Organization Development in Non-Governmental Organizations: An Overview

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In the field of development, non-profit, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have gained considerable visibility in the past decades. When modern development enterprise began after the Second World War, the prime mover in each developing and developed country was the government. Problems of rural development, water, sanitation, education, health, environment, forests, agriculture, employment, tribals and women, etc., were predominantly addressed by governmental ministries, departments and agencies. Local voluntary agencies, community associations and small indigenous development agencies did exist at that time too, but were largely invisible and marginal. With the rise of international aid for development in the South, Northern NGOs began to participate more actively in development programs in the South by late 1960s. Voluntary Development Organizations or NGOs as they are commonly called, in countries of the South began to gain attention of international donor agencies and national governments from the mid 1970s. In comparison to large-scale, inefficient, top-down, at times corrupt, government bureaucracies, NGOs were small, locally rooted, had rapport with local communities, flexible and dynamic and seemed to have greater impact of their development interventions.

This recognition slowly gained momentum and NGOs (both in the North and the South) began to attract increasingly larger amounts of bilateral and multilateral assistance, increased flow of private resources from northern NGOs and enhanced programmatic provisions from national and provincial governments. At the same time, NGOs in the South began to develop a variety of roles and functions. Various typologies classify them differently. Many NGOs work at grass-roots level, others do research, training, networking and advocacy. Some NGOs specialize (health, education, water, forestry, women, etc.), others have integrated and multi-sectoral programs. Some NGOs provide relief and welfare services, others promote community organization and empowerment. Some are small, informal groups, other are large development agencies.

This phenomenon was further expanded to include a broader framework of civil society in the late 1980s. NGOs became a sub-set of civil society, which comprised a variety of non-state and non-market actors and associations (Clark, 1991; Tandon and Mohanty 2002).

In this context, the resources, outreach, visibility, impact and presence of NGOs became a new social phenomenon throughout the world by the early 1990s. In the course of this development, strengthening capacities of NGOs to perform their tasks effectively began to gain certain significance since the mid 1980s. Concern with NGO capacity heightened much more among donors in the early 1990s as increasingly greater resources and performance expectations were placed on NGOs. Training as an intervention to strengthen capacity of NGO staff received some attention from the mid 1980s, but was largely limited to technical competencies. Capacity building of NGOs to manage their organizations more effectively and efficiently gained some attention only a decade ago (CDRA, 1995-96; IFCB, 1998; Tandon and Bandyopadhyay, 2003). It is only in the last decade that Institutional Strengthening (IS), Institutional Development (ID) or Organization Development (OD) of NGOs has begun to be discussed and practised (Fowler, et al., 1992; MDF, 1994). As more and more NGOs learn about OD or undergo OD experiences, greater body of knowledge will become available. However, in the current context of increasing demand for OD from NGOs and their donors, it is important to clarify the relevance and use of OD in NGOs and its implication.

## Meaning and Definition of Organization Development

Organization Development (OD) as a field of theory and practice in management science began nearly five decades ago with the practices of laboratory training methods (or T-Groups as they became known later) in National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute for Applied Behavioral Science in the USA in the early 1950s. A more comprehensive organizational focus (as opposed to mere individual focus of T-Groups) began to evolve in the actual practice of helping industrial organizations to improve their performance or solve human problems faced by them. A lot of initial practice in solving human problems of large-scale organizations occurred in military organizations (in particular coping with the post Second World War peace time role of military and its men).

OD began to get defined and redefined with increasing practice in solving real-life organizational problems in industry and government (Beckhardt, 1969). As understanding about the nature and functioning of complex organizations grew, the scope and depth of OD and its interventions also expanded. While many different definitions and frameworks have been adopted, certain key elements of OD have emerged from these wide ranges of approaches and methodologies. Some of the key elements are as follows:

### 1. Planned Change

Organizations change over time. Pressures for change generate from within and from outside the organization.
OD implies proactive, anticipatory, planned change in some (or all) aspects of functioning of an organization, as opposed to ad-hoc, haphazard, reactive change. In this sense, OD implies forward-looking and future oriented planned change effort.

2. Improved Effectiveness
The purpose of OD is to improve the long-term effectiveness of the organization. Short-term profit, efficiency in input-output, and growth are also part of the goals of OD. Improving the health of an organization and increasing its capacity to engage in planned change and ongoing self-renewal is part of this purpose of improving effectiveness. Gaining new technology, new products, new services, new markets, new clients, on the one hand, and improving employee morale and productivity, reducing costs, enhancing quality, increasing competitiveness, etc., on the other hand, have all been part of the framework of improving effectiveness of an organization.

