ARAVALI—HOLDING HANDS FOR RURAL ADVANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The Indian government had to seek sustainable solutions to long term problems of poverty through an integrated and community based approach that reinforces civil society and respects native culture. An initiative towards this direction had also been taken from Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), a supportive organization, based in Rajasthan. It worked to strengthen government-civil society collaboration.

ARAVALI worked broadly on aspects of participatory processes in development programmes, through promotion of development innovations and their up-scaling; networking and liaison between and among Government Organizations, Non-Government Organizations, research bodies and private sector; capacity building; promotion of collaborative initiatives; and policy and strategic research. The unique nature and position of ARAVALI provided it with a unique positional advantage, yet the steady increase in rural development was much lesser than expected. Based on this understanding and, the roles for ARAVALI had evolved, ARAVALI was facing certain major challenges which had led to review their strategy for ensuring long term participation and sustainability.

KEYWORDS: Rural Advancement, ARAVALI, Sustainability, Long Term participation.

BACKGROUND

Economic development formed part of almost every national agenda, especially in developing countries like India. Several countries identified development areas that if addressed could lead to accelerated economic growth. India - where 69% of the population in villages (source: 2011 Census) - primarily an agricultural country. The rural economy of Rajasthan, depended on agriculture and allied activities. In

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2011-12, the agriculture sector contributed 26.76% of the state's GDP at current prices, and about ¾ of the total state's population, who resided in rural areas, depended on this (source: Economic Review: 2011-12). The state's topography however, posed a big challenge to this rural economic foundation.

Agriculture failure could give a big threat to the farmers and daily wage laborers. They had to go to distant places to look for optional livelihood. According to local estimates their earnings could go down to less than 50 rupees per day during lean periods, and the family could face a tough time to earned proper meals in a day.

The state government was well aware of the livelihood challenges and the rising poverty, and was trying hard to come up with proper approaches and schemes for the deprived section. The 12th five-year plan besides other aspects also focused upon building of equitable society and inclusive growth, ensuring food security and drinking water, creation of livelihood through skill development and better infrastructure (source: 12th Rajasthan;s Five Year Plan, Chapter 4). On the other hand Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) had emerged with a strong organization basis and developed closer community with an innovative ability, but the all-round and large scale development of communities required a combination of efforts and approaches which cannot be solely provided by any one agency or system. To ensure that the benefits of development reached the poor in particular, and people in general, it was necessary that different agencies working for development pool their strengths and become partners. There were compelling complementarities between the Government and Non-government sector. Although the Government and NGOs had the reach, scale and infrastructure for programme delivery over a large area, but there were serious doubts, and suspicions on both sides. Also systems of institutionalizing the partnership did not exist in departments and government bodies. In this context, the inception of ARAVALI happened in 1994 to act as an interface between the government and the voluntary organizations.

ABOUT ARAVALI

ARAVALI – Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement - was initiated in 1994 by the Government of Rajasthan to facilitate collaboration between the government and the voluntary sector. ARAVALI was registered as a society under the Rajasthan Societies Act, 1958, under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, and also under the relevant Income Tax Acts, as applicable. It started its operational in 1997. ARAVALI a member-based organization which included representatives from voluntary agencies, research institutions and also from the State Government. The governing body of ARAVALI comprised of *General Body, Governing Council and Executive Committee.* All the members of ARAVALI constituted its General Body. The members of the Governing Council- a policy making body- constituted by the representatives of the General Body (who are elected by the members of the General body) and senior secretaries of the Government of Rajasthan - these include the Principal Secretaries of the Departments of Finance, Rural Development, Education, Social Justice, Planning, Agriculture and Forests. The Governing Council elected the Executive Committee that was responsible for executing the policies decided by the Governing Council. The Government of Rajasthan nominates the Chairperson of ARAVALI. Hon'ble Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Government of Rajasthan, become the Chairperson of ARAVALI.

The genesis of ARAVALI was based on the realization that effective developmental action requires diverse approaches and flexible structures. Voluntary action to a large extent embodied this diversity. Building, strengthening, and expanding the base of voluntary efforts in the development field in Rajasthan was at the core of ARAVALI's work since it became operational.

The primary mission of ARAVALI was to increase number of effective partnerships working closely with marginalized communities in every district in Rajasthan and developing an environment within which these partnerships can function. ARAVALI had developed platforms for dialogue between the state, the voluntary sector, and the panchayat institutions at the state, regional and district level. It had also facilitated the State's understanding on issues relating to partnership management.

