ownership that Santhals have over the institution, ideological as it may be, is of vital importance in promoting the baisi as a forum for development. Given the spontaneous participation of people in the process of formation of revived baisis, limited as it may be, is indicative of the baisi’s potential to bring the community together for a collective purpose. Notwithstanding the limited representativeness of the contemporary baisis, it can be pointed out that processes within the baisi seek to maintain the collective worldview that is so intrinsic to the Santhal community. These values are of relevance in the contemporary developmental context where efforts are being made to promote participatory forms of decision making.

To be effective, the baisi needs to work on three issues: widening legitimacy, increasing representativeness, formalization and strengthening linkages. Given that legitimacy is derived from the usefulness of an institution, the baisi needs to take up a developmental activity, which reflects the need of the community.
It is also necessary to widen the involvement and participation of the community, especially of women, in the formation and functioning of the baisi. Wide and consistent publicity to the process of revival, ensuring the involvement of the entire community in this process and formalising the involvement of women in this institution can prove to be useful strategies for increasing the representativeness of the baisi. Given that the Majhi system forms the basis of the baisi, efforts to strengthen the baisi will become effective only when similar steps are taken to strengthen the village Majhi system.

Till now the baisi has functioned on a voluntary basis. However, if the baisi takes up a development activity it will have monetary implications and implications on the structure of the baisi. Steps will need to be taken to formalise procedures, and maintain records scrupulously. This will not only curtail the power of the members, but ensure transparency and accountability to the community. While the baisis are moving in the direction of formalising procedures and effective record keeping and information dissemination, much remains to be done in this regard.

The baisi will also need to form linkages with the other institutions like the Panchayats, local administration and other CSOs in the area. These linkages can help to keep the baisi informed of happenings in the area and be supportive of its work. Whether or not these linkages would result in politicisation would depend on the way these relationships are managed. It will also depend on the extent to which the baisi can function exclusively as a social institution for the larger public good and keep itself away from mainstream politics.

Contemporary baisis are in their infancy. Hence it is too early to comment on the shape they will take in the future. However, the potential for using it as a forum for development does exist. Actualisation of this potential depends mainly on the way its members and those trying to promote baisi address its external and internal issues.

Endnotes

1 Although one finds references to the Majhi system and the Paragana system in anthropological literature on the Santhals, there appears to be no mention of the word ‘baisi’ before the 1970s. However the collective memory of the people corroborates the traditional existence of this assembly throughout Santhal Pargana.

2 Status would include the following parameters:
- Formation: process of formation, membership and norms of functioning
- Structure
- Functioning: functions, leadership, communication, conflict resolution, records maintained
- Linkages: with administration, courts, police, other civil society organisations

Reference:
Research Practice Engagement for Social Development

Ranjita Mohanty*

The need to engage research and practice for social development is widely acknowledged and there are occasional attempts to foster such an engagement by bringing the practitioners and researchers together to a common platform. As the issues of social injustice, empowerment of women and dalit, inclusion of the voices of the excluded in governance, making policies which are more exclusive than inclusive gain currency, the need for creating and expanding the knowledge base and a simultaneous rethinking of ways of intervention is pressing us to discover new ways of bringing practitioners and researchers closer. The need for researchers and practitioners to come together has perhaps never been felt more urgently than at this period of transition when social rearrangement is taking place on a grand scale due to globalisation, shrinking of the state, rise of market, ascendancy of local culture and resurgence of civil society.

Practice and research engagement (PRE) is based on the understanding and appreciation that they share a universality of purpose that is affecting social development and that they can be complementary to each other in achieving this goal. However, despite the desirability of PRE, there are critical issues which affect the engagement. First, PRE upsets the traditional division of labour in Indian society where ‘mental’ and ‘manual’ are not only separate categories of work - they have different connotations of power and respectability attached to them. Second, academic institutions where the bulk of the research work is conducted are not very open to work with practitioners. Though there are cases of individual scholars maintaining associations with field based organisations, these are individual initiatives and not necessarily promoted by the institution. Third, achieving the balance between academic rigour of research and its practical use has been a matter of concern to researchers and practitioners working together.

At PRIA, we have been constantly striving to minimise the distance between practice and research and forge a more horizontal association between them. PRIA occupies a unique and advantageous niche in the process of PRE. It is an institution which is engaged in practice; it also promotes research, and by advocating the use of participatory research methods it also demystifies the systems of knowledge production characteristic of academic institutions. It thus influences practice by generating knowledge; it also influences practice by influencing dominant systems of knowledge production. PRIA’s association with the schools of social work in India indicates that our endeavours to forge a sustained and meaningful relationship between research and practice, have been successful.