3. Preferred Values
The practice of OD has emphasized the espousal of certain preferred values about individuals, organizations and society. Based on studies on motivation and human need, social relations and group dynamics, OD professes the value of increasing individual autonomy, choice, creativity and respect as a necessary ingredient of improved organizational effectiveness.

4. System-wide Understanding
OD emphasizes the need for deeper understanding of underlying causes of visible problem symptoms faced by organizations. Therefore, OD starts with a diagnosis, which aims to improve a comprehensive, system-wide understanding of the organization. This process of diagnosis, therefore, makes OD a data-based change strategy which bases its interventions for organizational improvements on the analysis generated from a systematic system-wide organizational diagnosis. In order for this diagnosis to be carried out, OD requires an explicit framework of understanding an organization. A variety of frameworks of organization have been developed over the years in the now well-established management discipline of organizational behavior. A clear and explicitly articulated framework describing what an organization is, how it functions, what outputs are caused by what inputs and intervening variables etc., is, therefore, necessary for OD.

5. Learning Process
Bringing about changes and improvements in organization occur through a variety of ways. Large organizations typically use power and coercion, through executive orders and decrees, to effect desired changes. The process of changing an organization in OD, however, follows an action-research approach. Inquiry, learning, experimentation, education and persuasion are preferred modes of bringing about organizational
change in OD. The processes of undertaking OD are, therefore, designed in a way that the organization, its leadership and members actively participate in the diagnosis, planning and implementing changes and improvements needed on that basis (Grinnell, 1969). This ensures that change in organization is “owned” by it and has greater possibility of being sustainable. It also implies that the organization’s leadership and members undergo a learning-relearning process in order to appreciate the need for and directions of change required to improve its effectiveness.

The above key elements of OD are the foundation of any planned organization improvement effort. As can be seen from this, the practice and theory of OD emerged in a particular historical context from the experiences of certain types of organizations. Typically, these organizations were profit-making, large commercial, industrial organizations: factories, mines, offices. Sometimes, these included large government agencies, departments or public corporations.

These organizations were large, complex bureaucracies with well-defined hierarchies, roles, rules, systems and procedures. They operated in situations where the supply of raw materials, technology of production and sale of outputs was reasonably stable and certain. In the case of large government agencies or corporations, these operated in monopoly situations with unrestricted flow of resource inputs. Many of these organizations (for-profit corporations or government agencies) were designed and operated on the basis of the theory and principles developed in the 19th century industrial revolution period in Europe. These principles of scientific management, efficiency through assembly line, bureaucracy as a non-feudal form of organization were evolved in the period of industrial revolution to create possibilities of managing efficiently and objectively large production and service enterprises. The rise of organized labor and increasing relevance of human motivation gave rise to theories and practices of human relations as an approach to effective management of an enterprise.

It is, therefore, significant that the practice of OD emphasized human values, organizational democracy, open and participative management and learning orientation. The practice and theory of OD became concerned with practice and planned change as many industrial corporations grew volatile in changing, uncertain and unpredictable social, political, economic and technological environments. Since “business as usual” was no longer possible OD interventions aimed to build the capacities of such organizations to proactively deal with anticipated future trends.

Relevance of Organization Development in NGOs

What is the relevance of OD in NGOs? As described in the earlier context, NGOs are a diverse set of actors with varying functions, sizes and approaches. While no universal prescription is possible in such a situation, certain typical pressures for change operate on many NGOs.

1. External Pressure

A number of external pressures for change are affecting NGOs today:

(i) NGOs are mission-oriented organizations. Typically, the mission of an NGO describes desirable social change in the community or society. Such a desirable change may imply changes in education, health, employment, etc. As social change organizations, NGOs intend to impact on their external constituencies. As NGOs succeed to bring about that desirable change, they typically redefine their mission. Success in achieving an NGO mission results in social change, which in turn puts pressure on an NGO to change itself. Failure in achieving its mission also puts pressure to redefine NGO strategy or mission. As social change oriented organizations, NGOs live on and promote change. Hence change is the very rationale of NGO existence and effectiveness. OD as a planned change intervention for NGO renewal and revitalization is necessary for its continued relevance.

