

ARAVALI

Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action & Local Involvement

“TOWARDS A RELATIONSHIP OF SIGNIFICANCE”

Synopsis of the Report done by PRADAN/SRIJAN following a study of Collaborative Initiatives between Government and NGOs in Rajasthan

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INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been an outcome of emphasis on popular participation, sustainable development and increasing awareness in the developing societies. The State of Rajasthan in India, the location of this study, is no exception to this worldwide phenomenon. Over a decade and a half, NGOs and government agencies have found common ground and devised mutually acceptable roles and working arrangements to fulfil development agenda. Their partnerships in various programmes rather than issue based negotiations form the major domain of our enquiry (see annexure 1 for programmes reviewed).

The approaches to development have been undergoing change. Although the old style top-down delivery of services doesn't show signs of disappearing, the new style bottom up planning based programmes seem to be gaining ground. The centralised decision making has proved less effective than what seems possible with participation of various forms of beneficiary organisations, even if someone must invest in this human resource. Motivating their staff to work in remote and inaccessible regions often proves to be a tough proposition for government managers than, say, offloading this task to NGOs. The same could be said of working with poor, or socially inferior sections of society. Size of the development bureaucracy is difficult for exchequer to sustain, security of employment makes it worse. The government's inability to protect and manage public natural resources such as forests and water have led to initiatives of joint management with user community. Development programming has begun to give space to local human resources, appropriate technology, traditional knowledge or systems of management.

The space for government in development is thus being re-defined and re-carved. The Government of Rajasthan would like to create space for the voluntary agencies. It is seeking to improve development performance by inviting NGOs to play complementary roles such as community mobilisation. This has opened new sources of funding for NGOs earlier depending entirely on external funds. Participating in government programmes will give NGOs a new legitimacy and currency.

Several innovative institutional arrangements for government and NGOs to work together have been discovered to allow the emerging institutional complementarity and diversity. Relationships have matured and arrangements have lasted a decade in some cases while others have

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failed to produce desired results pointing to persistent problems. The evidence indicates that problems relate to a tendency to preserve domains among government agencies and tendencies within NGOs to retain their autonomous character. NGO capacity has been a limiting factor in developing large scale collaboration.

Collaborative programmes have not been immune to the phenomenon of “transfer turbulence” just as the government programmes themselves do. Problems of delays in funds flow have been constraining factors and “leakage has been a concern in government collaborating with NGOs. “De-linked” structures that have been created by the government have often been more successful in developing more fruitful partnerships.

This policy document tries to understand the collaborative structures that have worked in Rajasthan to derive a policy which clearly outlines the approach and strategy that the government will undertake to improve the spread and management of development programmes in partnership with the NGOs.

This document has tried to identify the mutual needs and shared objectives for collaboration and follows this assessment by profiling the the variety of role division and types of relationships seen in Rajasthan, and the structures and systems devised to manage collaboration. The final section outlines the policy..

NEEDS AND OBJECTIVES OF NGO- GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION

Certain convergence over their development objectives, and overlapping of practical organisational needs brings NGOs and the Government together. Mutual fears and mismatch in values also simultaneously operate.

Government Agencies and NGOs Converge on Development Objectives

We observe that the following are the basic premises that motivate government agencies and NGOs to collaborate with each other. These represent the broad rationale that underlies collaborative behaviour.

- Collaboration facilitates 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.

Generation of innovations to solve development problems and their replication is found to be a common objective among government and NGOs. Field-testing and refinement of innovation requires flexibility, imagination and an accurate understanding of local situation - traits that some NGOs possess. Working intensively in a specific area, some NGOs find or develop appropriate solutions which are possible to adopt elsewhere. They may not have, however, the resources or structures to work on a large scale. Hence collaboration with government agencies can greatly improve the chances of successful replication of proven approaches. There are two variants of replication: diffusion of innovation through the government, or NGO itself undertakes the responsibility of 'scaling it up' with government's financial support. To address the problem of

teacher absenteeism in remotely located villages, an NGO experimented with the idea of recruiting and training local youth as teachers and found it working. This flowered into a state-wide government run Shiksha Karmi programme. NGOs were involved as project implementation agencies in this replication.

The case of an NGO taking up artificial insemination in 13 districts is a classical example of the second strategy. Another example is an NGO-promoted lift irrigation programme in six districts of south Bihar with government funds. The subject of replication has been dealt with extensively in literature. It may be worthwhile to point out here that not all NGO innovations are automatically replicable by the government system. Skill replication and providing the nurturing organisation environment prove to be the main hurdles.

A second objective where government and NGO converge is to *improve the delivery of services*. There may be functional gaps in government services or un-reached remote geographical areas, unattractive for government staff. The growing NGO participation in government programmes reflects that NGOs have skills and relative advantage in filling these gaps and perhaps improving the quality of programme implementation. This is because NGOs are local institutions, working closely with community. They have a limited geographical area, they can respond flexibly and reasonably quickly to community's demands. NGOs participation in government schemes is the most substantial way of collaboration. Pure examples of this type include *Swasthyakarmi Yojana* providing family welfare services and the national watershed programme introduced in 1994 by the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment of the Union government.