The schools of social work in India are also uniquely placed to conduct research, as well as engage in developmental interventions at the community level. PRIA began its association with the schools of social work in India in 1994. Initially it began as a series of inter-professional dialogues at the national and regional levels. The dialogues provided opportunities for researchers

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and practitioners to evolve a common thinking on participatory development and participatory research.

Two national and three regional inter-professional dialogues on participatory development and participatory research were organised between 1995-1997. These dialogues which took place between researchers and practitioners drawn from universities (engaged in research and teaching social work), and voluntary development organisations elaborate the conceptual framework of participatory development and research. The implications of incorporating the theme of participatory development and methods of participatory research in teaching and research, particularly for social work education and practice were highlighted. These inter-professional dialogues emphasised on the following:

- Social work education must provide a holistic understanding of development.
- Changes in social work education curriculum are needed to incorporate participatory development and participatory research.
- Both teaching and field work should adopt a participatory approach.
- Participatory research should form an integral part of social work research methodology.

As part of this initiative, a research fund on participation was created by PRIA, in order to catalyse the involvement of the teachers and the students of schools of social work to undertake field based research on issues related to community participation. Till date seven studies on the theme of “People’s participation in development” have been undertaken under the fund.

*National Inter Professional Dialogue on Participatory Research and Participatory Development, April 1997*
Overview of the Research Fund studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Study</th>
<th>By</th>
<th>Focus Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Fighting Industrial Pollution - A study of the participation mechanisms of community based organisations in two sample villages in Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>Dr. B. Devi Prasad Dept of Social Work, Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>Dynamic study of two community-based organisations in the Visakhapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh. The essay narrates the struggle of these two organisations against industrial pollution in their villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Participatory Research for People’s Empowerment. A study of people’s needs and aspirations in the rehabilitation of pollution - affected villages in Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>Dr. B. Devi Prasad Department of Social Work, Visakhapatnam</td>
<td>This study presents the findings of a participatory research (PR) intervention among victims of industrial pollution awaiting relocation in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tribal women’s participation in sustainable tribal development</td>
<td>Dr. V.V. Devasia Tripude College of Social Work, Nagpur</td>
<td>This study describes a participatory research project among tribal women in Maharashtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Safe Drinking Water: A study of women’s participation in development</td>
<td>Dr. Leelamma Devasia Tripude College of Social Work, Nagpur</td>
<td>This study describes a participatory research project in ten Maharashtrian villages in the Nagpur District of Vidarbha the dynamics of women’s to study participation in obtaining safe drinking water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Participatory Structure: The concept and forms</td>
<td>S. Selvam Department of Social Work, Delhi University</td>
<td>This essay defines and elaborates the concept of “participatory structure.” An illustrative case study is also provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Urban Poor Women and The People’s Campaign- A study on urban poor women in people’s campaign in the medical college ward of Thiruvanthapuram city</td>
<td>K.A. Joseph Loyala College of Social Sciences, Kerala</td>
<td>This is a study on urban poor women in the people’s campaign in the medical college ward of Thiruvanthapuram city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Promoting thrift and saving among women- women’s participation in self help groups</td>
<td>A.I Sheikh and G.S Yelene School of Social Sciences, Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded</td>
<td>The study aims to evaluate women’s participation in self help groups programme jointly planned and implemented by Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal Ltd and Govt. of Maharashtra, under Maharashtra Rural Credit Project financed by IFAD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilitating Regional Nodal Centers

Building on its previous experience of association with the schools of social work, PRIA has forged collaborations with five selected schools of social work from different regions to work as Regional Nodal Centers (RNCs) for strengthening the research and practice on the themes of participation, citizenship, and democratic governance. This effort got further impetus as the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, extended short-term financial support to the RNCs.

The theme of participation has always been PRIA’s forte; in recent times due to the global changes taking place in the form of rise of market institutions and the further shrinking of the state from the lives of people, citizenship and democratic governance have assumed greater importance. An active citizenry is seen as the vehicle for fostering participation of the poor and marginalised in governance so as to enhance its democratic quality. This has become more so as governance is seen not merely the responsibility of the government but all institutions occupying the public place, including the institutions of civil society and market.

Keeping in view the changing national and global contexts, RNCs are envisioned to be centres of excellence in the thematic field of participation, citizenship, and democratic governance. Since they are best placed to combine research and practice, as RNCs they are committed to undertake research on these themes, sensitize the faculty and students on them, and elaborate action programme based on these themes. As RNCs their role is also to take an initiative and provide impetus to other schools of social work in the region to incorporate the themes of participation, citizenship, and democratic governance in their teaching and research.

Institutions committed to work as RNCs:

- Stella Maris Collage of Social Work, Chennai
- College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan, Mumbai
- Department of Social Work, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam
- School of Social work, Lucknow University, Lucknow
- Department of Social Work, Viswa-Bharati, Santiniketan

RNCs are envisioned to promote research – practice engagement in three significant ways:

1. Undertaking and promoting research on issues which have a practical relevance – those issues which have a policy / developmental implication

2. Promoting participatory research as a method to be followed in the research work to be undertaken by teachers and students of social work.