(ii) The core task of NGOs is to bring about some desirable change in an external constituency. By definition, that constituency is outside the jurisdiction and control of the NGO. Therefore, autonomous changes in that constituency generate renewed pressures for change in an NGO. (Uphoff, 1986). A local community may undergo social, economic or political changes due to forces operating in the larger environment. Other actors in the community may change on their own. For example, economic liberalization may spur economic development of the community (or society), thereby bringing about significant changes in employment, income, poverty, migration, environmental degradation, natural resource use pattern, etc. Government agencies operating in that community (or society) may change their policies, programs, laws, strategies etc. on their own, thereby increasing or reducing the space for NGO actions in that community (or society). In today’s world of increasing globalization, changes in community (or society) may emanate from multinational corporations and/or international bilateral and multilateral agencies, thereby further augmenting the space for NGO actions in that community (or society). Thus independent and autonomous forces create changes in these external constituencies where an NGO conducts its main business (or performs its core development functions). These changes generate significant
pressures for change in NGOs, which could be helped through OD.

(iii) Development, non-profit NGOs frequently rely on external resources to conduct their business. These resources are typically mobilized from national and international donors, which are interested in bringing about certain desirable developmental impacts on the community (or society) with which an NGO does its main business. This constituency of resource-providers is different and distant from local community constituency with which the NGO conducts its main business. Major changes and shifts in policies and programs of resource providers and donors have occurred over the past five decades as new lessons are derived from field experiences. As NGOs know well, donors emphasize different development problems at different points in time: rural development, environment, women's status, micro-enterprise, urban poverty, etc., are examples of some recent shifts in donor priorities. Priorities and volume of resources available with international donors change in response to priorities, policies, public opinions and macro trends obtaining in their host countries (northern, industrialized, developed economies in most cases). Obviously, shifts in donor policies and priorities can significantly affect the functioning of an NGO, thereby necessitating organizational change in NGOs. OD can possibly make a contribution here.

(iv) As NGOs gain visibility and prominence as development actors in a community or society, other relationships and expectations in society develop. NGO networks and associations evolve and generate expectations of mutual support and accountability. Media and general public expects greater transparency and accountability from NGOs. Government agencies demand better data on NGO performance and impacts and make policy and legal regulations to govern NGO activities. Other actors of civil society (local associations, cooperatives, trade unions, professional associations, academia, or local governance institutions, etc.) also expect coordination and support from NGOs. Thus NGOs find themselves in a web of relationships with other autonomous actors and agencies with conflicting expectations and demands placed on NGOs. These conflicting pressures from external constituencies generate pressures for change in NGOs. OD can possibly help an NGO clarify these (Brown and Covey, 1987).

2. Internal Pressure

Likewise, NGOs experience a number of internal pressures for change:

(i) An NGO typically starts small, in scope, coverage and resources. As it succeeds in its mission, it grows. NGOs experience life-cycles of birth, infancy, maturity and possible decay. Growth in NGOs is generally associated with larger area of operation, broader set for development interventions, bigger staff, budgets, and infrastructure. The methods of organizational functioning appropriate for a small, informal group may not be appropriate for a large NGO. Pressures for change are inherent in growth, which itself is change. Typically, NGOs find themselves growing at a rapid pace, in somewhat unplanned ways. OD can be a relevant intervention in NGOs for both planning for growth and coping with growth.

(ii) As NGOs gain experience and credibility over time, pressures for improved performance and impacts on the ground increase. NGOs are subject to pressures from different constituencies and stakeholders. Stakes are high for NGOs to demonstrate their impact and effectiveness. OD can be a relevant intervention for NGOs to address these pressures.

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(iv) NGOs are typically set up by committed, idealistic, visionary persons who want to make an impact on society. In some important ways these persons are social entrepreneurs as they take initiatives and risks to stake their values, capacities, reputation and resources in setting up and nurturing NGOs. By
involving personally one's values, energies, personal physical and emotional resources, and by growing together with and NGO, the founder of NGOs and the NGOs themselves develop parallel life-cycles. A founder's association with an NGO, reinforces the identity of both internally and externally. In such a situation, issues of transition in leadership, building leadership at the level of NGO management, strengthening institutional mechanisms of NGO governance and systematizing NGO functioning beyond the personal style and idiosyncrasies of the founder-leader gain significance. Many NGOs, therefore, find themselves in difficult situations around these issues, which generate enormous pressures for change. It is this context that OD can make a contribution.