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF OPERATION

worked for the development of entire Rajasthan, and had operated through a Central Office in Jaipur and three Regional Resource Centres located in Ajmer (covering the central districts), Jodhpur (covering western Rajasthan) and Kota (covering eastern districts of Rajasthan).Central office looked after the northern and southern districts of Rajasthan. Team members worked in these Regional Resource Centres had sectoral / thematic competencies and diverse experience and exposure.

APPROACH

To kick start their most promising mission ARAVALI had developed different approaches in the form of program offerings. These programs had supported the organization by helping them to visualize the roles that they see themselves playing, development of their human resources, building and deepening their perspective, and helping them develop their operating systems and processes.

The major segment of ARAVALI's support was towards small locally evolved organizations in Rural Area's in the state; which had been set up by people with a keen interest in addressing developmental issues. These organizations were facing problems to translate their ideas into action and were able to contribute to only those development interventions, which were coming to their way. ARAVALI had helped these organizations in enhancing their capacities to address the livelihoods challenge through skill development programmes for strategic planning and implementation of projects, peer group critique, exposure and orientation to development challenges.

ARAVALI had designed and supported programmes related to the major key themes and sectors relevant to development such as Capacity Building, Development and Training of Non-Government and Voluntary Organizations, Building local institutions to address livelihood community working in Mining area of Rajasthan, Piloting Innovations for Livelihoods Promotion, Institutionalization of Innovative Themes and Approaches, Human Resource Development, Organizational Development, Organizing Exposure Visits, Assessment of NGOs for empanelment in Government Programmes, Committees and Projects, Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment of Development Programmes, Schemes & Projects for Government of Rajasthan and Government of India. (**Annexure-1**)

ARAVALI with the support from various donor agencies had been able to build capacities of more than 150 Voluntary Organisations who were working with rural communities. They had also undertaken research studies on key thematic area's such as Rainfed Agriculture, Watershed Development, Animal Husbandry, Forestry, Community based Microfinance, Study on Livelihoods in the state, etc. ARAVALI, so far had initiated 368 Individual Benefits Scheme in Rajasthan. 59, Social Welfare Department Schemes. They had operated in 6 district and catered social services to 2500 under-privileged families in the State.

ARAVALI had provided a platform for stakeholders' consultation around various issues related to policy and regulation. The platform had invited diverse and at times conflicting views from different voluntary organizations, donors, and the State.

DONORS

Many organizations including Government institutions and private donors (national and international) had given financial support to ARAVALI for its effective functioning. Some of these were: the Aga Khan Foundation, European Union, the National Foundation for India, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, National Rainfed Area Authority (Planning Commission, GoI), the Agriculture Department, Government of Rajasthan, the Rural Development Department, GoR, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, UNICEF, UNDP and Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, Mumbai.

ARAVALI's membership, representation in Committees and affiliation with Government Departments and Research Institutions:

- Member in executive committee of Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sansthan (IGPRS), GoR

- Member of executive and technical committee in Rajasthan State AIDS Control Society

- Member in the General Body of Centre for Micro-finance, Jaipur

- Member of DaangVikas Board and MagraVikas Board

- Member of the Voluntary Sector Development Council and accreditation committee for NGOs

- Member of the State Level Steering Committee of the Rajasthan State CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority), Forest Department, GoR

POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

To fulfill its mission, ARAVALI had developed a long-term partnership with the voluntary organizations. It had also done rapid NGO assessment through minimum partnership requirement framework (MPRF), which assessed the credibility, effectiveness and sustainability of the NGOs for effective bonding. It believed in working with the voluntary organization having high credibility & low capacity approach, to work-upon enhancing their capacity. It had focused Core-Values in the form of Credibility, Capacity building, and Transparency. Word-of-Mouth by the voluntary organizations helped it to market its core values and functioning.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

ARAVALI had confronted several challenges while dealing with poor and rural communities. Some of these challenges were : firstly, Recognitions of Voluntary Organizations for their efforts towards upliftment of poor families; Secondly, The challenge of overcoming short grant cycles and increasingly uniform donor trend of focusing on immediate outcomes of their financial resources; Thirdly, retaining and attracting human resources in the organization; Fourthly, How to provide the more benefits to the poor families as these families had to pay interests to the Mahajans for their livelihood and spend the rest of the amount in their health; Fifthly, Managing the Collaborations between Government and Voluntary organizations; Sixthly, Fulfilling the different stakeholder's expectations. Stakeholders expected that ARAVALI should had an assessment of all NGOs in Rajasthan-a sort of encyclopedia of NGOs. The expectation from ARAVALI was to provide a concurrent status of NGOs in terms of their fit for various engagements by the state and donors for their programmes.