3. Synchronising the issues for research and issues for developmental interventions in the community; i.e. developmental interventions in the community are to be carried around those issues on which research is being conducted. This would help in combining reflection and action; and the insights generated at each step would guide the next step.

RNCs have been undertaking research on various issues related to these three themes: village level institutions such as water users associations as forum for community participation in development; women’s leadership among the elected dalit panchayat members; leadership and factionalism in village panchayat; participation of social workers in statutory bodies constituted
under various acts such as the Juvenile Justice Act, Bonded Labour (System) Abolition Act, Prisons Act, Family Court Act and Consumer Protection Act; and the rural reconstruction work of Rabindra Nath Tagore.

Besides research, RNCs propose to pursue the three themes in a number of ways: introducing new courses which are based on any of these themes for the students of social work (Stella Maris College has already introduced a course on citizenship); encouraging students to use participatory research methods in their research work; making participation an intrinsic component of higher research (School of Social Work, Lucknow University has made it mandatory for scholars interested in pursuing higher research, to first work with the community and on the basis of that experience, undertake research which would be helpful in developmental intervention); encouraging other regional universities to take similar steps; develop reading material on the three themes.

PRIA’s past associations with the schools of social work reveal that substantial and sustainable engagement between research and practice can be fostered only around socially relevant issues. This engagement then prompts reflection on these issues and form a basis for action.
International Perspective on Voluntary Action. Reshaping the Third Sector

The role of the third sector and the context of their action in both the North and the South need to be relooked at in the backdrop of a wide range of emerging issues and challenges. While the sector is being reshaped across the globe, there is a growing need to share the commonalities and diversity of experience from the researchers' as well as the practitioners' perspective. In this context, the collection of papers in this volume marks a beginning in the third sector literature and attempts to set future research agendas for the sector.

The introductory chapter, categorises the existing universe of literature on third sector organisations in the North and the South into two broad categories of 'non-profit (NPO) literature' and 'NGO literature'. While this might be labelled as too simplistic a classification, nonetheless, it provides a useful framework to deal with the terminological and conceptual complexities that prevail around the third sector organisations.

The book has been divided into two parts. Part I explores global third sector themes and analyses connections that exist between NGOs working in the North and the South. The chapter by John Gaventa, highlights the possibility of effective horizontal exchange between CBOs and NGOs working in the North and the South. The need for establishing such global links, he argues, becomes more pertinent in the context of asymmetrical growth patterns in the North where one may come across 'South within the North'. The practicability of such horizontal sharing and linkages has been shown through interesting case studies. In a similar attempt, David Brown explores the potential of social learning through the levels of networks, coalitions, and alliances. Brown's case studies describe different forms of such learning, mechanisms and analyse the whole process of social learning, starting from creating such networks to knowledge acquisition, distribution and intervention. Although the studies point out the complexities and fragility involved in the learning processes, Brown views them as a viable institutional arrangement to promote diverse viewpoints and strengthen sustainable development, particularly, in the context of an increasingly interdependent world of social learning.

The chapter by Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier seeks to go beyond the universe of existing terminologies, assumptions and research foci. It argues that any meaningful understanding of the concept of nonprofit sector must also include a host of associations with roots in traditional religious and cultural life, those expressing missionary activism and others that represent growing assertiveness of middle class professionals and commercial elite. In the context of serious limitations of the existing NGO/NPO literature to facilitate understanding on a wide range of small scale, informal or associational organisations within the third
sector, this pioneering work by Salomon and Anheier sheds useful light on the theories and concepts being used to understand the nonprofit sector.

Part 2 of the book compares research findings from the two research universes on some common themes like governance, organisational legitimacy and values, policy advocacy and evaluation and effectiveness. The chapters on governance by Margaret Harris and Quadeer Baig highlight a range of issues and challenges facing the third sector organisations in the North and the South respectively. While organisational issues like composition of the governing board and its relationship with the staff are strongly represented in nonprofit literature, the field of research is fairly new in the context of Southern NGOs. Raising concern over proliferation of prescriptive handbooks and introductory texts about the organisation and management of the voluntary sector in UK and North America, Harris explicitly puts forth the need to undertake research on many relatively unexplored and complex issues. Similarly, Baig’s study on third sector governance issues, expresses the need to go beyond the governing body frame work into a wider framework of regulation and unstable, risk-prone and resource scarce environment to understand the complicated nature of governance problems facing the NGOs in the South.

