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THE SUBSTANCE OF INTERACTION: DESIGN AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF NGO-GOVERNMENT PROJECTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Collaboration between government and non-government organizations has been a recurrent feature of many development interventions in India. Despite a history of nearly expecting these agencies to work together remain valid, experiences have frequently been ventures. This paper is based on case studies of 11 such programs. Cross case analysis of relationship between government and non-government agencies, and that these various

In the interventions studied it was found that tension between government and or outputs; perceived domains of responsibility; and operational disjunction. Cases in joint action and inter-agency relations were more effective and demonstrated greater those, interventions which incorporated opportunities for partners to evolve new ways of conclusion that interventions involving government and NGO collaboration need to support administration of collaboration but which also ensure adequate agency of each related issues of (1) stakeholder *organization* and (2) the which govern their

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Ruth Alsop with Ved Arya *

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1996 it was estimated that between 10 and 15 percent of all development aid went to non-government organizations (ODI 1996). This \$6 billion was either given directly to NGOs or channelled through country governments as part of project packages. The concept that government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play complementary roles has shaped the design of many development interventions over the last 15 years (Clark 1990; Stewart and Moore 1998; Tvedt 1998). The logic of this pluralist approach has emerged primarily out of a recognition that popular participation is essential to sustainable development and that government, while possessing authority and funds, has neither the geographic reach nor the human capital to bring this about (cf. Farrington et al. (eds.) 1993; ODI 1995). NGOs have been regarded as staffed by people who possess the skills necessary for the processes of community involvement and who are willing to work in remote locations. More recently, their assumed ability to support inclusive organizations and to strengthen civil society has attracted funds (Bebbington and Mitlin 1996; Fowler and Pratt 1997). This analysis of NGOs organizational and human capacity has led to interventions based upon an understanding that NGOs and government can supplement each others' deficiencies and work together creatively to

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bring about wide reaching change (Robinson and White 1997). However, while there may be complementarities of action and purpose, program design has usually ignored the dynamics of interaction and hence the complexity of bringing together people from organizations with different expectations and behavioral norms (Cooke 1998; Howes 1996; Moore et al. 1995; Zadek 1996). It is this facet of organizational interaction which has often caused problems in collaborative ventures.

The State of Rajasthan in India is no exception to the worldwide phenomenon of development partnerships between NGOs and government agencies or the difficulties encountered (Alsop et al. forthcoming). Over the last 10 years a number of NGOs and government departments have moved from relationships based on negotiation over specific issues to those based, in theory, on partnerships rooted in development programs (PRADAN 1996). This findings of this paper emerge from a study of 10 such experiences within the State and one covering experiences in three other states (see Table 1). All but one of the studies were undertaken by different authors and coordinated by a central group.¹ In 1996 a draft paper, 'Towards a Relationship of Significance' (PRADAN) was published. Donor, government and NGO enthusiasm for the paper led to a further publication containing the full case studies, 'Negotiating Spaces' in 1998. This discussion paper draws heavily on the narrative material of those documents.

¹ Smita Agarwal, Ruth Alsop, Ved Arya, Ranu Bhogal, Snigda Charaborty, Dayaram, Rajiv Khandelwal, Pramod Kulkarni, Sudhir Katiyar, Anand Kumar, Jyotsna Lall, S. Ramanathan, Sachin Sachdeva, Manas Satpathy, Malika Singh, Disa Sjoblom.

Table 1 Case study sectors and actors

Sector	Project	Donors and other partners
Natural Resource Management	PAHAL	Sida, Govt. of Rajasthan (GoR), local NGOs
Forestry	JFM	GoI, Local FD, local NGOs
Agriculture	Rajasthan Initiative I	Ford Foundation, DoA (Rajasthan), NGOs, Agricultural University, Overseas Development Institute.
Animal Husbandry	Artificial Insemination	GoR and NGO
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, NGOs
Health	Swasthyakarmi	UNFPA, GoR, NGOs
Command Area Development (IGNP)	Saving Water Courses	World Bank, GoR, and NGO
Micro-Irrigation	Lift Irrigation: M.P. Lift Irrigation: Karnataka Lift Irrigation: Bihar	GoMP, NGO, and Banks in Utthan Project Govt. of Karnataka, NGO, and Banks The World Bank, Govt. of Bihar, and NGO in Bihar Plateau Development Project (BPDP)

Adapted from: SRIJAN/PRADAN 1998.

The following section briefly analyses the rationale for collaboration and looks at the organizational and operational objectives of the agencies involved in each case study. Section three presents the framework used to analyse the relationships between government and non-government agencies in each intervention described and illustrates this through case material. Section four draws out key issues which were either beneficial or had a negative impact on the achievement of objectives. These are analysed and suggestions are made for the design of interventions involving collaborative relations between NGOs and government in the final section.

2. WHY COLLABORATE?

The reasons for collaboration between government and NGOs agencies in the cases studies fell into two categories -- organizational and operational. Organizational objectives of collaboration relate to the identity, rationale and existence of the organization itself and include:

- provision of finance from government to NGOs;
- establishing NGOs as legitimate actors in the eyes of departmental staff;
- establishing government as concerned and committed actors in the eyes of NGO staff and within local communities.

Operational objectives of collaboration, which concern the applied or active aspects of an organization's work, include:

- improving delivery of development programs and services to rural communities;
- generation or replication of innovation and alternative approaches to development;
- inducing organizational reforms;
- changing behavioral norms and action.

Finance. In eight of the case studies there was a direct financial link between the government and non-governmental agencies. NGOs signed contracts with the government for provision of specified services to rural communities. However, as section three illustrates these financial bonds did not imply similarity of relationships between

government and NGOs across the board. The form and effectiveness of relationships varied in all cases.

Legitimacy. Establishing legitimacy of presence and purpose for each agency, while rarely articulated by either group as a specific objective of collaboration, has emerged as an important consideration particularly for NGOs. In the case analysis the official recognition of an NGOs qualification and right to operate that resulted from a formal agreement with government gave some, although rarely equal, power of negotiation to NGOs. The degree of power varied considerably but the principle was observed in the natural resource management, both education, health, command area development and micro-irrigation cases.

Improving local level perceptions of the credibility of government is something which mainly derives from provision of satisfactory services. Their task of service provision for rural development is enormous, financial resources are limited and there is virtually no client accountability. These factors, combined with a culture which on one level correlates power with social legitimacy, results in most local level (sub-district) functionaries regarding credibility as an unimportant element of their professional lives. However, at higher levels government staff are concerned about how government is perceived. These senior administrators and their political masters recognize that collaboration with NGOs can assist in changing the current dismissive and distrustful attitude of rural people towards government through more effective service delivery.

Improving Delivery. The sheer size of area for which government services are responsible means that staff are at best thinly spread and at worst none existent.

Therefore a strong operational reason for engaging NGOs in government programs is simply to increase coverage -- especially in remote or inhospitable locations where government staff do not like to work. From the 11 case studies this was the main rationale for six cases of collaboration (animal husbandry, both education programs, the health, command area development and micro-irrigation projects).

Improving delivery not only implies increasing geographic coverage but also improving quality through complementary provision of skills and services by government or non-government agencies. Growing NGO participation in government programs reflects a perception that NGOs have particular skills and relative operational advantages and thus collaboration can improve the quality of program implementation. This view is rooted in the idea that NGOs are usually local organizations, working closely with communities and concentrating on the development of local human and organizational capacity. They often work in a limited geographical area and are able to respond flexibly and reasonably quickly to localized needs. The case analysis revealed that NGOs can increase the effectiveness of service delivery in three ways. They can:

- provide services to villagers which enable them to make better use of government facilities;
- build local knowledge and capacity and thus enhance people's ability to place demands on public systems and services;
- use their skills in community mobilisation to complement the technical or professional services the government can provide.

In the case studies upon which this paper is based the positioning of NGOs directly increased the effectiveness of government service provision through providing intermediary services in the health program, in the agricultural intervention and in the rural credit program. Indirect impact on effectiveness through local empowerment included the minor forest produce and agricultural case studies. In the natural resource management and joint forest management cases NGOs were commissioned to employ their “soft” skills to complement the government technical services delivery.

Innovation. Collaboration is sometimes driven by the need to generate or replicate innovative solutions to development problems. Field-testing and refinement of innovation requires flexibility, imagination and an accurate understanding of local situation -- traits that some NGOs possess but which government organizations and staff rarely do. Two routes to stimulating and seeding innovation were observed in the case studies. The first involved bringing government and NGO staff together to work jointly on a particular issue, This was attempted in the natural resources and agriculture interventions, The second, more common approach was for an NGO to find or develop an innovative technology, approach to or management of a problem. Lacking resources or structures to work on a large scale collaboration with government agencies greatly improved chances of scaling up and replication, There are several variants of replication: diffusion of innovation directly by the government; an NGO itself undertaking scaling up with government’s financial support; or a combination of both. The command area development project attempted to introduce the first form of replication. Examples of the second type of replication include the Animal Husbandry program of another NGO which

resulted in innovations in artificial insemination being recognized by government and financed for scaling up to 13 districts by that NGO. A further example of this is an NGO-promoted lift irrigation program which had small beginnings but which, with government funds was extended to six districts of South Bihar. The last form of replication is demonstrated in the Shikshakarmi education project. An NGO sought to address the problem of teacher absenteeism in remotely located villages and after a period of learning the experiment flowered into a state-wide government run Shikshakarmi program. NGOs were involved as project implementation agencies in this replication.

Organizational and Institutional Reform. Other operational reasons for collaboration are those of inducing organizational or institutional reform. Organizational reform implies structural and procedural change. Institutional reform implies changes in the implicit and explicit rules governing the behavior of members of a particular organization.² Both types of reform are usually attempted in an effort to increase transparency, accountability and efficiency. While organizational reforms in government agencies are sometimes initiated externally by donors or political mandate, on other occasions such 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. Changes within government departments are often necessary if they are to

² Definitions of ‘organization’ and ‘institution’ are distinct and important. An organization is defined as individuals bound together by a common purpose to achieve specific objectives. Institutions are the rules which govern behavior of individuals or organizations. A rule is a principle to which a procedure or action conforms.

collaborate with NGOs or to become more accountable and responsive to their clients. Case studies in which reform has been a specified objective of collaboration include the natural resource management, agriculture, Lok Jumbish educational, and rural credit interventions.

3. FRAMEWORK OF INTERACTION

Analysis of the cases studies indicated that operational objectives or intended outputs of collaborative ventures fell into four categories. These were: 1) predetermined service delivery, 2) technical innovation, 3) organizational innovation, and 4. institutional innovation. Organizational objectives are endogenous and while the political, social and economic context can induce shifts, project design can only directly influence an organization if organizational or institutional innovation are explicit operational objectives. The following analysis therefore focusses on operational objectives. Table 2 lists these and cross references each with the form of relationship which was both observed (actual) in the case studies and that which analysis suggests as most appropriate (ideal). The significance of any differences in actual and ideal forms of relationship is developed in section four. There, cross case analysis demonstrates that when related to the objective of the collaboration the form of relationship which organizations experience has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of their work.

