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ABSTRACT

India is one of the fastest growing economies of the world. Yet the 2010 Human Development Index ranks India as a middle level country in the bottom third at 119 of 169 countries on the human development index. The Voluntary sector or non-governmental Organizations have emerged as a new force contributing to social upliftment and economic development. India is estimated to have 3.3 million registered NGOs. NGOs are engaged in development work in the remotest of areas in a variety of areas like health, education, water, environment, human rights SCs/STs, women empowerment, child rights, disability, etc ensuring that people get their entitlement. But in our country people rightly remarks that, "Bekar baithane se achha hain NGOs chalo aur paisa banao" what it really means, without work, make money by just doing paper formalities with doing fraud and cheat to poor people in rural areas. So for that promoting good governance in the management of NGOs (Non-governmental organisations) is required.

KEYWORDS

Good governance, accountability, management & evaluating.

INTRODUCTION

Good governance means the effective management of an NGOs resources in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs. The rule of law, transparency, accountability and effectiveness of NGO management are all essential components of good governance. This issue of governance is now widely regarded as one of the key ingredients for poverty alleviation and sustainable development which NGOs must not lose sight. There is a vital linkage between good governance and sustainable developments. Since most NGOs are aimed at becoming sustainable then good governance becomes a vital aspect of NGOs existence. Participatory approach or management is essential to the achievement of sustainable development because it helps to ensure good accountability and effectiveness. NGOs in developing countries often lack institutional capacities and resources. Funds from donors are poorly managed. To ensure effective and proper management of resources, good governance becomes an important aspect of every NGO. NGOs need to be accountable for their actions and performance. Without such accountability, NGOs face no pressure to meet reasonable standards of governance and to ensure that an acceptable standard of human, financial and material management is maintained. The achievement of accountability, participation and effective institutions is not easy. They require a considerable range of technical expertise, skill and commitment of resources. We can now look at how good governance can be promoted in NGOs.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF NGOS

Ensuring the accountability of NGOs involves first of all creating the conditions which will allow for open expression of views, free dissemination of information and the rule of law which is essential to the effective functioning of every NGO. NGOs in India are being challenged and address issues concerning their accountability and representatives. The key question being asked are:

- To whom are NGOs accountable?
- Who or what do they represent?

The debate around these questions has grown as NGOs have come to extend the scope, breadth and depth of their work, and as their structures have come to include both private and participatory forms of control and various forms of incorporated or unincorporated entities.

The questions appear at first sight to have answer. An incorporated private NGO is controlled by and thus accountable to a Board of Management or trustees. These people derive no financial gain from the Organisation, and thus are independent in the sense that they do not have the vested interests even staff or those served by the NGO may have. In the participatory and thus also accountable to be its members. More broadly, NGOs are accountable to the wider public through processes of registration and regulation. They will also be accountable to funders through agreed reporting arrangements.

NGOs working with marginalised and disadvantaged people see themselves as representing the interests of such people. Those NGOs which are more involved in a particular aspect of disadvantage or with an issue of affecting the well-being of society as a whole see themselves as representing a cause of some kind rather than a specified group of people. In both cases the representation will be stronger where the NGO has a participatory rather than a private structure. But issues of the accountability and representatives of NGOs are more complex than the above might suggest.

The fact that it is not that simple is implicit in particular aspects of the above discussion. The private NGOs, can thus in reality be accountable to nobody but themselves. Private NGOs can also be used by individuals to pursue their egotistical or political ambitions under the guise of representing people or causes. Organizations which claim to be participatory organisations can, when closely scrutinized, turn out to have a narrow, disenfranchised or "token" base of membership, and thus in reality be privately controlled or even used for fraudulent purposes.

Just as the existence of a small number of fraudulent NGOs can bring the financial integrity and honesty of the great majority of NGOs into needless doubt, so too do the small number of NGOs that are unaccountable and unrepresentative attract unwarranted doubt and criticism to the majority. Most NGOs are controlled by people acting out of genuine personal concern and commitment and operating with standards of honesty and integrity.

There are a number of ways in which NGOs can improve the quality of their governance and operations and these are outlined in the following sections. Many NGOs already recognise the need for such improvements. Signs of them being made are abundant as are debates about issues raised by the changes and the following sections try to reflect them.

IMPROVING NGO GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

NGOs are improving both their governance and operations in the following ways:

- Stating their mission, values and objectives clearly and ensuring that their strategies and operations are at all times within them;
- Better management processes as well as financial management, accounting and budgeting, systems;
- Better human resource development and training within the organisation-of managers, administrators, project staff, board members, beneficiaries, members and volunteers;
- Better procedures to ensure that men and women have equal opportunities to participate effectively at all levels of the organisation, from members to leaders;
- Better means by which both the organisation, and its projects, services and activities are monitored, evaluated, and reviewed.
- Better information provision by and about NGOs.
- Better networking and alliance-building among NGOs.