The differences in emphasis between the two sets of literature continue in the work on values and legitimacy by Hashemi & Hassan and Rob Paton. While Hashemi & Hassan construe the legitimacy of NGOs in Bangladesh in the backdrop of the contest between the state and political parties, Paton has looked into the issue from a management perspective. The discussion by Paton highlights some worrying signals about value-based conflicts and tensions implicit in voluntary agencies. Hashemi also expresses concern about the tendency of shifting conscientizing visions of radical transformation to a new donor-supported liberal vision in order to get legitimacy. Sharing similar concern over lack of required commitment to conform to the stated primacy of values in the mission statements among NGOs and voluntary agencies, Edwards advocates to publicly accept if values are really not the bottom line. He figures that the failure of most NGOs lies in not addressing real issues concerning the form and content of values, and its operationalisation in the management system and decision making process. While arguing for being, becoming and remaining a truly value based organisation, Edwards also accepts that this is an extremely complex and demanding agenda.

Looking beyond the ‘organisational framework’ Najam asserts that citizen organisations should be looked on as policy-entrepreneurs or para-policy agencies that directly or indirectly influence policy. The chapter, attempts to construct a broader framework for understanding how citizen organisations influence the process and substance of public policy, as well their activity as policy monitors, as innovators of new approaches and service providers. This has been done by using examples of citizens organisations from both the North and the South. The discussion undertaken by Najam may also help in constructing a framework for undertaking comparative research on key questions relating to the impact of citizen organisations on the policy enterprise. The chapter by Marilyn Taylor, explores the ways in which the voluntary sector in UK has contributed to policy. It examines how this role has developed over time and identifies the challenges that it faces in the policy environment of the 1990s’. Taylor asserts for an effective partnership between the state and voluntary
sector in order to meet societal needs in the context of particularistic, patchy and exclusive nature of the voluntary organisations. The discussion argues for empowering the excluded groups in order to influence policy and hold the rest of the sector as well as the government to account. Fowler’s analysis of the experience of voluntary and non-governmental development organisations in understanding and improving the effectiveness of advocacy efforts brings out the need to appreciate the complex reality in which they operate. Although the discussion offers new opportunities for advocacy work, it also figures out constraints like the resource dependence of many NGOs, which drift them away from building and strengthening necessary civic rootedness required to maintain their credibility.

Finally the chapters on issues of evaluation and effectiveness, summarise the lessons learnt from the review of the UK voluntary sector and also share the nature of evidence emerging from international aid donors’ attempt to evaluate the impact of the NGOs which they support. Review by Kendall and Knapp highlights considerable complexities involved with the concept and practice of evaluation of voluntary organisations. In the view of the complexity involved, they propose that any evaluation process should be a multi-framed activity and must explain the assumptions and value judgements involved. Riddell’s analysis summarises the main results and findings of a draft report commissioned by and produced for the Expert Group on Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD). The chapter discusses the approaches to evaluation conducted by NGOs themselves in the backdrop of evaluations commissioned by donors. Riddell raises some methodological issues related with the donor-initiated, mega-evaluation studies and explores some of the possibilities of initiating new interaction patterns between donors and NGOs that may lead to a new approach to impact evaluation.

The papers in this volume encapsulate complexities of the global third sector issues involved at the level of both research and action. A wide range of themes combined with a lack of coherence in the presentation of chapters, however, make it tough reading. Nonetheless, to mark a beginning in the third sector research agenda it greatly helps in developing conceptual understanding about the nature of voluntary action around the world, and the form of the emerging third sector at the level of action.

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Complex Responsive Processes in Organisations. Learning and Knowledge Creation

Author: Ralph D Staey; Routledge, London, 2001, pages : 258

Today’s organisational asset is largely taken to be the knowledge it possesses. Since this can not be traded or measured or recorded, the gap between the value that an organisation gives to itself and the value that it is accorded externally, is quite large. This has motivated many to measure the intellectual capital within the organisation and to effectively manage its ‘knowledge assets’. Two problems are posed here - firstly, knowledge is located within individuals and is in tacit form. Individuals possessing knowledge could leave the organisation taking it with them, which, in turn, creates significant management problems. Secondly, individuals may be reluctant to share the knowledge they possess. Both these problems require management styles that encourage and persuade people to share knowledge and spread it around the organisation, to adopt empowering management styles, to be able to extract the tacit knowledge within the individuals and convert it into explicit form that can be stored and used by others.

In the first half of the century, management was essentially thought to be a function of controlling people. In the second half, the systems approach stressed upon management of people’s relationships and inter-related system of tasks and roles. Later in the 1980’s, the focus of control widened from the details of tasks to relationships to the ‘system of beliefs’ and the concept of learning organisation became popular. Managing the changes in people’s minds was now emphasised, as it was thought possible for people to engineer changes in their own and in other people’s minds. The shift was from controlling actions of humans at the workplace, to the relationship between two individuals, to the beliefs, values and minds of the individuals. Having placed the individual in the centre of everything, when we talk of the human capital being the very ‘soul’ of organisations, we take for granted that knowledge can be owned, managed and controlled. Therefore when we talk of measuring intellectual capital and managing knowledge, we are talking of controlling the very identities of persons, for that is where the knowledge exists.