Table 2 Forms and objectives

Objective of intervention	Form of relationship		Case examples
	Ideal	Actual	
Predetermined Service or Technical Delivery	Complementary	Independent	Animal Husbandry Command Area Dev. Forestry Health Lift Irrigation
	Complementary	Complementary	Education (SK) Education (LJ) NRM Rural Credit
Technical Innovation	Interactive	Independent	Command Area Dev.
	Iterative Iterative	Iterative Interactive	NRM Agriculture
Organizational Innovation	Interactive	Complementary	Education (SK) Education (LJ) Rural Credit Minor Forest Prod.
	Iterative	Interactive	NRM Agriculture
Institutional Innovation	Iterative	Complementary	Education (LJ) Rural Credit
	Iterative	Interactive Iterative	NRM Agriculture

DEFINITIONS

Before using the case studies to elaborate on the table it is first useful to describe the classification and terms used. The *objective of an intervention* affects both the arrangements to which organizations agree, or believe they have agreed to, and the

dynamics of a relationship.³ The four categories of objective were not mutually exclusive and some interventions specifically recognized high levels of dependency between the last three.

- Pre-determined service delivery occurs in a situation where there is an existing technology or service which needs no adaptation and which can simply be delivered or extended to clients. The output of the relationship is clear to parties agreeing to interact.
- Where technical innovation is the reason for a relationship specific forms of change are implied and the overall output is clear and agreed to. Agreed output can be of two types, either (a) a known which is to be seeded in a new context, or (b) an unknown for which a specific need has been identified.
- Organizational innovation requires change in the structural and procedural aspects of (a) one or more of the organizations involved in the relationship, and/or (b) the organizational aspects of the activity they are engaged in. Change is explicit and recognized by all parties but outputs can be either specified or open.
- Institutional innovation requires change in the social norms which determine acceptable behavior. Many of the rules which govern behavior

³ Collaboration is a much and loosely used term. It implies a wide range of interaction and power sharing. Current interpretations do little to enhance understanding of the quality or roles in the relationship involved. Hence, in Table 2 'relationship', as a qualitatively-neutral term, is used.

are implicit and unconsciously and strongly adhered to. Institutions are part of socialisation processes and are contingent on context. They can relate, simultaneously or discretely, to the household, the community (or sub-groups in the community, including organizations) and the state. This complexity makes institutional change one of the most difficult outputs to achieve.

In relation to different objectives case studies demonstrated a range of operational relationships between organizations. These fall along a continuum between fully independent to fully iterative. Between these points are relations which are characterized as complementary or interactive. This classification is based upon (a) malleability of output, (b) task dependency, and (c) power sharing. In explanation:

- Independent relations are those where the operations of parties are completely separate and have no influence objectives or each other after the initial agreement.
- Complementary relations are found in situations where organizations undertake responsibilities which are separate but which contribute to a mutual, pre-defined purpose. The power to make operational or strategic change lies with one agency.
- Interactive relations are those where actors separately undertake activities which dovetail with each other and contribute to a mutual, pre-defined purpose. Parties work within the same geographic or substantive domain and enjoy equal access and agency in decision making.

- Iterative relations are the most process-oriented. Particular outputs may be unspecified, there is a high degree of mutual dependency in task accomplishment and power is equally shared.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

Different forms of relationship between government and non-government agencies were observed in relation to different goals. The following section gives examples of these various forms and gives background information on each of the case studies.

Independent relations. As Box 1 illustrates in the case of Animal Husbandry during the stages of innovation there had been no professional or financial links with government. The Baharatiya Agro Industries Foundation's (BAIF) original independence of action continued as it scaled up provision of artificial insemination services under contract to the government. The relationship with the

Box 1 Animal husbandry -- BAIF's artificial insemination program

In 1978 the Rajasthan Minister of Agriculture visited a BAIF breeding centre. He was impressed and subsequently sent a team to study the approach in more detail. The team recommended that BAIF be invited to begin their breed program in Rajasthan. DoAH did not have an artificial insemination program at that time.

Since the program started in 1979 AI services have been provided to the animals of 50,000 rural households in 3,500 villages through 114 village centres. In 1994/5 alone more than 38,000 cows and buffalos were inseminated with a success rate of just under 70 percent.

The contractual arrangement between BAIF and the government is anchored in the Special Schemes Office of the Department of Rural Development Agency. The funding link with the SSO was conceived because of the availability of funds rather than as a strategic choice.

Beyond indicating in the contract that BAIF should work in remote areas thinly covered by the DoAH there are no attempts to link the work of BAIF with the government.

Lall 1996

Department of Animal Husbandry (DoAH) was fixed and allowed for no change in

working patterns or opportunity for one agency to influence the other.

URMUL Trust's relations with the Command Area Development Authority⁴ was based on URMUL demonstrating two technical innovations. These were (a) covering water courses to avoid sand-logging, and (b) low cost school building. Using CADA finance their objective was to prove the effectiveness of their designs for future use by the government. The arrangement was a straightforward contract in which URMUL were expected to deliver specific services and CADA would administer finance. The operational relationship between the organizations was independent. URMUL has completed its work. Five water courses have been covered and 12 schools constructed, all of which have a positive effect on the local community. Proof of this lies in productivity increases on agricultural land and a shift from coarse grains (subsistence, low cash value) to groundnuts (market, high cash value). The new school buildings provide five room, as opposed to the conventional two room, facilities for students participating in the Shikshakarmi program. However, there is nothing to indicate that the government plans to scale up these innovations, that is to follow through with the anticipated technical innovation.

At a policy level the collaboration of the Forestry Department with non-government organizations was expected to enhance service delivery and bring about organizational innovation at a village level. Despite this, according to the authors

⁴ 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 Indra Gandhi Nahar Pariyojna canal and to develop support facilities, such as hospitals, schools and drinking water facilities for incomers.

(Bhogal and Sjoblom 1996) while the 1990 guidelines on joint forest management anticipated NGOs as playing a complementary role to the Forestry Department in terms of motivating communities to form forest protection committees, “the project is not collaborative in any meaningful sense. As a consequence of the way the project is structured, the FD and the NGOs do not as a rule seek each other out . . . There is a potential complementarity between NGO knowledge of these communities and the technical skills of the FD . . . However, neither side seems particularly interested in working with the other or feels any advantage in doing so. The understandings and expectations regarding the program remain far apart.” (ibid., 34). Only three NGOs are involved in this initiative and they have formed only 25 forest protection committees within the whole state. The department and NGOs work independently of one another.

Complementary. The case of the Shikshakarmi Education Project provides interesting insights into how changes in a dominant party’s, in this case the government, perception of a program’s intended outputs alters relationships. Box 2 outlines the project’s four different phases leading to a situation today where the boundaries of interaction and locus of power are clearly defined. NGOs ability to influence the project has decreased over time as the relationship between the government and NGOs has moved from one of interaction to complementarity. Of the two whose involvement in Shikshakarmi was studied both feel uncomfortable with their current role of contractors

Box 2 Changes during the Shikshakarmi project

This project sought to reach school drop-outs, train village youths as teachers, relate pedagogy to local contexts and involve the community in the educational process.

1. *The experimental phase* (1978-84), was purely an NGO project and had no government involvement, financial or otherwise. The scale was small and the style innovative with regard to technical, organizational and institutional issues.

2. The second phase (1984-86) was a *pilot project* in 13 schools. The Government of Rajasthan financed the project and withdrew any existing teachers from concerned villages. Apart from this they remained uninvolved and the project was run by a single NGO who continued to innovate in terms of pedagogy, organizational structure and manner of operation. The roles agreed to by each agency were complementary.

3. *Shikshakarmi Phase I* (1986-1994). In 1986 the government took the concepts embodied in these early efforts and drew up a program which intended to take primary education to a further 2,000 villages in 144 blocks. Implementation was initially slow. Only 26 blocks covered by the end of the five years. While the project document states “provision of primary education is Government’s obligation...and as locally active and capable NGOs are not always available the responsibility for implementing the Project will rest with (the government)”, it did not attempt to rigidly separate government or NGO implementational roles. At this stage, while there was agreement on the service which the various parties were to deliver, the project also sought to explore options for technical and organizational innovation. The prime example of the latter is when in 1987 GoR disbanded the original project structure located in the Education Department and established an independent body in which NGOs were expected to be represented and to contribute as professional partners in all matters concerning the project. The relationship was supposed to be iterative. In practice the balance of power quickly became unequal and as the project’s expansion gathered speed in 1992-4 opportunities for NGOs to influence the technical and organizational agendas diminished.

4. During *Shikshakarmi Phase II* this tendency became more marked. NGOs are not represented on the Shikshakarmi Board which is the policy making and strategic change forum. Currently the project is one which focuses on pre-defined service delivery and in which government, through Shikshakarmi deputed staff, and NGOs work in on the same task in different locations. The only opportunity for organizational change is when an NGO lobbies for change which is directly in line with existing project purposes. There is no option for NGOs, or even lower level government staff, to influence project strategy or make technical innovations.

Agarwal 1997

but only one regards this as something which has diminished the effectiveness of the intervention “. . . over time it has become a set program and doors are closed . . . this situation precludes experience sharing and blocks policy change” (Agarwal 1997, 12).

This quotation highlights why there are different viewpoints. The other NGO Sankalp,

which feels it is able to contribute to improvements in project implementation, has limited its goal to influencing the organizational rather than institutional aspects of the intervention and has not sought to change the balance of power or its relationship with government as represented by the project board. Complementarity it is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the Swasthyakarmi Yojana health project. In this project the NGOs were called upon to assist the government in increasing its reach into uncovered rural areas (Box 3). The role of each party was defined for the project period. The anticipated output was the delivery of a pre-determined service and there was substantive complementarity of roles. No attempts were made to innovate technically or institutionally during the course of the project. One major operational transformation occurred when the government decided to take away training responsibilities from the NGOs.

Box 3 The Swasthyakarmi Yojana project

In 1994 inaccessible area, bad communications and inadequate health facilities provoked the Government of Rajasthan to develop a new approach to health services delivery. By 1996 the Swasthyakarmi Yojana project was operative in 24 blocks of the state.

The project expects NGOs to act as the main delivery mechanism in areas lacking basic health services. After an NGO has indicated its interest in participating in the project it undergoes a lengthy process of capacity and credential assessment. This task, along with later management of operational collaborative issues, is undertaken by the state level Standing Committee on Voluntary Agencies. This committee comprises senior government health officials, representatives of the funding agency and four NGO staff.

