

# Penser la Qualité en Solidarité Internationale

## 6

### La qualité vue du Sud

Une première ébauche

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### **Remarque introductive**

Le lecteur trouvera dans le *premier cahier* l'ensemble des informations relatives à la production de la collection de cahiers, de même que la bibliographie complète, la liste des acronymes et d'autres informations utiles que nous avons choisi de ne pas reproduire dans chaque cahier dans un souci d'allègement.

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# Sept cahiers pour aborder la qualité dans le monde des ONG et de la Solidarité Internationale

Problématiser la qualité dans le secteur de la solidarité internationale revient à ouvrir une boîte de Pandore, nous l'avons rapidement réalisé au contact des terrains visités. Nous avons cependant choisi d'affronter cette complexité en faisant le pari que la réflexion menée avec de nombreuses structures en France et en Europe répondra aux attentes du public intéressé par cette thématique.

Les cahiers réunissent un ensemble de documents de travail qui avaient été initialement produits dans le cadre d'une étude menée en 2010 par Inter-Mondes Belgique à la demande du F3E et de la plateforme Coordination Sud sur la question délicate de la qualité dans le monde des ONG impliquée dans des programmes de solidarité internationale. A l'issue de nos travaux, nous avons à notre disposition deux rapports volumineux. Après coup, nous avons pensé que les contenus seraient plus accessibles et mieux valorisés s'ils étaient répartis dans des cahiers thématiques qui peuvent se lire indépendamment les uns des autres, selon les centres d'intérêt ou les préoccupations du lecteur. C'est dans cette logique là que cette série de sept cahiers a été rédigée.

Les cahiers, le lecteur s'en rendra compte, sont de volume variable. Ils ont été mis en forme de manière à faciliter autant que possible leur lecture. Il faut cependant admettre que certains cahiers seront plus faciles d'accès que d'autres, certains étant plutôt descriptifs, d'autres de nature plus conceptuelle ou théorique, d'autres encore regroupant des matériaux empiriques mis en forme, en général des entretiens approfondis.

## **Cahier 1 – Vue d'ensemble**

*De Leener Philippe & Totté Marc*

## **Cahier 2 - Perceptions et enjeux de la qualité par les acteurs**

*De Leener Philippe, Totté Marc & Seror Béatrice*

## **Cahier 3 - Pratiques de la qualité dans les ONGD et dans les autres secteurs**

*Totté Marc*

## **Cahier 4 - S'approprier la pensée sur la qualité. Quelques pistes pour avancer**

*De Leener Philippe & Totté Marc*

## **Cahier 5 – La qualité dans les ONG : l'envers du décor. De qui, de quoi faisons-nous le jeu sous prétexte de qualité ?**

*De Leener Philippe & Totté Marc*

## **Cahier 6 - La qualité vue du Sud**

*Premchander Smita, Mbaye Moussa, De Leener Philippe & Totté Marc (dir.)*

## **Cahier 7 – Parole aux acteurs du terrain**

*De Leener Philippe & Totté Marc*

Penser la Qualité en Solidarité Internationale  
*La qualité vue du Sud*

Le **premier cahier** offre une vue d'ensemble de la réflexion. Il précise aussi, grosso modo, les conditions dans lesquelles elle a été menée. Il valorise en particulier une note de synthèse rédigée en vue d'un atelier de réflexion qui a eu lieu en mai 2011 et qui regroupait une sélection d'acteurs, ONG et parties prenantes. Ce cahier reproduit fidèlement la position présentée à cet atelier en négociation avec le Comité de Pilotage de l'étude, une position médiane que nous nous attacherons à enrichir dans les autres cahiers, les n°4 et 5 en particulier.

Le **second cahier** propose une synthèse des travaux de terrain menés avec les acteurs, principalement en France mais aussi dans les pays voisins, les Pays-Bas, la Grande Bretagne, la Suisse, l'Espagne, l'Allemagne, la Belgique,... Un échantillon assez diversifié d'acteurs ont été investigués, depuis les ONG dans toute leur diversité, les grandes, les petites, les réseaux ou les fédérations... jusqu'aux parties prenantes, notamment les agences officielles, en général nationales et gouvernementales.

Le **troisième cahier** rend compte de la diversité des pratiques, modalités, dispositifs, instruments et options, tant dans le secteur de la Solidarité Internationale que dans d'autres secteurs proches. Il offre une *sorte d'état des lieux méthodologique*, certes modeste, mais suffisamment instructif pour prendre le pouls des initiatives. Nous y insérons aussi une schématisation que nous mobilisons régulièrement à Inter-Mondes, la boucle de la qualité.

Le **quatrième cahier** entend élargir les bases pour raisonner la qualité dans l'univers qui est propre aux ONG. L'idée est de contribuer à une *appropriation créative de la qualité* par le secteur des ONG de solidarité internationale. En effet, le piège d'un alignement pur et simple du secteur de la solidarité internationale sur le secteur marchand n'est pas à exclure. Ce cahier défriche des pistes précisément pour éviter de tomber dans ce piège.

Le **cinquième cahier** s'attache à replacer la souci de la qualité en perspective avec les *profondes mutations qui traversent les sociétés occidentales contemporaines* de manière à ne pas isoler la réflexion sur la qualité d'une *réflexion sur le changement social*, politique et économique. Le risque est grand en effet de circonscrire la question de la qualité à une préoccupation technique, alors qu'elle fait écho, profondément même, à des processus qui traversent toute la société.

Le **sixième cahier** est plus modeste par son volume mais intéressant dans le sens où il donne la parole à des acteurs du Sud qui eux aussi, certains d'entre eux au moins, tentent de développer une réflexion propre. La parole est surtout donnée à une approche indienne de la problématique, originale par son angle d'attaque et par sa tonalité vigoureusement sud.

Enfin, le **septième cahier** reprend une sélection des entretiens les plus riches qui ont été menés sur le terrain lors de nos investigations. Il ouvre en quelque sorte une fenêtre sur nos travaux de terrain en mettant à la disposition du public quelques moments forts de nos *travaux empiriques*. Il laisse entrevoir la diversité des points de vue et des situations qu'on rencontre dans la vie concrète des ONG ou des autres institutions actives dans la Solidarité internationale sitôt qu'on évoque la qualité.

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## 6

# Regards du Sud sur la qualité

La qualité est une préoccupation qui frappe tout le secteur de la Solidarité Internationale. Résonne-t-elle de la même manière au Sud qu'au Nord ? C'est une question que nous nous sommes posée. Pense-t-on la qualité de la même manière au Sud ? Privilégie-t-on les mêmes approches, les mêmes concepts, les mêmes sensibilités ? Ou alors, comme on le constate souvent, les acteurs du Sud font-ils simplement écho à une nouvelle vague déferlant du Nord, en la récupérant à leur manière, souvent en rasant mais aussi parfois en innovant, de la même façon qu'ils l'ont fait pour tant d'autres concepts à la mode, le genre, la société civile, la démocratie ?

Nous savons que la qualité est une valeur qui a des racines profondes en Occident et en extrême Orient. En Europe du Nord, le concept y a une histoire sinieuse qui passe, notamment, par un rapport d'engagement à l'objet de son activité très particulier si on le met en perspective dans l'histoire et au regard de la diversité des rapports au monde que les autres cultures, nombreuses et diverses, proposent. Un rapport d'engagement qui fait, notamment, que l'auteur d'une activité se voit dans les artefacts issus de cette activité, au point de pouvoir se convaincre qu'il se trouve dans la chose produite, qu'il s'y identifie jusqu'à s'y confondre ("*Cette œuvre, c'est moi*"). La qualité est une production culturelle. A ce titre, elle ne peut donc pas être tranquillement versée d'un univers culturel à un autre sans autre précaution. Sauf à reprendre à son compte une forme nouvelle de mission civilisatrice. Mais ce n'est pas à l'ordre du jour.

