

**TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP OF SIGNIFICANCE:
LESSONS FROM A DECADE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN
GOVERNMENT AND NGOS IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA**
Ved Arya

Abstract

Collaboration between government and non government organisations (NGOs) has been one outcome of the greater emphasis placed on participation, sustainability and democratic processes in India. This paper outlines how the role and space for elected government in development is being redefined. It begins by outlining the diversity among NGOs and the roles they seek to play. It then examines the mutual practical needs which draw NGOs and government towards each other. For NGOs, these include the need to access technical or managerial resources, to gain legitimacy or recognition, to promote greater accountability and transparency and to promote reform in public systems. Government agencies on the other hand work with NGOs to enhance people's participation in their programmes, to extend coverage of programmes to areas and groups that are poorly served by government staff, to test and replicate innovative approaches and to achieve greater cost effectiveness.

This paper explores how government and NGOs converge on a number of development objectives that have become social and political imperatives, divide roles along expected lines and prevailing notions of each other's capacities, but still end up with problems in certain areas. It outlines the reasons for this, including overlapping of professional domains, issues relating to NGO capacity, the role of individuals and personalities, inadequate consultation mechanisms, the lack of inclusive networking and weak management structures. It stresses the importance of achieving reform through indirect means, through cross learning by gradual exposure to alternative models and by providing space so that the two systems can be brought together in creative competition. Donor agencies occupy an influential niche in the affairs of governments and NGOs. The final section of the paper analyses the aspects of GO-NGO collaboration that merit the attention of donor agencies and are likely to be positively influenced by a more proactive and considered donor response.

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Acronyms

AI	artificial insemination
BAIF	Bharatia Agro-Industries Foundation
CADA	Command Area Development Agency
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CAPART	Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology
DoAH	Department of Animal Husbandry
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
FD	Forest Department
FPC	Forest Protection Committee
GO	government organisation
GONGO	organisation with the structure of an NGO but controlled by government
GoR	Government of Rajasthan
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
JFM	joint forest management
LIS	lift irrigation schemes
LJP	Lok Jumbish Parishad
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NGO	non government organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
PWD	public works department
SC/ST	Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe
SCOVA	standing committee on voluntary agencies
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SHGs	self-help groups
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SK	Shikshakarmi
URMUL	Uttar Rajasthan Milk Union Limited

TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP OF SIGNIFICANCE: LESSONS FROM A DECADE OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOS IN RAJASTHAN, INDIA

Ved Arya

1 INTRODUCTION

Approaches to development in India have undergone a dramatic change. Collaboration between government and NGOs has been one outcome of the greater emphasis placed on participation, sustainability, and democratic processes. New roles are therefore required of the government, and new organisations outside government play an increasingly significant role.

New approaches

Although many examples of old style top-down delivery of services still remain, new style bottom-up planning programmes are here to stay. The development bureaucracy, whose size is difficult for the exchequer to sustain, suffers from a lack of motivation to eradicate poverty. Centralised decision-making, which remains a norm in government, is proving less effective than what seems possible with users' groups, though process work in the latter is intensive and is often expensive. The challenge of reaching out to large numbers of the poor has compelled governments to work with NGOs who are, it is hoped, more cost effective and better at targeting beneficiary populations. Local human resources, appropriate technology, and traditional systems of resource management or health care are being given space in designing more sustainable programme interventions.

New roles and actors

The role and space for elected government in development in India is being redefined. The private for-profit sector and voluntary agencies are playing roles earlier reserved for the government. Many NGOs, who previously depended entirely on external funds, are beginning to work with government agencies and are discovering new roles for themselves in substituting for or influencing them. *Panchayati Raj* institutions¹, armed with their new Constitutional mandate, are carving a new space in grassroots development, particularly in programme implementation which was once dominated by State government and NGOs. Increasing institutional plurality has opened the door for new ways of role and space sharing.

Recognition of inherent complementarity has replaced the perception that the roles of these institutions are essentially conflicting and adversarial. There is an increasing interest among international donors, bilateral and multi-lateral, to support closer relationships within the projects they sponsor. The Government of Rajasthan (GoR) has, over the past few years, devised many creative ways of working with NGOs. It has drawn up strategies, which with the help

of NGOs, increase outreach and enhance the effectiveness of its programmes. It has also made a number of institutional changes to shape a new and more effective relationship with the NGOs. Despite these efforts, some of which have been operative for almost a decade, the two still remain 'uneasy bedfellows' and a huge potential remains untapped. Critics of collaboration, continue to equate it to 'co-option' and 'sub-contracting'.

This paper describes how NGOs and the government converge on a number of development objectives that have become social and political imperatives. Roles have been divided along expected lines and notions of each institutions' capabilities. Problems still however occur in some programmes, while succeeding in others. The paper draws lessons from ten years of collaboration across sectors in Rajasthan.

2 TYPOLOGY OF NGOS

NGOs are, at one level, an expression of voluntarism by the citizenry. They do not work in the same legal and institutional framework as government agencies; government does not sponsor them. Distinguishing them from government is however not enough, as considerable variation exists among NGOs (Box 1). It is reflected in their voluntarily chosen ideologies, modalities of catalysing change, their scale of operations and their connectedness or remoteness from grassroots action.

This paper focuses particularly on the relationship between government and grassroots development organisations, hereafter referred to as NGOs.

Box 1 Typology of NGOs in Rajasthan, India

- Private philanthropy/charitable trusts: their basic motivation is relief and welfare.
- Intermediary organisations: their main agenda is to conduct research, support and training or to bring grassroots NGOs together on a common platform with a common agenda.
- Grassroots development support organisations: these are involved in implementing grassroots development projects and promoting groups; leadership may or may not be local.
- Membership organisations: including local people's groups and organisations with local leaders such as artisan groups, women's self-help groups or users' groups.
- State sponsored or dependent NGOs (GONGOs): a new breed of NGO promoted outside the rigid framework of government to gain flexibility (particularly from accounting and financial procedures) and sometimes to reduce interference from political processes.
- Social Action Groups: work to change governance processes and structures; adopt mobilisation and confrontation as methods to challenge existing structures and mindsets; are not interested in implementing projects.

3 OBJECTIVES OF NGO–GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Practical needs draw NGOs and government towards each other. NGOs seek collaboration with government for many reasons: (i) to access technical or managerial resources; (ii) to gain legitimacy or recognition; (iii) to adapt a programme to their area; (iv) to obtain appropriate solutions to development problems; (v) to enhance people's participation in government programmes; and (vi) to promote greater accountability and transparency, and promote reforms in public systems. Broadly speaking, specific needs at any point in time are a function of the direction and pace of an NGO's organisational growth or leadership orientation, i.e. the needs of an NGO change as it grows in size and scale. In the initial stages, the need to survive is crucial. Government resources and linkages may be sought for that purpose. In the later stages, when there is relative stability of funds and a sufficient pool of experience to draw upon, the NGO's priorities may change: it may be motivated to make larger scale impacts or inform public policy through its work. Secondly, the ideology and the quality of leadership strongly influences the motivation of the agency in working with the government. Most NGOs are led by strong dynamic personalities, who have set up these organisations to carry out a defined agenda. The personal motivations and beliefs of the leader have a strong bearing on the organisation's strategy.

