Voluntary Sector in India
Scale, Impact & Potential

September 9, 2005

Planning Commission
Govt. of India, New Delhi

PRIA is an International Centre for Learning and Promotion of Participation and Democratic Governance

website : www.pria.org
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Development & promotion of Participatory Methodologies in development projects & Programmes - applied to education, health care, natural resource management, women's livelihood, etc. 1981 onwards

Capacity building of voluntary organizations in internal management & governance, and programme planning and monitoring 1983 onwards

Occupational & environmental health & safety - promotion & advocacy 1983 onwards

Knowledge on Voluntary Sector in India/internationally 1986 onwards

Strengthening Institutions of Panchayati Raj - voters' awareness campaigns, gram sabha mobilization, participatory micro-planning, training of elected representatives & government functionaries, support to state govs in devolution 1994 onwards

Reforming Municipal Governance in small & medium towns - Birth registration, sanitation & water 2000 onwards

Current Coverage - 12 states, 26 districts, 37 municipalities

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Pan – Commonwealth NGO focusing on advancement of human rights

Primary focus in our access to justice, which comprises of
  - Police reform
  - Prison reform
  - Judicial education

In recent year, focused on Right to Information registrations and implementation, specially in India

Citizens groups facilitated to monitor elections, candidates and performance of elected representatives

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Voluntary Sector: Post-independence History

1. Relief and Rehabilitation
- Bihar Famine
- AP Cyclones
- Bhopal Disaster
- Koyna Earthquake
- Latur Earthquake
- Uttarkashi Earthquake
- Kutch Earthquake
- Orissa Cyclones
- Tsunami

2. Innovations - which Multiplied
- Literacy & non-formal education - NAEP 1978
- Primary health care - National Policy 1979
- India Mark II Handpump 1980
- Women’s livelihoods - DWCRA 1981
- Bio gas - Non-conventional Energy 1985
- Social & community Forestry – 1986
- Self-help groups - Micro finance 1990
- Early childhood Nutrition - ICDS 1995
- Environmental Protection - Ministry & programmes
- Water conservation - Watershed development
3. Development Policies – Effective Advocacy

- Displacement due to development
- Tribal rights
- Dalit empowerment
- Rights of Children
- Violence against women
- Electoral reforms
- Human rights
- Right to Information

Voluntary Sector: Present Realities


- 1.2 million organizations
- Mostly rural and small, half unregistered
- One-fourth religious identity, 21% community/social service, 20% education
- 2.7 million paid employees (full-time equivalent), 82% of all central govt employees, 31% of employees in organized private sector
- Nearly Rs 20,000 crores annual turnover; foreign funds only 7.5%, nearly half self-generated
- Nearly 40% of all households give for charity, poor give more
2. Voluntary Development Organisations

(Neither community-based organizations, nor formal institutions in health & education)

- More than 20,000 active organizations, half a million professionals
- Uneven presence in the country, though can identify 5 good organisations per district
- More than 100 organisations/professionals from such organizations received international awards & recognitions
- More than 200 such organizations and their staff have been involved in supporting development projects in other developing countries
- Approaches, analysis, methods & tools developed by many such organizations being regularly utilized by Governments & NGOs in other countries
- Most incisive and respected voice in regional & global foras of UN, WB, WTO etc.

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Voluntary Development Organisations NEED

1. Overhaul Archaic Regulatory Frameworks
   a) Registration in Society’s Act (1860) or Trust Act (1882) no national framework, variations across states causing harassments, lack of transparency & accountability
      ⇒ NEED A SIMPLE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON MODERN PURPOSES AND IT ENABLED REPORTING
   b) Income Tax (1961) has outdated definitions (“relief to the poor, education, medical relief and the advancement of any other object of general public utility”); treats all Charities alike (religious, self-help, etc);
      NEED NEW SECTIONS TO ENCOURAGE
      ⇒ Tax-exempt charitable giving
      ⇒ Corpus & own resource development

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c) FCRA (1976) attempts to regulate foreign funds; now proposing FCMC Bill (2005)

- Attempt to control management by specifying conditions (30% on administration);
- Deregister after five years
- Restrict change in Governing Boards
- NEED ABOLISHMENT OF FCRA AND MINOR AMENDMENT IN FEMA TO INCLUDE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

2. Vigorously Enhance Voluntary Sector’s involvement in National Development

- Crucial role in implementing and monitoring Govt. initiatives like Bharat Nirman, Employment Guarantee, Rural Health etc.

a) Announce the Policy Framework

- Encourage state governments to develop similar frameworks
- Inform all govt. departments about the New Framework
- Include in curricula of training of govt. functionaries
- Formally designate 3-5 NGOs per district as sources of expertise and feedback
b) Inform bilateral & multilateral donors re New Framework
   - Remove current controlling regimes on their funding to NGOs in Finance Ministry
   - Include all OECD countries in that regime (Australia, Norway & Switzerland missed out presently as it includes only G8 & EU)

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c) Encourage Ministries to Involve NGOs in International Cooperation
   - As part of delegations (PM's visit to Afghanistan)
   - As Partners in Global Dialogue (at WTO, UNEP, UN Reforms, ASEAN, SAARC, Commonwealth)
   - As Implementers of Third Country Development Projects (in Africa & Asia)

d) Recognise Indian Voluntary Sector as Global Knowledge Centre on Development & Democracy
   - Encourage systems of global knowledge sharing
   - Remove Obstacles to Organise Global Conferences & Training Programmes
   - Enable Policy to Start Institutions in other Developing Countries

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