These external and internal pressures for change generate requirements for restructuring of NGOs as organizational entities. NGOs respond to these pressures for change in a variety of ways. Most tend to “swim with the tide”. They deal with these pressures as the waves come, allowing them to determine their direction or responding to such pressures for change by ignoring them and continuing with “business as usual”. The response, over time, ultimately results in the same tendency to respond to an outside pressure to an external agenda. Only in a few cases do NGOs recognize the need to change themselves. NGOs as social change organizations get so obsessed with changing others that they typically fail to take notice of the changes, which have already occurred within them (for example, growth) or to address the changes that they need to make in themselves (for example, restructuring). Even in such a situation, where the NGO responds to needed change in organization, it tends to looks for “quick fix”, partial and temporary solutions. This approach to organizational change discourages systematic diagnosis and the development of a long-term perspective on organizational renewal. Such a short-term focus had been encouraged in the 1970s and 1980s by NGO thinkers, donors and ideologues who typically viewed NGOs as temporary instruments to solve a limited problem. Such a “misconception” or narrow conception of NGO roles relegated them to “gap filling” functions due to failures of the government or market. It was generally assumed, and explicitly proclaimed, that NGOs should enter in, intervene into and withdraw from an area in a short-term, time bound manner to play this gap-filling role. This conception assumed that NGOs had no role whatsoever in the event of efficient functioning of government and market agencies. As a result, long term organizational capacity building, institutional strengthening and organization development were never valued or supported by NGO leaders, their donors and evaluators. The instrument of NGO organization was seen as merely temporary and, therefore, any investment in making this involvement valid, relevant and functional over the long-term was considered both unthinkable and undesirable. NGO leaders and their donors/patrons till very recently continued to support only that limited aspect of NGO capacity building which allowed effective execution of short duration (2-3 years) projects funded by that donor for that point in time. This worldview significantly undermined NGO institutional capacity building and limited the possibility of OD interventions in NGOs.

However, beginning from the late 1980s, with the advent of fresh thinking on the development trinity (state-market-civil society) and a new perspective of the role of NGOs in a perennially changing society, there was growing recognition of the significance and long-term role of civil society organizations in ensuring democratic and equitable development (Brown and Tandon 1994). This recognition highlighted the existing reality of weak NGO institutional capacity. OD was viewed as a possible intervention to build such capacity. Likewise, there was growing acceptance of the need for strong and effective local development institutions (outside the preview of the government) in order to ensure sustained benefits of any development project. This further pushed for viewing NGO institutional capacity building as an important requirement for bringing about desirable development.

Steps in Organization Development with NGOs

In a typical OD effort, three phases are distinct, yet inter-related. What is the meaning of these three phases in OD with NGOs?

1. Recognizing the Need for Change

The first step in any OD effort is when an organization feels the need for change. While pressures for change (both external and internal) operate in NGOs regularly, an NGO may or may not feel the need for change. Typically, the need for change in an NGO may be effectively felt by field project staff, headquarters staff, the leadership of the NGO or its governing body or its donors. Many a times, a project evaluation triggers off the need for change in an NGO. Sometimes, a long term donor partner (which has worked with the NGO over a period of time) notices certain clear needs for change and may discuss it with NGO leadership and staff.

Recognizing the need for change is the first step in the OD process. The recognition of need for change, as well as commitment to systematically undertake planned
change (a hallmark of OD) in an NGO should ideally be made throughout the NGO and its key external partners (like donors). In reality, it is important to ensure that recognition of need for and commitment to change is explicitly made by the top leadership of the NGO, preferably including its governing body.

It is also important that this decision to undertake OD as a systematic process of planned change in the NGO is based on an informed choice of possible long-term implications of OD on the NGO, its leadership and future directions. If OD is initiated primarily due to donor pressures, without commensurate commitment from NGO leadership, it is likely to degenerate into a mere report which gathers dust on shelves of the NGO and its donors (much like the fate of most evaluation reports of NGO projects) (Agarwal and Tandon, 1996).

Any change from known, habitual ways of present functioning to somewhat uncertain future ways generates resistance, anxiety and apprehension among any set of individuals, groups and organizations. Hence, OD efforts to undertake planned change also provoke similar reactions. The nature and form of these reactions in NGOs vary, but it is important to recognize the reality of such reactions. To the extent that typical NGO leaders pay scant attention to organizational dynamics of their NGO, it is not uncommon to find NGO leaders somewhat insensitive to this universal phenomenon of initiating planned change in their organization.