Government agencies on the other hand work with NGOs to: (i) enhance people's participation in their programmes; (ii) to extend coverage of programmes to areas and groups that are poorly served by government staff; (iii) to test and replicate innovative approaches; and (iv) to achieve greater cost effectiveness. Therefore, behind a NGOs' interest in working with the government, or conversely, the government extending an invitation to NGOs, lies a certain degree of convergence in their development objectives and certain needs.

NGOs and government converge on development objectives

The following list contains the basic premises that motivate governments and NGOs to collaborate with each other. These represent the broad rationale that underlies collaborative behaviour.

- Collaboration facilitates the generation and replication of innovations and alternative approaches to development.
- Collaboration is an efficient means of improving the delivery of development programmes and services to rural communities.
- Collaboration has the potential of inducing system/institutional reforms such as reorienting departments towards bottom-up planning and implementation.
- Collaboration is an effective means of improving people's ability to place demands on public systems and services.

4 ROLES SHARED IN PROMOTING DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The roles and space that NGOs acquire, or are assigned, depend on the programme's development objectives and the perceived capacity of NGOs to meet these (and conversely the perceived lack of government capacity). The following section describes the roles that government and NGOs share in working towards the development objectives outlined in the previous section, using examples from Rajasthan.

The *generation and replication of innovations* to solve development problems is a common objective of government and NGOs. In the process of developing appropriate solutions to problems in a specific area, some NGOs – if not all – develop new approaches that have the potential to be adopted elsewhere. For instance, to address the problem of teacher absenteeism in remotely located villages in a backward region, an NGO experimented with the idea of recruiting and training local youths for the job. This became the basis for the government to promote the *Shikshakarmi* programme in a number of districts.

The generation and demonstration of innovative approaches is a role which the State readily agrees NGOs can perform, and it is often prepared to support them in this regard. This role requires NGO capacity to develop bold, unconventional ideas and to undertake action research. The government role is often limited to funding innovation and research, though it can also allow the NGO to work with a small part of the government system as well. The complexity of this relationship is determined by the scope of innovation.

Field-testing and refinement of innovation requires flexibility, imagination and an accurate understanding of the local situation – traits that some NGOs possess. However, they may not have the resources or structures to work on a large scale, hence collaboration with governments can greatly improve the chances of successfully replicating proven approaches. There are two variants of replication: the diffusion of innovation can be undertaken by government, or the NGO itself may assume responsibility for 'scaling up' with government financial support. The case of an NGO taking up artificial insemination (AI) in 13 districts² is a classic example of the second strategy. It is worth pointing out however, that not all NGO innovations are automatically replicable by the government system – choice of actors, technology, local demand, and capacity to manage a larger system without losing quality, are some important considerations when preparing to 'scale up'.

A second area where government and NGO objectives converge is in efforts to *improve the delivery of services*. This can be done either by filling functional gaps or reaching remote geographical areas where government staff find it unattractive to go. The growing acceptance of NGO participation in government programmes reflects recognition that firstly, GO programmes and services are not performing adequately and secondly, NGOs have skills and comparative advantages that can improve the

quality of many programmes. NGOs are recognised as local institutions, which work closely with communities, have a limited geographical area to work in and respond flexibly and reasonably quickly to a community's demands. Better outreach and more effective targeting of benefits is expected, often at reasonable cost. NGOs' participation in government schemes is the most effective form of collaboration. Pure examples of this type in Rajasthan include the Union Government's recently introduced watershed programme³.

The major requirement for providing services is that a local institution is available to reach the target population or carry out a specific function (such as training, AI) better than the government. Capacity to innovate may be desirable, but not necessary. 'Commitment' to serve the poor (or target population) is often cited as a critical requirement. 'NGO implements-GO funds' is the basic formula. This is the most common division of GO/NGO role in Rajasthan.

A third area of convergence is *inducing system or institutional reforms*. System reform can imply structural change as well as changes in values, attitudes and work cultures. The need for such change arises from the desirability of improving transparency, accountability and efficiency. While system reforms in government agencies are often initiated externally by political mandate or donors, the objectives of senior government officials may sometimes converge with those of NGOs. Where such a convergence exists, NGOs with the requisite skills and experience can productively collaborate with government in the introduction and refinement of new approaches. For instance, a joint team from the NGO Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN), and the Block Development administration was set up in Alwar district, to improve the implementation effectiveness of the government's poverty alleviation programmes. Another example is *Lok Jumbish*, a programme aimed at achieving universal primary education in the state. The government has promoted a GONGO – *Lok Jumbish Parishad* – to develop new methods and systems which can be taken up by the Education Department (Box 2).

The objective of pursuing system or institutional reform in government is a complex process. It can rarely be achieved by a single actor, let alone by a single NGO. Actors/NGOs with a strong participation/empowerment orientation (like the mobilisation agencies of the *Lok Jumbish* Programme) are essential, but they must be accompanied by others – with a systemic understanding – to pull through the changes in government departments (the role that *Lok Jumbish Parishad* plays *vis à vis* the education department). Institutional reform can also take the shape of introducing a new methodology in a department or substituting public service with NGOs.

Finally, collaboration provides a means of addressing *participation and empowerment* objectives in

government programmes. While the desirability of people's participation is generally accepted by the state, NGOs – who lobby for this cause – are not always seen as legitimate intermediaries between government programmes and rural communities. NGO philosophies can also carry the concept of empowerment considerably further than governments are comfortable with. NGOs view their own involvement with government as a means of improving the ability of communities to work directly with government. There are many instances where NGOs have succeeded in intervening on behalf of the community. Box 3 illustrates one such example. Another is the collaboration between NGOs and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), which aims to link small, informal savings and credit groups with the commercial banks.

Empowerment and widespread participation in government projects requires that NGOs act as pressure groups and people's organisers and possess understanding and skills to influence the system. NGOs need a deep commitment to this, as the process may be long-drawn and results intangible and unpredictable.

**Box 2 An attempt to create a new institutional culture and graft it on to an old department:
The case of Lok Jumbish Parishad**

Lok Jumbish was initiated in December, 1992, with the objective of realising universal primary education in Rajasthan through both the formal and informal systems. By the end of 1996, the project was operating in 2,826 villages in 58 blocks and is projected to cover the entire state by 2007.

The project is managed through a society – *Lok Jumbish Parishad* – registered for this specific purpose. The design ensures a high level of involvement and backing by senior government officials. The Chief Minister is the ex-officio chairman of the governing council and the Education Secretary is the ex-officio vice chairman of the executive committee.