A third area of convergence is *inducing system or institutional reforms*. System reform could imply structural changes as well as those in values, attitudes and work cultures. The need for such changes arises due to desirability of improving transparency, accountability and efficiency. While system reforms in government agencies are often initiated externally by donors or political mandate, sometimes the objectives of senior government officials may converge with those of NGOs. Where such a convergence exists, NGOs with the requisite skills and experience productively collaborate with government in the introduction and refinement of new approaches. A team made up of NGO professionals and Block development staff jointly implemented government poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP and JRY and made several suggestions for improvement. Lok Jumbish programme mobilises the local community and carries out a participatory assessment of the unfulfilled gap in its primary education needs with help of NGOs. Lok Jumbish Parishad, a GONGO, feeds this information to the educational department and follows it up.

Finally, collaboration is a means of addressing the *participation and empowerment* objectives in government programmes. The desirability of people's participation is generally accepted by the State, although NGOs are not always seen as legitimate intermediaries between government and rural communities. NGO philosophies often carry the concept of empowerment considerably further than government agencies are comfortable with. NGOs view their own involvement with government as a means of sensitising the bureaucracy to people's needs as well as helping communities in placing demands on and work directly with government. In a conservative social milieu of Rajasthan, the government initiated a radical programme for women's empowerment, known as Women's Development Programme, the precursor to Mahila Samakhya Programme. Not only many non-officials were involved in shaping the programme, the NGOs were cast in a role of trainers, employing training as a strategy for empowerment. Less radical

examples include negotiations between NGOs and Rajasangh to promote tribal cooperatives for tendu patta collection and marketing, and the facilitative collaboration between NGOs and NABARD to link small, informal savings and credit groups with commercial banks.

Practical Needs Attract Them but Mutual Fears Pull Them Apart

NGO needs for entering into collaboration with the government are: resource support in the area of operation; legitimacy by working with the system; support to an innovative scheme; expansion in new areas and sectors; and finally, influencing the government to adopt an innovation developed by it. On the other hand, government feels drawn towards NGOs because it wants to: enhance popular participation in its programmes; use NGOs in programme implementation to reach poor and under-served communities; and look for low cost alternatives to permanently employed bureaucracy.

There are also fears that inhibit them from working together. They might lose rather than gain if they collaborated? Most NGOs have developed autonomously which engenders in them a sense of pride and independence. It is often backed up by an ideology to mark out their unique space in the society. The government officials feel they have the legitimacy to rule the country and rightfully control funds and access to resources. If the two collaborate, NGOs fear losing their independence and government their power and control over resources or over information. Further, government may not want to be seen as inferior to NGOs in service delivery. And NGO may shun government as long as 'softer' sources such as external or private funds are available. Government funds bring accounting controls, reporting requirements, and the hassle of following up for disbursement.

Decision to collaborate, and the very success of collaboration therefore depends as much on coping with mutual fears as on discovering mutual practical needs, even if there were an agreement on development objectives, as we shall see later.

ROLE DIVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP

How do the government and NGOs divide the labour in collaborative programmes? What forms do such relationships take and what is their dynamic? And once the programme begins to be implemented, what management processes and structures are designed by the stakeholders to oversee this role division and relationship? These are some questions we ask in this section.

Role Division - A Function of Development Objective and Perceived NGO Capacity

The roles and space that NGOs acquire or are assigned depends on the programme's development objectives and the perceived capacity of the NGOs to match (and perceived lack of government, conversely). In the previous section, we identified a set of development objectives over which the NGOs and government, and the external donors could agree. We now consider for each such objective, the roles that government and NGOs share.

- Innovation to resolve a development conundrum needs an NGO with a capacity to think up bold, unconventional ideas and to undertake action research to go deeper into the problem. Government role is often limited here to funding innovation and research, but could allow the NGO to work with a tiny part of its system as well. The complexity of relationship would be determined by the scope of innovation.
- For providing services, often the only requirement is that a local institution is available to reach to the targeted population or serve a specific function (such as training, artificial insemination)

perhaps better than the government. Innovation capacity may be desirable but not necessary. "Commitment" to serve the poor (or targeted population) is often cited as a critical requirement since such projects are hard to monitor due to nature of services and geographical spread. NGO implements and government provides funds, is the basic formula. These roles are most common.

- Empowerment and popular participation in government projects requires that NGO not only act as a pressure group and people's organiser but possess understanding to influence the system. NGO needs a deep commitment to this as the process may be long drawn and the results intangible and unpredictable. In response, the government is called upon to perform its constitutional duty as a welfare state.
- The objective of pursuing system or institutional reform in government is a broad-ranging one, and indeed a combination of the above three objectives. This could rarely be a tried by a single actor. We may need actors with a systemic understanding to pull through the changes in government department (the role that Lok Jumbish Parishad plays *vis a vis* education department). The institutional reform could take a shape of introducing a new methodology in a department (like micro-level planning in PAHAL) or substituting public service with NGOs (like watershed development programme). Former or retired bureaucrats and arrangements such as GONGOs are very often found to be successfully leading this task, NGOs playing a support role.