Once approved the NGO is given funds to cover 90 percent of the costs of implementing the project in a cluster of 25 villages. For every group of five villages the NGO has to select a *swasthyakarmi* -- an educated, or at least literate, village woman to act as the main extension contact for the department and village. Her responsibilities include provision of maternal and child care, family welfare, birth control and information, first aid and health awareness (disease prevention and sanitation) services. Apart from direct individual contact with clients she works through a *mahila mandal* (women's group). Every group of five swasthyakarmis are assisted and overseen by a *Sahyogi* -- a person having the qualifications and experience equivalent to a conventional government Auxiliary Nurse Midwife. Each NGO has to appoint a Project-Coordinator who acts as the main link between the NGO and the government at the block level. At a higher level the primary link with the Department of Health is through the IEC bureau who approves, administers and monitors NGO performance.

Sachdeva 1996

The Lok Jumbish educational project is one based on a geographic division of responsibility between government and NGOs (see Box 4). Unlike the Shikshakarmi project this intervention is state wide and works closely with the Department of Education. Anticipated outputs include pre-determined service delivery, organizational and institutional innovation. There is no attempt to change pedagogic methods or content, which in terms of an education project constitute a technical innovation. Lok Jumbish seeks to both universalize primary education and to strengthen the existing system. To this end of organizational innovation Department of Education employees are seconded to Lok Jumbish, after which they return to their normal duties with the mandate of revitalising the system. Lok Jumbish does not provide any option to innovate in terms

Box 4 Lok Jumbish

Lok Jumbish was initiated in December 1992 with the objective of universalising primary education in Rajasthan through both the formal and non-formal systems. By the end of 1996 the project was operating in 2826 villages in 58 blocks and is projected to cover the entire state by 2007.

The project is managed through a society 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 Secretary, Education 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 operationally either controlled 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. 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. This group is 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 who are either of school age and whether or not they attend school. The map forms the base for the community to develop an educational plan for the village. From amongst the *prerak dal* are elected 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).

of relationships between agencies involved in the project. Institutional innovation is at two levels. First, Lok Jumbish aims to change parental behavior which determines a child's school attendance. This is explicit and attendance and drop out figures demonstrate a high degree of success. Second, the project seeks to change the manner in which the Department of Education operates. Implicit in this is the need to change the beliefs and behavior of departmental staff. Unfortunately, government staff on deputation to Lok Jumbish display an unwillingness to return to their parent department as it cannot offer the structure or sanction staff operating outside of conventional norms.

Mediated Interactive Relations. A summary of the credit case is contained in Box 5. This is a national program spread over 14 states in India. By mid-1995 2,221 self help

Box 5 Self help groups for savings and credit

In July 1991 the Reserve Bank of India issued a circular to all commercial banks asking them to participate in a program for linking with self help groups. These groups have been widely promoted by NGOs to address the problem that poor people have in obtaining credit through regularized and fair channels. NABARD was to work out details of implementation with the commercial banks. These were later extended to the Regional Rural Banks and the Cooperative Banks. The guidelines for this initiative focussed on provision of bank credit to groups of 10-20 people which had been functioning for at least 6 months without asking for collateral or guarantors. Funds equivalent to three times the group savings could be lent by banks. Groups would lend on to members. There was no restriction on what could be financed. Normal bank documentation requirements were minimized and banks, other than commercial banks, could apply to NABARD for refinancing.

NABARD identified the role of NGOs as: catalysts in establishing links between the sources of formal credit and self-help groups; initiators of new self-help groups; and providers of organizational development support to these groups. Of the two NGOs which were the subject of this case study one, Sahyog, initially worked to develop the managerial capacity of groups. These groups now work directly with the banks and this NGO is establishing new groups. The second NGO, PRADAN, formed a federation of self-help groups which now employs local staff to support member groups. While PRADAN continues to provide assistance this role is diminishing and the federation is expected to take on the role of both establishing new groups and linking groups to banks.

Both agencies have enjoyed close and constructive working relations with NABARD. A total of 112 groups, 76 established by NGOs, spanning five districts were linked to banks by June 1996 and had borrowed nearly \$70,000. Recovery rates are between 90 and 100 percent.

Singh, Khandelwal and Chakraborty 1997

groups, 86 percent of which are women's groups, had received credit through the program. Twenty-one commercial banks, 25 regional rural banks, and three cooperative banks were involved in the lending. In Rajasthan, throughout the program the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development ⁵ has been pro-active in establishing linkages with NGOs, the banking sector, the private sector and government departments. It has managed to engender considerable support for the project among NGOs and has brought about both organizational and institutional change in relation to formal sector lending to self-help groups.

NGO interest in the program lies in their moral and practical concern over rural indebtedness and inequality. In India it is estimated that nearly half of indebted households borrow outside the formal sector. Terms of loans in the informal credit market are exploitative in the extreme yet people continue to borrow to meet their immediate production and consumption needs.

Prior to this program access to formal credit was very limited and involved provision of collateral or guarantees, considerable and lengthy paper work, overcoming the reticence of banks to lend small amounts and confronting the social divisions militating against fair treatment of lower status people. As the lift irrigation cases in the following section will illustrate, NGOs and poor people's experiences of getting the banks to provide loans has been frustrating and often ineffective. The NABARD program offered potential clients (rural people) and the NGOs trying to help them, the

⁵ NABARD is a public sector organization which does no lending itself but which specializes in improving the flow of bank credit to the rural poor.

chance to access clean and fair credit.

While the overarching goal of NABARD and these clients may well have differed, the short term operational objectives were the same and clear to all -- delivery of a credit service to previously disenfranchised people. NABARD and NGOs also understood the complementarity of their specific roles and did not try to change those. Despite the terms of engagement being determined by NABARD, that agency has invested heavily in consultations and building understanding of the program and its implied relationships by all parties. The organizational change objective of the program, that is the change in the procedures governing lending, has been achieved through NABARD skilfully building legitimacy for groups and NGOs in the formal credit sector. Through workshops and consultation it has managed to develop complementary relationships between these groups by mediating their interaction. In terms of institutional innovation both NGOs report a change in the relationship between banker and client. Again, NABARD as an intermediary has managed to bring this about partly by giving both parties equal agency which has enabled professional exchange and interaction between organizations and partly by ensuring that the program effectively delivers intended outputs.

Interactive towards iterative. The natural resource management project is complex in terms of its multiple objectives and process approach.⁶ It is a project which has, despite executive power being ultimately vested in a government project director, attempted genuine power sharing and collaboration amongst NGOs and government staff.

⁶ At the time of writing the project is in a state of limbo, having undergone a major end of project review and redesign process for a second phase.

As Box 6 summarizes, the project has gone through a number of phases in the way it has allocated responsibilities and decision making options. The project document was explicit in encouraging this to occur.

Throughout all phases there has been organizational innovation. The innovation allowed for and experienced at the community level has decreased over time as the project has moved towards evolving effective Village Level Committees.⁷ The forms of relationships which both NGO and government project implementors have had with villagers has also changed over time (see Box 6, 1995 onwards). NGO and government cluster agencies have move respectively from iterative or interactive to interactive or complementary relationships with villagers. In terms of project relations, government and NGO staff operate in an interactive manner, but always with the mediation of the project director whose interests are seen as vested with the government.⁸ At the beginning interactive relationships were based on substantive expertise, this later shifted to a geographic separation of activity as emphasis shifted from technical innovation to greater stress on pre-determined service/technology delivery.

The case study of PAHAL documents that “Many among the government staff

⁷ As yet there is no evidence to indicate if VLCs will be able to continue to evolve as the conditions in which they operate change.

⁸ Interestingly in the early days relations were generally been interactive during every day implementation but iterative during discussions of strategy.

Box 6 Natural resource management - the PAHAL project

The Participatory Approach to Human and Land Resource Development project began in 1992. It was an innovative watershed-based project featuring 1) a district level project authority with responsibilities encompassing several departments concerned with natural resources and agriculture, 2) financial and technical support to rural communities to plan and implement a range of activities related to watershed development, 3) agreements with NGOs to be involved in participatory planning, implementation, training extension staff, village group formation and strengthening. The project office employed government staff seconded from five departments -- agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, soil and water conservation and education. To 1997 the project was operating in 137 villages and had undertaken rehabilitation work on 5500 hectares of land.

PAHAL was designed as a (learning) process project and as such the original plan did not include detailed objectives and specific physical targets. It was assumed these would evolve with the participation of rural communities. The project was to be flexible in its approach to land use management, the selection of technologies, the criteria of village and activity selection and in the methodology of villagers' participation. The initial phase of the project gave priority to human and organizational development, recruitment, training and the development of micro-level plans with villages. There was clear demarcation of substantive roles between NGOs and government bodies. In each block in which the project operated separate government and NGO teams were established. The NGOs were responsible for all that went with community mobilisation and HRD training. Government staff provided the technical inputs. At the district level a lead NGO coordinated with the project director.

In 1993 a joint NGO-government workshop produced a nine point plan for processing and implementing micro-level plans. Relations between the two groups were productive at this time but tension between participatory approaches and the desire to set and reach targets was becoming apparent. A meeting in 1994 demonstrated the increasingly difficult relations as the two groups tried to coordinate their efforts within blocks. In addition, although the project was nearing the halfway stage expenditure was only 15 percent of the total budget. Government staff made it clear that they wanted targets and division of responsibility with rules and regulations followed by all parties.

With a new project director a revised plan of action was implemented in 1995. This involved greater emphasis on implementation of physical activities, legal registration of village level committees, the production of a project manual for use by the VLCs, use of standardized norms for training and planning activities, reduction in time allowed for developing micro level plans. The Project Director thought that a joint NGO-government team or multi-disciplinary approach would complicate procedures and slow down implementation. NGOs were persuaded to try a more direct approach and to assume responsibility for both process and physical work in specific clusters of villages. Project responsibilities were then divided geographically between government and NGOs. Each cluster was put under an Officer in Charge from either the NGO or government body responsible for each area. While each party was critical of the performance of the other in terms of their originally recognized areas of expertise project records show increased rates of expenditure and achievement of targets.

The last change in organizational structure which occurred prior to the end of project evaluation involved building on one NGO's experimentation with action and coordination. Its revised HRD plan was agreed to for all project locations and new co-ordinating teams comprising a project officer, the block head and one member each from an NGO and the government were established in each block.

have changed their attitude to working with communities and some of the flexible working culture has rubbed off on them” (PRADAN 1996, 47). The only evidence suggesting that NGOs have undergone similar institutional changes is in their acceptance of the implementational and technical responsibilities of the 1995 revised plan of action. The project though has allowed for, and at times encouraged, institutional innovation. It has provided organizational mechanisms to encourage interaction and iteration (training, joint implementation, workshops) and has attempted to locate changed behavior and the rules governing that in an evolving organizational structure.