2. Organizational Diagnosis

Having articulated and established the need for change and commitment to OD as a vehicle for bringing about planned change in an NGO, the next important (perhaps the most critical) step is organizational diagnosis. Diagnosis means a systematic process of understanding about the NGO, its problems, its future, etc. Diagnosis typically starts with that aspect of an NGO, which has prompted the need for OD. If a project evaluation report has pointed out the inadequate impact of NGO programs on the ‘target group’, project planning and implementation may become the starting point for diagnosis. If a donor has pointed out the imbalance gender composition of senior staff, personnel policies and human resource development may be the starting focus of diagnosis. If a unit of field project focusing on income-generation is unable to break even after 10 years of continuous investment, and the NGO chief functionary finds it impossible to raise further resources for that unit, this part of NGO becomes the starting point of the diagnosis. If continuous and acrimonious conflicts between key staff members perpetuate in all staff meetings, then interpersonal relations and team functioning becomes the starting point of the diagnosis.

A. Framework of Diagnosis

Diagnosis implies systematic understanding of underlying causes of visible problem symptoms. Hence,
whatever be the starting point of diagnosis, it cannot be carried out except with a clear, holistic and systemic framework of the NGO as a whole. Understanding of a part of an NGO can be enhanced if it is situated in the understanding of the NGO as a whole in its unique external environment. This is the most challenging requirement for an effective diagnosis. It, therefore, calls for developing and using a framework of understanding NGO organizations. The key issue here is not to blindly borrow the framework of organization evolved from studies on private corporations or government agencies, but to synthesize that theory of organization behavior with our own understanding of unique features of NGOs. Such a synthesis alone will help in undertaking a diagnosis uniquely relevant to the NGOs (Brown and Covey, 1987). While it may not be possible to espouse a complete theory of NGO organization here, it may be worthwhile to identify some unique features, which need to be incorporated in a framework of NGO.

(i) As mission oriented social change organizations, NGOs define desirable outputs in normative, qualitative and processual terms.

This requires establishing the relationship between the broadly defined desirable social changes an NGO stands for, its stated mission, and its program goals and operating strategies.

(ii) As mission-oriented organizations, NGOs operate in a vaguely understood complex social reality. Since its primary task or core business is carried outside its organizational boundaries, the organization's relationships with key constituencies in the external environment have a significant impact on its performance. This is further accentuated by the fact that an NGO may require their operating and material resources from external donor constituencies which are typically different and removed from the local community where the NGO intends to have an impact.

(iii) As has been noted, an NGO attracts core staff on the basis of its values, and ideology of social change. Such individuals have primarily a normative (as opposed to merely utilitarian) relationship with the organization. Certain functions, like accounts, administration, etc., may attract staff for more utilitarian reasons (“I am here for a job versus I am here for a cause”). Among NGO staff, issues of morale, motivation, productivity and organizational culture get affected due to this plurality.

(iv) As mentioned earlier, an NGO’s form and functioning, in many cases, is a reflection of the personality of its founder. This makes the founder-leader a very powerful, perhaps most central, feature of an NGO organization. Decision-making in an NGO is, therefore, much more personalized.

(v) Since leaders of most NGOs are committed to a vision they try to pursue, they have an inherent dislike and disregard for secondary tasks of NGO (for example, financial management, office and infrastructure maintenance, personnel and legal matters, etc.). These aspects coupled with quest for flexibility and responsiveness in relation to programs makes NGOs rather unorganized systems (in contrast to an over-organized government bureaucracy a factory) (Brown, 1980). Many aspects of NGO functioning, its organization structure, rules/procedures and systems, role definitions, delegation and accountability remain fluid, ambiguous and informal.

(vi) Finally, as mentioned earlier, NGOs operate in a web of multiple stakeholders, many of whom are in conflict with each other. Besides its governing body, top leadership, core program staff, field workers, and other staff in the NGO, local community groups, socio-political formations, donors and supporters, government development agencies and regulatory bodies, other NGOs, and public at large seem to have varying, diverse and, at times, conflicting stakes in a given NGO (Gricar and Brown, 1981). Thus effective NGO functioning sometimes implies a sensitive and delicate balancing of diverse stakeholders towards a well-activated and coherent mission.

B. Process of Diagnosis

A second set of issues in diagnosis relates to its processes. Diagnosis implies data-collection and analysis. It is essentially a research exercise to deepen understanding of the NGO. By agreeing to initiate an OD process, and by starting a diagnosis, a certain type of intervention is already made in an NGO. In order that the results of diagnosis are used to improve NGO functioning, the process of conducting the diagnosis becomes crucial. Participation in diagnosis by key leadership and by the widespread membership of the organization helps to generate commitment to the findings and builds the basis for implementing organizational change. It also ensures authentic data-collection and analysis. This approach to organizational diagnosis is distinctively different from diagnosis of sickness by a medical doctor (where the doctor as expert makes the diagnosis of a patient’s sickness and prescribes him the treatment) (Grinnell, 1969). The participatory process of diagnosis in OD, therefore, needs to be carefully planned and effectively facilitated.