Table 1. Linking Role Division and Relationships with Development Objective

Development Objective	Role Division	Type of NGO Required	Relationship	Examples
Service delivery	NGO implements, Government finances, often under well defined schemes	a) NGO as local organisation (size and innovation capacity not necessary)	schematic/ contractual	Swasthyakarmi
		b) NGO upscales its own scheme	Dyadic	BAIF's AI services, PRADAN's LIS
Innovation	Government role as funding innovation/research	NGO to think up unconventional ideas	dyadic or institutional	Initial phase of Shikshakarmi
Participation and empowerment	NGO as a pressure group and people's organiser, government accountable to people	strong participation/ empowerment orientation	catalytic (facilitative/ confrontational)	Tendu patta collectors' cooperatives, SHGs
System/ Institutional reform	Role division depends on the type of change introduced - new working methods or new culture in government	strong participation/ empowerment orientation or systemic understanding to pull through the changes suggested	Institutional - a possible mix of the above three	Lok Jumbish Programme, PAHAL, PAWDI, Right to Information Campaign

Form and Dynamics of Relationships

Four major forms of relationship are found: *schematic*, *dyadic*, *catalytic/facilitative*, and *institutional*. And there is the fifth form - *confrontational* - when either side attempts to change or constrain the other side. This could be subsumed in the catalytic.

The nature of relationship is decided by many factors. The objective of the programme is the foremost determinant as is the spread that it aims. Presence or absence of perceived capacity in NGOs is another factor. Positioning of NGOs in the decision making structure depends a great deal on degree of innovative content in the programme and the leverage that donors may have with the

senior policy makers of the government. Consequently the relationship could be mutually supportive or confrontational, could enjoy parity or be patently unequal, and could be static or allowed to evolve.

Most commonly found relationship is what we term as *schematic*. For each development scheme the government proposes standardised criteria of NGO selection, technical and cost norms, preferred approach and mode of implementation. The scheme is often open to all NGOs and a large number of NGOs participate. NGOs often do not feel happy about being treated any different from a telephone or electricity subscriber. Electricity board or telephone department operates in the general milieu of scarcity and monopoly, making the relationship an unequal one. Thus the relationship between the government and NGOs in Schematic relationship may be the one between *data* and *yachak* (benefactor and beneficiary).

Dyadic (or bilateral) relations develop between government and an NGO, to execute a mutually agreed project. Projects try out an innovation such as when CADA asked URMUL to try new method to cover sand-clogged watercourses in the command area. Or, government may provide financial support to an NGO to upscale its successful project. In some sense, it could be considered a special case of Schematic relationship but the NGO is in a more prominent position here. The government strikes a relationship with a single NGO, because of certain confidence in the latter's capability. Examples include BAIF scaling up artificial insemination services to improve cattle or buffalo breed.

Catalytic roles and relationships exist where 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 to pressure the government to play its role of welfare state or protector of the weak. The government would often find it difficult to finance this work, but external agencies support NGOs. This relationship is open-ended and could witness a 'flip-flop' behaviour, now cordial, now adversarial. Many new frontiers are won or at least new doors opened following this strategy, and can result in a programme where NGOs role is more clearly legitimised. Astha and other NGOs worked with various levels of government hierarchy to demand an increase in the wages of tribal *tendu patta* collectors in south Rajasthan, and even persuaded a government agency to give them license for and to finance *tendu patta* marketing. JFM is a well known example. Another variant of this is equally interesting where one government agency undertakes reform of another government agency. NABARD's attempt to push commercial banks and RRB's to lend to the poor is a classical example, where it takes help from NGOs to link SHGs with banks. Lok Jumbish Parishad, a GONGO, acts as a pressure group on education department in a bid to reach the goal of universal primary education in the state.

Institutional relationship is a newly evolving form where government shares roles with NGOs during implementation. NGOs are assigned process intensive or software roles and the government physical implementation or hardware roles. This role complementarity model goes hand in hand with a project's attempt to adopt a new, perhaps radical, approach. Hence this kind of role division is common in "process projects", as donors call them. NGOs are considered important vectors of change in helping government move away from existing approaches. Role division requires greater coordination in the field, greater need for mutual adjustment, and unusually high sensitivity to mutual needs and compulsions. Thus systems should exist for periodic experience sharing, co-learning and conflict resolution. Lok Jumbish, PAHAL and PAWDI are examples of

this manner of institutional relationship. Sometimes, an operating structure, delinked from government bureaucracy, is created to allow flexibility and sensitivity to learning.

Processes and Structures Devised to Manage the Relationship

In dyadic relationship where a single NGO works with a government agency, committees are set up for reviewing periodic progress. Sharing of roles and spaces of innovation and implementation requires more sensitive and alert management approach from the "owners" of these projects. In a catalytic relationship, where there is no formal agreement, the coordination mechanisms do not take any definite shape. Negotiations could be long drawn or may be quickly concluded. And a situation of confrontation will arise when these negotiations break down.