The agricultural case differs somewhat from the rest of the case studies as, the experience documented was not related to a government project or program.⁹ A donor acted as the catalyst for bringing together NGOs and government line departments in an effort to increase the contribution of rainfed farming to rural households’ economic portfolios. It was envisaged that in working together these two groups of agencies could increase the effectiveness of existing service delivery, bring about technical innovation, evolve the organizational mechanisms necessary to support multiple stakeholder interaction and begin to develop mutually acceptable ways of interacting. Box 7 outlines specific events in this initiative.

The roles within the initiative were demarcated in a conventional way: NGOs were seen to be a group who could both enhance farmers ability to make demands on government service and also help those same staff better respond. Government’s role

⁹ The experimental program documented here is no longer supported by the original donor but has led into the development of a proposal by the state government which is currently under consideration by a bi-lateral donor.

Box 7 Agriculture -- process not project in the Rajasthan initiative

In 1992 discussions were initiated between a donor, the state government and NGOs. These focussed on the problem area of the limited success of agricultural research and extension delivery to poor farmers cultivating rainfed holdings. Organizational and institutional problems were identified as the principal causes of this operational failure, and NGOs were regarded as agencies able to bridge the gap between poor farmers and research and extension staff. Financing was made available by the donor to NGOs willing to enter into operational collaborative relationships with Department of Agriculture staff at a district, block and village level. In 1993 a state level meeting was convened by the donor and hosted by the government. Representatives from NGOs and government participated to discuss experiences of interaction and how to take this forward. More grants were given by the donor in the following year and another meeting was held in 1994. At this time the donor presented a draft strategy paper which was intended to provide a conceptual and practical framework for people to reference in their sometimes seemingly disparate village level activities. The paper was not a blue-print, but an effort to demonstrate the common threads and broad objectives running through the various activities of the increasing number of actors embarking on interactive ventures. There was no attempt to “projectize” events, no specific actions were defined, no targets were set and no collective time frame imposed. The donor played a catalytic role, financed proposals which fell in line with the broad objectives of the initiative and provided professional support services.

Activity gradually coalesced in one main district. NGO and government agencies gave expression to the emerging coalition of interests in a regular meeting which became known as “the Forum”, and mechanisms were established which enabled process monitoring, information sharing among stakeholders and enhanced opportunities for joint decision making. By 1996 the level of interaction in villages had increased substantially, both with and without donor financing. Changes had been made to some research-extension procedures, other agricultural projects had changed the design of some of their components and people closely involved in this initiative became involved in formulating the agricultural sector chapter of the state’s next five year plan. In addition, while the initiative had focussed on organizational and institutional issues, there were quantitative indications of a positive impact. Extension staff were achieving targets, farmer groups were active and making better use of government services, a composite maize variety was being increasingly grown, existing irrigation systems were back in use and under collective management and research was taking place on farmers’ fields and with high levels of farmer involvement.

Alsop 1998

was regarded as provision of substantive expertise. There was a perceived complementarity of skills and hence roles which could assist in service delivery. In addition it was envisaged that technical, organizational and institutional innovation would develop as roles became more interactive.

By the time the project was reviewed in 1996, shortly before the donor withdrew professional and technical support, at least 15 NGOs were involved in working variously

with three government departments and two research organizations. Technical innovation had occurred and was being researched. In this relations between scientists and NGOs was complementary as they were with Department of Agriculture extension staff.

Organizationally the coalition did innovate and relationships were interactive.

Institutional innovation occurred to differing degrees. Several NGOs admit to having changed their attitudes and way of working with government departments, both of which are manifestations of changes in the rules governing behavior. In turn leadership at a district level within the Department of Extension has made serious efforts to encourage operational relationships between its staff and NGOs. As far as the structures and procedures of the department have allowed there have been sincere attempts to change the attitudes and behavior of staff. Leadership indication of the acceptability or otherwise of certain ways of operating has done much to modify the institutions operative within the department. The form of these relationships between the Department of Agriculture (Extension) and non-government agencies has been interactive. The forms of relations with university scientists was rather different. The technical specialists with whom NGOs established relationships were fringe members of this organizations, i.e., they were those who only subscribed to the norms of their parent organizations as far as was necessary to retain their positions. As an entity the parent organizations itself demonstrated no desire to innovate organizationally or institutionally and on many occasions fell back on their strongly held organizational norms to undermine opportunities to collaborate with non-government agencies and farmers.

4. ISSUES AND EFFECTS

Apart from the case of forestry all the government-NGO relations described in this paper have resulted in some positive impact (see Table 3). However, the degree to, and the way in which intended outputs have been achieved varies considerably as does the efficiency of the intervention and the continuity or reliability of interaction. In most cases tension between organizations was common, but because of variation in the forms of relationship and the options available to parties to resolve difference, the impact it had on output differed. Annex 1 summarizes the various projects and issues.

Tension between government and non-government agencies regularly arose over:

- differences in understanding of operational objectives or outputs,
- differences in perceived domains of responsibility; and
- operational disjunction.

This section discusses these and presents evidence which demonstrates that tension, which is almost inevitable when disparate individuals or organizations interact, can be managed constructively if forms of relationship are appropriate to intended outputs and are supported by specific organizational support mechanisms.

PERCEPTION OF OUTPUTS

In several cases there were obvious disagreements over intended outputs of a collaboration. The Shikshakarmi project's history (see Box 2) is one of NGO

Table 3 Spread of collaboration and impact

Case	Sector	Focus/objective of program	Govt. dept.	No. of NGOs	No. of dist.	Funds mobilized	Results achieved
BAIF-SSO	Animal Husbandry	Promotion of AI technology	SSO	1	13	?	38677 animals covered in 94-95, CR 67.9%
URMUL-IGNP	Command Area Devt.	Demonstration of new design	CADA	1	1	25 lakh	5 waterways lined, 12 school buildings completed
Tendu Pata	Minor forest produce	Promoting tribal coop to replace contractors	Rajasangh FD	4	4	2 crore	Coops did business in 13 units in 3 yrs
Self Help Group	Credit for rural poor	Promoting rural saving groups	NABARD Banks	9	4	15 lakh	76 SHGs formed
JFM	Forestry	Formation of village level FPCs	FD	3	1	-	25 FPCs formed in Dist. Udaipur
Rajasthan Initiative I	Agriculture	Improving service delivery to poor farmers	DoA, DoAH, Dir. Watersheds, Ag. University	15+	3	\$1.5 million	120 villages covered, farmer groups re-activated, mini-kit/demonstration targets reached, reached, OF ginger research undertaken
Shiksha Karmi	Education	Reviving schools in remote areas	PanchRaj/SK Board	28	27	20 crore	SKs in 1410 schools
Lok Jumbish	Education	Universalisation of primary education	PanchRaj/EdDpt/LJ	26	27	21 crore	School mapping in 1879 villages

Table 3 (cont'd)

Case	Sector	Focus/objective of program	Govt. dept.	No. of NGOs	No. of dist.	Funds mobilized	Results achieved
PAHAL	Natural Resource Management	Sustainable land use through people	TADA	3	1	10 crore	5418 ha. land treated in 139 villages
Schemes of Health	Health	Primary health care, family welfare	Health Dept.	95	22	4.74 crore	
PRADAN Bihar	Lift irrigation	Replication of LIS	BPDP/DRDA	1	6	2.5 crore	244 schemes 7308 families benefited
PRERNA Karnataka	Lift irrigation	Demonstration of LIS	Banks/DRDA	1	1	50 lakh	144 schemes 500 families benefited
PRADAN Bilaspur, MP	Lift irrigation	Demonstration of LIS	Banks/DRDA	1	1	37.6 lakh	6 schemes 163 families benefitted

Taken from SRIJAN 1998.

experimentation followed by a period of changing relations with government. Following a period of strategic power sharing between NGOs and government NGOs lost power in 1994 and can now only influence operational aspects of the project from a lobbying position. This reduces opportunities to bring about any form of innovation. In terms of technical innovation this is only a problem for one of the NGOs whose close association with the project since the early experimental days leads them to conclude now that “Today children who pass class five are merely literate, there is no change in their mental level” (Agarwal 1996, 12). As the government’s objective is simply to assist children achieve literacy and deliver a pre-determined service there is a discrepancy each agency’s anticipated project output and hence a tension in the relationship. The NGO in question seeks technical, organizational and institutional innovation and an interactive relationship which will support this. The government does not, feeling that it has supported a small scale learning process and has reached the point where it can implement a large scale project which has clear outputs, guidelines and complementary operational relationships.

The command area development project also demonstrates differences in organization’s ideas on what was to be achieved. URMUL Trust believed the purpose of their work was to demonstrate technical innovation which would then be taken up by the government. Senior government officials shared this view but lower level government staff with whom URMUL worked operationally rarely did. “CADA engineers remained aloof from the implementation of this work” (Kumar 1998, 8). There was not only a difference in the opinion of the NGO and government but also within the government. This is not an uncommon problem. Senior bureaucrats understand and support the idea

behind an action but fail, or are unable, to ensure that the mechanisms are put into place which can operationally support the innovation. Here the independent form of the relationship which the contract between the two parties agreed to was inappropriate to bringing about technical innovation within government.

Similar differences of opinion of what constituted project outputs occurred in both the agriculture and natural resource management interventions. Initially in both cases government services took the position that technical solutions already existed and that this area of project activity simply required delivery of these. NGOs viewpoints differed. While accepting that some technical solutions were available “off the shelf” their approach was one of first identifying technological needs followed by testing of possible solutions and development of new alternatives. Each approach demanded a different relationship between organizations and between them and the communities they were serving. Each relationship in turn therefore required a different set of support mechanisms. The natural resource management project dealt with this difference through the existing project structure. The agricultural project did not have such structures available. When feelings ran high between the two groups of organizations the easy route of withdrawal was taken by the mainstream research organization from collaborative activities. The working relationships which developed between NGOs and research scientists association were with individuals willing to work outside of their organizational boundaries. Because there was no mechanism for resolution of different interpretations of outputs and subsequent agreement on activities, and because the coalition had no agency within formal research circles, the effectiveness of collaboration was considerably reduced.

In the forestry initiative the perceptions of what was to be achieved by collaborative joint forest management differed considerably. Government were interested in protection (a pre-determined output), NGOs were interested in community management and use of local resources (innovation). The failure of government and NGOs to work effectively together in the forestry case emphasizes the point that directives which do not provide any incentive or determine how organizations are going to interact -- or by what means -- generate ineffective and independent relations. In this case, perceptions of outputs differed and the relationship was such that there were no organizational means through which this difference could be addressed.

The animal husbandry case described a situation where the government provided finance and legitimacy and the NGO provided a technical service. Intended outputs were clear to both parties and no tension arose in this relationship over outputs. As such the independent relationship between the government and the NGO was effective. However, other problems arose as they did in the health and lift irrigation projects -- both of which also had clearly agreed outputs. These are discussed later and raise the question of whether, even when there is no tension over outputs, an independent relationship is ever appropriate.