At the block level, *Lok Jumbish* establishes offices and a committee known as the *Khand Stariya Prabandhan Samiti*. Members of this include government and NGO staff, representatives of the teaching community and educationalists. One-third of the members are drawn from *Panchayat Samitis* (unit of local governance for between three to five villages). This committee oversees clusters comprising 25–30 villages. Such clusters are controlled operationally either by NGOs or by *Lok Jumbish* staff. Where such staff are working, they are controlled by a Block Steering Group. There is clear geographic demarcation between NGO and Block Steering Group areas of activity, and there is no day-to-day interaction between the two – interaction occurs only during review and planning meetings.

Lok Jumbish has two clients, the children and the parents who are the decision-makers. To create demand for education, the project works with parents through an environment building exercise and school mapping. The latter is a key process. It is done by selected male and female members of the village community who form a group known as the *Prerak Dal*. The map records the social and educational resource base of each village and indicates the number of male and female children of school age and whether or not they attend school. The map forms the base for a community educational plan. A village education committee, a *Mahila Samooh* (to encourage participation of girls) and a *Bhavan Nirman Samiti* (for decisions regarding and supervision of building construction) are elected from the *Prerak Dal*.

5 FORM AND DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIPS THAT EVOLVE AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP

What forms do GO-NGO relationships take and what are their dynamics? Once programme implementation begins, what management processes and structures are designed by stakeholders to oversee this role division and relationship?

Four major forms of relationship are evident (Table 1): *schematic*, *dyadic*, *catalytic/confrontational* and *institutional*. The nature of these linkages are decided by the type and perceived capacity of the participating NGOs and their positioning in the decision-making structure; the scope and coverage of the programme or scheme; the degree of pre-determined designing of components; the target or goal orientation; and the way the roles of the two sides are conceived and divided. Consequently, the

Box 3 Beyond negotiation: Minor forest produce

In 1990, following a study by one NGO – Astha – of *tendu patta* (leaf) collection, representation was made to the government to increase the purchase price from 13.5 to 50 rupees per bundle. The rate went up to 20 rupees, but a strike was still called. At the suggestion of *Rajsangh*, a government organisation under the Ministry of Tribal Development responsible for marketing and trading commodities, the *Adivasi Tendu Patta Collection and Marketing Cooperative* was registered with the help of the NGO. It was to provide services in direct competition with private contractors who operated collection centres. Operations began in 1991, with financial support provided by *Rajsangh* at six per cent interest. Threatened by both strike action and the diversion of leaf supplies to the Cooperative, private traders increased their rates to 26 rupees per bundle. In 1991, the Cooperative netted a profit of 600,000 rupees (\$15,000).

This success encouraged other NGOs to undertake similar activities and a coalition, the *Tendu Patta Samanvaya Samiti*, was formed to link their efforts. *Rajsangh* simultaneously expanded its activities, and with NGOs, successfully lobbied government to set aside collection units in *Rajsangh's* name for the cooperatives it was supporting. However, because of poor leaf quality, low prices and delays (due to *Rajsangh's* requirement that sales be made on a tender basis) all cooperatives made a loss in 1992; in 1993 only one made a profit.

By 1992, a new Managing Director took over *Rajsangh* and relations between *Rajsangh* and the NGOs soured, initially because of a disagreement over profit sharing. The situation became worse when changes were made to the contract between cooperatives and *Rajsangh*. Two cooperatives refused to sign the new contract, and a signature was fraudulently obtained from another. After public exposure, an apology was made by *Rajsangh* and the old terms reinstated. In 1993, another new Managing Director sanctioned support for seven collection units for cooperatives, but in 1994 the brother of a State Minister began negotiating for units for his own cooperative. *Rajsangh* initially refused and an aggressive campaign was launched against it and the NGOs. As a result, *Rajsangh* did not finance any cooperatives in 1994 and took over buying operations in the reserved units itself. It also instituted an enquiry into the accounts of the cooperatives and issued an order to seize all the old stocks and property of the cooperatives.

The NGOs and cooperatives felt that *Rajsangh* was victimising them in response to political pressures and resorted to using the press to pursue their cause. The events attracted considerable coverage in local newspapers. *Rajsangh* maintained it had evidence of financial irregularities in the cooperatives, but accounts indicated that the Minister had directly threatened the Managing Director with dire consequences if *Rajsangh* continued to support cooperatives promoted by NGOs. This effectively ended relations between *Rajsangh* and NGOs.

relationship can be mutually supportive or confrontational, can enjoy parity or be patently unequal, may or may not have elements of innovation and flexibility, and can be static or evolve dynamically.

The most common relationship is that which we term as *schematic*. For each development scheme, the government proposes standardised criteria for NGO selection, technical and cost norms, preferred approach and mode of implementation. The schemes are designed to accommodate a large number of NGOs. The relationship between the government and NGOs in the schematic relationship may evolve to be one of benefactor and beneficiary. NGOs participating in such schemes often do not feel happy with being treated as little more than sub-contractors.

Dyadic (or bilateral) relations can develop between government and NGOs, in order to execute a mutually agreed project. Projects test an innovation, or the government may provide financial support to an NGO to upscale the latter's successful project. In some senses, this could be considered a special case of a schematic relationship, but the NGO is in a more prominent position. The government strikes a relationship with a single NGO because of confidence in its capability. Examples include that of the Bharatia Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF), with strong technical expertise in the livestock sector. They were invited to scale up the AI services provided by the government.

Catalytic roles and relationships exist where the government and NGOs work with each other to enhance the benefits to the third stakeholder – the disadvantaged community. The initiative may often lie with the NGO, which raises issues pertaining to the community it seeks to serve and pressures the government to fulfil its role as welfare provider, or protector of the weak. Box 3 provides an example of this kind of relationship. This relationship is open-ended and can witness certain 'flip flop' behaviour – at times cordial, at times adversarial. Many new frontiers are won, or at least new doors opened, following this strategy which can result in a programme where the role of NGOs is more clearly legitimised. Joint Forest Management (JFM) provides a well-known example. A variant of this is when an official agency undertakes to reform another official agency – NABARD's attempt to push commercial banks and Regional Rural Banks⁴ to lend to the poor with help from NGOs, and to link self-help groups (SHGs) with banks is a good example.

Institutional relationships are attempted where a programme adopts a radically different approach, such as those emphasising process rather than targets. In some so-called 'process projects', where the attempt is to move away from blueprint approaches, NGOs are considered to be important vectors of change. Often there is a role division between the government and NGOs. Based on perceptions of their strengths, NGOs are generally

assigned process intensive or software roles, while the government adopts physical implementation or hardware roles. Such role division and complementarity implies that government and NGOs coordinate their action during field implementation, adjust to contrasting working styles, and are sensitive to mutual needs and compulsions. If the task of managing innovative GO-NGO arrangements cannot be managed within a department, project designers may opt for 'de-linked structures' (Box 4). Systems are put in place for periodic experience sharing, co-learning and conflict resolution. In some cases, there is even a package deal for a specified role and output, as opposed to narrow line item controls on salaries and overheads. Such flexibility, and a learning-sensitive approach, is backed by allowing an operating structure de-linked from the usual government bureaucracy.