Pour prendre au sérieux ce que nous venons d'écrire, il aurait fallu sonder en détail, au moins avec autant d'énergie que ce que nous avons fait en France et dans les pays voisins, la diversité des positions et expériences du Sud. Cela n'a pas été possible, hélas. Nous avons dû nous débrouiller avec des bouts de ficelle pour investir, malgré tout, cette préoccupation. Nous l'avons fait en donnant la parole et quelques moyens à des partenaires du Sud, en Asie et en Afrique.

Dans ce sixième cahier, nous donnons la parole à deux partenaires choisis parmi ceux que nous avons mobilisés, de sorte que nous proposons une contribution indienne et une autre sénégalaise. Aucune de ces deux contributions, quelle que remarquable qu'elle puisse être, ne peut revendiquer un quelconque droit à la représentativité. Mais toutes les deux donnent à découvrir une pensée propre et une tentative de s'approprier la perspective de la qualité qui ne peut que nous convaincre de la nécessité absolue de penser la qualité dans la solidarité internationale en interaction étroite. Mais pas n'importe quelle interaction. Celle qui pousse des partenaires à prendre toute la mesure du défi que constitue l'entreprise de co-élaboration : produire ensemble en se laissant influencer par l'autre, par l'étrangeté de l'autre et par le potentiel de renouveau que cette étrangeté peut receler, jusqu'à éventuellement déclencher du changement. Chez soi comme chez l'autre. Car, au-delà des grands débats que peuvent nourrir le développement d'approches qualité dans les ONG et chez leurs parties prenantes, que ce soit le choix de concepts, d'outils ou de dispositifs, on découvre un autre enjeu de la qualité, peut-être en fin de compte le véritable enjeu : développer la réflexivité, offrir aux uns et aux autres une occasion singulière de se découvrir et de sonder la rationalité de ce qu'on entreprend et des

manières d'entreprendre. La qualité est fondamentalement un moment de retour sur soi, un moment réflexif qui, quelle que soit son issue, met en processus de l'inattendu. C'est pourquoi un dialogue ou, mieux, une réflexion conjointe nord sud ne peut qu'être profitable à toutes les parties engagées.

Ce sixième cahier est une modeste contribution à cette perspective. Il livre comme tels deux textes que nous avons décidé de reprendre ici tels que nous les avons reçus. Le premier texte, rédigé par Smita Premchander, secrétaire de l'ONG indienne Samprak, rend compte d'une investigation qu'elle a conduite à notre demande dans la région où elle est en activité. Le format d'investigation était le même que celui que nous avons nous mêmes mis en œuvre en France et ailleurs en Europe. Elle y développe une analyse propre et offre des conclusions stimulantes en matière de qualité. Le second texte est une synthèse rédigée par Moussa Mbaye, coordinateur de ENDA DIAPOL, ONG basée à Dakar. Elle a été réalisée sur la base d'un travail d'enquête mené par ses soins dans divers programmes de développement au Sénégal. Il nous propose sa synthèse, sa manière à lui de comprendre le défi de la qualité en tant que Sénégalais engagé dans divers programmes de développement. Un point de vue qui donne à réfléchir.

Philippe De Leener & Marc Totté  
Août 2011



## 6.1

# Different Stakeholder, Different Meaning

## A Southern Perspective of Development NGOs and Quality

**Smita Premchander**

with

**KS Ravi, Radha Gopalan, Kartik Kalyanram, Anjani, Omar Faruk, and K. Sudin**

### 6.1.1

#### *Abstract*

This paper collates experiences from one Bangladeshi and six Indian persons engaged in development work, and present their perceptions about NGO quality and international cooperation.

It offers reflections from the southern perspective, of those in the field of development. This paper is a view from the south, particularly South Asia, about the conceptualization of quality of development NGOs. The author summarises and analyses the views of six people engaged in diverse fields of development practice, all with over twenty years of experience. Mr. K.S Ravi is a senior Chartered Accountant, who in his 20 years of accounting practice has audited over twenty NGOs, and seen their work from close quarters. Dr. Radha Gopalan has spent time working with NGOs, communities, building capacities of Government Departments, and designing projects in the field of environmental management, urban planning and climate change, and is currently engaged with food security, sustainability, and community oriented projects on the ground. Dr. Kartik Kalyanram runs a rural health centre along with teaching in a regular school. They both work with the Rishi Valley Education Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India. Mr. Anjani works in a development project of Bihar government, which has been established with World Bank support. Dr. Omar Faruk works in health component of Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), a large donor funded programme that works with the ultra poor in Bangladesh. Mr. K. Sudin has over 15 years of experience on projects, both national and international. These resource persons have shared their views and perspectives based on many years of engagement with development. The paper then provides a reflection based on the author's own experiences in development, in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, and engagement with organisations in Switzerland, UK, and several other countries.

The paper highlights how stakeholders constantly assign meanings to different aspects of development work, such as cooperation, projects, grants, loans and impact. NGOs with strong inner and philosophical orientations should stay strong and rooted. However, many external expectations intervene. A globalised donor environment prioritises organisational sustainability. This creates tensions among different partners and affects quality of development work.

For development work that creates positive poverty reduction impacts, quality standards must be explicit, agreed and monitored. Impact orientation is the pivot around which stakeholders can come together for high quality development programmes.

### **6.1.2.** ***Executive Summary***

This paper collates experiences from one Bangladeshi and six Indian persons engaged in development work, and present their perceptions about NGO quality and international cooperation.

This paper is a view from the south, particularly South Asia, about the conceptualisation of quality of development NGOs. Dr. Radha Gopalan has spent time working with NGOs, communities, building capacities of Government Departments, and designing projects in the field of environmental management, urban planning and climate change, and is currently engaged with food security, sustainability, and community oriented projects on the ground. Dr. Kartik Kalyanram runs a rural health centre along with teaching in a regular school. They both work with the Rishi Valley Education Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India. Mr. Anjani works in a development project of Bihar government, which has been established with World Bank support. Dr. Omar Faruk works in health component of Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), a large donor funded programme that works with the ultra poor in Bangladesh. Mr. K. Sudin has over 15 years of experience on projects, both national and international. These resource persons have shared their views and perspectives based on many years of engagement with development. The paper then provides a reflection based on the author's own experiences in development, in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, and engagement with organisations in Switzerland, UK, and several other countries.

The paper addresses primarily the notion of NGO quality, and how that differs among different stakeholders in international cooperation. The 'donor-recipient' paradigm has replaced the 'solidarity' paradigm. This has resulted in reduction in the quality of cooperation. Where solidarity exists, the quality of cooperation is high.

The demands and expectations for quality in international cooperation currently hinge on the concept of sustainability: a key word which is perceived to reflect the quality of the work done. This is a trap, as it takes attention away from the orientation of community benefits, to the financial benefits to the NGO itself. For instance, NGOs working in selling condoms mobilize more money than the one which generates awareness and education about family planning, benefits of smaller families etc. The comparative advantage of NGOs in terms of organizational flexibility is replaced by bureaucracy of NGO's.

It is only institutions with philosophical and spiritual bent of mind that can reach high quality standards. The standards elaborated by southern development workers demand high quality development work. Donors are more and more focussed on technical expertise. They want to deal with NGOs more as contractors, and expect similar approaches from the NGOs. Now, donors expect NGOs to hire and fire contract staff as needed, which completely changes the way NGOs work. Donors tend to treat NGOs as extended arms for delivery, which is a short term agenda. Long term agendas for bringing significant change on the ground, in which the donor and NGO work is partnership is going out of practice. However, just as there are differently oriented NGOs in the developing world, so are there philosophically, spiritually oriented NGOs and donor organisations in the developed countries.