In two of these types of relationships - schematic and institutional - where scale of operations is large, the process of change is complex, many NGOs participate, and relationship is devised formally to implement projects - that the coordination or management mechanisms have to be necessarily designed.

Management of Schemes. The schemes are managed by "implementation departments" or special organisations created for NGO funding such as CAPART. NGOs submit their project proposals for sanction to these agencies, located at State Capital or Delhi. The proposal screening committees include technical experts but not always those with work experience in NGOs. Periodic instalments are built in to ensure better performance and they often are based on reports of target-achievement and accounts submitted by the implementing agency. All of this is necessary, but these Schemes fail to allow for flexibility, easy channels of feedback, grievance redressal, or cross learning between relevant departments and NGOs. Farther the location of the sanctioning authority (such as CAPART) from project site, more adversely affected are the NGOs. On the other hand, at district level, the lower rank officials by and large perceive NGOs as encroachers in their domain. Where funds are to flow to NGO programmes through district or even lower channels, blockages are more likely to occur. This was found to be true in the case of *Swasthyakarmi yojana*.

Management of Institutional Relationship. Institutional relationship in which implementation responsibilities are shared is a response to the concern that participation is absent in the top-down, "one size fits them all" type of development approach in the government. NGOs are therefore asked to mobilise people, particularly poor, women, and low castes, help them participate in micro-planning, and even prepare them for implementation responsibilities. Management processes in such projects have to respond and provide for adequate decentralisation of decision making, flexibility to suit diversity of conditions, and evolution of models. Such a management system cannot flourish in the existing environment where rent seeking tendency and *annadata* roles (patronising attitude) are common, and if tried, it may die a premature death.

A new management structure needs to be found - one that is sufficiently *de-linked* from government to meet the demands of the new charter. 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. In the new structure, they would could engender innovation, and cocoon it till it is ready for replication. This new entity is government sponsored (and controlled) but registered as a "society" - under the law same as the NGOs - thus are sometimes referred to as government organised NGOs (GONGOs). The governance structure of such "GONGOs" or delinked structures is filled with politicians and

officials. Examples of such structures include District Women's Development Agency (in WDP), Shikshakarmi Board, Lok Jumbish Parishad and PAHAL.

Programmes involving this type of collaboration are set up in pursuit of some innovative idea or a highly desirable social goal. *Shikshakarmi* and Women's Development Programme (WDP) represent radical departures from conventional approaches to education and women's empowerment respectively. Donor agencies prefer this arrangement too and may indeed pull their weight in its favour. Besides objectives such as seeding innovation, they may have a direct link with the project instead of going through the departmental maze.

Creating de-linked organisations is also considered better for improving the quality of collaborative actions and arrangements. The Government is aware that NGOs, particularly those having adequate resources of their own, do not react favourably to delays and rigidities. GONGO would smooth procedural delays in fund flow and also ensure greater sensitivity to NGOs. Institutional collaboration provides a major opportunity for mutual exposure and cross learning between government agencies and NGOs. It may be surmised that NGOs have been called in to reinforce alternative work cultures in these new structures and organisations. While such an arrangement affords NGOs a more substantial partnership with the government and greater legitimacy, they also need to show greater accountability for their actions and performance than otherwise.

CONSTRAINTS TO GO NGO COLLABORATION AND LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

Why collaboration runs into difficulties, despite government and NGOs converging on objectives and dividing roles along the expected lines? In which circumstances is the collaboration long lasting, and desirably so? On the other hand, isn't collaboration only a means to initiate change in government, and once that happens, the NGO role loses its significance and withdrawal is desirable? Are conflicts a temporary phenomenon, and a part of evolutionary process of mutual coming to terms? Or conflicts occur only with a certain kind of NGOs? How could conflicts be anticipated and processes designed to manage them? These are some of the questions we ask in this section.

This section highlights those factors and constraints based on the experience in Rajasthan that hinder healthy collaboration between Government and NGOs. These factors may be generic viz. they apply to all manner of GO-NGO collaboration or they may be unique to the specific type of arrangements. We identified the following as the major generic issues:

- Contesting Departmental domain (technical superiority, resource control)
- NGOs preserve autonomy and seek budget parity
- NGO capacity - mismatch between expectation and reality
- Weak management structure to effect change
- Transfers and other factors that make individuals and inter-personal equations critical
- Infrequent and ad hoc consultation with NGOs
- Weak NGO networking for working with government

Below we discuss these in brief (see Table 2 for summary).

Contesting Departmental Domain

Resistance to NGOs arises when the Government engages it in a task that also constitutes the core activity of a department. Any overlap or infringement of domain of a department creates conflict with the NGO. Conflict may occur in three aspects – regulatory, technical and financial. Dilution or reduction in a department's regulatory powers over use of natural resources such as forests causes conflict over administrative domain. In JFM programme, forest department's role as protector of forests and regulator of its use is reinforced and NGOs' role is only suggested. Consequently at operational levels Department officers do not feel obliged to entertain them.