3. Interventions

Based on the diagnosis, the analysis of the findings and the decisions of the NGO relationship, concrete planning of interventions to improve the effectiveness and health of the NGO is undertaken (Friedlander and Brown, 1989). The nature, range and depth of these interventions raises a great deal and has been sometimes linked to OD technologies and practices. However, the nature of issues highlighted by the diagnosis determines the types of appropriate OD interventions. In specific NGO
A common category of OD interventions to help clarify the identity and strategy of an NGO are typically included here. Given the nature of their changing external environment, NGOs find that they periodically need to rearticulate their vision, reformatulate their organizational mission and redefine the broad components of their development strategy. This type of OD intervention is broadly called Strategic Planning. It entails a SWOT analysis (assessment of strengths and weakness of the NGO; identifying opportunities and threats in the external environment). It requires systematic and comprehensive constituency mapping (identifying and elaborating the current and desired relationship with various key constituencies like local community, government agencies, donors, other NGOs, other formations in civil society, etc.); it generates specific strategic options from which the NGO has to choose the one that will define its medium-term (3-5 years) posture, identity and programs. The reformulated mission then becomes the basis for elaborating program objectives; the redefined strategy provides the basis of planning program activities.

This type of OD interventions typically entails close involvement and decision making by NGO leadership, including its governing body. If an OD intervention starts with Strategic Planning, it creates a series of options and implications for rearranging the organization’s planning, design and staff role allocations. This is a comprehensive organization-wide intervention, which typically results in major renewal of the NGO as a whole. OD interventions in this category sometimes involve Search Conference methodology. This methodology promotes a reformulation of external partnerships and relationships of an NGO with its key external environment. This is an inter-organizational intervention, typically bringing together several diverse stakeholders to explore, analyze and plan some joint initiatives. Networking is another outcome of such an intervention. Typically, it helps to build and strengthen an NGO’s relationships with key segments of its external environment. This type of intervention is sometimes labeled as institutional strengthening.

A. Identity and Strategy

B. Human Processual

This category of OD interventions is the most popular and common feature of any OD exercise. These interventions focus on the human dimensions of an NGO. Such interventions help improve the processes of functioning of an NGO. These processes may be communication, participation, decision-making, conflict resolutions, individual motivation, commitment and morale, organizational norms, values, culture, leadership styles, etc. Historically, OD interventions primarily addressed such human and process issues.

(i) Human Resource Development

Human resource development (HRD), human resource management (HRM), human potential development (HPD) and training of individual staff is one sub-set of interventions in this category. It comprises of two aspects:

First, it entails establishing or strengthening HRD policies and systems in an NGO. Traditional personnel functions like recruitment, induction, orientation, role allocation, service condition, compensation package, individual career planning and performance review are generally included here.

Most NGOs, despite their people-centred development philosophy, have inadequate personnel policies and systems. The second category of interventions implies ongoing training and capacity building of staff. Specially designed training can re-form attitudes, build awareness and knowledge, and develop professional, technical and managerial skills. It may also include a focus on personal growth and development (like sensitivity training) (Lynton and Pareek, 1990). Even when an NGO utilizes training as an OD intervention, it rarely looks at it as long-term human power planning and as HRD for people in the future. Hence, within the framework of OD, and in response to organizational diagnosis, this set of interventions is critical in many NGOs.

(ii) Process Consultation

Second sub-set of this category is those interventions, which help to improve process in an organization (Schein, 1988). One common example is Team Building, which focuses on improving processes of functioning of a team. Another example is role clarification and negotiation between superior-subordinate and work team members. Process Consultation as a method facilitating understanding and improving the functioning of a manager, leader, work team, production unit, or an NGO is a commonly practiced OD intervention of this type.

Third party consultation or peacemaking and inter-group confrontation meeting or mirroring are other examples of OD interventions aimed at improving inter-departmental relations, collaboration and processes. Such interventions are particularly suited to conditions where inter-departmental conflict exists.

C. Techno-structural

The third category of OD interventions focuses on technology and structure of an NGO. Technology
means ways, techniques and equipment needed for doing the core business or primary task of an NGO. For example, the technology of water harvesting is different from the technology of primary health care. This set of OD interventions attempt to build congruence between desired technology and required organizational structure. Structure means tasks (both primary and secondary), groupings of tasks into roles, role responsibility and accountability, reporting relations rules, procedures and systems.