The funding for development initiatives through NGOs is declining. This has challenged the perceived dependency relationships that NGOs create with the community. Many NGOs take pride in working for twenty years in one village. Problems also arise from the fund constraint in the field of development.

Expectations change with time, and are a factor of social trends. As the society's' understanding of development needs and processes changes, their perception of what change is desirable. Rationales of quality expectations change with time and with changing social paradigms. It is not surprising that it shows up in discussions on NGO quality and how good development cooperation is perceived and operationalised.

Often these demands come quite upfront and also reflected in policies and products of different donor agencies. Donor agencies formulate their demands and expectations and NGOs tend to agree, as they perceive no choice, although some large and powerful NGOs can usually dictate terms. Senior management of donor supported projects are often either citizens of the donor country, and often insist by their position to uphold northern perspectives and further northern interests. In general, NGOs bring to the table a relationship with people, and donors bring finances.

In the context of international partnerships, where there exist strong formulations of demands by donors, NGOs tend to be oriented to fulfil the demand and expectations of donors. NGOs fulfil the needs of the people they serve, and their actions are oriented towards this. Values of transparency and accountability to the people NGOs serve are emphasised by them. The notions of quality that dominate are those of the donors, with local perspectives being ignored even by the NGOs, as their orientation towards the northern donors detracts from their articulation of local needs. When demands of the donors dominate, such as evidenced in bidding and selection processes for development contracts, they create pressure for survival of the fittest.

There are several gaps between different types of organisations: NGOs, donors and government. For example, many a time government put pressure (create incentive) on NGOs to do all kind of development activities (diversifying to health, education, livelihoods etc.). At other times, the government and donors give preference to those NGOs who have a defined product to deliver to the community alongside the capability to deliver. Further, donors and government apply pressure of delivering results quickly. Many agencies demand projects for funding. There are a lot of problems in relationship between the funding agency and the NGO. Finally there is a need to meet quality standards within a broad frame work. There needs to be education of both the NGOs as well as the funding agencies.

The local community believes that the NGO is an agent of the donor, and demands a price of compliance. Donors, NGOs, and local communities are all stakeholders, and their stakes can be different.

While internal motivation plays a strong part, NGOs, donors, communities and governments have much more of an influence over one another than ever before. Consultations among stakeholders are an important and necessary process in agreeing on quality expectations, and accommodating contextual factors.

NGOs can have an inner orientation of sacrifice and joy in serving the needy, which has the potential to define high quality standards deriving from the service orientation. However, NGOs are not the only local players in the field of development and poverty reduction. In reality, all those working in an area are stakeholders, such as the community, donors, government, international agencies and the private sector including global corporations.

Clearly articulated policies, procedures and practices should set example of quality standards among all personnel in the organization. It is important that institutional resources are spent to drive home quality aspects in every work or assignment undertaken by the institution. Even if it is an internal endeavour, in an increasingly open and globalising environment, the institution and its members are expected to work towards quality standards that will meet external requirements.

Development of funding strategies and plans is critical to making good partnerships. Theoretically, a broad band of funding partnerships would imply less pressure to conform to any one donor. In practice it could mean that by the time an NGO gets several donors on board, several external northern donor processes would have already been internalised by the organisation, thus defeating one of the main advantages of diversified funding! Even as NGOs work with the community, it is important to point out that an idealised conceptualisation of the community is problematic. The ground reality is that communities can collude with dishonest NGO, government or bank staff to promote corrupt practices. NGOs are seen as corrupt, government or bank officers, never people.

The southern NGO category is not uniform. There are various kinds of southern NGOs. There are those who pass on funding from northern donors, and are agents. Others implement projects. Sometimes, if people have taken loan from an NGO's microcredit fund, and find out that the fund has been contributed from a foreign donor, they are less likely to return it. When foreign funds are handled by NGOs, people are also likely to believe that the intermediary NGO has kept a large part of it. Quality is judged by scale and sustainability, leading to industry drift from the poor. Development funding has shifted from the poor to the non poor, from the NGOs to the corporate, from activists to contractor NGOs.

The relationships of the NGO with the people it seeks to benefit is the most critical as it determines the quality of engagement and work done. Next is the partnership of the NGO with its donors, and fundraising agencies. NGOs, as implementers of donor programmes, are the latter's link with the community. Donor perceptions of the community are distant and largely second hand. Their expectations about quality and what "should" change at the community level can therefore be quite different from those of local NGOs.

The quality standards of the former are impressed upon and demanded from the latter, and in the 'giver-receiver' equation, the funds giver, and dispenser (fundraising agency) have more power than the organisations who receive the funds. A perfectly good opportunity to be a mediator and a learning organisation is lost when a fundraising organisation prioritises the funding agencies over the implementing ones.

In the debate about NGOs and funding agencies, and north and south organisations, we need to recognise that organisational processes are very much like family processes. Relationships among staff, senior-senior, senior-junior, and junior-junior, become equally important to the motivation and happiness with which people work in organisations. The tensions that people carry from home to work affects the work atmosphere. Invariably, when the relationships with partners, parents, or children are disturbed, work relationships get affected. The community expects NGOs to bring external resources, and the NGO in turn expects people to collaborate with external projects. As ground realities often change, whereas project designs remain inflexible, the pressure to comply creates tension in the equation between NGOs and the community. These relationships affect the quality and impact of development on the ground.

Often we account for all the professional issues, but forget to consider the social relationships and processes that determine the quality of all development work.

The quality of development depends fully on the quality of relationships between the local NGO and the community at one end and that between the NGO and the donor at another. Good relationships between the community and the local NGO do not imply smooth sailing operations. The lives and livelihoods of the poor are strained, and these strains and difficulties reflect on the success of the intervention projects introduced by the NGO and donors. It means the NGO must step into the shoes of the community, and the donor into the shoes of the NGO, and the community into the shoes of the NGO and the donor.

Partnership quality has a strong influence on quality of development. Moving towards high quality partnerships requires donors to be flexible, and NGOs to be administratively strong, transparent and accountable. Quality standards have to be explicit, agreed and monitored form adherence. Above all, impacts on the poor need to be monitored, and used as the final indicator for the quality of development work and partnerships.

### **6.1.3.** **Introduction**

The paper addresses primarily the notion of NGO quality, and how that differs among different stakeholders in international cooperation<sup>1</sup>. The French term ‘international solidarity’ in fact originates from the concept of ‘solidarity’ which implies action out of standing together. This indeed was the spirit of development cooperation in earlier years, and the very fact that the term is not translated in English as ‘international solidarity’ but as ‘international cooperation’ shows not only how the language has changed, but how the practice has changed.

International solidarity was practiced differently from how international cooperation is practiced today. The ‘donor-recipient’ paradigm has replaced the ‘solidarity’ paradigm. In the latter, two international organisations came together for a common objective. In the latter, one commits to another to undertake some work on the ground, and is therefore accountable to the other. The power relations are unequal. The terms partnership and cooperation are less signifying of the philosophical and spiritual connotations behind using the word solidarity. I deal with this language difference upfront, because the question answered in this paper, by all the contributors, is about NGO quality and international cooperation. One of the common themes is that real solidarity is missing very often from cooperation! There are some instances where it does exist, and when it does, it is powerful and creates good results. This paper is a view from

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1- The author summarises and analyses the views of six people engaged in diverse fields of development practice, all with over twenty years of experience. Mr. K.S *Ravi* is a senior Chartered Accountant, who in his 20 years of accounting practice has audited over twenty NGOs, and seen their work from close quarters. Dr. *Radha* Gopalan has spent time working with NGOs, communities, building capacities of Government Departments, and designing projects in the field of environmental management, urban planning and climate change, and is currently engaged with food security, sustainability, and community oriented projects on the ground. Dr. *Kartik* Kalyanram runs a rural health centre along with teaching in a regular school. They both work with the Rishi Valley Education Centre of the Krishnamurti Foundation India. Mr. *Anjani* works in a development project of Bihar government, which has been established with World Bank support. Dr. *Omar* Faruk works in health component of Chars Livelihoods Programme (CLP), a large donor funded programme that works with the ultra poor in Bangladesh. Mr. K. *Sudin* has over 15 years of experience on projects, both national and international. These resource persons have shared their views and perspectives based on many years of engagement with development. The paper then provides a reflection based on the author’s own experiences in development, in India, Bangladesh and Nepal, and engagement with organisations in Switzerland, UK, and several other countries. Editorial and compiling support was provided by Udit Khurana, who worked late nights on the paper.

the south, particularly South Asia, about the conceptualisation of quality of development NGOs. It offers reflections from the southern perspective, of those in the field of development.