An instance of technical domain conflict occurs when NGOs provides services for which only professionals in government are credited. Let us give a few examples of conflict over technical domain as most departments are organised around a professional discipline. NGOs are generally perceived to be low on technical skills. Technical experts view their entry into such areas with scepticism. URMUL undertook to demonstrate new techniques of covering water courses in a sandy desert and new designs of school buildings. 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 difficulties 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 NGO is professionally competent, there could be resistance. BAIF expanded its AI services with financial support from department of rural development, but it has had to face opposition in some districts from DoAH. BAIF had to leave areas where DoAH had subsequently developed AI facilities. Certain departments are responsible for specific segments of population such as rural poor, tribals, women and children. Technical or regulatory domains are not established since staff is seconded from other departments. Thus NGOs find it easier to work with these departments.

Departmental employees, particularly at lower ranks, may feel threatened to lose their legitimate or illegitimate pecuniary benefits when projects are sanctioned to NGOs. Commonly supposed but difficult to prove are the cases of corruption. This became a bone of contention in many projects such as PAHAL and PAWDI. A relatively recent cause of resistance from lower cadres is their perception that NGOs are *eroding employment security in the Government* by offering cheaper and contractual services. The employees' trade unions protested when agriculture extension and ICDS work was sought to be given to NGOs.

Lower department levels may thus not share the enthusiasm of their superiors in granting a space to NGOs. Many NGOs exhibit a general inability or indifference to *manage lower ranks* in the government. They prefer to enter into agreements at senior levels while leaving the dynamics at lower levels to be sorted out somehow. This neglect rarely works in favour of collaboration. Exception to this rule we observe in BAIF's ability to smooth out contentious issues at district levels, and Sahyog's ability to work with district and sub-district officials and local bank managers.

Lessons/Recommendations: What strategies can be used to manage this competition and reduce turf conflict in mutual relations? Experience suggests the following:

- Anchor the collaboration outside the technical department, whenever possible.
- Proven ability of the NGO in the area permits it to deal effectively with resistance from the government as well as manage a separate geographical domain with competence.
- Avoid geographical/ functional overlaps with the government department. An important corollary of this lesson, brought out in several instances, is that, at least in the beginning it is much easier for NGOs to move into gaps left by the government services.

The above lessons read together should not be interpreted to mean that avoiding collaboration is the best strategy. If service delivery is the agenda of the programme then it does not matter which department the funds come from. In such cases, avoid seeking funds from a department which includes that service in its core agenda. In other words, anchor the collaboration outside. But if the agenda of the NGO is to reform public policy or programmes, a closer interaction between the government agencies and NGOs may be necessary. However our recommendation is that even in such cases, *reform may be best possible through indirect means, through demonstration of alternatives in another less hostile setting, through cross learning by gradual exposure to alternative models*. By separating geographical domains, you may bring the two systems together in *creative competition*, where the two learn from each other. And that organisational learning may occur better from a distance.

NGOs Preserve Autonomy and Seek Budget Parity

Most NGOs attach a great value to their independence from the government. They see themselves as voluntary organisations. In fact very *raison d' etre* of NGOs as voluntary agencies arises from a critique of the government. Affiliation with the government dilutes their separate identity in the eyes of the society, but target community or peer group of NGOs in particular. In instances of collaboration, they guard their identity *even more* zealously. This is reflected in their demand for treatment at par with the government agencies, say in decision making and sometimes even in facilities.

They also resent excessive interference in their internal matters by the government. Take for instance the government's attempts in collaboration cases to insist upon the salary and staff pattern for NGOs prescribed in project designs. This is often a contentious issue. A NGO evolves a salary structure of its own over a period of time which is rooted in its 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 / funding induced changes in their salary structure. They cannot have a separate salary structure for separate projects they undertake. Outside pressures for change produces acrimony and can even lead to their withdrawal from the project.

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.

Lessons/Recommendations:

- NGOs must be treated at par with the government functionaries. In institutional collaborations where NGOs work with the government, this parity must be built into the design of the project proposal.
- While allocating salary 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 at the discretion of the NGO.

Mismatch between Expectations and Reality of NGO Capacity

As discussed earlier there are three kinds of capacities that could be expected from NGOs - innovation, service delivery, and inducing participation. A fourth one is institutional change in the government, which is rarely achieved by a single actor.

Many programmes are based on eliciting community's participation and NGOs are expected to devise methods on the lines of micro level planning (MLP) or participatory rural appraisal (PRA). These programmes expect NGOs to deliver on "participation." Since control of resources is still with government agencies, NGOs' role reduces to raising awareness or gathering people for a meeting, with little control over the decision making. Since most field NGOs are not expert in using training as an empowerment strategy, they may not succeed. In Women's Development Programme, this strategy was adopted, suitable NGOs were found, and programme was a resounding success.