Examination of the rural credit case, where agreement over outputs and roles made independent relations an option, further suggests that other forms of relations are more effective. This case earlier illustrated that while the overarching goal of government and non-government agencies may have differed the short term operational goals of the intervention were common. NABARD and NGOs provided complementary

services to banks and self help groups. There was mutual clarity over intended outputs but while each could easily have independently provided a service which dovetailed with the other NABARD chose to open up the relationship and give their NGO partners opportunities to influence and debate activities and strategy. Ownership and the concomitant responsibility was therefore much higher than if there had been no opportunity to interact as was the ability of actors to respond to on-line and unforeseen issues. This complementary form of relationship, in relation to the objective of pre-determined service delivery, has led to a relatively trouble-free and productive intervention.

With regard to organizational innovation again the agriculture intervention had limited success as government staff who participated in the project certainly did not have this on their agenda in relation to their own departments or organizations. The donor and the NGOs did. However, without a formalized mechanism their efforts in this direction were limited to influencing by documenting experiences which demonstrated needed organizational change within government departments to key decision makers. This documentation and accumulated experience is currently having an impact but it is clear that a more cost-effective approach would have been to provide an organizational structure within which each party had a legitimate place and was given agency to negotiate.

In terms of organizational innovation in a project the natural resources management project was perhaps the most successful in bringing about organizational change within the project. The project document specified that this was an objective and

both sets of agencies recognized this. Interactive relationships were established between NGOs and government which legitimized and gave access to fora for decision making and debate and organizational structures and procedures were tailored towards this end. There was tension between, and within, organizations. However, tension is a common by-product of interaction between parties with different philosophies, agendas and approaches and in this case the tension was generally managed constructively.

Organizational innovation is an agreed objective of both the Shikshakarmi Lok Jumbish and education programs. According to the authors of the Shikshakarmi case “The phase 1 project document envisaged a gradual build of a project organization in which government bodies closely interacted with NGOs. It did not specify the exact role of respective parties but advocated flexibility.” (Agarwal 1997, 178). Relations were interactive and mechanisms were in place to support this. However, by Phase 2 this changed. From the government’s point of view organizational innovation was no longer an objective of the project. They regarded the existing organizational structure as adequate to the needs of service delivery. At this time the form of government’s relationship with NGOs also changed. The shift to a complementary relationship reduced NGOs bargaining power and decreased opportunity for professional exchange. One of the NGOs studied continues to believe that organizational innovation should remain as a project objective. The other believes that in a limited fashion it still is but feels the form of relationship into which they are forced restricts interaction and places them in a more confrontational relationship with government. This is considered unfortunate as this manner of interaction reduces collegiality and cooperation. It is also a relationship which

consumes much more of the NGOs time as it prepares its case and lobbies for change.

The case study of NGO-government interaction over minor forest products describes a turbulent relationship based on NGOs efforts to support primary cooperative enterprises of tribal forest produce collectors (see Box 8). The collaboration between NGOs and Rajsangh collapsed after four years. The purpose of the relationship was to bring about organizational change in the purchase and marketing of *Tendu patta* (leaves of the Timru tree, *Dispyros melanoxylon*). The case demonstrates how the agenda of one strongly placed group can undermine collaborative ventures. In essence, the objectives of one group enjoying the patronage of highly placed individuals, did not match with those of the cooperatives or the NGOs. While formal agreements were drawn up between Rajsangh and the cooperatives, the relationship between Rajsangh and NGOs was never formalized. No organizational mechanisms operated to support what was essentially a complementary, but given the agenda should have been an interactive, relationship. It is possible, although not certain because of the nature and source of the political pressure, that a different relationship along with the appropriate support mechanisms could have saved the relationship.

Box 8 Beyond negotiation: Minor forest produce

In 1990, following a time and motion study by one NGO -- Astha -- of Tendu leaf collection, representation was made to government to increase purchase price per bundle from 13.5 rupees to 50 rupees. The rate went up to 20 rupees but a strike was called. At the suggestion of Rajsangh, a government organization under the Ministry of Tribal Development responsible for marketing and trading of commodities, the Adivasi Tendu Patta Collection and Marketing Cooperative was registered with the help of the NGO. This was to provide services in direct competition to private contractors who operated collection centres. Operations began in 1991. Financial support for buying was provided to the cooperative by Rajsangh at 6 percent 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 all their efforts. Simultaneously Rajsangh 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, initially because of a disagreement over profit sharing, soured between Rajsangh and the NGOs. The situation became worse when changes were made in the contract between cooperatives and Rajsangh. While two cooperatives refused to sign the new contract, 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 then 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.

Khandelwal and Katiyar 1996

DOMAINS OF RESPONSIBILITY

This is an area of tension which, although easy to predict, is rarely confronted in project design. In six out of the 11 case studies problems over domain were raised. In all cases this became an issue for government staff rather than NGOs. Conflict arose over regulatory, technical and financial issues. In some cases it was the result of poor management or design, in others tension occurred because of threats to professional prestige or reduction of control especially in areas which open pathways for rent-seeking.

In the forestry case department staff often saw joint forest management as something which would undermine their regulatory powers -- some of which provide opportunities for extracting unofficial payments from forest users. The relationship into which the guidelines placed NGOs and government offered no opportunity to confront this issue. Hence it remains outstanding and many within the forestry department avoid interacting with NGOs or the joint management committees.

The health project provides a clear example of where poor management decisions were taken and there was overlap in technical areas. "According to the design, it was planned that the Sahyogi would replace the government Auxilery Nurse-Midwife. However, projects were sanctioned and the existing ANMs were not withdrawn. . . . The issue of overlap has become a major area of conflict. . . . Specific overlaps relate to immunisation, distribution of contraceptives and family planning counselling" (Sachdeva 1996, 125). At present no mechanism exists to manage this conflict. The only sign that government is considering reacting to this situation is in their indication that it is considering scrapping the Sahyogi post and replacing it with an ANM post. NGOs feel

that a geographic demarcation of activities would solve the problem but the independent relationship between agencies in this project does not give NGOs the agency or mechanisms through which they could put their views to government.

In contrast, the natural resource management project has moved from a situation where activities were divided according to technical or substantive specialisation to a point where both government and NGOs do the same work but in different locations. The nature of the relationship between the two groups and the mechanisms established to manage it led to acceptance by both government and NGO staff that both strategic and operational change was acceptable in the project. The fact that it has occurred, that all parties feel they have provided input to the decision and that there is a high degree of mutual identification with the project indicates that an interactive relationship is more likely to lead to successful resolution of domain issues than independent relations.

In the command area development initiative no such arrangements existed and problems arose over technical domain. CADA engineers are reported to have both felt professionally threatened and lost opportunities to syphon funds. It is suggested in the case study that “because URMUL did not have proven technical competence or certification it has suffered from lack of credibility. . . Thus because URMUL was unable to communicate effectively at a technical level the potential for far reaching change within a government department . . . was not realised” (Kumar 1998, 36). URMUL was seen to be encroaching on areas of technical expertise without having an appropriate professional background. In the absence of mechanisms which enabled interaction this was guaranteed to provoke poor relations. In addition to rendering the

objective of seeding technical innovation within the department obsolete the NGO also experienced operational problems (see Box 9). The NGO strongly suspected junior engineers of providing the CADA accounts department with reasons to delay payment but the independent form of the relationship in which they were involved did not sanction or provide mechanisms for them to negotiate for change.

Box 9 Technical expertise and payment

In October 1994 URMUL submitted a bill of expenses to CADA and sought an advance for the remaining work of covering water courses. For the cost of construction URMUL charged CADA 8½ rupees per square foot, whereas the sanctioned cost of construction was ten rupees per square foot. CADA's accounts department raised objections to URMUL's bill and held up payment until an intervention by the Commissioner made it accept URMUL's letter of response.

In March 1995 URMUL completed the work and sent the final bill to CADA. Payment was subject to a positive inspection by an Executive Engineer. His report noted a difference in the source of stone used for covering the water courses, which accounted for the saving of 1½ rupees per square foot, but he recommended payment. Payment was withheld even after the change in stone was approved. In March 1996 it raised a further set of objections on what were considered by URMUL and the Commissioner to be trivial technical issues.

Kumar 1998

OPERATIONAL DISJUNCTION

This was by far the most pronounced area of tension and often related to conceptual differences in understanding of what an intervention was trying to achieve and who was to play what role. In addition, structural discontinuities played out operationally leading to frustrations, delays and degenerative organizational relations. As the illustrative cases following demonstrate, without appropriate mechanisms to support the form of relation necessary for a particular objective, inefficiencies and occasionally complete breakdown in collaborative activity occurred.

Government organizations are highly centralized and hierarchical. Decision making power regarding change rests with those at the apex of the organization. Other

decisions which can be taken by lower order staff are determined by detailed and formal rules. NGOs however tend to be smaller organizations, often with a strong leader but also usually with a flatter and more democratic decision making processes.

Unencumbered by the procedures and rules which slow down government's ability to respond to non-routine issues NGOs tend to make decisions and act faster and more flexibly. Relationships between NGOs and government agencies suffer from disjunctions in two areas: relative positioning in decision making power and ability to respond to client needs.

Pre-determined service delivery:

disjunction. Where contracted delivery of a pre-determined service is to be the output of the relationship between the NGO and the government the problem of disjunction is minimized but not entirely avoided. Of all the cases the animal husbandry case documents the easiest and perhaps most output-effective. However, even here "Delays in the release of payments do occur which can

Box 10 Attempting to modify contracts

Payment to BAIF was originally based on each AI centre achieving pre-determined targets. Payment was withheld from all centres if even one centre failed to achieve its target despite the fact that for the district the total target was exceeded. Attempts by BAIF to modify this term of the contract met with success after nearly three years of hard lobbying.

In another case payment was withheld because DRDA demanded targets based on the number of conceptions rather than AI treatments, of which both BAIF and the DRDA had proof. Conceptions are fewer than treatments and harder to verify. Rewording the contract once again proved a long and difficult task.

Payment delays continue yet BAIF has managed to work using interim funds from other sources.

Jyotsna Lall 1996

have adverse consequences for the artificial insemination program (see Box10). Among the reasons for non release of payments are delays in the verification of performance which is the responsibility of the district level coordination committee (a government

body); lack of conformity to government guidelines; and requests for more information” (Lall 1996, 63).

BAIF did manage to negotiate changes in its contract but not without considerable difficulty despite being a large organization providing a well documented professional service and staffed by articulate, high status people. In this case, even when altering existing terms was favorable to both groups it took time and considerable pressure. If the form of the relationship had been complementary the organizational mechanisms supporting the interaction could have routinely allowed for such changes.