*Solidarity should be the foundation of cooperation. However, in many international development partnerships, the foundation of solidarity has become weak. This has resulted in reduction in the quality of cooperation. Where solidarity exists, the quality of cooperation is high.*

#### **6.1.4.** ***Quality in the Field of International Cooperation***

The authors are first concerned about what quality in the field of development is, and how this is interpreted, defined, measured. Then they deal with the differences between the perceptions and expectations of NGOs and donors.

##### ***6.1.4.1. The Demands and Expectations for Quality***

The articulation of what is quality, is to know what one set out to do, what is the path charted, to know how one is progressing on that path, where are the challenges and successes, and to be able to do so in a transparent manner, so that lessons can be drawn by a larger development community. *Radha and Kartik* list these aspects down as:

- ***Clarity in objectives and deliverables.*** The primary objective should be clear cut and simple. It is important to know what one can do, and even more important to know what one cannot do. This may need to be reviewed in the light of experience and with ground reality. The secondary objectives could relate to the primary one, and add value but not take away anything from the primary objective. It is important to keep the objective statements simple and straightforward, with no obfuscation or cover up. The intent has to be clear without conflicts and doubts.
- ***Accountability and transparency.*** On many occasions NGOs are made accountable and in the process they build in defence mechanisms against the donor, the public or the government for the simple reason that they lack conviction in expressing that they have delivered the best. It is also a case wherein there is a lack of transparency and therefore NGOs are forced to beat retreat before third parties. Micro finance is a classic example of how things could go wrong if practice deviates from proclaimed objectives. Where there is quality delivery, transparency and a rational behaviour, even if things were to go wrong, it sets in a domain for proper understanding of a given situation and course correction. Quite often only the best comes to the surface in the form of reports, discussions and public presentations. The shortcomings are deliberately concealed so as to ensure that there is no public gaze of organizational weaknesses. In situations like this there is an extra effort to seek for accountability and transparency, by the outsiders, resulting in mistrust and hesitation for the donors to fund bigger and complex programs. Alternatively, if the organization is accountable and transparent even without expectation from the donor or the public, it offers a better standing and provides avenue for improving practices and methods. It provides an opportunity of deep introspection or a conviction to stand unmoved as one is clear about the achievable goals. Accountability and transparency has to emerge uncalled for, as it is the essence of a sincere approach to any replicable practice models in the development sector. Why only the development sector, it is equally applicable to any sector if we have safeguard and be sensitive to scarce resources on this planet.
- ***Quantification*** and therefore measurement of outcomes not in a fragmented but integrated manner. While *Radha* feels robust, well-defined, integrated quantifiable indicators are priorities (indicators must be revisited periodically and confirmed based on feedback from

the monitoring process), *Kartik* feels that the objectives must be covered by a series of measurable and non quantifiable parameters. Quantifiable indicators can only give an idea of the quantum of the work done. They are mostly driven by Industry/ MBAs who are used to measuring performance (e.g. number of patients operated for eye ailments, their post operative vision, number of infections etc.). He feels that immeasurable parameters, such as quality of life, happiness quotient, feeling of improvement, well being etc. are equally important (e.g. did you feel comfortable with the doctor, caregivers, were they warm welcoming, how did they treat you, what was your experience, why did you feel the way you did).

*Anjani* further elaborates that the demand for the quality of the work delivered by the NGOs has grown during the recent time, particularly after increasing question mark on aid effectiveness at the global level. However, many a times this demand gets wrapped up in tick mark quality i.e. something which is measurable e.g. accreditation, grading and ratings of the products and services delivered by NGOs. While this is helpful, nonetheless, on several occasions, it ignores what cannot be measured. The whole millennium development goal specification further gave the impetus to this measurable form of the quality of work being delivered by different NGOs.

The underlying tension between quantifiable and non quantifiable indicators is palpable. To discuss *Kartik*'s example, should one consider success to be how many patients were treated, or how many returned happy? What would be the final judgement of quality if people returned happy, but were not cured (Cure Rates and other indicators of a hospitals performance are a given. Many of these parameters are for full fledged hospitals with inpatient facility. Also a patient who is not cured will obviously not be happy. It is in the overall setting of patient satisfaction which encompasses cure as well as a feel good factor that this point was raised. Another question arises about who is the judge of that quality? The patient who went back happy? Or those who believe cure are extremely important?

One often observes that students have faith in a particular teacher, patients flock a particular clinic or a doctor, and clients share their individual and personal matters with some professionals like advocates and chartered accountants. This is something beyond the call of the duty. Why are some individuals distinguished from others, even though others may be equally competent and well versed? The answer to this extends the boundary of quality delivery to say that quality is not merely empirical but has a human touch and has to do more with passion rather than the quantum. It also has an element of perception, what is perceived as high quality is what is respected. Delving deep into the subject transcends quality from the materialistic domain to a spiritual domain. Accountability, transparency, quantum and any other yardstick that one wants to get, is all there with an effortless approach.

Take the example of government spending on a project. There are documents that explain monies spent, there are statistics indicating the number of beneficiaries who have received the benefits, there are the so called competent officials who have worked to make the program a success, there are debates and discussions that provide an understanding on the implementation. But, with all the documentation, statistics and debates, the quality of delivery remains a far cry unless the beneficiaries understand the objectives of the program and express satisfaction for having derived the expected benefits. We have all been brought up under an environment wherein success is measured in quantitative terms. Any other method appears to be odd and unless we change our mindsets, we may miss the qualitative and the creative approach to an endeavour.

- **Documentation.** It is important to document not only what has worked and what has not worked with absolute clarity, but also **why** something has worked and why something has not worked – learnings should not just be a compilation of standard phrases such as 'need for capacity building', 'empowerment of women' etc. In depth analysis, and experience exchange

will enable replication and effective adaptation of success stories from one place to another. *Anjani* highlights some factors which he observes are differently prioritised or perceived by donors in the north, and NGOs working in poverty ridden developing countries.

- **Sustainability.** A key words which is perceived to reflect the quality of the work is SUSTAINABILITY of the work done. This relates to enhancing the skills of beneficiaries in implementing and monitoring project activities, and management and maintenance of these after a project is completed.
- **Participation** of community based institutions is another factor that is considered important. However, often this is judged in terms of the community's own contribution: higher the contribution better is the quality perception. It is important to understand that local ownership of a project and its interventions does help the project implementers to exit the operational area at the earliest, which probably is overlooked by the donors.
- **Technical expertise** The availability of technical skills and understanding, ability to achieve the targets and disbursements within the stipulated time frame is important to northern donors. Moreover English speaking staff is what considered a good quality organisational setting.
- **Market-orientation** Another area which is gaining prominence is having market friendly organisational policies, procedures and interventions, as the market is considered a superior institution than the government and the society. NGOs working in selling condoms mobilize more money than the one which generates awareness and education about family planning, benefits of smaller families etc. Cost effectiveness of delivery of services gets a high weightage in the organisational setting. The in-formalization of organisation, contractual than permanent jobs, honorarium rather salary, fee based services are part of the preferred setting. There is lot of focus on monitoring & reporting mechanism of the organisation.