Typically, NGOs as under-organized systems require, as part of OD interventions, formalization of job and role descriptions, clarification and formalization of reporting relationships across jobs and roles (for example, relationship of roles of Chairperson and Treasurer of governing body and chief functionary of an NGO), formalization of certain routine decisions into component parts (like hours of work, leave, delegation for approved expenditure, etc.), delegation procedures (like procedures for taking an advance from accounts section by a field worker) and systems (like filing and record keeping). Systems of program planning, monitoring and evaluation, system of MIS for decision-making, system of financial management and reporting are other typical examples for NGOs. Instead of loosening existing rules, procedures and systems, NGOs typically require interventions to formalize and systematize many of their ways of internal functioning.

Another set of OD interventions in this category focuses on improving staff creativity, responsibility and morale through job design (for individual) and work design (for work teams). Increasingly, some OD interventions on NGOs also address the introduction of new technology, in particular information technology, proposed by the diagnosis; certain OD interventions need to be aimed at bringing the adoption and integration of that technology in the NGO. A common OD approach to this set of interventions is called socio-technical systems approach, where the design of human, structural and technical components of an organization is jointly undertaken.

Overall, this set of OD interventions is called organization design and entails simultaneous attention to the technology and structure of an NGO.

D. External Relations

Development NGOs are facing a set of new pressures in relation to their external relationships. This fourth category of interventions focuses on strengthening this aspect of NGOs. First type of interventions could be categorized under the broad theme of network building. Within civil society as a whole, and among development NGOs more specifically, there is a greater and growing requirement of networking. Building such relationships and types of mutual obligations, networking can be relevant at different levels as well local, national and global.

Another type of intervention focuses on building relations with other actors of civil society around coalitions, alliances and partnerships. Inter-organizational arrangements to pursue common agenda in a time, resource and activity bind manner is a critical focus of such interventions.

Outside the development and civil society sector and NGO’s relations with government, media, academia and private business sector have also acquired new priority. OD interventions aimed at helping to build such relations and nurture them in the pursuit of NGO mission are becoming increasingly vertical. Inter-organizational power and inter-institutional webs become key concepts to address in such OD interventions.

In sum, therefore, a wide range of OD intervention is available to be appropriately utilized in an NGO in response to the diagnosis. Likewise, the planning for each of these OD interventions has to be carefully undertaken in such a manner that those affected by it and the leadership of the NGO is fully involved and owning the implementation of these interventions. Similarly, monitoring the process of implementation of OD interventions and evaluating the results has to be planned in advance and undertaken in earnest in order to draw lessons for future improvements in the NGO.

Pre-requisites for OD in NGOs

There are several pre-requisites for an effective OD exercise in an NGO.

(i) A major issue in any OD exercise is the explicit commitment of the leadership to the challenges of revitalizing the organization. In case of NGOs, this requirement typically implies commitment of the founder-leader and the governing body. Even when such a requirement is fulfilled, there are certain other requisites to be addressed.

(ii) One question invariably faced is the facilitation of OD. Who should do the diagnosis? Who has competence for OD interventions? The expertise and professional competence needed for OD diagnosis and intervention, and its acceptance as such, is usually not available within an NGO. Some large-scale private corporations and government agencies have in-house OD departments and competence. Even they periodically use external consultants for facilitation of some critical aspects of OD (like top management team building exercise). NGOs may need to invite external facilitators for organizational diagnosis and intervention, if they opt for OD.

(iii) Another requirement relates to time. When does an NGO do OD? How long does OD take? Clearly, OD is not a perpetual exercise. OD is undertaken...
periodically (every 3-5 years) in response to existing problems, anticipated future and internal/external pressures for change. The time taken in OD depends on its scope of coverage and depth of intervention. Typically, for a large NGO, comprehensive OD exercise may take 12-24 months (if relying exclusively on external consultants).

(iv) The above also poses the question of overall resources needed for OD. Resources include time of top leadership, other staff who participate in diagnosis and interventions, resources for meetings, workshops, studies, resources for external consultants etc. Explicit and early commitment of resources for OD as an investment for organizational development helps a great deal in undertaking such an exercise.

It is important for NGOs to pay attention to these requirements of readiness, time, external consultants and resources before committing themselves to an OD exercise.