Learning and knowledge creation, in fact arise in complex responsive processes of relating between humans. Relating is a communicative interaction. Knowledge creation is a communication process between humans. It is not stored but is constructed from time to time. The book ‘Complex Responsive Processes in Organisations - Learning and Knowledge Creation’ is part of a series that aims to explore complex responsive processes of relating within organisations - be it knowledge generation and management, intellectual capital, or human relations. It has three parts:

The first part “The Foundations of Mainstream views on Learning and Knowledge Creation in
Organisations: Systems Thinking” presents mainstream views on learning and knowledge creation in organisations, with the systems approach in focus. The author, highlights some key elements of learning as being transmitting knowledge between individuals, diffusing it across the organisation and storing it in explicit forms. Key issues that emerge in this context are: is it the team/group that is said to learn, or is it just the individual members who do so? If it is the individuals who learn and create knowledge then how will this individual learning be shared across the organisation?, how will it be retained by the organisation?

In the second section of this part, on knowledge creation, the underlying assumption is that new knowledge may come from tapping the tacit knowledge stored within individuals and translating it into the explicit form i.e., making it more formal, systematic and easily transferable. But here what the mainstream thinking has ignored is how this completely new tacit knowledge arose within the individual (The individual already possesses this tacit knowledge). Therefore, the knowledge may be ‘new’ to the organisation but, it is not new per se. The transfer of knowledge may therefore then, be a movement between the explicit and the tacit forms of knowledge.

In the section on different levels - learning and knowledge creation in organisations, the individual and the social are seen as different levels where learning and knowledge creation takes place. They are seen as two separate, mutually influencing levels. An interesting concept, mentioned, in this part, is the ‘double-looping’ process of conversion between the tacit and the explicit knowledge by mimicry, through articulation in the form of prototypes and models, teaching and learning.

The second part, “Towards a complexity perspective: The emergence of knowledge in complex responsive processes of relating”, explores the emergence of knowledge in complex responsive processes of relating. The first section of this part looks into the individual and the social in communicative interaction through ‘complex adaptive systems as a source domain for analogies of human acting and knowing’. The author argues that the system does not provide an analogy for human action, but, the process of interaction does. The next section talks about the communicative action in the medium of symbols and includes the importance of feelings and abstract thinking. It holds that humans communicate through symbols which are the responsive bodily interactions of relating, and since these symbols are meaning and knowledge, therefore knowledge is not an ‘it’ but a process of action.

Knowledge is a process of patterning symbols, and the next section talks about the global rules of language and the structuring of communication, narrative forms of communication and patterning of experiences. Another section talks about the emergence of enabling constraints that are the power relations and unconscious processes. It argues that, power relations are an important feature of the communicative interaction, in which knowledge arises. Therefore, to manage knowledge would mean to manage power relations and ideology.

A section also talks about organisation as communicating in the living present and the issue of how knowledge emerges in complex responsive processes of relating. From the perspective of this section, knowledge emerges from communicative interaction between people and emerges as meaning in the ongoing relating between people. Collective and individual
identity evolves and communicative interaction, learning and knowledge creation are the same processes as the evolution of identity. From this perspective, the author feels that it is ‘meaningless to ask whether the organisations learn or the people in organisations learn. It is the same process.’

In the third part “Systems thinking and the perspective of complex responsive processes - comparisons and implications”, comparisons between systems thinking and the complex responsive processes along with its implications are included. Knowledge is not designed and does not exist in a ‘transcendent common pool’ but emerges from the interaction between bodies, in different situations in the ‘living’ present. The organisational implications of processes of knowledge creation through the limitations of the systems approach in managing knowledge are shared in one section. This section is very interesting especially as it deals with the whole issue of intellectual and human capital and how this can be measured within organisations.

A section is also devoted to the issue of hiring and retaining the human capital within organisations. Spreading knowledge around the organisation may be achieved by designing more flexible, flat and decentralised organisational structures, behavioural change and by inspiring and removing barriers to informal contact. Knowledge is not a “thing” but, a process of “meaning making” where meaning is reproduced and transformed by the communicative relation between two individuals. Therefore, any concern with improving the knowledge creation capacity would concern the dynamics and quality of human relations within the organisation.

This is interesting reading especially for psychologists, sociologists, OD practitioners, organisational behaviour experts and consultants. It encompasses all that one may need to know about knowledge and learning. However, it calls for some serious reading as the reader often gets lost in trying to find meaning in the maze of heavy phrases and big words. Some of the sections are good reading and the author has brought in many perspectives to the issue of knowledge creation / management and learning within organisations.