In the absence of mechanisms which allow for negotiation a number of NGOs seek to establish close relations with people who are in positions of power. In the event of a need to bargain this strengthens their fall-back position. This occurred in the case of URMUL (where NGO staff built close relations with the Development Commissioner), in the animal husbandry case (senior BAIF staff established relations with senior bureaucrats) and in the lift irrigation case. This informal approach, which often involves building social capital, suffers from serious weaknesses and is not one upon which projects can be designed as the example from the lift irrigation study shows (Box 11). If organizations are expected to act in an independent manner no opportunities for negotiation will be factored into a relationship.

Even in a case where an intervention has a large and demonstrable effect and has led to a formalized agreement between parties, impact has been modified by individuals. In six years over 7,300 poor tribal families gained access to irrigation through the work of PRADAN yet particular people within positions of power were able to undermine further

Box 11 Transfer and loss of investment

In 1989 PRADAN was invited and financed by the Deputy Development Commissioner of Ranchi to set up 30 lift irrigation schemes. The next DDC was cautious, if not suspicious, as to why the previous incumbent had sanctioned 10 new lift irrigation schemes immediately before his transfer. She was more interested in forestry activities and put little effort into continuing support for lift irrigation. This DDC was transferred and replaced by someone who eventually, after considerable energy by NGO staff was put into discussions, became an enthusiastic promoter of such schemes. His interest moved with him to his next posting where he continued to finance lift irrigation schemes and took to the unprecedented step of signing an MOU with the NGO. His successor continued this process, bringing PRADAN's work into the World Bank supported Bihar Plateau Development Program in 1993. MOUs between the government and the NGO supported scaling up to five districts.

If PRADAN thought it had reached a stable relationship with the government it was in for a rude shock. In one district on particular district commissioner refused to sanction any new schemes and released only half the funds agreed to for two existing schemes. After two years the position was reversed and a new incumbent immediately sanctioned five schemes. In two other districts the same kind of problems occurred with schemes being supported or rejected according to the proclivities of district commissioners.

Kulkarni, Bhogal and Satpathy 1998

progress. MOUs were signed between the two agencies but were not respected and the weaker party, the NGO, did not have the resources to resort to legal channels. The MOU was supposed to provide a fall-back position in bargaining but in fact because of NGOs positioning in relation to enforcement mechanisms when the agreement was tested it was inoperative. This relative inequity is normal in government-NGO interaction and suggests that it is not only the formal agreement which is necessary, insofar as it provides legitimacy, but that such agreements need to be embedded in a context which gives each party agency to enforce the agreement.

Pre-determined service delivery: functional relations. In the cases of both education programs there are mechanisms in place which allow for negotiation in relation to the operational aspects of the service being delivered. These mechanisms are explicit

in their recognition of each partners legitimacy to bargain. In the Shikshakarmi (Box 2) and Lok Jumbish (Box 4) projects autonomous management bodies have been established. Government retain dominant positions in these bodies but their NGO partners have a right to access the processes and platforms through and in which decisions are made. The decisions which they may affect, as illustrated through the earlier description of the Shishakarmi program, are often circumscribed and this may affect the efficiency of a project whose objectives include innovation. However, in terms of pre-determined service delivery a dedicated management mechanism creates a context which gives all partners agency.¹⁰ As the animal husbandry, command area development and lift irrigation cases show, existing management structures are usually embedded in a context which militates against this.

The rural credit case does not have a formal project structure but it does have an independent agency, NABARD, who has engineered and largely managed the relationship between the banks and NGOs. NABARD has provided an organizational context in which existing power relations have played no part and that offers equal access and rights to both parties. Because of the quality and professional background of staff involved in this initiative, NABARD's function of mediator has worked and appears to be robust.

Innovation. If an intervention seeks innovation in a technical, organizational or institutional sense, actors who are part of that process need to operate in a manner which supports those changes. The technical innovation which was sought as the final output of

¹⁰ There are other problems associated with dedicated or autonomous structures. These include reducing chances of mainstreaming project learning, creating parallel structures and building organizations which become redundant when a project ends.

the command area development program is unlikely to be achieved. The independent relationship between the government and the NGO neither created any situation where substantive interaction would take place nor did it give government staff any reason to take any notice of the innovation demonstrated. In relation to the intended output of technical innovation there was operational disjunction in the way the relationship was structured. Independence of operation of one agency will not sustain, and rarely provoke, innovation in another.

The situation in the natural resource management (Box 5) and agricultural interventions (Box 6) was rather different. In both, activities were hosted by dedicated structures -- formal project mechanisms in the former and informal coalition mechanisms in the latter. The difference in effectiveness of the two types of structure is striking. In the PAHAL project there is little to show that either the government or non-government groups were unable to respond to change and changing needs. The project has undergone a number of organizational changes, has succeeded in changing some of the rules which govern both the interaction of government and NGO staff and the way that these staff behave in relation to their clients. In general the form of relation between the two agencies has been interactive and there have been appropriate organizational mechanisms set up to support this. This has enabled the project to respond to disjunctures which occur either because of the procedures or modes of operating which different parties are familiar with.

In the agricultural intervention there are many examples of operational disjuncture between NGOs and government (see Box 12). The activities in the agricultural sector occurred under the aegis of a coalition of interests. A coalition is a fluid entity without a permanent governance system and needs mechanisms to support joint action, information sharing and building of common knowledge (Alsop 1998). These evolved but their effectiveness has been subject to the varying levels of interest of coalition members; is limited in relation to conflict resolution; and is inadequate to the challenge of directly inducing organizational change within participating agencies. This is because the coalition has gathered around practical issues of implementation. While members find strategic issues -- especially those which undermine their joint action -- important no lead has been taken and no organization has volunteered the time to address them. Hence, organizational change has occurred in a minor fashion in a small number of NGOs and in an extremely limited way within government. Institutional innovation has been restricted to individuals who find that they

Box 12 Problems on both sides

In 1994, at the request of the Deputy Director, Extension, experts were brought in to train teams of NGO and government extension staff on participatory agricultural planning. The training and follow up was scheduled to continue over a period of two years. One problem which occurred was that over this period only one of the government staff trained remained in post. Others were transferred or left their jobs. A second problem was that when farmers, the NGO and the local government extension representative put together a seasonal agricultural plan and passed on their requests for support the existing extension bureaucracy found it extremely difficult to respond. Examples of this include an inability to supply soy-bean and fodder grass seeds either for farmer testing or cropping as neither were in the state plans for that year. A third example is of NGOs agreeing to distribute mini-kits for the extension department, but the kits arriving after planting time.

NGOs also demonstrated a lack of understanding of the government's mode of operating. Requests for assistance were often put far too late for the government to respond to, a departmental camp demonstrating agricultural machinery was a disaster because an NGO failed to coordinate its activities, monitoring visits to crop demonstration sites lost focus and valuable data was not collected.

Alsop 1998

are operationally curbed by the dominant norms of their organizational context. In this case relations between organizations were interactive but the mechanisms which emerged to support collaboration were limited in respect of strategic change. A review of this intervention noted that “the team is . . . of the firm view that the approach has substantial ideas to offer in terms of learning about the problems and possibilities of a more flexible institutional intervention with multiple actors” but that “ there is now enough experience and learning on the ground to adopt a more composite strategy that would ensure greater field action to benefit the small and marginal farmers” (Ford Foundation 1997). A proposal, derived through a multi-agency, decentralized planning process is currently under consideration by a bi-lateral donor (Government of Rajasthan 1998). The new project differentiates between the administrative and the management roles of a project structure. It is proposed that operational administration will occur through decentralized (district) project offices and that strategic management will be under the control of district multi-stakeholder coalitions. The strategic management group, which has members from the administrative office, will be able to identify issues and request support which the administrative office can then process.

The experiences of the rural credit case where objectives were agreed upon, appropriate relations developed and mechanisms to manage that established, provides a stark contrast to the experiences of NGOs with the banking system in the lift irrigation case. As Box 13 illustrates, in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh NGOs came across similar problems when trying to mobilize bank loans for lift irrigation schemes. In these states the disjunction between the operations of the banking sector and the needs of

Box 13 Loans for lift irrigation

PRERANA, Karnataka. Helping poor farmers to secure bank loans was probably the most difficult task facing the NGO. Banks often treated these applications with indifference and regularly missed targets for lending of this kind, taking one or two years to process sanctioned loans. This is because the banks required up to 20 forms for each farmer to process and sanction an irrigation loan application. Several problems occur as a result of this, not the least that many farmers are illiterate hence form filling is extremely difficult. Senior bankers said they could not change these requirements as they were framed by the Reserve Bank of India.

PRERANA took issue with this and two other aspects of using land as security for loans. One was the problem of documentation. A lawyer had to verify land ownership and issue a clearance certificate on the basis of records since the year of “revenue settlement” (usually 1954). Responsibility for procuring these records, which was a time consuming and costly business, lay with the farmer. After a two year struggle a state level committee of bankers waived this condition and along with it some of the documentation requirements. A second issue concern was the need for farmers to mortgage all their land, not just the land to the value of the loan. PRERANA, also after a lengthy period of lobbying, managed to have this condition also waived.

PRADAN, Madhya Pradesh. To process a loan typically 16 documents were required by the bank, irrespective of loan size. Land was the only collateral accepted and all holdings had to be mortgaged. In this case 163 farmers held over 500 plots. The revenue department took 15 months to update the land records of 145 of these farmers and to issue copies of records. Even this was only achieved because of strong support from the district administration. Farmers then had to visit nine more offices, including all local banks in order to obtain a “No Dues” certificate. After this loan processing could begin. This entailed filling in the 25 forms, comprising 54 pages, which constituted a bank’s loan proposal. Signatures, or thumb prints, had to be obtained in the presence of a bank employee. Because of the amount of time taken to process these small loans bank staff resisted processing.

PRADAN resorted to using its good relations with senior district development administrators to overcome these processing problems. It also contacted NABARD in order to negotiate a decision taken by the State Bank of India not to finance collective lift irrigation schemes. In both cases it was finally successful.

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potential clients was a serious problem. The intervention of NGOs assisted rural people in accessing loans for lift irrigation but it was a drawn out, highly frustrating and very inefficient process. In the rural credit case many of the obstacles which NGOs came across in either trying to obtain loans for farmers or in changing the procedures required by banks for loan security for lift irrigation schemes were overcome quickly and

efficiently. With NABARD acting as the organizational interface, client and banking needs were negotiated in an effective manner. NABARD not only provided the mechanism, but also had legitimacy in professional banking circles and was accorded the agency to bring about change.