In a second situation, when NGOs are given independent projects, problem is not so much with individual NGOs but any number of those who masquerade under the same legal entity. We see an uncontrolled growth of NGOs, since so many new schemes are announced for NGOs and large sums allocated. Even newspaper advertisements are issued now to invite proposals from NGOs. A genuine NGO would not pick up a paper and look for "business" unlike a PWD contractor and submit a "tender." Not unexpectedly, a large number of "well written" and sometimes identical looking proposals land on the desk of issuing agency. This makes NGO screening a difficult task. Some of the funding agencies such as Agha Khan Foundation have adopted word of mouth and workshop as methods of letting prospective NGOs know of the scheme. In ActionAid and Ford Foundation, programme officers make personal visits to learn more about the ground capacity of the applicants.

A third variant is when NGO is expected to provide service in a new sector. In *Swasthyakarmi yojana*, a rural woman is to provide certain family welfare services. The NGO would recruit her and supervise her work. But the *yojana* could not provide training of requisite nature, which NGOs themselves were incapable of. In *Shikshakarmi* programme where a new organisation (Sandhan) was promoted for this purpose, many more NGOs could participate.

A fourth situation occurs when a "process project" is designed to carry out an institutional reform and a reputed NGO is inducted into a collaborative relationship with the government. Expectation is that NGO would develop a participatory methodology and have it grafted in the collaborating department. Why is it difficult for NGO "to live up to its reputation in these projects?" Often NGO would have done well in service delivery or in protest against the government (championing people's cause), but the role required in such projects may be different. In PAHAL and PAWDI an NGO with a track record of innovation in public systems would do better.

Lessons/Recommendations:

- NGOs should be prepared in using training as an empowerment strategy.
- Any programme that is planning a large scale induction of NGOs should develop screening procedures such as workshops and personal visits. It should prepare a capacity building module for gradual growth of fledgling NGOs, especially if it is a new sector for them.
- NGOs participating in process projects should be specifically prepared for this role.

Management Structure Too Weak to Effect Change or Not Committed.

A new project aims for a change and thus causes a flutter in an existing bureaucracy. This flutter may start from lower cadres and have a ripple effect. The resistance to NGOs' entry needs to be creatively managed and indeed buffered from possible fatal attack. In *Swasthyakarmi Yojana*, the NGOs were assigned the task of family welfare. Their work was monitored the very medical officer from whose domain the NGO function was carved out. When NGOs faced difficulties, the Standing Committee on Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA), the only managing body was not able to save them. In case of PAHAL, although a separate society was registered to enhance flexibility and financial powers, the Project Director pursued financial expenditure as an objective rather than evolving an innovative participatory and decentralised approach to land use management for degraded areas. On the other hand, Shikshakarmi board successfully created a niche for NGOs' entry and protected it too. The long standing track record of the leader and his ability to create a broad supporting coalition has provided the Lok Jumbish programme a long lease of life despite mainline bureaucracy's resentment to the flexibility given to him.

Lesson/Recommendation:

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

Transfers and Other Factors That Make Individuals and Inter-Personal Equations Critical

Personal relationship between NGO leaders and senior government officers have their own dynamic and has, in a number of cases, led to creative partnerships. High frequency of transfers of senior officers makes this, however, the most subjective and unpredictable element. It often hinders stability in GO NGO relationship. An officer's initiative using synergy among government and NGOs may not be followed up by his or her successor. A large number of such initiatives are rarely institutionalised or made formal. NGO has to once again convince a new incumbent of the utility of mutual commitments. In an unpredictable scenario, NGO could not make any long term develop plan or employ staff. Funds from private donors could prove a buffer and strengthen NGO capacity to deal with transfer turbulence in the system.

Further, since transfers are routine in the system and number of "pro-NGO" or "pro-people" officers may decline, the programme designers and NGOs have to come up with broader coalitions, perhaps including politicians and panchayats too. Part of the reason behind non-replication of successful experiment with collection and marketing of tendu leaves was political opposition. In Lok Jumbish programme, however, support from Chief Minister has ensured longevity to the programme, despite resistance from bureaucracy.

Lessons/Recommendations:

- Buffer government funds with private donor funds.
- Build broader coalition to support the programme including political leaders, to make programmes "transfer proof."

Infrequent and Ad Hoc Consultation with NGOs

Consultations between government agencies and NGOs are an increasing trend but manifest with several drawbacks. They are often *one time, one off events, often hastily convened*. Tendency to 'tokenise' is apparent when issues are rushed through and discussion on substantive matters

discouraged. As a result consultations are often one sided in that "the government invites and the NGO attends" and dialogue is rare.

A fundamental problem is the near absence of effective forums or mechanisms for continuous interaction. Only a few departments have set up committees for management of a particular programme. Even here, diversity of views is not captured since preference could be given to high profile NGOs, even if they have not participated in the programme (Shikshakarmi programme provides the evidence here). Otherwise they are generally absent in line departments at the state level. In some DRDAs, NGOs are represented in the governing body. They also get invited by district administration to special committees such as that on bonded labour. But these mechanisms are not very effective at least in leading towards a common programme of poverty alleviation in the district. Nor is there any state level mechanism yet by which NGOs can regularly interface with the Government on development issues or those that affect their capacity to work with each other.