Reviewed by:
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Participation of the Poor in Development Initiatives. Taking their Rightful Place.

Carolyn M. Long; Earth Scan, London, 2001, pages : 192

The theory and practice of development has undergone several changes over the years. Most of these changes have come with the recognition that development policy initiatives have failed to recognize the complexities and diversities of the poor. The identification of needs and the design of interventions have generally been top-down. The distant experts formulated people-centered, macro-economic and sectoral policies, such as education, health, drinking water, forestry, and agricultural development. Absence of the voice and choice of the primary stakeholders—the poor, affected in-turn the appropriateness of such policies. Involvement of local people as active agents is gradually becoming a key development priority. In grassroots mobilisation, based on the praxis of social equity and justice, civil society and people’s organization (i.e. NGOs) have influenced the paradigm shift in the development discourse towards participation as a right of citizenship.

Many NGOs have been advocating an alternative bottom-up participatory development since early 1970’s. The experiences of participation, and the advocacy and monitoring efforts carried out by the NGOs around the world, accelerated the efforts towards bringing together the participation of the poor into donor operations in many ways. The most consistent, long-term NGO voice advocating participation to the World Bank has been the NGO Working Group (NGO-WG) on the World Bank. It is a platform for NGOs to engage in policy dialogue with the World Bank on issues related to both project and policy areas. In 1981, the World Bank created the NGO-World Bank Committee to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between the World Bank staff and the NGO Working Group. By 1984, NGO members of the Committee established the Working Group as an autonomous parallel body, that included only the NGOs. (PRIA chaired the sub-group on participation of the NGO Working Group (NGO-WG) on the World Bank and coordinated monitoring of fifteen project and policy cases of the World Bank, in Africa and Latin America. It has also chaired the South Asia group for the last two years and is a member of the global executive committee.)

In the 1990’s, NGO-WG on the World Bank advocated the need for a participatory development approach with the World Bank in its own projects and policies. It brought together, under southern leadership, NGO representatives from both developing and developed countries, to question the World Bank regarding its policies, programmes and loans. The advocacy efforts focused mainly on a structural adjustment programme and primary stakeholder participation. The poor, marginalized and excluded, including women and indigenous people were identified as primary stakeholders, having a stake in the decision-making on donor funded projects and policies. This recognition is a significant milestone in a participative policy formulation.
In November 1998, the NGO-WG convened a multi stakeholder conference in Washington, DC at World Bank headquarters. This conference entitled “Upscaling and Mainstreaming Participation of Primary Stakeholders: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward” did a stocktaking of experiences of participatory project development, policy formulations and of efforts to incorporate participation of primary stakeholders in the development initiatives during the past 15 years. It also delineated lessons learnt from such experiences and charted the way forward. The conference was co-sponsored by the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Authority (SIDA), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), German Technical Cooperation (Gessellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) (GTZ), the Department for International Development (DFID), and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). Participants were representatives of multilateral and bilateral donor foundations, recipient government implementing agencies, southern and northern NGOs and academics.

The book, “Participation of the Poor in Development Initiatives: Taking Their Rightful Place” by Carolyn Long is a good attempt to understand the underlying rationale for changes in donor strategies. Carolyn Long, is a consultant on the roles of civil society organizations in development. Her study deals with the relative effectiveness of participatory development initiatives to gain insights into future challenges. Her study may be useful in finding ways to effectively mainstream citizens’ participation in donor assisted development programmes of their governments. She has developed her analysis from the case studies on initiatives to incorporate participation in projects and policies. One can discern three concerns guiding her analysis. First, identify the means of enlarging participation, to more direct forms of influence over development projects of large donor organizations. Second, endorse the responsiveness of large donor agencies and recipient government implementing agencies towards participation of the primary stakeholders in decision-making. Third and the overriding concern, is to highlight the efforts of civil society towards participative development, and to describe the interventions of the NGO-WG with the donor agencies for this purpose.

Carolyn, while drawing extensively from the proceedings of the conference, takes a retrospective of work by donors, NGO activists and others to incorporate participation of the poor into development programmes and policies of donor agencies. Her study examines and assesses the success of the endeavors towards mainstreaming participation in development initiatives in the World Bank, and to a lesser extent, in other donor agencies and government implementing agencies, in order to make comparisons and draws lessons from this analysis for future advocacy efforts. For instance, the first chapter presents the historical background and evolutionary thinking leading to current understanding of participation as well as a framework of terms and definitions. The second chapter, reviews the evolution of participation policy in the World Bank and the role NGOs have played in promoting participation in this large, multilateral donor agency. It describes the process of engagement between NGOs and the World Bank and analyses the extent of influence of such engagement on the efforts of World Bank towards incorporating participation in its operations. The third chapter, provides a brief history of participation in policy formulation processes. Drawing on the experiences of GTZ, DFID, and the World Bank, this chapter reviews the efforts to use various kinds of participation at different stages of project cycle. The chapter also notes changes necessary in the project cycle and the process of policy formulation, in order
to make participation mutually beneficial and effective for all concerned.

