

MANAGING VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WITH LIMITED FINANCES AND UNSKILLED PERSONNEL

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Voluntary organisations work with local people to promote their involvement and participation in developmental tasks. They can also act as catalysts in the rural setting to develop a community's organisational competence and ability to mobilise resources for development. Voluntary organisations have taken up a variety of activities, but a study of 33 voluntary organisations in Andhra Pradesh showed that they work under severe restraints of finance and personnel. If these handicaps are overcome, permanency can be given to voluntary organisations which will, in turn, enable them to work better.

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Voluntary organisations have been promoted on various assumptions regarding their approach, organisation and behaviour patterns. It is argued that, being small and autonomous, voluntary organisations have a flexibility in approach, organisation and functioning. They can evolve a work-culture appropriate to their clientele. Another assumption is that since they operate mostly with local recruits, they have the ability to acclimatise themselves and their activities to the regional or local milieu. Further, they are expected to develop a high level of commitment to planned change in the economic and social life of the rural community concerned. Voluntary organisations work with local people to promote people's involvement and participation in development tasks. The underlying objective is to develop people's abilities and resources, so that they could take over and manage village development tasks by establishing their own organisations. A voluntary organisation is thus conceived as a catalyst institution which is expected to develop the community's organisational competence and ability to mobilise resources for development. In this role, the emphasis is on the dispersal and extension of the change effect to a wider circle (Gupta, 1977:76-22). However, the voluntary organisations in India suffer from serious handicaps and problems. An attempt is made in this article to analyse the two major problems *i.e.*, finance and personnel of voluntary organisations, in the light of the findings of a study on voluntary organisations engaged in rural development.

Programmes

Voluntary organisations have undertaken several programmes to ameliorate the conditions of the inhabitants of rural areas. The programmes they undertake are agricultural development, animal husbandry, education, health and sanitation, housing, social forestry, relief and rehabilitation schemes, welfare services, cultural programmes, cottage and small scale industries, vocational training and programmes aimed at organising the poor. The nature and duration of these programmes vary. Some are meant for the needs of a few village households alone, while, other programmes have offered benefits to a number of households in several villages. Some programmes are of short duration, varying from a few months to an year. Besides launching their own programmes, some voluntary organisations have worked as catalysts. They have helped various target groups to make use of government programmes. The programmes and the target groups of the sample agencies, by and large, corresponded to the priority areas of rural development recognised both by social scientists and the Government. The choice of the programmes and the selection

of the population strata by some agencies would, however, depend upon the priorities of the donor agencies as well. The synchronisation of priorities in this regard lends no scope for controversies in regard to the choice of programmes.

Financial Resources

Financial resources are a key factor in the success and achievement of programmes, as well as in the development and growth of organisations. The leaders of voluntary organisations have realised that they cannot bank on the support of private philanthropy and they are obliged to rely largely on institutional funding for their constructive programmes. Some of the organisations, with good leadership, have the capacity to acquire the required finances for their programmes. Some other organisations have the knowledge of the access points through which they could get the required funds. The sources of income of a sample of 33 voluntary organisations engaged in rural development in Andhra Pradesh are presented in the following table.

Table 1
SOURCE OF FINANCE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Sr. No.	Source	Number of Organisations	Percentage
1.	Foreign funds	11	33.3
2.	Indian governmental and non-governmental sources	3	9.1
3.	Foreign and Indian government sources	8	24.2
4.	Foreign and non-governmental sources	4	12.1
5.	Foreign, governmental, non-governmental and other sources	7	21.3
Total		33	100.0

The table shows the combinations of sources of funding of voluntary organisations. About one-third of the organisations (11 out of 33) depended exclusively upon contributions from international donor agencies. Some agencies got funds from international donors which was usually supplemented by small amounts of local resources, or donations from religious organisations like the Church of Jesus Christ Restored (CJCR) which has been undertaking rural development work in East Godavari District. Three agencies, namely the Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust (KGNMT), the Vidyavanam Public Trust (VPT), and the Cuddapah District Khadi Gramabhudhaya Samstha (CDKGS) were functioning with funds from Indian governmental and non-governmental sources. Nearly one-fourth (24 per cent) of the voluntary organisations were managing with funds from foreign sources and grants from the Indian Government. Four agencies had access to funds from foreign, as well as Indian non-governmental sources. Seven agencies had undertaken income generating schemes to supplement funding from the usual sources-foreign, Indian governmental or non-governmental. The Bhagavathula Charitable Trust (BCT), for example, was generating income from its afforestation projects and water exploitation and drilling unit.