By contrast, says *Anjani*, ideals, values, mission, and volunteerism are losing their significance in the development world slowly and steadily. Commitment, dedication, responsiveness to community needs and requirement, accountability to the core is getting erased from NGO's lexicon. The value of allowing some scope for committing mistakes and learning from them is no more appreciated. The comparative advantage of NGOs in terms of organizational flexibility is replaced by bureaucracy of NGO's.

This loss of values is elaborated on by *Ravi*, who perceives quality as reflected in every aspect of a person and an NGO. He feels that 'Quality' has to be seen to be appreciated. "It is not that we have to document to demonstrate it. In fact it should be the way of life for the individual and it should be self-revealing for the institution. It is not to be done to convince the funding organization or the beneficiary, but must be done to ensure that we excel in our actions and thought so as to bring out the best in ourselves first and then listen to others thereafter. We don't convince others by our actions, but we request others to help us in overcoming our faults. We appreciate constructive criticism from others, as we are myopic to our own shortcomings.

It is painful to witness NGOs going overboard to convince external agencies merely because the institution has to survive. Whether are not they are convinced of a project, whether or not they have the conviction to deliver it, whether or not they have the expertise to deliver it, it is often observed that NGOs paint their proposals different hues just to be part of the big ticket projects, so that they can survive. In the absence of the required expertise and quality factors, the institutions are often twisted and turned beyond their beliefs bringing drudgery to the whole

***"Please interview and identify for us NGOs with already existing expertise. We have neither the time nor the money to invest now in capacity building of NGOs. We want to tap into the best available expertise, and move from there"***

**Brief from a northern donor for partner selection**



exercise. There are difficulties faced at different stages in the projects and the finishing reports are coloured to convince different stakeholders of the event. The cutting edge delivery is lost and project goes into oblivion providing a natural death to the efforts and processes, which otherwise ought to have blown itself up into a bigger endeavour for the common benefit of the larger society.

Quality has to answer its usefulness in terms of how useful it is going to be to society at large, the world at large, not merely human beings and not merely the present generation, but all other living creatures and all future generations to come, should derive benefits from such efforts. The development world, I think brings sanity to this rat race world. It should exercise its concerted efforts in conservation and sustainable efforts in avoiding catastrophic disaster to this wonderful universe of ours. It is only institutions with philosophical and spiritual bent of mind that can reach such quality standards. Willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of others is the hallmark of such institutions. Not only such institutions will remain accountable to all, but will provide constructive suggestions with all seriousness and maturity for the benefit of all.

**The general development scenario has moved to one where both donors and NGOs have become market oriented and contractual. Long term partnerships based on common objectives are few and far between. However, these do exist and some examples are presented.**

Success is not to be measured only by achievements. In fact, the measure of success is in the means and the quality standards that have been adopted. The pursuit of excellence that one has followed in achieving results is more important than the result itself. It does not matter that the result has not come up to our expectation, but there are efforts that gets perceived to bring satisfaction to our work. It is not enough if only the mind is at work, but the heart has to be total immersed to derive and churn butter out from curds. In the words of Harold Taylor, 'The roots of true achievement lie in the will to become the best that you can become.' If this is the state of art of an institution, will there be anything for anyone for deviating you from your path. The standards elaborated by southern development workers demand high quality development work. They highlight the need for clarity in objectives, setting out clear pathways, milestones and monitoring systems that monitor progress. These reflect values of participation, focus on local needs, and a high degree of professionalism. Thus conceptualisation of quality in the south includes an articulation of values. One of them specifically emphasises the focus on internal values of an organisation. However, **Ravi** believes that NGOs are fast losing a value focus.

Thus the contributors feel that quality in the Asian context is about being clear about what to do, being transparent, having a clearly outlined path, and monitoring all the way till one arrives at the goal. They also believe that quality comes from within, and reflects a way of life, an approach that is philosophical and spiritual, just as it is professional. They endorse learning by doing, an orientation towards the people one works for, and sharing and learning from mistakes.

In this, they feel the difference between northern donors and Asian NGOs. Donors are more and more focussed on technical expertise. They want to deal with NGOs more as contractors, and expect similar approaches from the NGOs. Gone are the days when once a person joined an NGO, he or she stayed there for life. Now, donors expect NGOs to hire and fire contract staff as needed, which completely changes the way NGOs work. Donors tend to treat NGOs as extended arms for delivery, which is a short term agenda. Long term agendas for bringing significant change on the ground, in which the donor and NGO work is partnership is going out of practice. It is no more companionship and support on a long and difficult path. That spirit and intention is missing in development partnerships today.

That said, the differences are not insurmountable. Just as there are differently oriented NGOs in the developing world, so are there philosophically, spiritually oriented NGOs and donor organisations in the developed countries. Often, these are able to find one another and connect up. The stories of Sampark's partnerships with four organisations: one Italian, one Canadian, one Swiss and one Indian all show different aspects of positive partnerships, both short and long term.

#### **6.1.4.2 Rationale and Timing of the Demands and Expectations**

In answer to the question about why this rationale arises at the current time, *Anjani* responds that the root of all the pressures from the northern donors lies in the Washington D.C. consensus. The funding for development initiatives through NGOs are declining. The presumption is that market will correct itself and penetration/downscaling of market institution would deal with such deprivations. The world is flat and fortune is at the bottom of the pyramid.

This has challenged the perceived dependency relationships that NGOs create with the community. Many NGOs take pride in working for twenty years in one village. The current donors put pressure to have exit strategy since beginning.

*Omar* agrees that the demands and expectations of northern donors are for fulfilling their wish to accomplish their own mandate, which mostly do not serve the programme goal and objective. Problems also arise from the fund constraint in the field of development.

*Kartik* says that there is a need for quality to be insisted upon, more so in the context of the extent of corruption in both the private as well as governmental sectors. There is also the need to differentiate the fly by night operators from the serious ones. How does one do that particularly in the initial years, more so when there is no one to recommend you? Of course once the NGO is successful, money starts to flow in, as people can see that the NGO is earnest. However, this gets very difficult for NGOs in their start-up phase. Having contacts and having seed money for at least 3 years is a must in the start up phase.

*Radha* reiterates that quality standards are important. In the absence of these, development, or more fundamentally, poverty alleviation will never be realised in spite of millions of dollars / euros / currency of choice being spent.

Due to increasing awareness and activism by civil society in developing countries, communities are demanding for rights to existence and earn their livelihood. As a result expectations from NGOs are increasing. They are being perceived as bridges to facilitate resources either from Government or private entities.

Thus the contributors highlight that:

- **Expectations change with time, and are a factor of social trends.** As the society's understanding of development needs and processes change, their perception of what change is desirable also shifts.
- **Paradigm shifts create ripples and conflicts.** The welfare paradigm of development can create long term dependency relationships; whereas the market paradigm can be so short term that it become ineffectual in bringing about any structural change. Change has to be negotiated somewhere in this continuum.

Rationales of quality expectations change with time and with changing social paradigms. The current prevalent paradigms are all problematic, and do not offer good solutions to today's development issues: to the increasing numbers of people in poverty. They do not provide a

good solution for eradicating extreme poverty on the one side, or increasing affluence on another, with the former bringing great hardships to people and the latter a lifestyle that is unsustainable for the planet. These growing divide in standards of living in countries shows up in all discussions. It is not surprising that it shows up in discussions on NGO quality and how good development cooperation is perceived and operationalised.