Processes and structures devised to manage relationships. Sharing roles and spaces of innovation and implementation requires a sensitive and alert management approach from the 'owners' of these projects. In a dyadic relationship, where a single NGO works with a government agency to either promote innovation or provide services on a large scale, committees are set up for reviewing periodic progress. In facilitative relationships, where a mainstream institution together with an NGO is promoting the participation of people in governance or access to formal institutions (such as banks) without any formal

agreement, the coordination mechanisms do not take any definite shape. Negotiations can be long and drawn out or may be quickly concluded. In some cases, a situation of confrontation arises when these negotiations break down.

It is in the other two types of relationships – schematic and institutional – where the scale of operations is large, the process of change is complex and a number of NGOs are implementing projects, that coordination or management mechanisms and structures have to be designed.

Management of schemes

Schemes are managed by Union Ministries, state government departments or special organisations created for NGO funding such as CAPART⁵. NGOs submit their project proposals for approval to these agencies, which are then screened by committees including technical experts. Lately, at least at the centre, NGOs are also represented on the committees. Disbursements are made in instalments to ensure satisfactory performance and are often based on reports of target-achievement and accounts submitted by the implementing agency. Schemes are not often known to provide flexibility, easy channels of feedback, grievance procedures, or cross learning between relevant departments and NGOs. The more distant the location of the sanctioning authority, the more adversely affected NGOs are by poor communication and inflexibility.

Table 1 Role division and relationship between government and NGOs for various development objectives

Development objective	Role division	NGO role and orientation	GO-NGO relationship
Service delivery	NGO implements, government funds, often under well-defined schemes	NGO as local organisation (size and innovation capacity not necessary)	Schematic/contractual
		NGO upscales its own scheme	Dyadic
Innovation	Government role as funding innovation/ research	NGO to develop unconventional ideas	Dyadic or institutional
Empowerment and participation	NGO as a pressure group and people's organiser; government accountable to people	Strong participation/ empowerment orientation	Catalytic (facilitative/ confrontational)
System/institutional reform	NGO role primarily in demonstrating an alternative; articulating people's demands or organising them so as to influence working methods or culture in government	Strong participation/ empowerment orientation together with systemic understanding to pull through the changes suggested	Institutional – a possible mix of the above three

Management of institutional relationships

Management processes and structures have to respond to innovation in programme approaches and collaboration with other institutions. Adequate space has to be provided for the decentralisation of decision-making, the flexibility and diversity of approaches, the evolution of models and innovation as opposed to prescribed blueprints, etc. Any management system informed by this new set of conditions cannot, by design, flourish in the existing bureaucratic environment. A new management structure needs to be found – one that is sufficiently *de-linked* from normal government functioning – to meet the demands of the new charter.

This new entity is government sponsored (and controlled) but registered as a ‘society’ – under the same law as NGOs; thus they are sometimes referred to as GONGOs (Box 4). The governance structure of such ‘de-linked structures’ or GONGOs is controlled by politicians and officials, perhaps more by the latter. This is guided in part by the desire to protect the projects from rigid bureaucracy and systems. The underlying assumption is that there are people in the government who, given sufficient operational space, financial powers and flexibility, will produce results not possible in a purely government setting. Once in GONGOs, they engender innovation and cocoon it until it is ready for replication. Many donor agencies also prefer this arrangement. Besides seeding innovation, they are also motivated by the possibility of having a direct link with the project and a more transparent flow of funds.

Creating de-linked structures is also considered better for improving the quality of collaborative actions and arrangements. The government is aware that NGOs, particularly those that have adequate resources of their own, do not react favourably to delays and rigidities and would rather not participate in a programme unless assured that their operations and autonomy will not be hampered.

Institutional collaboration is a major opportunity for mutual exposure and cross learning between governments and NGOs. The quality of this exposure and learning varies between individuals on both sides.

Box 4 De-linked structures

Projects that depart radically from conventional approaches and that aim for a large scale change need new institutional arrangements. These range from creating a new unit or cell within an existing structure to setting up an external unit or organisation. In a natural resource management project (PAHAL), a separate office of project director was created to allow for innovative approaches to managing degraded lands in tribal areas. Project staff were brought from other departments on deputation, to work with NGOs. They tried a number of new technical ideas within self defined targets, and came up with new processes of beneficiary participation. This arrangement of having a separate project director gave way to PAHAL being registered as a ‘society’ – a structure delinked from government. This gave far more autonomy to the project leadership, particularly to decentralise some of the financial powers to subordinates. Many of these structures are legally NGOs, but their governance structures are controlled by government. Hence they are nicknamed GONGOs.

For NGOs, while such an arrangement affords a more substantial partnership with the government, it also implies greater accountability of actions and performance. Their actions are subject to periodic external review, which remains a rare phenomenon in the NGO sector.

6 CONSTRAINTS TO GO-NGO COLLABORATION AND LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

Why does collaboration run into difficulties, despite government and NGOs converging on objectives and dividing roles along the expected lines? Under what circumstances is the collaboration long-lasting? On the other hand, should we see collaboration only as a means to initiate change in government, and once that happens, does the NGO role loses its significance and is withdrawal desirable? Are conflicts a temporary phenomenon or a part of the evolutionary process of mutual coming to terms? How could conflicts be anticipated and processes designed to manage them?

This section highlights those factors and constraints that hinder healthy collaboration between government and NGOs. These factors may apply to all manner of GO-NGO collaboration:

- NGOs challenging a department’s domain;
- NGOs seeking autonomy and budget parity;
- issues relating to NGO capacity;
- weak management structures to effect change;
- role of individuals, personalities and inter-personal equations;
- inadequacies in consultation with NGOs;
- lack of NGO networking;
- design and administration of schemes for NGOs (specific to schematic relationship);
- role division (specific to institutional relationships).

Annex 1 provides a summary of the major issues affecting collaboration and a summary is provided here.

Potential overlap

Resistance to NGOs may arise when the government engages them in tasks that also constitute the core activity of a department; any overlap or infringement of the domain of a department can create conflict. Three aspects of conflict are evident: administrative – when a department regulates the ownership and use of natural resources such as forests (for instance, in JFM); technical – when professionals such as engineers and medical doctors have little or no confidence in an NGOs’ capability (for instance, AI); or financial – when department employees feel their legitimate or illegitimate pecuniary benefits are threatened (commonly supposed but difficult to prove). For one or all of these reasons, lower department levels may not share the views of their superiors in granting space to NGOs.