Lessons/Recommendations:

- Set up a forum for Government NGO collaboration at State level to enhance mutual understanding.
- Set up sector specific forums to focus on State level policies and implementation on the one hand and NGO contribution and capacity on the other.

Weak NGO Networking for Collaboration with Government

A very underdeveloped link in the collaboration scenario of Rajasthan is the lack of involvement of NGO networks with the Government. Though networking among NGOs is an increasing trend, NGOs coalitions for specific programmes or policies are absent. There is little consensus among NGOs how to pressure government on development issues. NGOs are often limited to servicing their chosen target areas and seeking project grants for the same. Probably they could take a leaf out of the networks of social action groups that are effective in addressing the Government and are able to demand attention from it for the causes they espouse. The Government response to these networks is often of extreme caution or outright dismissal.

Lesson/Recommendation:

- Examine the feasibility of setting up programme specific forums for sharing NGO experiences and making demands on government for improvement

Now we turn to Structure Specific Issues.

Management of Schemes for NGOs

A large number of small, struggling agencies avail grants from government schemes. Given the lack of transparency in grant making mechanisms, many agencies of doubtful competence, even integrity, have begun to feature increasingly as recipients of the schemes. As a result, the general credibility of the NGO sector has eroded and there is an increased sense of frustration in serious minded NGOs at the rampant proliferation within the sector.

Aside from the phenomenon of low provisions, there are a number of problems related to the designing and administration of schemes for NGOs. Mainly these relate to: a) Lack of consultation with NGOs at the design stage that results in laying down of unrealistic goals and activities; b) Selection criteria and procedures for screening NGO proposals; c) Timely disbursement of funds; and d) Monitoring and Evaluation of schemes.

Lesson/Recommendation:

- A separate study needs to be instituted at the state level to look at the aspects of administration of schemes for NGOs.

Viability of Role Division within Institutional Collaboration

We find that role division in the context of an institutional collaboration does not work well over a period of time. In several instances NGOs are given the task of organising and mobilising the community while the responsibilities of implementation vest with the Government. Such role divisions are derived from the notion of comparative strengths and are observed in projects such as PAHAL, WDP, and more recently in PAWDI.

The problems are quick to manifest in these situations. Often, physical execution and achievement of financial targets assume a more central role whereas village level processes that the NGO leads are jettisoned or tokenised. There are also *power connotations* in this kind of role division *vis a 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 programme is to be carried out. Delays and deviations happen often. NGOs end up facing a crisis of credibility with the villagers. The differences in value systems and ideologies also get highlighted when NGOs raise issue of rent seeking by their counterparts. These lead to either stalemates or unilateral pushing of targets.

Lessons/Recommendations:

- Role division in implementation is not likely to work well. Area division between government and NGOs with specific responsibilities will yield better results.
- NGOs with training skills could complement government's implementation role better than grassroots NGOs.

Annexure 1
Projects Studied for Understanding Government NGO Relationship

Sector	Project	Donors and Other Partners
Watershed	Pahal	Sida, Govt of Rajasthan (GOR), local NGOs
Forestry	JFM	GoI, Local FD, local NGOs
Animal Husbandry	Artificial Insemination	GoR and BAIF
Primary Education	Shikshakarmi	Sida, GOR, and NGOs
Primary Education	Lok Jumbish	Sida, GOR, Lok Jumbish Parishad, and NGOs
Minor Forest Produce	Tendu leaves marketing	GoR, ASTHA and other NGOs
Rural Credit	SHGs	NABARD, Banks, PRADAN, SAHYOG
Health	Swasthyakarmi	UNFPA, GoR, NGOs
Command Area Development (IGNP)	Saving Water Courses	World Bank, GoR, and URMUL
Micro-Irrigation	M.P. Karnataka Bihar	GoMP, PRADAN, and Banks in Utthan Project Govt. of Karnataka, PRERNA, and Banks The World Bank, Govt. of Bihar, and PRADAN in Bihar Plateau Development Project (BPDP)

Table 2 . Role Sharing, Management Structures and Issues in GO-NGO Collaboration (Rajasthan Experience)