Commercial enterprises like *papad* making, *adda* leaf stitching and marketing them through 'Apna Dookan' had been undertaken by the Grama Siri (Bapatla) to increase their income. Similarly, the People's Research Organisation for Grassroot Environmental Scientific Service (PROGRESS) had accrued income through the charges for the services it provided to other agencies. The income from the remunerative enterprises that the agencies engage

in ranges from less than one per cent to about four per cent of the total budget of the voluntary organisations.

It can be inferred from the data, that of several sources of funding, the most important one is from abroad. About 90 per cent of the agencies of the sample have access to foreign funds. Their survival is linked to the life of the projects sanctioned by the foreign donors. So access to foreign funding sources represents the 'life-line' for many of the social action groups. But linking them with foreign funding involves an entirely new set of dilemmas particularly because of recent changes in the Foreign Contributions (Regulations) Act, 1976. Next in importance are grants from the federal and state governments. However, there was no single agency which was sustained solely by government grants. With increasing competition for government grants, many voluntary agencies find it difficult to secure sizeable increases in grants-in-aid. With inflation cutting into the real value of their expenditure, most organisations which rely solely upon indigenous sources of funding find it difficult to balance their budgets, much less maintain their existing level of services. Delay in the release of government grants makes their condition even worse. When executing official programmes, the voluntary agencies have to deal with exacting bureaucratic procedures and accounting requirements and, in the process, their developmental thrust gets weakened.

The fees collected by some agencies for the services they render, or other incomes generated by them do not constitute a sizeable proportion of their total expenditure. Besides, donations from private sources have registered a steep decline during the last four decades (Dave, 1966: 156-164). Some voluntary organisations die prematurely for want of financial support. A few are forced to give up some activities half-way through, and substitute them with some others for which funds are available, irrespective of whether the agencies have the competence to undertake them or not. *Ad hoc* grants from Government or, as is usually the case, from foreign charitable sources, willy-nilly, reduce them to faceless bodies running *ad hoc* programmes. For new entrants who have not established themselves, but have the will and capability to serve the poor people, the problem is far more acute and in many cases almost insurmountable.

Quality of Personnel

Earlier, most of the work was carried out by voluntary workers. With the development of social sciences and discovery of new needs and problems, the appointment of whole time paid personnel in the voluntary organisations is becoming increasingly necessary. The general direction of this change has run, of course, counter to older ideas of welfare, charity and social reform and in favour of professionalism. Most voluntary organisations today routinely pay their staff, particularly their professional staff.

The staff of the voluntary organisations taking part in the study included honorary workers or volunteers, part-time and full-time paid workers. The employees of the sample organisations could be grouped or classified into different grades or classes as in government service: lower, middle, and higher grades. The workers designated as social worker, volunteer, animator, organiser, community organiser, teacher, technician, instructor, non-medical assistant and so on, were grouped into the lower grade. Employees belonging to this grade are the bottom level workers. The middle grade included employees like accountant, supervisor, senior community organiser, cluster community organiser, field/area/programme coordinator, manager and others of the same status in the organisation. They work as a link between the lower grade and higher grade employees of the organisation. The higher grade employees included subject specialists like geologist,

farm superintendent, accounts officer, health/medical officer, and generalists like administrative officer, person-in-charge, development officer, field director/assistant director, project administrator, zonal officer, sub-agent and *sanchalik*. The top executive of the voluntary organisations was also included in this grade. The top man of the organisation had one of these designations: secretary, executive secretary, convener, operations director, executive director, *prathinidhi* and so on. Besides playing a crucial role in policy-making, the top executive always decides on the manner of programme implementation.