MANAGEMENT

Work in NGOs has always been demanding. It has traditionally attracted people having high ideals, boundless energy, creativity, commitment and resilience. It is a sector which has a high level of female participation among volunteers and staff as well as at a leadership level. Indeed, in some countries, such as Jamaica. The majority of NGO leaders are women. The explosion of NGO activities over the recent past has not only been quantitative, but qualitative, too. As has been noted, NGOs can now be very large and complex entities, financing and running their own programmes as well as being contracted by government and others to be providers and deliverers of public services. They may simultaneously operate a number of activities, from service delivery to advocacy and campaigning. At the same time they will be seeking funds for their work from a wide range of sources, and applying these funds to their work in the most effective and efficient manner. They will also constantly review, monitor and plan their work. They have to be able to mobilise the creative energies of a team including paid staff, Board members, volunteers, members and beneficiaries. They need to inspire as well as manage. In participatory NGOs, managers also need to know how to work with people rather than administer unto them. Many NGOs work in insecure circumstances, by virtue of having to rely on funding from external sources. All this means that NGO managers have to be a unique breed of men and women. It is however recognized that: - the personal qualities of the unique breed need to be supplemented and complemented by the possession of knowledge and skills relevant to the NGOs activities, provisions and target groups, and to the tasks involved in the management of the organisation as a whole. The personal qualities and dispositions of NGO managers are not enough in themselves to sustain and enhance the work and development of the organisations, in other words: efficient and effective management and financial systems are essential in NGOs.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (HRD) AND TRAINING

NGO work is much more difficult and demanding than many realise, as managers do and staff moving from the private sector and public sector to work in them have found. NGOs often undertake projects of a very demanding scale and complexity with limited resources. Yet the myth that NGO work is undemanding lives on.

More and more, NGO management training is regarded as a distinctive task in a number of countries, agencies have been established to provide it, and such agencies are often constituted as NGOs themselves. The distinctive HRD and training needs of Boards, members, volunteers and programme beneficiaries are also being increasingly identified and responded to. This is based on the recognition that it is as important to have a well trained and effective Board, for example, as it is to have qualified and competent staff, properly trained volunteers and aware, able beneficiaries. Well trained and informed Boards are less dependent on staff and more able to ensure that they are properly accountable.

Some of these new NGO HRD/training initiatives have an international orientation. Others offer research and consultancy services to NGOs as well as training programmes. At the same time more and more NGOs are recognising the need to allow time and resources for training, both in-house and outside.

Funders are doing the same: indeed some training initiatives have been set up at their instigation or with their active support and involvement. All that said, there is an oft-repeated view that too little investment is still being made by NGOs and their funders in this aspect of their work.

In NGOs, as in other sectors, HRD begins with being able to attract and retain staff of the right calibre. In part this means being able to offer salaries and conditions of service that are as adequate and secure as possible. Many people involved in NGOs agree that the insecurity of work in them is a major problem. Job insecurity in the NGO sector affects both men and women but not always in the same ways. Labour force studies in many countries show that women tend to be concentrated in the low-waged service sector, which includes many NGOs. This may be one of the factors explaining the large number of women employed in NGOs which have generally emerged from the welfare sector.

Even where NGOs are contracted to deliver public services, as they increasingly are. This is not bringing an end to job insecurity in NGOs. This is because the trend towards contracting out such services is often being accompanied by trends towards applying market place economics to the delivery of public programmes. This means NGOs compete with each other and even with private providers to secure contracts. Trends in this direction are well advanced in a number of countries. They are stimulating a great deal of debate, not just about security. Many NGOs question whether human needs, issues and problems should be seen as "markets" within which competition takes place.

Funders and contracting agencies have key roles to play in this aspect of HRD in NGOs. From the subject of adequately remunerating NGO staff there has grown another debate, one that is about the general "professionalism" of NGOs and their staff. One view holds that NGO staff should be paid comparable rates with staff in other sectors, based on a recognition of the demanding nature of their work and to ensure the respect of their peers in other sectors. Another view sees NGO staff as people who should be selfless, poorly paid workers and dedicated amateurs rather than slick professionals. There are undoubtedly NGOs which have gone to extremes here:

"(NGOs are) now an industry in which lots of money can be made. For example some have budgets of about 1 billion per year. The salary of some is kept in line with top government officials. (This) welfare elite (has developed) while (such) leaders are publicly condemning poverty..."

The debate is complex. Other issues come into it, including those of control, accountability and representation discussed earlier:

"Many voluntary agencies have become generally centralised in power. Their directors have turned autocratic, and are not guided by any democratic process... There is very little identity with the people with whom they work... the very antithesis of that prevailing in genuine people's organisations... To the people (NGOs) are become middlemen... they are new breed of top elites, replacing landlords and moneylenders... often seen by people as exploiters and lies tellers..."

NGOs, therefore, walk a thin line between being on the one hand professional, and achieving it by paying adequate salaries and investing in staff development, and on the other hand, retaining their traditional values and ability to be effective and efficient. It is not an easy line to walk. The NGO sector is inevitably affected by trends in other sectors in society, by labour market forces, and by prevailing social attitudes, which increasingly lean towards individualism. To an extent, NGOs have to live with these trends and are inevitably affected by them. NGOs, however, have to keep in mind the values and non-self-serving aims which drive them, and express them in all aspects of their work. These values are a needed counter-force, especially in societies where self-serving individualism becomes extreme. NGOs are recognising this.

REVIEWING, MONITORING AND EVALUATING

Almost by definition, NGOs are organisations that are constantly changing and evolving. Thus monitoring and evaluation activities are of critical importance to them because they are the means by which change and evolutions can be guided, rather than be serendipitous or opportunistic. Monitoring and evaluation are also valuable ways of capturing accumulated experience and expertise that is all too easily lost when rapid changes occur either within organisations or in the environments in which they operate.

In addition, many NGOs recognise that carrying out their own evaluation and monitoring, as a matter of course, is preferable to having external evaluations, and all the disruption and uncertainty they can cause, imposed on them by others. NGOs are thus increasingly recognising the need to enhance their work by having their own procedures in place for constant monitoring and regular evaluation. More and more NGOs, mount such exercises in respect of particular programmes and projects. Less common are wholesale reviews or evaluations of entire organisations, but these do occur. There is a growing body of literature and training related to monitoring and evaluation. A number of organisations have been established to assist NGOs with evaluation and/or with reviewing or generally reflecting upon their work, some national and some international in their scope.

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