The experiences of the World Bank and USAID, are analyzed and contrasted in the fourth chapter. These two donor agencies were selected on the basis of reports presented by each on organizational change at the 1998 Participation conference. This chapter provides an overview of reforms of internal organizational elements such as leadership, incentive and reward structures, human resource development and systems and procedures. In addition, it also reviews the role and importance of governance structures for donor agencies as well as the record in creating accountability mechanisms. Just as the donor agencies need to reorganize their structures and procedures to incorporate participation, so also do government ministries and other implementing agencies in the southern governments. The fifth chapter looks at important elements of enabling environment for government implementing agencies. It examines both the external factors such as changing donor development paradigm, changing roles of participants in development and the internal factors such as the political culture, decentralization and growing demand for citizen participation. The analysis of actual experiences of organizational change focuses on what needs to be changed to incorporate participation, and how donor agencies can change their own practices to assist southern governments to institutionalize participation. The last chapter synthesizes the lessons learnt relating to attitudinal changes and experiences in practice as well as organizational reforms and innovations and extracts lessons to guide future efforts towards including the participation of the poor in any development initiatives.

This is a well-researched and well-argued book with balanced interpretation of events and issues.

The analysis, on the one hand, unfolds the vital concerns of participation of primary stakeholders. On the other hand, it logically sums up the needs and mechanisms of incorporating their participation in development initiatives, the success and limitations of the impact of such mechanisms, and the conditions under which mechanisms might be reiterated.

Methodologically, this is a remarkable book. It represents the best of what research is all about. It successfully combines the application of historical and comparative analysis. Since it is based on reliable sources of information, it is a valuable reference guide for research scholars, as well as professionals involved in donor funded development initiatives. The simple, reflective and informative style of writing in an easy to understand manner is useful, for those interested in the issues of participation in development.

Reviewed by:
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New Roles and Relevance. 
Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change

The book, "New Roles and Relevance: Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change", presents a soul-searching discussion for development NGOs to discover their new roles and relevance against the backdrop of "new policy agenda". The liberal democratic, political and economic agendas are characterized by free markets, private property, individual incentives and enabling roles for the state under the overarching norms of "good governance". The editorial mentions that NGOs both in the north and the south either participated in the process of structural change or raised their voices against this dominance. Perhaps another group does exist which is not mentioned here. This group of grassroots NGOs especially in the south is unable to take a clear political stand, partly due to the complexities of these agendas and partly as they are not a part of the decision making process in any way.

The book includes nineteen articles, each discussed under separate chapters. The chapters are organized in three broad thematic areas. The first part is focused on the theme alternative thinking about development concepts and ideas, the second is on new approaches to influencing policy and the third is on innovations in development practices. The articles by different authors cover a range of topics relevant to the NGO work. They were presented originally at the Third International NGO Conference, which was held at Birmingham University in 1999. The topics include relief and development, social responsibilities of corporations, roles and challenges of civil societies, organizational learning, micro finance, micro enterprise development and policy advocacy.

The first paper explores three key trends: globalization and the reshaping of global poverty, inequality and insecurity; 'complex political emergencies' in the post cold war disorder; and the reform of international cooperation to address these changes. The discussion on the expression (often violently) of ethnic and religious identities as a defense mechanism against the effect of "cultural recolonization" as a result of "globalization of culture" is an eye opener for the promoters of globalization in its current form.

The first part of the book includes five articles focusing on the theme Alternative Thinking about Development Concepts and Ideas. Smillie argues that the concept of a 'continuum in which the external response to an emergency moves from relief through reconstruction to development' should be replaced by more holistic thinking about synergies between relief and development. Kaplan discusses the innate and natural process of development as opposed to the conventional 'deliverable' understanding of development. He also emphasizes the requirement of a new paradigm for development beyond resource transfer and an attitude towards learning. Zadek explores the debate on whether the corporate
community contributes or constrains the realization of sustainable social and environmental development demanded by the civil society. He argues that the competitive advantage can go side by side with the agenda of sustainable social and environmental development. However this would require a change in mindset and perceptions about the significance of ethical behaviour of the corporations rather than the financial significance of reputation.

Cameron cautioned that the NGOs run the risk of either being co-opted by the state or being commercialized by market institutions, since they occupy a position within the institutional space of the triangle created by civil society, state and market. Hailey highlights that organizational learning is inherently associated with organizational development and NGO capacity building. Effective organizational learning integrates informal processes like participative dialogue and learning by doing with formal structures and systems which include training, research, evaluation etc.