In a bureaucratic organisation, ranks and authority are graded from top to bottom. This apparatus is meant to provide a chain of command in which each person is subject to immediate control of the employee above him (Weber, 1946: 215-216). The number of hierarchical strata is quite important as individual participation is often affected by the nature of the hierarchy (Presthus, 1962: 33). It could be derived from the staffing pattern of the voluntary organisations that the two essential Weberian bureaucratic characteristics, namely, hierarchy of authority and division of labour are widely prevalent in the operation of the voluntary agencies, which have several types of employees, with different levels of responsibilities. Ranks and authority are graded from top to bottom. Each lower level worker or employee is under the control and supervision of a higher one. There is division of tasks among the members or employees of the voluntary organisations and they are assigned fixed responsibilities. To explore the quality of the personnel, the profile of 283 employees of 33 voluntary agencies working in 15 districts in Andhra Pradesh was examined along with the dimensions of age, marital status, educational attainments, pre-entry experience, methods of recruitment, length of service in the voluntary sector, in-service training and upward mobility.

More than half of the respondents (57 per cent) of our study belonged to the age group of '30 and under'. Nearly one-third of the respondents were in the age group of 31-45 years, and the remaining 11 per cent of the respondents were above 45 years. If those who are 35 years and below are classified as young, those between 36 and 45 years as middle aged and those above 46 years as old, about 73 per cent of the respondents were young, 16 per cent middle aged and 11 per cent old. The respondents of the last group were mostly government employees who retired at the age of 55 or 58 years and then joined the NGOs. Most of the young workers, particularly, those below 30 years of age, were unmarried, and they did not have any dependents. But some of the respondents did have family responsibilities in a society that is based on the joint family system. About 62 per cent of the employees looked after one or more relatives.

Generally, it seems that most of the employees of NGOs have few family responsibilities relative to that of government servants (Jain and Chanduri, 1982; Panandiker and Kshirsagar, 1978). Education is considered an important factor for entry into various occupations and upward social inability for higher status and prestige (Clark, 1962; Harbinson and Myers, 1964; Gore, 1968; Tumin and Feldmen, 1956). The educational level of the respondents is shown in Table 2.

One-third of the respondents were graduates and a little less than one-third (30 per cent) were post-graduates, some of whom had further education after their post-graduation. So it is clear that more than 60 per cent of the respondents were highly educated. Fourteen per cent of the respondents had some college education and 18 per cent completed high school. A negligible number had (4 per cent) minimum schooling *i.e.*, upto primary or upper primary stage. The study also looked into the type of education received by the respondents - general, technical and professional. About 72 per cent of the respondents had gone through courses in science, humanities or commerce while the remainder had

technical (10 per cent) and professional (18 per cent) education. It indicates that an overwhelming majority of the personnel of the NGOs did not have technical and professional education and training.

Table 2
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Level of Education</i>	<i>Number of Respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1.	Primary	4	1.4
2.	Upper primary	8	2.8
3.	Secondary	53	18.3
4.	Under-graduate	40	14.2
5.	Graduate	95	33.6
6.	Post-graduate and above	83	29.7
Total		283	100.0

It was found that 62 per cent of the respondents entered the voluntary agencies without previous work experience. More than half of the respondents entered through a single oral interview. About 37 per cent walked into the respective agencies even without an interview. Only a little over seven per cent reported that they were recruited through normal procedures like advertisement and interview. However, none of them had to write any test. The association of the respondents with the voluntary agencies was also not long. Nearly one-third of the employees had been working for only one year or even less than one year. About 20 per cent had been associated with the organisation for a period of two years, while 17 per cent of the respondents had been working for three years. The data also show that about 15 per cent of the employees had a period of service of four years, about 10 per cent 5 years and about 16 per cent more than 5 years. On the whole, about 50 per cent of the employees in the voluntary agencies had been working with them for two years and a little over 16 per cent for more than 5 years.

The study found that nearly three-fourths of the respondents were not trained before they took up the work or during their service, in their respective organisations. About a fifth of the employees received training for periods ranging from one to four weeks. The remaining six per cent (17 respondents) had undergone training for more than one month.