NGOs are generally perceived to be low on technical skills and technical experts view their entry into such areas with scepticism. This is well illustrated in the case of the Uttar Rajasthan Milk Union Limited (URMUL) collaboration with the Command Area Development Agency (CADA), where URMUL undertook to demonstrate new techniques of covering water courses and new designs of school buildings^{6,7}. Further, it sought to do this at a cost lower than CADA's rates, thereby suggesting unwittingly that CADA had 'commissions' built into costs. URMUL's efforts ran into problems, since the lobby of engineers in CADA felt that URMUL was encroaching on their professional turf and trying to discredit them. Even in cases where the NGO is professionally competent, there can be resistance. BAIF, which expanded its AI services with financial support from the Department of Rural Development, has faced opposition in some districts from the Department of Animal Husbandry (DoAH). To eliminate competition, BAIF had to leave areas where the DoAH had subsequently developed insemination facilities. A relatively recent cause of resistance from lower cadres is their perception that NGOs are eroding employment security in the government by offering cheaper contractual services. Employees' trade unions for instance, protested when agriculture extension and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) work was sought to be given to NGOs⁸.

The phenomenon of encroaching on the technical and administrative domains is less likely to occur when NGOs work with departments focusing on specific segments of the population such as the rural poor, tribal groups, women and children.

NGOs exhibit a general inability or indifference to manage lower ranks in the government. Most NGOs prefer to enter into agreements at senior levels, while dynamics at lower levels are left to sort themselves out. This neglect rarely works in favour of collaboration. There are exceptions, such as BAIF's ability to smooth out contentious issues at district levels, and PRADAN's ability to work with district and regional officials. In both of these cases, agreements between government and NGOs served as a stabilising factor in the environment of turbulence created by frequent transfers (Box 5).

The promoters of collaboration on both sides need to be prepared for potential opposition from government staff and need to manage this competition creatively. The following strategies can be used to manage this competition:

- Anchor collaboration outside the technical department whenever possible. For instance BAIF has been able to sustain a long term arrangement with the government in the field of AI, in spite of active opposition from the DoAH. One of the reasons has been that it does not get funds from the DoAH.

- Proven ability of the NGO in the area – this permits it to deal effectively with resistance from government, as well as manage a separate geographical domain with competence. BAIF and PRADAN have been able to sustain long term relations with the government because they have high proficiency in the field of AI and lift irrigation respectively. While this competence does not remove all tension, it certainly removes one of the main grounds of complaint by government functionaries.
- Avoid geographical/functional overlaps with the government department. An important corollary of this lesson is that, at least in the beginning, it is much easier for NGOs to move into gaps left by the government development agencies. PRADAN has been successful in mobilising government funds in South Bihar earmarked for Lift Irrigation Schemes because the government department was prevented from participating in the programme⁹.

The above lessons read together should not be interpreted to mean that avoiding collaboration is the best strategy. If service delivery, and not departmental reform, is the agenda of the programme – as in the case of BAIF/PRADAN – then it does not matter which department funds come from. In such cases, it may be preferable not to seek funds from a department which has that service as its core agenda. But if the agenda of the NGO is to reform public policy or programmes, a closer interaction between the governments and NGOs will be necessary.

Box 5 Enlisting cooperation from lower ranks in the government

PRADAN began setting up small scale lift irrigation schemes (serving about 30 to 40 farmers, with an average command area of 40 acres) in south Bihar. When district authorities offered to provide funds for such schemes, PRADAN's proposal included a service charge (five per cent), and the two parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), indicating a shift in the relationship. Similar MoUs were signed in a number of districts. Later when an externally aided project promoted lift irrigation in collaboration with NGOs, the MoU between PRADAN and the project authority was signed on a regional basis. This MoU specified government responsibility, such as sanctioning the schemes that PRADAN would propose, releasing the funds on time and giving completion certificates.

BAIF entered into a contract with the state level department for rural development for providing AI services in various districts. Payments for services are based on verification by district level authorities. These included officials from DoAH, who perceived BAIF as their competitor. There were delays in verification and questions on whether BAIF had achieved its targets. In one instance, one of the insemination centres did not achieve the target, while all others had and the aggregate target was also met. In another, the district authorities wanted to measure the number of conceptions rather than the number of the insemination treatments. In both cases, BAIF officers requested a change at the district level, but when it did not happen they waited patiently for the occasion when the MoU at the state level was to be revised and had the amendments made.

However our analysis of collaboration experience suggests that, even in such cases, reform through indirect means; through demonstration of alternatives in another, less hostile, setting; and/or through cross learning by gradual exposure to alternative models, may be best. By separating geographical domains, the two systems may be brought together in creative competition, where the two learn from each other. Organisational learning may occur better from a distance.

Autonomy and budget parity

Most NGOs attach great value to their independence from government. They see themselves as voluntary organisations: their very *raison d'être* arises from a critique of the government. Affiliation with the government dilutes their identity in the eyes of society and their target community, so that in instances of collaboration, they may guard their identity even more zealously. This is reflected in their demand for treatment on par with the governments, for instance in decision-making.

They also resent excessive interference in internal matters by the government. There are examples of NGOs' withdrawal from government programmes because they felt that government procedures were an undue interference. Take, for instance, the government's attempts in collaboration cases, to insist upon the salary and staff pattern for NGOs prescribed in project design. Most well-established NGOs have their own salary structure which has evolved over a period of time, and is rooted in its own history and development ideology. Typically in NGOs people perform multiple tasks. NGOs are most comfortable in a system where they have consolidated provisions for salaries for performance of certain tasks. NGOs normally resent externally- or funding-induced changes in their salary structure. Their logic is that they cannot have a separate salary structure for the separate projects undertaken.

In case of departmental schemes, the phenomenon of depressed budgets for NGOs is even more marked. In numerous schemes, there is no provision for covering staff time or even overheads that the NGO may incur. This poses unrealistic constraints on the agency that is expected to perform the required task. Therefore:

- NGOs must be treated on par with government functionaries. In institutional collaboration, where NGOs work with the government, this parity must be built into the design of the project proposal.
- While allocating salaries for the NGO personnel, the best policy is to allocate a consolidated amount for performance of defined tasks. Its further break up should be left to the discretion of the NGO.

Differing expectations

Differing expectations continue to undermine constructive collaboration. For instance, many programmes are based on eliciting community participation, and NGOs are expected to devise methods along the lines of micro level planning or participatory rural appraisal (PRA). Since control of resources is still with government agencies, NGOs' roles are reduced to raising awareness or gathering people for meetings, with little control over the subsequent decision-making.

Further problems relate to the uncontrolled growth of NGOs in India since the introduction of new schemes for NGOs and the large sums allocated. Proposals are often sought through newspaper advertisements – although some claim that a genuine NGO would not normally pick up a newspaper to look for 'business', unlike, say, Public Works Department (PWD) contractors. Not unexpectedly, a large number of well written and sometimes identical-looking proposals land on the desk of the issuing agency. This makes NGO screening a difficult task. Some funding agencies such as the Aga Khan Foundation, have adopted word of mouth and workshops as methods of letting prospective NGOs know of different schemes. ActionAid and Ford Foundation programme officers make personal visits to learn more about the ground capacity of applicants.