Second part of the book includes six articles focusing on the theme on New Approaches to Influencing Policy. Howell and Pearce raise the concern about the potential danger for civil society organizations becoming externally created, embodiment of external norms and goals and materially dependent on outside rather than local resources. Hudson explores the issues of effectiveness, legitimacy, accountability and governance in Northern NGOs and their involvement in advocacy and policy work. He concludes that the Northern NGOs cannot shy away from advocacy and policy work. Karim discusses that the growing global recognition of the civil society actors provides a conducive framework for NGOs to create considerable political space to promote democratization and good governance. However, partisan politics and an antagonistic attitude towards the NGOs by other actors have hindered this process to a large extent in Bangladesh.

Blair discusses how policy preferences, as well as personalities and opportunism make key differences to enact and implement development strategies targeted on marginal groups at a national level. Johnson et. al share the experience of micro-finance programmes in situations of macroeconomic instability, natural disasters and conflict and insecurity. Freres spells out that it is vitally important for NGOs to understand the institutions and its policy process when engaged with advocacy work. The European NGOs need to develop attainable goals since the NGOs have specific expertise in the area of aid policy as opposed to non aid policies related to trade, defense policy, immigration, etc.

The third part of the book includes seven articles focusing on Innovations in Development Practice. Chapman raises the issue that the role of southern grassroots activists within international campaigns is little recognized or understood by northern NGOs. Without these activists, changes in legislation or even monitoring of those changes will not necessarily achieve the desired effect. Crowther argues that the importance given by NGOs to local organizations often comes from their ideological stand point and overwhelming need for visibility. Richardson and Langdon discuss the tensions and dilemma of NGOs as providers of micro and small enterprise support within a community economic development context.

Mbabazi and Shaw highlight the role of indigenous, intermediary and international NGOs in the peace building process. Biggs and Matsaert introduce the ‘actor oriented approach’ to micro and small enterprise development which includes the importance of social
networks and information linkages between different actors in analyzing motives and the expectations and needs of clients and actors in service organizations. Simbi and Thom discuss the relationships between northern and southern NGOs which highlight three trends – pressure on northern NGOs to achieve measurable results, unequal relationships and new management tools that lead to a new form of relationship that is disempowering and ineffective.

In conclusion, various articles in the book have been able to challenge many existing beliefs and perceptions about the development processes, especially fostered by the NGOs both in the north and south. A significant portion of the book has analyzed the social, political and economic trends at the regional and local levels, which have been triggered off by many global trends. This new way of analyzing the local, regional and global trends would enable the NGOs to take on new roles in order to remain relevant agents of social change.

Reviewed by
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About PRIA Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), a non-profit voluntary development organisation based at New Delhi, India, has been promoting people centered development initiatives within the perspective of participatory research. It aims to strengthen popular knowledge, demystify dominant concepts and promote experiential learning and people’s participation. For nearly two decades this has been the basis of supporting empowerment of the poor and the oppressed in PRIA’s work. It learns about challenges of promoting people’s participation and democratic governance through local grassroots action via systematic documentation. It facilitates learning through sharing of its research findings and capacity building, by promoting a conducive environment and supportive public policies towards this end. PRIA operates locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Vision

PRIA’s vision of a desirable world is based on values of equity, gender justice and freedom. A balance between economic and social development and citizen’s rights and responsibilities with ecological regeneration which gives equal importance to local priorities and global demands and a balance between authority and accountability.

Mission

- To work towards democratic governance in society PRIA identifies the poor and the marginalized, focusing upon changing women’s roles and status as agents and leaders of change.
- Economic inequality requires addressing issues of poverty and powerlessness.
- Social exclusion entails mainstreaming participation by youth, tribal, dalits, elders and focusing on the rights of the workers and ordinary citizens.

Strategies

- Capacity Building - A wide variety of methods are used in enhancing and strengthening capacity at individual and institutional levels.
- Policy Advocacy - It entails influencing policies from the vantage point of enabling participation and empowerment of the marginalized by systematic and ongoing monitoring of existing policies, their implementation and reformulation. It builds networks, coalitions and alliances of like minded individuals and organisations to facilitate dialogues across differing perspectives and players and establishes linkages and accountability between micro and macro issues.
- Knowledge Building - Entails engaging in critical and systematic study of issues and institutions, which encourages or discourages a citizen from participating in democratic processes. New knowledge is aimed at social change involving partnership with the beneficiaries. The aim of empowerment of citizens is to shape their lives, which is achieved by linkages and accountability between research and action. This is the essence of PRIA’s philosophy “Knowledge is Power”.
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