An analysis of the salary structure of the respondents indicates that nearly one-fourth of them earned less than Rs. 400 per month. The salary of more than one-third of the respondents ranged from Rs. 401 to 800, and that of 21 per cent of the respondents fell within the range of Rs. 801 to 1200. The salary of 18 respondents ranged from Rs. 1201 to 1600. Only 10 out of the 283 respondents drew more than Rs. 1600 per month. Twenty-two respondents reported that they had not drawn any salary, though they were full-time volunteers. It was also noticed that 76 per cent of the employees had not been promoted even once at the time of the study.

The high proportion of relatively younger persons in the sample voluntary organisations probably accounts for the lower ratio of dependents. The educational level of the employees is evidently high. However, an overwhelming majority of them do not have technical and professional education and training. The personnel with professional and technical qualifications constitute only about a fourth of the total work force of the voluntary agencies. They include doctors, teachers, social workers, nurses, craft instructors, technicians and others. Many organisations hire the services of some professionals particularly of doctors, on part-time basis.

A majority of the employees are novices working with the voluntary organisations for the

first time. They join and work for some time and leave the voluntary organisations in sheer disgust, despite the difficult employment market. The salaries are very low and working conditions are poor in voluntary agencies. There is no guaranteed tenured employment and there are no promotional avenues. Further, the voluntary agencies do not provide any social security benefits like pension, provident fund, and medical reimbursement. Hence most of those who accept employment in the voluntary organisations do so as a stop-gap arrangement, and keep looking for better jobs, elsewhere, especially in the government sector. The voluntary organisations in the study had not followed proper methods for the recruitment of their staff. The recruitment methods like contacting the heads of employment exchanges, issuing advertisements in newspapers, conducting tests, and so on, are not popular among the voluntary organisations. The personal touch and involvement of a responsible person of the organisation plays an important role in the process of recruitment. Generally, the Secretary or Chairman takes lead in selecting the employees. The employees also get entry through other members like Executive Committee members or senior employees of the agency. More than 90 per cent of the respondents of the sample entered the voluntary sector through one or a combination of these sources. Undoubtedly, personal contacts play an important role in getting entry into the voluntary organisations. The data on training also show that the training given to the employees is not sufficient.

In the past, many public service spirited individuals used to make time and serve in voluntary organisations. But with the gradual decline in the motivation for charity, there has been a corresponding reduction in the number of individuals willing to donate their time. As a result, there has been a steep decline in the proportion of voluntary and honorary workers. The unemployed graduates and post-graduates are keen to join the voluntary organisations for economic considerations. However, many of them are typical 'white-collar' types with limited skill and motivation for the type of work needed by the voluntary agencies. When such people are recruited in large numbers, a voluntary organisation faces the problem of high turnover of personnel, causing serious dislocation to on-going projects. This problem is acute in organisation like the Village Reconstruction Organisation (VRO), the Comprehensive Rural Operations Service Society (CROSS) and the Action for Welfare and the Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE) which employ college educated youths in large numbers.

Conclusion

In recent times there has been a spurt of foreign support for voluntary organisations. Though the motivations behind such funding cannot be faulted as being for ulterior purpose or for prescribing demeaning conditions, exclusive or excessive dependence on foreign institutional funding is debilitating and invites suspicions of external manipulation. There are also some voluntary organisations which depend on one principal source of funding. It is such organisations which show signs of stagnation and decline. So the voluntary agencies must try to mobilise local resources and funds rather than depend completely on external agencies or the Government.

The voluntary agencies may work to increase their internal source of income which helps them to become self-reliant, at least to some extent and makes the organisers of the agencies confident about the future of the organisation even in case external funds stop. In the absence of internal sources, they have little to fall back when external funding sources dry up. Internal sources can be raised to the extent sufficient to pay the salaries to the staff and maintain the programmes at minimum level, till external sources are available to the agency. This need for raising internal sources of income has been realised

by voluntary organisations and more than one-fifth of the sample agencies have already initiated steps in that direction.