Finally, misunderstandings occur when NGOs are expected to take on new roles and responsibilities. When a 'process project', designed to carry out institutional reform, inducts a good and reputed NGO into a collaborative relationship with the government, it often finds it difficult to live up to its reputation. NGOs may have built up their reputation primarily on good service delivery or protest against the government (championing people's causes), but the role required in process projects may be different. Therefore:

- Any programme that is planning a large scale induction of NGOs should develop better screening procedures, such as workshops and personal visits, and it should prepare a capacity-building module to encourage the gradual growth of fledgling NGOs (especially when they are working in a new sector).
- In process projects aiming at institutional change in the government, NGOs should be specifically prepared for this role.

Management structure

A new project aims for a change and thus causes a flutter in an existing bureaucracy. This is likely to be most felt in lower cadres. Resistance to the entry of an NGO therefore needs to be creatively managed. In *Swasthyakarmi Yojana*, the NGOs were assigned the task of family welfare and their work was to be supervised by the people whose domain was being challenged. When NGOs faced difficulties the managing body – the Standing Committee on

Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) – was not able to help them. Therefore:

- Resistance to change in the system needs to be countered by strong, committed, and sustained leadership to the programme.

Role of interpersonal relations

There is unanimous agreement between governments and NGOs that individuals, personalities and interpersonal relations can make or break collaborative efforts. This is perhaps the most subjective and unpredictable issue in GO–NGO relations. It is rare for collaborative initiatives to be institutionalised or made formal and hence they last only as long as the individual government officer remains in post. An enormous amount of energy may be spent or wasted if the NGO has to convince a new incumbent to fulfil commitments made by his/her predecessor.

Personal relations between the leaders of NGOs and senior government officers have their own dynamics, and in a number of cases this has led to more creative institutional partnership between government and NGOs. Any perceived links between NGOs and senior bureaucrats may also result in increased alienation from the NGOs of the junior levels in government.

Since transfers within the system are routine, and the number of ‘pro-NGO’ or ‘pro-people’ officers may decline, programme designers and NGOs have to develop broader coalitions, and must build up political support. In the *tendu patta* case (Box 3), part of the reason for the successful experiment with tribal collectors gaining marketing licenses and finance was political opposition. In the *Lok Jumbish* programme, support from the Chief Minister has ensured longevity to the programme, despite resistance from bureaucracy. Therefore:

- Build broader coalitions to support the programme, and involve political leaders to make programmes ‘transfer proof.’

Consultation inadequacies

The level of consultation between governments and NGOs is increasing but there are still several problems. Consultations are often hastily convened, one-off events. There is frequently a preponderance of high profile NGOs present and thus the diversity of views is not captured. Consultations are one sided in that ‘the government invites and the NGO attends’, while the reverse is difficult to achieve. There is a tendency to ‘tokenise’, which is apparent in rushing through issues and discouraging discussion on substantive matters. Consultations on controversial or contentious issues are generally avoided.

A fundamental problem is the near complete lack of effective forums or mechanisms by which governments and NGOs can interact with each other on a continuous

basis. They are generally absent in line departments at the district and state level, and are weak or erratic at other levels of development administration. Nor is there any state level mechanism by which NGOs can regularly interface with the government on development issues, or those that affect their capacity to work with each other.

An underdeveloped link in Rajasthan is the lack of involvement of NGO networks with the government. Though networking among NGOs is increasing, there is no broad-based coalition of NGOs for managing the interface with government. There is no consensus among NGOs on how to pressure government on development issues. An exception are the networks of social action groups that are effective in addressing the government and are able to demand attention for the causes they espouse. The government response to these networks is often of extreme caution or outright dismissal. Therefore:

- Inclusive networking is critical for sustained collaboration.

Management of schemes for NGOs

There are many small, struggling NGOs who avail of government schemes. With the lack of transparent mechanisms, such agencies, whose competence and integrity is doubtful, have increasingly begun to feature as recipients of schemes. There is an increased sense of frustration in serious-minded NGOs at the rampant proliferation of bogus NGOs within the sector. As a result, the general credibility of the NGO sector has been eroded.

Aside from the phenomenon of low provisions, there are a number of problems related to the designing and administration of schemes for NGOs. These mainly relate to: (i) a lack of consultation with NGOs at the design stage, which results in the laying down of unrealistic goals and activities, and low participation by quality organisations; (ii) weak selection criteria and procedures for screening NGOs and their proposals; (iii) timely disbursement of funds; and (iv) inadequate monitoring and evaluation of schemes.

Role division

Role division – derived from the notion of comparative strengths – does not always work well in the context of institutional GO–NGO collaboration. In most instances NGOs are given the task of organising and mobilising the community, while the responsibility for implementation rests with the government. Often, physical execution and achievement of financial targets assumes a more central role, whereas village level processes that NGOs provide the lead on are jettisoned. There are also power connotations in this kind of role division

vis-à-vis the community – government functionaries continue to enjoy the power derived from their control of resources and their discretion regarding the priority and pace at which the programmes are carried out. Delays and deviations often occur, which results in NGOs facing a crisis of credibility with communities.

In institutionalised collaborations, where the GOs and NGOs work together in different roles, there is often a decline in the NGOs' role and involvement in key areas. Experience suggests that once learning takes place within the context of the project, NGOs' participation becomes redundant or marginalised.

7 THE ROLE OF DONORS

Donor agencies occupy an influential niche in the affairs of governments and NGOs. What is the present and potential role of donor agencies in the realm of GO–NGO relations? What aspects of GO–NGO collaboration merit the attention of donor agencies and are likely to be positively influenced by a more proactive and considered donor response?

Donors in Rajasthan are at least as heterogeneous a group as the GOs and NGOs they support. Donor agencies generally have specific mandates and resources that guide the intensity of their work with governments, NGOs, or both. The multilateral and bilateral agencies, by virtue of their origin in governments and size of resources, extend 'development cooperation' to national and state governments. They also have an 'NGO window' for direct assistance to NGOs, which is relatively small and often built in as a component of the awards to governments. Private donor agencies and charities often exclusively support NGOs.

The increase in the flow of resources to NGOs over the past decade has been a major factor in the increase of NGO presence and activity in domains that were once considered exclusive to government. The flow of external resources to governments has also increased in absolute terms, but questions have been raised regarding effectiveness, reforms, cost efficiency, sustainability and participation. The emphasis on provision for NGOs in externally funded government projects is increasingly marked. This is driven in part by the experience of northern NGOs and pressure from indigenous NGOs, regarding what southern NGOs can bring to large-scale development interventions.