### **6.1.4.3 Formulation of the Demands and Expectations**

The next question that arises is about how these demands and expectations are formulated.

**Anjani** has experienced that many a times these demands come quite upfront and are also reflected in policies and products of different donor agencies. Approval of funding proposals are not done unless and until all these demands are met.

**Smita's agrees that** donor agencies formulate their demands and expectations and NGOs tend to agree, as they feel they have no choice. Yet, whose demands and expectations get primacy is dependent very much on who has greater power in a given situation. We have all come across many NGOs who are so big and powerful compared to their donors that they can dictate terms. The bigger, better known and most sought after an NGO is, the keener donors are on making a partnership, the greater is the former's power to formulate demands and expectations.

**Sudin** feels that articulation of demands and expectations (particularly in bi-lateral aid agencies) is a reflection of the 'parent' government's policies (and changes therein). This in turn could be the result of 'politics' followed by the party in power and/or local public demand/perception. (Whatever is their origin, these demands and expectations almost always seem to be 'imposed' rather than 'evolved' through consultations with the NGOs).

The demand for proven track record edges out small/new organisations that already are attempting to address a pressing problem. Similarly, financial transparency and accountability are demanded, and although these are desirable, they come with a demand for more frequent and numerous reports, particularly 'impact' oriented, with very short periods of grassroots work.

**Omar** elaborates that the demands and expectations are sometimes formulated for the interest of donor country or its native and to accomplish this, stakeholders become irrelevant in the project intervention modality. Senior management of donor supported projects are often either citizens of the donor country, or consultants appointed by them, and often insist by their position to uphold northern perspectives and further northern interests. Sometimes an intellectual position is used to prove the superiority of the northern perspective.

In general, NGOs bring to the table a relationship with people and donors bring finances. Often, finances are considered more important than the relationships, and so donors get an upper hand. Also the demand for funds is more than the supply, which further adds to the power that donors derive, by putting through a selection process, which has now turned out to be a bidding process. These bidding processes are strong evidence of the formulations of demands and expectations of donors getting primacy over those of NGOs and field needs. The bidding processes also sometimes demand, and overlook, that the participant NGOs do some irregularities. These may also sometimes encouraged by the local government institutions.

**Kartik** and **Radha** have highlighted the need to formulate the need from the perspective of the community and NGOs, and be clear and focussed on these.

#### 6.1.4.4 Actions to Satisfy Demands and Expectations

**Kartik** and **Radha** emphasises that as NGOs are focussed on community needs, their actions to satisfy demands and expectations would consist of:

- Working on the basis of community's needs: Identifying true development needs from the community which will require active, sustained and long-term engagement with the target community;
- Building community leaders / resource persons to enable growth and spread of a successful initiative;
- Providing communities with information and exposure to other successful initiatives in similar or more restrictive socio-economic situations (**Radha**).

Further, the accountability and transparency would involve :

- Record Keeping: a must so that all the work done is available for analysis. Many people forget this important aspect
- Accounts: Strict accounting following the highest standards and principles of accounting. Every Rupee/currency has to be accounted for.
- Cost analysis: What is the ratio between salaries, perks and actual programme expenses? Is the NGO paying itself too much, how many foreign jaunts etc.?
- Transparency/Openness – willingness for anyone to access the records, accounts, talk to the beneficiaries at any time.
- Honesty – to say when things do not work out – analyse what went wrong and why. Be willing to accept mistakes. Be clear that the objectives set are achievable and if not be willing to downscale. In my experience, funding agencies are quite willing to listen when you are up front and open about this.
- Documentation and timely reporting – however frequency of reporting needs to be worked out with the NGOs.
- Constant touch: The NGOs need to be in touch with the beneficiaries who are the most important people in the business – to follow Mahatma Gandhi. The poorest and most disadvantaged are the reason why we are here. Going beyond formal feedback, which is essential, a human touch, a casual talk, tells you where you are wrong and where you need to improve.
- Peer review if possible, adds value (**Kartik**).

In the context of international partnerships, where there exist strong formulations of demands by donors, NGOs are then oriented to fulfil the demand and expectations of donors. They hire so called professionals (MBAs, MSWs<sup>2</sup> etc.) for the project management, who have no loyalty either to the organisation, or to the community. They tend to change the job every year as they climb the ladder (**Anjani**). **Ravi** points out that on the other hand, if salaries are too low, staff lose motivation, as they are unable to take care of their families, especially children's education. The NGO and the funding organisation have to offer something to retain staff, not just in monetary terms but also in terms of career growth, job satisfaction etc. This is an inherent risk that is prevalent in any type of organization or industry. In spite of a conducive work environment, if a person does not stay, it is obvious that he is not the right fit and therefore he should be allowed to fall apart. This works well both for the organization and the individual.

**Sudin** further elaborates that there is an increase in the paperwork consequent to donor demands- more periodic reports (sometimes ad-hoc demands of donors) leading more of the limited resources to be diverted to reporting rather than implementing. There is a pressure to

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<sup>2</sup> Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Social Work.

show/report impact, often prematurely (and often superficially). An irony here is that with less time and resources to actual implementation, deeper and quicker impacts are expected. (This is perhaps almost the exact opposite of what some of the NGOs experienced in the 80s and 90s).

There is also a tendency to overestimate the potential impact of an intervention or to almost see the intervention as the sole driver of change (an implicit assumption that there was stasis before the said intervention and the change is wholly and entirely attributable to the intervention). This forces the NGOs to contrive 'cause and effect' in their reporting. It is not sure how much this is considered as an indicator of 'quality'. If so, this might be contributing to false sense/idea of quality.

A more sophisticated level of proposal writing that many (well intentioned but small NGOs might find difficult). Pressure to align objectives/outcomes (sometimes even post-facto) to the changing 'fad' of the donors (particularly true in bilateral funding).

At another level such demands favour larger, established and 'national'/'state' level NGOs who might necessarily not have an experience/understanding of local context and more so not have local rapport.

*NGOs fulfil the needs of the people they serve, and their actions are oriented towards this. Kartik and Radha emphasise the important of good monitoring, documentation, constant supervision, and peer reviews where possible. Values of transparency and accountability to the people NGOs serve are emphasised by them.*

*When expectations of international donors dominate, pressures to conform reflect in dressing up of proposals with very high expectations, which can be out of touch with reality. NGOs begin to use the jargons and fall into the trap of fads and fashions of donors, which may take them away from the local context. The notions of quality that dominate are those of the donors, with local perspectives being ignored even by the NGOs, as their orientation towards the northern donors detracts from their articulation of local needs.*

#### **6.1.4.5 Consequences of such Demands and Expectations**

When demands of the donors dominate, such as evidenced in bidding and selection processes for development contracts, they create pressure for survival of the fittest. There will be only few NGOs, who will survive; others will lose their existence. This will probably also rationalize the number of NGOs in the market place (*Anjani*).

*Omar* believes that demands sometimes reflect the perspectives of international community, not the community of developing world they serve. Their expectation is not corrected, even though the organizational setting that they fund does not always match with desired quality standard.

An example of consequences is provided from a donor assisted project where one of the objectives was health and nutrition outcomes for poor women and children. The foreign technical consultant suggested a readymade sprinkle powder, which incidentally, was to be imported from his home country. The Indian technical staff said that it would be better for the women to learn about nutrition, and get the same dietary supplements from a natural diet rather than company made sprinkle powders. The northern consultant's view was upheld by the senior management of the organisation.

When demands and expectations of the community are prioritised, the results can be spectacular. This is evident from the case study of Rishi Valley Special Development Area programme (RVSDA), elaborated below (*Radha*).

The two responses show the spectrum which at one end shows donor orientation and at another shows community orientation. The contributors both favour the latter, perceiving an external

orientation as negative and prioritising community demands and expectations in shaping the work they do.