5. DESIGN LESSONS

The difficulty is that a large number of initiatives in consultation and collaboration are rarely institutionalised and remain informal, unwritten and hence personalised. (PRADAN 1996, 117)

Tensions have arisen in collaborative ventures over differences in NGO and government understanding of output, respective responsibilities and operational norms and processes. Cases in which the form of relationship was supported by formal mechanisms for administering joint action and inter-agency relations were more effective than those using existing unmodified channels. Amongst those, interventions which incorporated opportunities for negotiation of differences and evolution of new ways of interacting were the most productive. This section first looks at ways of minimising tension and then suggests which organizational structures are appropriate to different outputs.

MINIMIZING DIFFERENCE

In section three different forms of relationship were classified on the basis of malleability of output, task dependency and power balance between actors. Case material was used to illustrate why certain forms of relationship led to, or were unable to resolve, tensions and suggested that different outputs required different forms of relationship. Because of the nature of the case studies, analysis of different sources of tension has focussed on matters which arose during projects. However, this analysis indicated that certain issues could have been avoided or difficulties associated with them reduced, if different approaches and associated relationships had been assumed during planning and design.

Planning. The first point at which NGOs and governments need to begin to formulate collective understanding of outputs and arrive at initial agreement on strategy and practice is during planning and design of an intervention. Stakeholder inclusion in planning interventions is now accepted in principle, even if practice varies and is yet to be fully understood. Participatory design is generally accepted as necessary on grounds of equity, and to a degree on grounds of efficiency. Efficiency of implementation is considered to increase as (a) possible implementation problems are identified and accounted for prior to action, and (b) stakeholders buy in during design and hence assume greater levels of responsibility for the action in which they are to be engaged.

A common complaint of NGOs in the case studies was that projects designed to include collaboration between NGOs and government were usually either designed before NGOs were consulted or, if there was consultation, the interaction tended to be cursory.

Extending the classification of relationships used for analysis of implementation the form in planning and design rarely extended beyond complementary and was, in all but two cases, independent. Single meetings of large numbers of NGOs with a design team in which there was no time to enter into discussion resulted in little note being taken of NGOs ideas or suggestions -- something which is on occasion due to confrontational rather than constructive presentation by NGOs. The same problem of exclusion applies to government functionaries. Recent experience with decentralized planning (Kumar M 1998) has demonstrated not only the degree of shock which lower level government staff express when they are asked to participate in the design of a project, but also the difficulties they have in doing so because they have no experience of such activities.

While participants remain unfamiliar with processes of joint planning external assistance is needed to mediate and guide processes of decentralized planning and design. This is a skilled task demanding previous experience and an ability to structure discussion towards production of a coherent project document. Log frame terminology has proved unacceptable to some groups, but the principles upon which it rests can be usefully adapted to manage multi-agency and decentralized design. Collective logical analysis of intended outputs, activities and assumptions can greatly assist in avoiding later tensions associated with outputs. Extension of this analysis into respective responsibilities and processes then provides a sound base for discussion of organizational needs and assists in later negotiations over shifts in who does what.

Participatory design demands changes in conventional financing patterns and time frames. The first is that adequate resources have to be invested in preparation. Rather

than intermittent inputs over a period of time it may be necessary to employ an organization dedicated to assisting stakeholders for the entire duration of the planning/design period. The second is that introducing agencies to new approaches to project design and to collegiate interaction demand planning periods somewhat longer than those traditionally allowed for. Those assisting a decentralized, participatory planning process are likely to face two tasks. One is to familiarize participants with the ideas and responsibilities of project design. The other is to move them towards producing a coherent and agreed plan. The processes of knowledge creation and accrual are such that recurrent contact and debate over an extended period are more likely to achieve both ends than single shot workshops or discussions.

Implementation. A project document with which the various stakeholders identify provides a sounder basis than one which can be criticized by any party as being inappropriate to their needs. This does not imply that a pre-defined activities, structures or relationships are appropriate throughout the period of interaction between organizations. It is a rare intervention which does not seek to bring about change in some form or another. As that change occurs so do the requirements of those affected and the organizational entities which support the change. What is appropriate in the beginning may not be so later. In six of the 11 studies (Shikashakarmi education, NRM, animal husbandry, lift irrigation, rural credit and agriculture) the ability of actors to refine outputs altered, the degree and substance of task sharing changed and there were shifts in the power balance between organizations.

Cases in which these transitions were regarded as positive by agencies were those which had in-built mechanisms for information sharing, discussion and joint decision making. These legitimized and enabled an evolutionary approach to the structures and processes governing a project as well as the activities in which agencies were engaged. Mechanisms to support each of the above functions are discussed fully in a previous discussion paper (see Alsop 1998) in relation to coalitions. Where a project document formalizes relations the organizational requirements for sharing information and providing fora for discussion and decision making will vary according to the purpose and form of relationship between agencies. These are discussed below.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

Decisions on the positioning and form of structures which are to host interaction between NGOs and government departments depend on what the objective of the collaboration is and the form of relationship appropriate to that. Three structural options exist:

- existing mechanisms
- autonomous structures
- embedded units.

Existing mechanisms. A simple service delivery contract between an NGO and government demands minimal administrative support. If administration is to be handled by existing government structures two elements need to be considered. First, the cases demonstrate that procedures need to be tailored to the specific needs of the contractual

relationship in hand. The animal husbandry, lift irrigation, health and command area development experiences show that the procedures and norms used for existing government work rarely coincide with those of the contracted agency or the needs of the activity in which they are engaged. Second, in addition to administrative changes it is also apparent that a contract will not necessarily provide for resolution of issues which emerge during the process of action. Management decisions, relating to changes in administration (such as criteria for approval, financing schedules, reporting or documentation requirements) or to the action itself (such as, ways of organising people, timing of activities, changes in inputs, training activities), also emerge after contracts are signed. Thus, contracts need to specify review options at the time of which both sides, contractor and contracted, are able to bring issues to the table for debate and resolution. This gives both parties voice -- but they may not be of the same volume or received with equal credibility. Large NGOs (BAIF, PRADAN) staffed by articulate and well positioned people managed eventually to bring about change in their contracts. Smaller or more controversial agencies are less likely to achieve this. Contractual provision of exit options (which improve the fall back position of organizations) at the time of negotiation for both parties can enhance equality during discussion and reduce the amount of energy NGOs have to expend to bring about change.

In terms of the framework used for analysis the cases suggest that independent relationships between NGOs and government can rarely, if at all, work efficiently. If the output of a relationship is clearly conceived and agreed upon by both parties then minimally a contract should allow for a complementary relationship, that is one which

allows intermittent review. In both education, the natural resource management and the rural credit programs built-in options for discussion of change and problem resolution greatly enhanced the efficiency of interaction. Complementary forms of interaction for pre-determined service or technical delivery therefore demand that existing administrative mechanisms are appropriately adapted and that contracts allow for change.

Autonomous structures. Where innovation is an explicit objective of interaction existing structures have proved inadequate to the processes associated with change. Depending on the type of innovation sought either interactive or iterative forms of relationship between NGOs and government work best in terms of managing change within the project boundaries. To this end the easiest way of avoiding the problems which occur in trying to use existing departmental structures and procedures to host interactive or iterative relations is to establish an independent, autonomous organization to manage specific activities or projects. This helps in overcoming “organizational baggage”, that is entrenched positioning, conventional norms and procedures in addition to concerns over long term employment responsibility.

In relation to technical innovation, Urmul trust failed to mainstream either their designs for canal coverage or school buildings as they were contracted to operate independently from CADA and there were no organizational mechanisms to ensure that interaction occurred or that the technical innovation was adopted. The agricultural intervention managed to establish interactive relations between groups seeking technical innovation but disputes were never resolved and the lack of formal commitment to joint action allowed withdrawal without sanction. The iterative relationship embodied in the

natural resources management project appear to have achieved the most satisfactory outcome in terms of technical innovation and this was the only one which had an organizational mechanism to administer and manage the relationship.

The autonomous structure of the NRM project was effective because it allowed for and supported iteration between the two groups of agencies. This aspect of the structure was critical in terms of bringing about organizational and institutional change within the project. However, both this and the two education projects demonstrate that while autonomous structures improved short term functional relationships, the longer term effects on both government and NGOs has been limited. Assumptions of secondary effects on government departments are unrealistic and often symptomatic of the unwillingness of bureaucrats to bear the burden of radical systemic change.

Autonomous structures can usefully host interactive and iterative relations which seek to bring about technical, organizational or institutional change but only within the boundaries of the project in which NGOs and government bodies are engaged. The difference in performance of the autonomous structures in the case studies indicates that such entities need to be tailored to the specific needs of (1) the output of the interaction, and (2) to the various needs of diverse actors they are bringing together. Conceptually it is useful to differentiate between administrative and managerial functions. The former cover everyday support activities within pre-set norms and procedures. The managerial functions of a autonomous structure serving the needs of multiple stakeholders pursuing the goal of innovation include: information sharing; creation of common knowledge and

shared decision making.¹¹ It is the management function which allows a structure to deal with change.

While the dedicated structures proved much more efficient administratively than unmodified existing structures, differences in the handling of the management function impacted on relations between government and NGOs. In the Shikashakarmi and Lok Jumbish projects the structure only supported complementary relations and thus did not allow equal decision making powers to all parties. Project structures were regarded as “government” property and NGOs experienced limited management power. Collective information systems were poorly developed and information made available to collaborators was partial and unequally distributed. One project had no provision for stakeholders to collectively re-express information as common knowledge and in neither were there fora in which NGOs were given equal agency in discussion. This led to tensions, although they were less disruptive in these projects than in those such as the health and command area development projects where there was no dedicated management structure. The lack of parity in management participation by NGOs was seen to undermine the speed of technical innovation and reduce possibilities of organizational and institutional innovation.

The projects which best managed collegiality between NGOs and government were those in which the autonomous structure played a “neutral” or facilitative role. The project office of the NRM intervention, while headed by a government officer on secondment gave equal voice and agency to NGOs and government in the area of all three

¹¹ See Alsop 1998 for discussion of these functions.

management functions. Information systems operated equally for both sets of agencies and there was parity in opportunities to discuss information and influence decision making. It is possible to critique the information system within this initiative as the matter flowing through the system tended to be only quantitative. Information regarding issues of process was not regularly shared and usually only made available during meetings or workshops. Linking a process monitoring system into a broader information and decision making system could have increased the efficiency of knowledge accrual and decision making.

In the rural credit case NABARD took on the role of a facilitator and assumed responsibility for ensuring both the administrative and managerial aspects of the project operated effectively. While legally part of the banking sector, the quality of performance and impartiality of NABARD staff positioned them as a neutral body which in effect assumed the functions of an autonomous structure. To date this has worked remarkably effectively but it is possible that, given a change of leadership or organizational priorities, NABARD's behavior and performance of this role could change. As an intermediary body they are not held accountable to either the NGOs or the banks with which they work and while there is as yet no evidence to suggest it, this may prove a flaw in the future.