The voluntary organisations have also to be specifically vigilant to follow the norms stipulated by the funding agencies and maintain the highest standards of integrity and, at all times, be absolutely accountable and open to scrutiny. At the time of investigation, the VPT was in financial doldrums. The KVIC the principal funding agency, had stopped the funds, on the charge that the money was not spent according to the norms laid down by it. This issue was raised in Parliament too. The allegation was refuted. The Government of India found, after an enquiry, that the VPT had not deviated from the rules and norms stipulated by the KVIC. So the voluntary agencies have to adhere strictly to the norms laid by the funding agencies so that the funds would be released in time. The Action for Welfare and the Awakening in Rural Environment (AWARE), one of the organisations included in the sample, was charged with misusing funds. The issue was also raised in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly recently. The leaders of the voluntary organisations should be free from such allegations and utilise the funds raised from both external and internal sources properly.

There is a need to improve the technical and professional competence of the employees of voluntary agencies. While there are many programmes undertaken by voluntary organisations employing thousands of field staff, there is a lack of suitably trained personnel, probably due to scarcity of suitable training programmes and lack of adequate finances to arrange training. Competent and trained government employees should be made available to those voluntary organisations which cannot employ competent persons due to their limited and restrained budgets. A training programme may also be launched to bridge the gap between the requirement of the technical personnel and their availability. There are already some training programmes being undertaken by the larger agencies like the BCT, CROSS, AWARE and RDAS, but these programmes have not been able to cater to the needs of many agencies.

A scheme of staff development is also in order. The voluntary agencies have to provide adequate wages to their employees to enable them to live even with inflation. Most people who opt for a particular service expect to make a career out of it, especially in the Third World countries. They also desire progression throughout the period of employment. A career is something that everyone who expects to work for a living would like to have and promotion is an integral part of a career system. Opportunities for promotion or upward mobility are to be provided for the employees in the voluntary organisations. The qualifications, working hours, leave facilities, and monthly pay and allowances should be fixed before-hand and not left to the whims and fancies of the leaders of the voluntary organisations. The pay scales with grades and regular increments may be structured, of course, within the limitations of their budgets. The retirement benefits like pension and gratuity may be extended to the employees. While many organisations claim that they are looking after the welfare of their employees, it may be observed that very few agencies have been providing some of these facilities. It is reported that AWARE has provided provident fund (10 per cent) and gratuity (15 days salary per year) facilities to its workers. The employees are also entitled to 12 days of casual leave and 24 days of privilege leave. A scheme giving Rs. 150/- every year for education of the children of the workers has been in operation in AWARE since 1986. Similarly VRO and BCT provide transport facility to their employees. A few agencies also provide housing to some of their employees. The new generation of social workers would definitely prefer to make a career of voluntarism if they are encouraged, through these benefits, to continue in the voluntary organisations.

The organisational situations in voluntary agencies should also be made conducive to high levels of job satisfaction among the employees. The rank and file employees may be encouraged to participate in decisions concerning policies and finances. At the time of investigation, it was learnt that some employees had left one organisation and joined another in sheer disgust because of their differences with their leaders. The founders of the organisations, who are the chief executives of their respective agencies in many instances, and other important leaders must function democratically in the management of the organisation and in the programme implementation. Power and autonomy should be devolved to the lower sections of the staff and the impression that these organisations are one-man shows must be avoided. The spirit of dedication, rejection of ulterior ambitions and monetary gratification would carve respect for voluntary activism. The leader of a voluntary organisation must be an embodiment of these ideals, so that he can command the respect of other members of the organisation and motivate the personnel to continue in the organisation to work for the upliftment of the poor and needy. If adequate financial resources are available and trained personnel are recruited and retained, the voluntary agencies can play a vital role in the development of the nation.

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To manage voluntary turnover in your organization, you need an in-depth understanding of why employees leave or stay with organizations in general, as well as strategies for managing turnover among valued workers in your company. Another important distinction is between functional and dysfunctional voluntary turnover. Dysfunctional turnover is harmful to the organization and can take numerous forms, including the exit of high performers and employees with hard-to-replace skills, departures of women or minority group members that erode the diversity of your company's workforce, and turnover rat