#### **6.1.4.6 Gap between External and Local Expectations**

There are several gaps between different types of organisations: NGOs, donors and government.

**Anjani** considers first the difference between NGOs and government. Neither of them are monolith; there are different voices within these institutions. For example, many a time government put pressure (create incentive) on NGOs to do all kind of development activities (diversifying to health, education, livelihoods etc.). At other times, the government and donors give preference to those NGOs who have a defined product to deliver to the community alongside the capability to deliver. Thus donors and governments give mixed signals, rewarding those who are focussed and have technical expertise in one area, and also pressurising NGOs to diversify and serve multiple needs.

Further, donors and government apply pressure of delivering results quickly. This disturbs those good-intentioned NGOs who would like to follow a proper defined process and try to go along with the speed of community. However, as Nelson Mandela said, we want to end the poverty in this generation and no one has got the patience to wait for the next generation. This is not to say that development NGOs want to delay poverty reduction for an infinite period but probably some balancing is required. This calls for an understanding and agreement over some uniform standard activities and adaptive processes.

**Kartik** points out the gap in perceptions between the funding agencies and the user end. Many agencies demand projects for funding. How does one do that, especially in the field of essential services such as health and education? What happens after three years when the project is over? What happens to the staff, the beneficiaries? It is great to use words like self-sustaining etc., yet in reality it does not happen. I have been working at trying to get a simple health insurance scheme off ground where I work at the Rishi Valley Rural Health Centre. All the people I met felt that the business model would not be sustainable. I think that they were missing something here. In the short term it would not break even, but later it does become workable. E.g. The RHC meets most of its day to day needs from the patient collections so only a small amount needs to be collected yearly.

There are a lot of problems in relationship between the funding agency and the NGO. Ideally it should be one of equals. That rarely happens. The funding agencies believe that since they have the money, they have the answers as well! They also try and impose their quality standards, which are probably true for their area of work on the NGO, which is involved in something very different. They do not take the time to understand where the NGO is located and what its work ethos is. In trying to meet externally imposed standards the NGO is often sidetracked in meeting these demands quite forgetting their primary role.

Finally there is a need to meet quality standards within a broad frame work. Some sort of certification will in all probability become mandatory. There needs to be education of both the NGOs as well as the funding agencies.

**Radha** categorises the NGOs operating in India into three broad categories: (i) extensions of Government Departments and focus on implementing Government programmes; (ii) issue-based largely pursuing access to rights and (iii) attached to Foundations, specific donors or private sources implementing their agenda.

While resources are not an issue for categories (i) and (iii) it can be a constraint for (ii) since they could be engaged in issues that may be too political for a donor or not meeting the agenda

of a Foundation or private enterprises. Demand for accountability is also much higher for those in category (ii). She describes the case of Rishi Valley School Development Authority<sup>3</sup> as particularly good practice in developing local partnerships for environmentally sustainable development, while at the same time providing for improving livelihoods of the local community (see accompanying box).

**Ravi** elaborates that quality is not merely a topic to be debated in a forum, it is also not merely a matter for documentation at the office, but it is a vibrant and dynamic process that needs to be practiced across the value chain. It should resonate, reverberate and break all barriers, so as to establish a culture for the institution. It should be embedded so deep into the institutional culture that, no matter what, the associated members may have to sacrifice to safeguard the vision, mission and philosophy of the institution. This is possible only when each one of us have a concern for the quality of life of our fellow neighbour. Our intentions and purpose should soar beyond the individual self. Not that any of the above thoughts are new to us as Indians, as we have a rich past which demonstrates concern not just for human life but for all living creatures on this universe. We are obsessed of boasting of our rich heritage before the world but do nothing to put that into practice. Discipline and quality which is abundantly missing in all walks of life, on account of selfishness and filthy desire beyond needs, needs a rethinking in this mad destroying world. Can we look at development organizations and NGOs as an answer to this adversity?

Quality statements are perennially being made in annual reports of the corporate. I am one who considers that such statements are shallow and a lip service to humanity. It requires real drilling down to touch the lives of its employees, their families and its surrounding. It must be a deliberate and a conscious effort. It is not an intellectual exercise but more to do with heart as its fragrance has to spread all around.

NGOs ought to be and are believed to be more human in their approach. But the messages are not enough to stir up the environment. If the practice continues just to address issues at the periphery, I am sure that the so called corporate will some day dictate terms to the developmental organizations. To create robust and institutions with integrity, it calls for protocols of quality across the organization and even beyond, as time passes by.

**Smita** puts forward the perspective that in this paper, NGOs are seen as along with the people, and the donor is seen as 'external'. However, from the point of view of the local community, even the NGO is external. Sampark faces this issue in its field operations. The local community believes that the NGO is an agent of the donor, and demands a price of compliance. The following instances will bring this statement alive:

In the early days of Sampark's work in the villages in 1995, the NGO made a partnership with a Swiss university for livelihoods research. Usually, Sampark's staff went to the villages in a bus or autorickshaw (three wheeler), but on one day, six of them arrived in the village in a jeep, with a swiss academician. They had two group discussions relating to employment, migration, health, and several other issues. Then the Swiss consultant and all except one field staff of Sampark left. The people then surrounded this person and said to her: "*We answered all the questions of the white man. What will we get in return?*" The attitude was: "Your donor wants you to achieve something. We are helping you to achieve it. Now compensate us for this."

One expects that as the relationship with the community deepens, this difference would reduce. It does reduce as cooperation increases, but there are elements of the difference which also stay.

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3- The Rishi Valley Education centre is one of the many educational initiatives of the Krishnamurti Foundation of India. The centre in Chittoor has a residential school, rural residential and satellite schools, as well as the Rishi Valley School Development Authority project among its many activities. More information can be found on <http://www.rishivalley.org>.

One of them relates to corruption. Sampark was formed with idealistic objectives, and believes in non-corrupt operations. This has always meant that government schemes are not routed through Sampark. Officers granting benefits route these through other local NGOs which routinely give “cuts” and “percentages” to them. As a result, Sampark’s self help groups, which have been in existence and operating well for over two to five years don’t get government support, while new groups which are formed overnight, just to get government money, do. This makes the community very unhappy. Once a government office had sanctioned a loan to a farmers’ group promoted by Sampark, but were not releasing the first instalment as they expected 10% of the loan to be given to them as a bribe. Sampark was not willing to give the bribe. The farmers argued with Sampark staff: “You need to see the loan as a *chapatti*<sup>4</sup> in the hand of the officer. The officer wants a piece from it, and then we can have the rest. If we don’t allow him to take that piece, we lose the whole *chapatti*. Is it wise to do that?” In this case, Sampark managed to convince the farmers to go as a group, and demand that their loan be released without a bribe.

*These stories bring to us the realisation that people’s rationales and meanings that they assign to money, loans, bribes, can be quite different from those that NGOs do. Ideals that are upheld by NGOs need not be the same as those that are upheld by the local community. Often they differ. Donors, NGOs, and local communities are all stakeholders, and their stakes can be different. Similarly, the community is not one monolithic category, the interests of the economic classes, caste groups, women, men, the aged and youth are all often quite different. These need to be understood and negotiated when any development intervention is designed. The quality of these negotiations determines the extent to which gaps between different expectations is covered.*

### **6.1.5.** ***The Contextual Factors in Quality Expectations***

**Ravi** says that quality in fact is an inner urge to excel. Not to excel in the sense of competition but as an actualization process that brings in the best out of an individual, a group or a team. It has in its context a pace of its own, a conviction of truth and tremendous amount of energy that buys no dictates from an external agency. It surfaces out very often not willing to be cowed down by externalities and with a willingness to sacrifice anything simply to demonstrate that there is a human possibility for perfection. At the conceptual level it is practiced naturally and with ease, without being perturbed, as it has its own design even if it has to remain a minority.