CONCLUSION

The successful incorporation of ARAVALI's rural development programs and sector promotion in the form of competence, credibility, transparency and accountability had given a path for further development opportunities to uplift rural livelihoods and build up more effective and efficient interventions for the empowerment of excluded communities. ARAVALI was working on these aspects and will definitely go a long way in evolving it to the next orbit of organizational growth. Since its inception, there had been manifold increases in the number of NGOs working on real life development challenges with minimum capacities to engage with poor and rural communities. The challenges of governance that emerge from time to time, retaining and inducting diverse experienced set of human resources, untied financial resources to put into action new propositions and aspiration had given the unique character and nature of its work made it highly confident and dynamically balanced organization-GO-NGO joint. Amidst all the churning the mute question still remains that of functionary capacities and resources.

Questions

1. Based on your assessment of the situation, suggest a road map that should be adopted by ARAVALI for fund raising schemes and retention & attraction of human resources.

2. Comment on triangular enterprise partnership i.e., organization, government and community.

3. Looking into the successful rural advancement program in Rajasthan State, Does ARAVALI should think for suitable expansion strategy in PAN India. Comment.

TEACHING NOTES

1.   Summary

The case was about functional support of ARAVALI towards rural advancement through a collaboration between various voluntary organizations and Government. The case highlighted the different approaches and key programme areas of ARAVALI. It had affiliation & membership with Government department and research institutions. All these department and institutions had provided funds to ARAVALI for it effective functioning. Though ARAVALI had a potential to grow but they had faced various challenges which had to be considered and minimized for its longevity.

2.   Teaching Objectives and target-audience

The purpose of this case is to make the participants aware about the functioning of organization and community participation for development of rural people. It also provide information about triangular enterprise partnership i.e., organization, government and community. It also discusses the challenges faced by the organization in terms of fund generation, retaining & attracting human resources and fulfilling stakeholders expectation.

3.   Teaching approach and strategy

The case is more diagnostic in nature and should be discussed in the same spirit. Each issue should be given 15-20 minutes to discuss. The case should be discussed first on individual level and then at group level. The size of the group should be about 4-5 members. Students of post graduate program in management and or Social work.

4.   Analysis

The analysis should be based on resource mobilization, fund raising and societal development projects.

5.   Additional readings or references

www.aravali.org.in

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ANNEXURE-1

Table 1: Competencies & Best Practices of ARAVALI: A Summary

COMPETENCE	APPROACH	BEST PRACTICES
Piloting Innovations for Livelihoods Promotion	Poverty Targeting & Inclusive Development	Family Livelihood Resource Centres (FLRC)
		Livelihoods Promotion through Segment-Oriented Extension
		Livelihoods Programming through Decentralised Planning
	Leveraging Diversified Funding for Livelihoods Promotion	Programme Design for Viability Gap Funding
Institutionalisation of Innovative Themes & Approaches	Development of Migration Support Programme	Genesis of a Specialised Agency to Work with Migrants
		Establishment of Migration Support Centres in NGOs
	Microfinance for Livelihoods Promotion	Programming for Community-based Microfinance in Rajasthan
		Establishment of a Centre for micro Finance in Rajasthan
	Promoting Alternative Institutions to Combat Poverty	Establishment of a Producers' Company in Rajasthan
Organisational Development	Building Institutions that Can Challenge Poverty	NGO Assessment & Selection
		Support Action Planning
		Governance & Programming Fellowships
Human Development for Sustainable Livelihoods	Fellowships	Certified Farmer Field School Facilitators for Promoting Livelihoods
		Livelihood Fellowships
		NGO Seeding Support Fellowships
	Information & Training Support	ARAVALI Training Support Fund
		ARAVALI Development Features Service
Programme Design & Institutional Arrangements	Participatory Programme Design	Segmental & Sectoral Baselines
		Facilitated Peer Learning for Programme Functionaries
		Mapping Social Networks
	Technical Backstopping of Development Programmes & Projects	Evaluation of Watershed Development Programmes
		Capacity Building Consortia for Watershed Development Programme
		Capacity Building Modules for NGO Functionaries

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