Donors may bring their specific agendas and mandates, but there is little general consensus among them on issues of community involvement, cost effectiveness, coverage, equity and replicability in the context of the interventions they support. Bilateral and private donor agencies need to be much more concerned about the potential represented by GO–NGO collaboration with respect to these factors.

Differing perceptions of NGO roles

Donors see NGO roles in relation to government differently. At the risk of over-generalisation, we surmise that bilateral aid agencies tend to view the NGOs' role as an intermediary and, in some cases, a transitory one, in relation to the government's links with people. NGOs are involved in functions that will help the government to understand community needs more accurately and generally improve its linkages with government programmes. In some cases, they may be invited to perform such tasks in a programme that are not possible within government, because a high degree of flexibility, cost efficiency and proximity to the community is required. Thus NGOs are involved as instruments of improved service delivery and outreach.

Far too often, donors see their task as completed once NGOs are admitted as partners in a project agreement with the government. They do not support or supervise the processes of selection of NGOs, do not see the resistance to their entry by government staff, or the inability of the nodal government agency to listen to their field experiences. Donors have a key role to play in setting up support mechanisms – processes and structures – to bring NGOs in as partners. This will ultimately have a positive impact on service delivery, participation and decentralisation, which have largely eluded governments in the past.

Private, non-government donor agencies tend to be much more intensely involved with NGOs. NGOs are seen as *catalysts* of social and economic change, with an ability to innovate and articulate the needs of the community. Their work and intervention in an area is not seen to be dependent on the government, though there is an overall notion (often unverified by donors) that NGOs' work is filling a gap in government resources or programmes. These donors are, however, less likely to be concerned about the complementarity of their NGO funding support with existing government resources in an area. Some private donors have identified *advocacy* as a valid role for NGOs to play *vis à vis* the government. Though they do not fund the government, the (non-funding) links of private donor agencies with government agencies are rather thin.

NGO capability

Whatever the role an NGO undertakes, NGO capability needs to remain a major donor concern. There is an assumption that NGOs will play certain roles in government programmes (setting up user committees, working with village based workers, engaging in participatory planning, etc.) while the capability of NGOs in other areas such as technical support and implementation remains limited. Tokenism of community and participatory processes in large scale government projects is common and, if anything, is growing. How can external donors

ensure that the elements of participation and equity are effective in the government interventions they support? In the context of government projects what is the experience of involving NGOs in these processes?

Private donor agencies need to be more concerned about the strategic relevance of their support to NGOs. Public systems, despite their inherent flaws, are too costly to society to be ignored. At a macro level, gains can hardly be made unless administrative inefficiency, unresponsiveness, corruption and chronic inability to reach the poor is overcome by the development apparatus of the state. Can private donor support to NGOs help them to negotiate better resources from government for the communities of their concern? Would it be worth considering the ability or willingness of an NGO to engage with public systems as a criterion for support? What kind of non-funding roles is it possible for NGOs to play in order to improve GO-NGO relations.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on practical experience, this paper has attempted to provide lessons on how to build constructive collaborative relationships between governments and NGOs. The following conclusions can be drawn:

- The type and form of collaboration needs to be based on a clear understanding of project or programme objectives. Different objectives imply different roles for NGOs. Hence in projects promoting innovation and participation, NGOs need to give more parity, flexibility and space than those that want NGOs to provide a pre-determined service.
- Different outputs require different forms of relationships between NGOs and government. Pre-determined service delivery needs at least a dyadic relationship with enforceable instruments such as MoUs. Participation and empowerment in programmes requires space for NGOs and government to negotiate and interact and cannot be driven purely by targets – which is a characteristic of service delivery.
- Different forms of relationship require different organisational structures. Existing structures need to be modified if they are to administer even the simplest form of relationship, namely a dyadic one. Institutional relationships, which entail coalition, require specific support structures and processes, which autonomous structures are suitable only for the administration and management of innovation within the confines of a project's organisation and activity. Often, a project can get better results under autonomous structures, which can create a snowball effect and force government department/agencies to

respond. A less disjunctive way of mainstreaming innovation would imply embedding change units within the organisation to be changed.

- Arguments supporting the above statements are couched in terms of increasing the inclusion of the stakeholders in the design and management of interventions. Giving appropriate voice and agency to stakeholders requires project structures and procedures which allow and enable the evolution not only of organisations, but also of the rules which govern collective behaviour.
- There is little general consensus among donors on issues of community involvement, cost effectiveness, coverage, equity and replicability in the context of the interventions they support.

Annex 1 Role sharing, management structures and issues in GO–NGO collaboration (in Rajasthan)

Development objectives of the project/programme	Role sharing among government and NGOs	Management structure	Issues	Recommendations for collaboration designers
<p>Health services Better family welfare services in inaccessible villages (<i>Swasthyakarmi</i> Programme).</p>	Government funded; implementation by NGOs; training roles unclear.	Well represented Standing Committee for NGO selection and periodic review; overall responsibility of the Directorate of IEC; supervision by district level.	Weak management structure to effect change, opposition from ranks who had little confidence in NGOs (at best ‘contractors’) and obsessed with target orientation, no mechanism for training <i>Swasthyakarmis</i> .	Human resource development interventions should include training of new grassroots cadre and induction of ‘pro-change’ government officers. New programme should be in a cocoon, not buffeted in initial stages. New programme should not be run like a departmental scheme. Need for a stronger and committed ‘management’. Greater need to develop NGO ownership in the programme.
<p>Primary education Universal primary education (<i>Lok Jumbish</i> Programme).</p>	NGOs to map community’s needs and mobilise opinion in project’s favour; <i>Lok Jumbish Parishad</i> (LJP) nudges Education Department to respond, NGOs and government agency given parity in budgets.	LJP set up as a GONGO, enjoys freedom of operation, liaises with Education Department and NGOs, employs government staff on deputation through an open recruitment.	Despite bureaucracy’s resistance a successful programme, but NGOs mostly in grassroots implementation, their potential to be partners in changing the system under-utilised.	Clear operational methodology, clear roles for implementing agencies. Frequent, responsive, sensitive management processes to build symbiotic relationship with field. Flexible management to respond to fresh challenges. Strong management to elicit response from government department.
Primary education in remote villages, curing teacher absenteeism (<i>Shikshakarmi</i> Programme).	NGOs ensure right selection of <i>Shikshakarmi</i> and <i>Panchayat Samitis</i> implement.	<i>Shikshakarmi</i> Board, a GONGO, manages the state-wide programme; local supervision both by NGO and <i>Panchayat Samiti</i>	Successful beginning, now more like a scheme with SKs becoming permanent government employees and there is less scope for innovation; SK Board less sensitive to field problems; <i>Panchayats</i> and NGOs find it difficult to collaborate; training role for a few NGOs.	Question to ask is whether the quality of the programme has suffered? If yes, could it be improved with better NGO involvement? In case the NGOs need to be involved, how to manage the interface between <i>Panchayats</i> and NGOs?
<p>Natural resources management Evolve a participatory, integrated land use management approach for degraded areas (PAHAL Project in Dungarpur).</p>	NGOs to form people’s groups, train extension cadre, while government officers on deputation provide technical expertise.	GO and NGO jointly guide the project, though project leader was a junior rank IAS officer; donor periodically reviewed progress and appointed a resident consultant.	High innovation load, flexibility misused by government, NGOs capacity high in implementation but limited in innovation and training, Inadequate external inputs in process management and technical innovation.	Need for stronger and more committed ‘management’ or leadership. Need for clear participatory methodology and activity priorities possibly with help of external resource inputs. Most NGOs could then be given service delivery roles. Even then need for sensitive and flexible management cannot be overemphasised.
Rehabilitate degraded forests with community participation (Joint Forest Management in Udaipur).	NGOs to convince villagers to join the programme – but FD not obliged to invite NGOs; FD employee secretary and <i>Patwari</i> member secretary of the FPC.	Entirely controlled by the Forest Department; district level Supervisory Committee to assess FPC’s performance.	NGO participation resisted by FD, scheme not monetarily attractive to villagers, strict control mindset of FD.	Unless NGOs are given a more legitimate role, collaboration is a non-starter
Save water courses from sand-clogging by covering them with stone slabs (Command Area Development in western Rajasthan).	NGO as an innovator in technical area, with government funding support.	Under Commissionerate for CADA; initiative was treated as any independent project where grant is given to an NGO.	CADA opposed NGO entry – engineers found technical snags and accountants delayed release of payments.	NGO should also be ready to take on a technical lobby, either with help of an external resource persons or agencies just as SWRC took help of CET in developing the <i>Shikshakarmi</i> programme, or by having the innovation assessed by another technical agency of the government.