The agricultural case, where a coalition was formed in place of an autonomous structure, provides interesting insights into the fine tuning of different organizational forms. The underlying rationale for developing a coalition rather than project office or management structure was the need to (a) learn which were the most appropriate mechanisms for supporting NGO-government interaction, and (b) create joint ownership

of action and structures by all parties. The coalition developed support mechanisms for several management functions but, because of the lack of an overall framework, explicit objectives and collective responsibility the coalition has been functional only to a point. The review of the initiative noted that the coalition had served the purposes it set out to -- it hosted fully interactive relations and enabled technical, organizational and institutional change to occur to useful but limited degree. However, after three and a half years it was necessary to structure relationships in a more formal manner in order to increase the pace of change, to increase accountability and to induce change within the various collaborating agencies. At the time of the coalition's inception collaboration between government and NGOs in the agricultural sector was virtually non-existent. Within the state, organizations are now much more familiar with the concept and it is possible to reduce the long lead period before moving into a more structured relationship. This is borne out by the experiences of a decentralized planning year involving both government and non-government agencies. Following on directly from the coalition-centred intervention focussing on one district, the expansion of activities to four districts suggests that coalitions serve an extremely useful planning function. Coalition building during the design of an intervention and giving equal agency to all in the process has assisted collective ownership and identification with the proposed project activities and structures. However, the lack of formal governance associated with this coalition has led to problems related to dispute resolution, fluctuating levels of interest among members and addressing issues of institutional change within participating organizations. Members of the coalition are currently embarked on a process of formalising the "Forum" (the original

organizational expression of the coalition). This body will take on the role of a nodal agency which administers the support processes associated with the coalition. While it is anticipated that this may assist in overcoming the first two problem areas associated with the more nebulous coalition, it may not be able to successfully bring about structural, procedural or institutional change within participating organizations. This is particularly, although not exclusively true, in the case of government agencies.

Embedded Units. Section 3 noted that organizational innovation implied change in the structural and procedural aspects of (a) the organizational aspects of the activity agencies were engaged in, and/or (b) one or more of the organizations involved in the relationship. Autonomous or parallel structures have proved useful in terms of managing change within the confines of a project framework but have had little impact on the way agencies operate themselves. Assumptions that staff returning to their departments from the Lok Jumbish project would continue to behave according to the rules which governed their behavior in that situation have been proved incorrect. Similarly, staff within the agricultural and animal husbandry departments have proved unable in both the NRM and agricultural interventions to adopt new modes of behavior as the organizational structure of the department militates against that. Mainstreaming new institutions, and if behavior is to change there must be a change in the rules which govern that behavior, requires adjusting the organizational structures and procedures through which they are enacted and enforced. The autonomous structures of the case studies have demonstrated no ability to bring about this kind of transformation. Future projects which seek to alter behavior have to confront the need to change the way that existing organizations function and that this

includes not only structural change but also the way that behavior is sanctioned or proscribed.

Given the difficulties faced in restructuring and reorienting a bureaucracy, the lack of enthusiasm for what can be considered radical change is understandable. Rarely is enough known about what needs to be done in terms of appropriate structures for changing the operational aspects of government making it difficult to justify the transaction costs of transformation. In addition, the political pressures which can be brought to bear on senior decision makers can be untenable, as witnessed in the marginal forest products case and the confrontation with the agricultural extension union which occurred after extension services were handed over to NGOs in two blocks. Although the problems of restructuring and reorienting cannot be totally avoided, the threat they pose can be softened by assuming a gradualist, learning approach. On two levels transition of this nature can reduce the shock given to the status quo. First, paradigmatic change can be slower and encouraged through incentives. Second, those most often against change tend to be those who have worked within the system for the longest and processes of attrition, early retirement and golden handshakes can be used to shift organizational perspectives and reduce vestment in traditional institutions. While this is most applicable to government departments, the same is also true of a number of NGOs.

In terms of designing for organizational and institutional change, one of the most promising approaches appears to be embedding a change unit within a given organization. For example, in the design of the new agricultural project a project administration unit has been built into the Department of Agriculture. There are strategic links between the

operation and management of this unit and that of the department. Key decision makers are the same in both instances. Also, process monitoring will be an important activity in support of learning and project management is committed to offering stakeholders the opportunities to discuss and decide upon appropriate changes in both the administration and operation of the project. This commitment is articulated in procedures which allow for regular “unfreezing” (developed from Lewin 1947) and reformulation of the project’s norms, structures and operations. In addition, in locations in which the project will be taking place departmental staff will be freed of their existing work programs and terms of reference. They will be subject to new processes of performance assessment and incentive provision, all of which will be monitored for effectiveness. The project is two staged in terms of organizational change -- the first involving piloting proposed change in four districts, and the second scaling this up.

Theoretically, an embedded unit has agency as it is the responsibility of the existing power structure of an organization. As an entity which administers a pilot from within it offers the department the opportunity to demonstrate, learn and bring about paradigmatic change while minimally upsetting the status quo. Giving existing managers a key role in decision making in the project forces attention and responsibility. A weakness may be in the interest of that key decision maker, but beyond stimulating and providing incentives to ensure his or her commitment there is little that can be done to account for this.

SUMMARY

While the qualitative nature of the information and the subsequent descriptive analysis of the case studies requires considerable space, a summary of the lessons emerging from these 11 case studies can be short and concise.

- Organizational performance is affected by both internal and external social institutions.
- Administration and management functions can be usefully separated.
- Different outputs require different forms of relationship between NGOs and government. Pre-determined service or technical delivery minimally needs complementary relations. Technical, organizational or institutional innovation minimally require interactive relations.
- Different forms of relation require different organizational structures.
 - Existing structures need to be modified if they are to administer even the simplest of complementary relations.
 - Autonomous structures are suitable only for the administration and management of innovation within the confines of a project's organization and activity.
 - Coalitions require specific support structures and are unlikely to be able to effect organizational or institutional change within participating agencies
 - Mainstreaming innovation implies embedding change units within the organization 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 require project structures and procedures which allow and enable the evolution of not only organizations but also the rules which govern collective behavior.

Annex 1 Role sharing, management structures and issues in GO-NGO collaboration (Taken directly from SRIJAN/PRADAN 1998)

Development objectives in the project/program	Role sharing among Government and NGOs	Management structure	Issues	Recommendations for collaboration designers
<u>Health Services</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better family welfare services in inaccessible villages (Swasthyakarmi Program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government funded; Implementation by NGOs; Training roles unclear; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well represented Standing Committee for NGO selection and periodic review; overall responsibility of the Directorate of IEC; Supervision by district level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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"> Human Resource Development Interventions should include training of new grassroots cadre and induction of “pro-change” GO officers. New program should be in a cocoon, not buffeted in initial stages New program could not be run like a departmental scheme Need for a stronger and committed “management” Greater need to develop NGO ownership in the program
<u>Primary Education</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal Primary Education (Lok Jumbish Program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs to map community’s needs and mobilize opinion in project’s favor; Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP) nudges Education department to respond, NGOs and GO agency given parity in budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite bureaucracy’s resistance a successful program, but NGOs mostly in grassroots implementation, their potential to be partners in changing the system under-utilized 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clear Operational Methodology, clear roles for implementing agencies helped. 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.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary education in remote villages, curing teacher absenteeism (Shikshakarmi Program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs ensure right selection of Shikshakarmi and Panchayat Samitis implement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shikshakarmi Board, a GONGO, manages the state-wide program; Local supervision both by NGO and Panchayat Samiti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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"> Question to ask is whether the quality of the program 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 Panchayats and NGOs?

Development objectives in the project/program	Role sharing among Government and NGOs	Management structure	Issues	Recommendations for collaboration designers
<i>cont d</i>				
<u>Natural Resources Management</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolve a participatory, integrated land use management approach for degraded areas (PAHAL Project in Dungarpur) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs to form people's groups, train extension cadre, while government officers on deputation provide technical expertise; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GO and NGO <u>jointly guide</u> the project, though project leader was a junior rank IAS officer; donor periodically reviewed progress and appointed a resident consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High innovation load, flexibility misused by GO, NGOs capacity high in implementation but limited in innovation and training, Inadequate external inputs in process management and technical innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Need for stronger and more committed "management" or leadership? 14. Need for clear participatory methodology and activity priorities possibly with help of external resource inputs 15. Most NGOs could then be given service delivery roles 16. Even then need for sensitive and flexible management cannot be overemphasized
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rehabilitate degraded forests with community participation (Joint Forest Management in Udaipur) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs to convince villagers to join the program - but FD not obliged to invite NGOs; FD employee secretary and <i>Patwari</i> member secretary of the FPC; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Entirely controlled</u> by the Forest Department; District level Supervisory Committee to assess FPC's performance; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO participation resisted by FD, Scheme not monetarily attractive to villagers, Strict control mindset of FD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Unless NGOs are given a more legitimate role, collaboration is a non-starter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save water courses from sand-clogging by covering them with stone slabs (Command Area Development in western Rajasthan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO as an innovator in technical area, with government funding support; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Commissionerate for CADA; initiative was treated as any independent project where grant is given to an NGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CADA opposed NGO entry - engineers found technical snags and accountants delayed release of payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18. 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 program, or by having the innovation assessed by another technical agency of the government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up lift irrigation schemes (LIS) for small and marginal farmers in remote, water abundant areas (Micro-Irrigation in Bihar, MP and Karnataka) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 organization, training in maintenance and irrigated agriculture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Project Approval committees and regional authority set up in World Bank aided BDPD in Bihar; DRDA and Agriculture Department collaborate in Utthan Scheme of MP; Respective departments/ agencies such as SC/ST corporation in Karnataka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19. If NGO wished to replicate it through the government, an assessment by a government agency will legitimize it. 20. 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. 21. External agency funds may be needed to kick off a GO/NGO collaboration in various States.

Development objectives in the project/program	Role sharing among Government and NGOs	Management structure	Issues	Recommendations for collaboration designers
<i>cont d</i>				
<u>Livestock</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve cattle and buffalo breed by artificial insemination (AI services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO mainly as provider of a service that department of animal husbandry (DoAH) was not equipped with, at least initially; Funds provided by department of rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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.
<u>Credit</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve rural poor's access to formal credit (SHGs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NABARD is the nodal agency too guide the collaboration process; it provides support for organising SHG familiarization 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program 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"> 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, emphasized 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.
<u>Commodity</u>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiate for better wages for tribal Tendu Patta Collectors and license to market patta (Tendu Patta Collection and Marketing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGO formed tribal collectors, persuaded a government agency (Rajsangh) to increase their wages and recognize their cooperatives for marketing and even give them loan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs successful in organising tribal collectors whose wage rates got a jump, but the program 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"> Gradual program expansion and building up NGO capacity in marketing would be preferable More formalized 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. After all, <i>Prashashan</i> (bureaucracy) is accountable to <i>Shashan</i> (politicians).

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