Development Objectives in the Project/Programme	Role Sharing among Government and NGOs	Management Structure	Issues	Recommendations for Collaboration Designers
<u>Health Services</u> Better family welfare services in inaccessible villages (Swasthyakarmi Programme)	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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Human Resource Development Interventions should include training of new grassroots cadre and induction of "pro-change" GO officers. 2. New programme should be in a cocoon, not buffeted in initial stages 3. New programme could not be run like a departmental scheme 4. Need for a stronger and committed "management" 5. Greater need to develop NGO ownership in the programme
<u>Primary Education</u> Universal Primary Education (Lok Jumbish Programme)	NGOs to map community's needs and mobilise opinion in project's favour; Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP) nudges Education department to respond, NGOs and GO 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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear Operational Methodology, clear roles for implementing agencies helped. 2. Frequent, responsive, sensitive management processes to build symbiotic relationship with field. 3. Flexible management to respond to fresh challenges 4. Strong management to elicit response from government department.
Primary education in remote villages, curing teacher absenteeism (Shikshakarmi Programme)	NGOs ensure right selection of Shikshakarmi and Panchayat Samitis implement	Shikshakarmi Board, a GONGO, manages the state-wide programme; Local supervision both by NGO and Panchayat Samiti	Successful beginning, now more like a scheme with SKs becoming permanent Govt. employees and there is less scope for innovation; SK Board less sensitive to field problems; Panchayats and NGOs find it difficult to collaborate; Training role for a few NGOs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Question to ask is whether the quality of the programme has suffered? 2. If yes, could it be improved with better NGO involvement? 3. In case the NGOs need to be involved, how to manage the interface between Panchayats and NGOs?
<u>Natural Resources Management</u> Evolve a participatory,	NGOs to form people's groups,	GO and NGO <u>jointly guide</u> the	High innovation load, flexibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need for stronger and more committed

integrated land use management approach for degraded areas (PAHAL Project in Dungarpur)	train extension cadre, while government officers on deputation provide technical expertise;	project, though project leader was a junior rank IAS officer; donor periodically reviewed progress and appointed a resident consultant	misused by GO, NGOs capacity high in implementation but limited in innovation and training, Inadequate external inputs in process management and technical innovation	"management" or leadership? 2. Need for clear participatory methodology and activity priorities possibly with help of external resource inputs 3. Most NGOs could then be given service delivery roles 4. 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;	<u>Entirely controlled</u> 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	1. 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 Commissionarate 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	1. 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 Shikshakarmi programme, or by having the innovation assessed by another technical agency of the government.
Set up lift irrigation schemes (LIS) for small and marginal farmers in remote, water abundant areas (Micro-Irrigation in Bihar, MP and Karnataka)	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)	District Project Approval committees and regional authority set up in World Bank aided BPDP in Bihar; DRDA and Agriculture Department collaborate in Utthan Scheme of MP; Respective departments/agencies such as SC/ST corporation in Karnataka	While professional competence of NGOs contributed to the success of small LIS and thus its quick expansion, bank financed schemes are slow to take-off due to unfriendly procedures, little attention to group schemes, risk averse bank staff and weak higher level coordination between banks and government departments (rural dev. and agri.)	1. If NGO wished to replicate it through the government, an assessment by a government agency will legitimise it. 2. 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. 3. External agency funds may be needed to kick off a GO/NGO collaboration in various States.
<u>Livestock</u> Improve cattle and buffalo breed by artificial insemination	NGO mainly as provider of a service that department of animal husbandry (DoAH) was	State level committee to approve the contract for an area to NGO, district level committees to	Resistance from department successfully tackled by NGO due to its non-confrontational stance, sound	1. Although NGO has admirably delivered a service for almost two decades, the department has learnt precious little. In

(AI services)	not equipped with, at least initially; Funds provided by department of rural development	review the progress, verify, and approve NGO's annual claims	technical base and highly motivated staff; In tribal areas, however, some questions are raised about AI's cost-efficiency and effectiveness	its Gopal yojana, the NGO could usefully be called in as a partner. 2. Without much competition, NGO has not taken bold initiatives in Rajasthan it has elsewhere. For example, it could promote small AI service entrepreneurs.	
<u>Credit</u>	Improve rural poor's access to formal credit (SHGs)	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	NABARD is the nodal agency too guide the collaboration process; it provides support for organising SHG familiarisation workshops for bank functionaries, its district staff follows up with NGOs and local branch managers, and it does have a provision to support NGO overheads	Programme expanding slowly as it requires intensive process work with SHGs which NGOs could put in; not all NGOs sufficiently enthused	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 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. 2. Working with banks, NABARD reached out to local managers, emphasised their mutuality with NGOs, and even used formal authority. 3. Banks have found NGOs as reliable intermediaries and less costly, with latter doing process work with SHGs. 4. Role of SHG federations remains as yet limited.
<u>Commodity</u>	Negotiate for better wages for tribal Tendu Patta Collectors and license to market patta (Tendu Patta Collection and Marketing)	NGO formed tribal collectors, persuaded a government agency (Rajsangh) to increase their wages and recognise their cooperatives for marketing and even give them loan	Essentially a negotiation between NGOs and Rajsangh for getting a better deal for tribal collectors such as enhanced wages, marketing license and loan to finance their operations.	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;	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gradual programme expansion and building up NGO capacity in marketing would be preferable 2. More formalised role for NGOs and relationship with government agency in the next phase 3. NGO networking provided strength to all NGOs and to cooperatives and be continued 4. NGOs come to terms with political class. After all, <i>Prashashan</i> (bureaucracy) is accountable to <i>Shashan</i> (politicians).