<p>Set up lift irrigation schemes (LIS) for small and marginal farmers in remote, water abundant areas (micro-irrigation in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka).</p>	<p>Fund release, water permission and electricity connection, etc., with government and bank gives loan in some places; but most of the field project installation and management with NGOs (technical design, group organisation, training in maintenance and irrigated agriculture).</p>	<p>District Project Approval committees and regional authority set up in World Bank aided project in Bihar; DRDA and Agriculture Department collaborate in Utthan Scheme of Madhya Pradesh; Respective departments/agencies such as SC/ST corporation in Karnataka.</p>	<p>While grant based, NGO supported small LIS was successful due to professionally competence of NGOs and thus expanded quickly, bank financed schemes are very slow to take-off due to unfriendly procedures, little or no special attention to group schemes, and risk averse staff; weak higher level coordination between banks and implementing government departments (rural dev. and agriculture).</p>	<p>If the NGO wished to replicate it through the government, an assessment by a government agency will legitimise it further. To scale this model up, or try some others, a feasibility analysis needs to be undertaken by a competent agency, backed up by policy statement by the Union and State governments. External agency funds may be needed to kick off a GO-NGO collaboration in various states.</p>
<p>Livestock</p>	<p>Improve cattle and buffalo breed by AI services.</p>	<p>State level committee to approve the contract for an area to NGO, district level committees to review the progress, verify and approve NGO's annual claims.</p>	<p>Resistance from department successfully tackled by NGO due to its non-confrontational stance, sound technical base and highly motivated staff. In tribal areas, however, some questions are raised about AI's cost-efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Although NGO has admirably delivered a service for almost two decades, the department has learnt precious little. In its Gopal yojana, the NGO could usefully be called in as a partner. Without much competition, NGO has not taken bold initiatives in Rajasthan it has elsewhere. For example, it could promote small AI service entrepreneurs.</p>
<p>Credit</p>	<p>Improve rural poor's access to formal credit (through SHGs).</p>	<p>NGOs promote SHGs like foster parents and work with NABARD to link them with rural branches of RRBs or commercial banks, with or without financial support from NABARD.</p>	<p>Programme expanding slowly as it requires intensive process work with SHGs which NGOs could put in; not all NGOs sufficiently enthused.</p>	<p>NABARD facilitated NGOs links with banks by legitimising their role, realistic assessment of their strengths, their early participation in planning, ensuring parity and adjusting pace to ground level reality. Working with banks, NABARD reached out to local managers, emphasised their mutuality with NGOs, and even used formal authority. Banks have found NGOs as reliable intermediaries and less costly, with latter doing process work with SHGs. Role of SHG federations remains as yet limited.</p>
<p>Commodity</p>	<p>Negotiate for better wages for tribal <i>Tendu Patta</i> Collectors and license to market patta (<i>Tendu Patta</i> Collection and Marketing).</p>	<p>Essentially a negotiation between NGOs and <i>Rajsangh</i> for getting a better deal for tribal collectors such as enhanced wages, marketing license and loan to finance their operations.</p>	<p>NGOs successful in organising tribal collectors whose wage rates got a jump, but the programme stuck due to lack of marketing capability. Frequency of changes in leadership and absence of formal processes in interaction problematic.</p>	<p>Gradual programme expansion and building up NGO capacity in marketing would be preferable. More formalised role for NGOs and relationship with government agency in the next phase. NGO networking provided strength to all NGOs and to cooperatives and be continued. NGOs come to terms with political class – <i>Prashashan</i> (bureaucracy) is accountable to <i>Shasan</i> (politicians).</p>

REFERENCES

Turton, C. and Farrington, J. (1998) 'Enhancing rural livelihoods through participatory watershed development in India'. *Natural Resource Perspectives*. No 34. London: Overseas Development Institute.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The 74th amendment of India's Constitution delegates increasing powers, finances and responsibilities to locally elected bodies known as *Panchayati Raj* institutions.
- 2 Similarly, an NGO promoted lift irrigation schemes in ten districts (South Bihar) with government funds, the project was externally funded by the World Bank.
- 3 See Turton and Farrington (1998) for details of the programme and its implementation.
- 4 Regional Rural Banks are local banks, with a service area of two districts, and are mandated to serve rural areas.
- 5 Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART) is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment of the Government of India. It is mandated to provide direct grants to NGOs on a country-wide basis.

- 6 URMUL is a district level milk cooperative organisation, and initially promoted a trust to provide primary health care services to the cooperative's members.
- 7 CADA is a government organization set up in 1974. It is essentially an engineering organization responsible for the construction of water distribution systems, water allocation and canal maintenance. In addition, it is mandated to encourage settlement in the command area of the *Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojna* canal and to develop support facilities such as hospitals, schools and drinking water facilities for settlers.
- 8 ICDS is focused on providing immunisation and nutrition services to children under six years.
- 9 BHALCO, a government agency existed, but its track record was poor. Only 12 out of the 232 schemes it had installed were functioning. The World Bank (the external funding agency in the project) insisted that the government department should not be allowed to participate in the programme.

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