Future Issues for Organization Development with NGOs

As explained in the previous sections, OD with NGOs is a fairly new, yet rapidly growing trend. In order for OD to be appropriate, relevant and effective in strengthening and developing NGOs and their capacities, practitioners of OD and NGO leaders and their partners need to think carefully about some key issues in future.

(i) First issue relates to the demand for OD with NGOs. Is this demand for OD with the NGOs largely driven by donors? Are donors asking OD for NGO that they support, in order to ensure optimum use of their funds for the partnered projects? Or is this demand also coming from NGO governance and leadership? If it is merely the former (driven by donors’ demand), then OD faces the risk of becoming short-sighted (only for NGOs with funds to spend for a specific project) and short-lived (only as long as major donors think OD is a panacea for the ills they face in working with NGOs). Sustained institutional development of the entire sector of NGOs and civil society should be promoted as the long-term goal of OD, not merely OD for a single NGO for short-term project implementation. Commitment to such an approach of OD requires both NGO leadership and donors.

(ii) The available technology of OD is drawn largely from the practice and theory of large organizations of the market and the state. The frameworks for understanding organization of civil society need to be evolved for more appropriate diagnosis of NGOs. Likewise, methods and techniques more appropriate to NGO size, culture, primary task and leadership need to be evolved to utilize OD effectively in NGOs.
This also has implications for evolving an appropriate set of ethics, values and standards for OD with NGOs. The professionalization of OD and systematic standardization of the practice has occurred in mainstream OD work. However, more NGO relevant values of OD need to be articulated and standards of professional conduct of OD with NGOs need to be specified.

(iv) Finally, there is woeful shortage of trained and competent facilitators of OD with NGOs. Practitioners of OD with private corporations and government bureaucracies are being drawn in as OD consultants and facilitators. Long-term capacity building of OD facilitators with NGOs needs to be undertaken to respond to the growing need for such professional competence. It also poses challenges for building in-house OD capacity in larger NGOs, their training units and NGO support organizations. Long-term viability of civil society actors requires strengthening of their institutional base, and appropriate OD interventions can contribute towards that.
References


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Making democracy work for all

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) is an international centre for learning and promotion of citizen participation and democratic governance. PRIA’s professional expertise and practical insights are utilised by other civil society groups, NGOs, governments, donors, trade unions, private business and academic institutions around the world.

Since its inception in 1982, PRIA has embarked on a set of initiatives focusing on empowerment of the poor and excluded. PRIA has consistently worked on issues of citizens’ access to rights and entitlements, such as basic services in health, education and water in rural and urban areas; women’s literacy and livelihood; forest rights of tribals; prevention of land alienation and displacement; and workers’ occupational health and safety. In all its interventions, PRIA emphasises gender mainstreaming institutionally and programmatically. Its perspectives on participatory research generate innovative participatory methodologies.

PRIA has promoted ‘governance where people matter’ to ensure that citizens and their collectives can access and claim their rights through engaging with governance institutions and processes. PRIA works on the demand side of development by facilitating active citizenship and empowering civil society. It works on the supply side by reforming institutions and their governance so that the entitlements of citizens are realised.

PRIA’s vision of a desirable world is based on values of equity, justice, freedom, peace and solidarity with a philosophy – Knowledge Is Power – that takes forward all its actions.

PRIA’s mission is to work towards the promotion of policies, institutions and capacities that strengthen citizen participation and promote democratic governance.

Building on its perspective that Knowledge Is Power, PRIA’s strategy comprises:

- Supporting enhancement of knowledge and capacities of citizens to become active
- Facilitating building of collectives and associations of citizens so that their voice is amplified
- Enabling civil society partnerships and alliances to work towards engaging governance institutions and structures
- Convening multi-stakeholder dialogues between citizens and governance institutions in the public and private spheres
- Advocating for policies, practices and procedures which support citizen participation and democratic governance

PRIA operationalises its strategy through:

1. Enabling micro-macro and macro-micro linkages that create strong support for influencing various actors. Therefore, PRIA works at the grass-roots level to evolve innovations that are scaled-up provincially, nationally and globally.
2. Developing and nurturing relationships with grassroots actors and systematising practical knowledge.
3. Promoting capacity building through distance education, structured events, field exposure, and information dissemination.
4. Undertaking trans-national initiatives based on the principles of south-south cooperation.

The intensive field programmes of PRIA are currently located in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. In addition, through its network of partners, these interventions extend throughout India. PRIA is also involved in programmes in countries like Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Philippines and Sri Lanka. In addition, its global interventions in distance education, capacity building and global advocacy reach out to practitioners, professionals and policy-makers around the world.