While internal motivation plays a strong part, NGOs, donors, communities and governments have much more of an influence over one another than ever before. Paradigms used to take a long time changing: not so the marketing paradigm, it has spread over the world very fast. This has changed both language and practices. Terms like participation, protection, inclusion, and empowerment are common and have spread across a wide range of stakeholders. The concepts of microfinance, livelihoods, and rights based work have spread and become the hallmark of new, proposals in development. While development is no rocket science, and the key precepts for success are known to all, each donor agency looks for an “innovative” project to support. Sampark was once asked to bid for a project for adult women’s literacy. One of the main criteria for evaluation was “innovative approach”. While the donors looked for an organisation that had tried and tested approaches which have worked in other areas, they also looked for innovation. The two criteria were quite contradictory.

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4- bread



Similarly, every project submitted to donors is now evaluated on 'sustainability'. A major programme working with the ultra poor on riverine islands in Bangladesh found that schools do not function properly here, and there is a need to open schools on these islands. The donors refused the money for the proposal, on the ground that it is the government's job to open schools, and providing these essential services by a project was not 'sustainable'. The donors did not plan the education input even as a bridging service, during the time that the government came on board. The islands continue to have no schools, because provision of project schools cannot be sustained during the project period. The development context is ridden with such notions: participation, sustainability, which can each work for positive planning, but which can all be interpreted in a way that it harms people and projects.

*Sudin* suggests that while the agencies providing the funds definitely have a right to demand quality, it would be more helpful to 'situate' such demands also in the context in which the recipient operates. A way to obtain this could be to have series of consultations with the NGOs on arriving at a more mutually acceptable, practical and enabling quality norms and even definition of quality.

### 6.1.6.

#### *The Stakes and Stakeholders*

In keeping with his earlier inward orientation, *Ravi* proposes that NGOs require a tremendous amount of sacrifice, which he expects would be often off-set by inner joys that one experiences merely by doing something to perfection. Probably it may appear as poverty to some for having staked everything in life. But the effortless achievement, that one arrives at on account self imbibed quality standards have a great sense of satisfaction that can in no way be measured with material abundance that one accumulates through mechanical processes in life. This is not to say that, quality pursuits have no monetary compensations. In fact, quality pursuits have much more material and monetary compensations in the long run, though not in the short term.

Further, there are people who approach any endeavour with quality standards in mind, who have no place for material comforts; and they invest time, effort and money in achieving excellence in what they have been doing all their lives. In fact they break all barriers for the sheer joy of it. Money or no money they are obsessed in achieving the imponderables. That explains quality with its trials and tribulations. In fact, one must read Jonathan Livingston Seagull written by Richard Bach to understand how to identify quality with life. For *Ravi*, the NGO alone is the relevant stakeholder, and none other.

However, in reality, not just NGOs but also many others interact with growth as well as poverty reduction, and in doing so, they become direct stakeholders in defining the quality aspects of development. They include the community, donors, government, international agencies and the private sector, even global corporations. NGOs, therefore, have to step beyond their inner orientations to relate to external forces if they have to partner these external organisations in the search for higher scale and impact.

### 6.1.7.

#### *Arranging for Quality*

*Ravi* answers this question only in terms of what an NGO needs to do. He highlights that no matter what efforts are made in introducing quality standards in the organization, it is important that the organizational superiors treat quality as a necessary ingredient in the organizational growth and career path of their juniors. Probably, they must own up for quality failures without

passing it down in line. Efforts should be made to walk the talk so as to ensure that consciously or unconsciously people see the need for excellence in all activities or endeavours. It must appear to be a natural trait rather than a forced affair. People around quality performers should get energized into picking up such traits naturally in their own area of activity. It must become a force of emulation both for the youngsters and the old and must spread like an epidemic for the common good of humanity as a whole.

Policies, procedures and practices should set example of quality standards among all personnel in the organization. It sets a culture for the incoming incumbents to adopt it naturally and the outgoing to spread the goodwill message amongst others in the society. No matter in what status the institution is in, there is no room for compromises. They are statements and standards that do not get traded and it is shielded against all odds. Many sacrifices are made to safeguard the sacred tenets of the organization. It provides a platform for live and let live, while the organization goes through fearful alleys in the modern world. Hence, the need for philosophy and spirituality has been spelt out, when endeavours of quality and excellence are being attempted against all hardships and sacrifices.

When we talk of quality, the existing literature speaks of:

- Objectivity;
- Integrity;
- Professional Competence and Due Care;
- Confidentiality;
- Professional Behaviour;
- Independence, so as to ensure compliance of standards set by the Organization.

It is an enabling task and therefore requires effective communication not just within the organization but also among all stakeholders to make them understand, that all efforts are towards a fair play and there can be no biased approaches towards an attempted goal. Everything here works beyond self and the concerted efforts of the team are for general good.

Actions and messages need to be initiated so as encourage quality work that may get recognized and rewarded. The messages can be in the form of written policies, messages, bulletins, meetings seminars, reviews, informal dialogue, mission statements, newsletters, etc. It is important to spell out that quality will over-ride commercial considerations. It is important that institutional resources are spent to drive home quality aspects in every work or assignment undertaken by the institution. Even if it is an internal endeavour, the institution and its members have to work towards a work culture that will match external requirements.

To quote Swami Vivekananda on work ethics- *“We find ourselves in the position for which we are fit... if one has some capacity above another, the world will find it out too.... He who grumbles at the little thing that has fallen to his lot to do will grumble at everything. Always grumbling, he will lead a miserable life.... But the man who does his duty as he goes, putting his shoulder to the wheel, higher and higher duties will fall to his share.”*

If we sample out people and endeavours that are worthy of emulation, we will see that they merely did what they were expected to do with a right mind and heart. This obviously brought in the quality and fine finish to their work effortlessly and naturally. Anything done without resistance and fear and without undue expectations will see the light of the day for everyone to take note of.

What then is the practice that one has to adopt to ensure principles of quality in an organization? Obviously it is the act of sacrifice, a sense of commitment, passion, compassion and a

committed conviction not to break down in adverse situations and above all being transparent to the core. If these are built into the NGO's way of working, its staff can set examples others to emulate, bringing benefits to both personal and professional work satisfaction as people adhere to self prescribed quality standards.

### 6.1.8.

#### *Supportive Measures to Implement Quality Approaches*

**Kartik** warns that to follow all the quality standards outlined, an NGO would need a strong administrative trail. This is something smaller NGOs will find it difficult to do. There is a need to build a team with members actively involved in the structure, and ability to multi task. The NGO needs to follow a hierarchy but one where individuals have the space to run their own sections / units. Constant dialogue is a must amongst the members of the team. There is a boss but there needs to be recognition that the unit will grow only when the team is in it together. Must realise that the boss / heads may be driven by idealism but the others are there for a job and so the motivational factors are different. It is then incumbent on the leaders/older people to ensure that they are able to imbue the younger ones with the vision.

**Ravi** lists the steps that need to be taken:

- Develop quality manuals to describe the mission statements on quality and excellence
- Work culture and ethics should set the quality tone in the organization
- Top leaders and supervisors to strictly adhere to the code of conduct
- To follow regulatory requirements and statutory obligations without demur. If the requirements are beyond public interest, then an inbuilt mechanism is established to confront such issues at appropriate forum.
- To attend to seminars, workshops, conferences and being part of international groups so as to understand that internal measures are measuring to world standards. If the standards at the national and international level are influenced by political and vested interests, to be proactive to thwart such influences among NGO representatives and institutions.
- To ensure that the beneficiaries of any program are made stakeholders in the quality establishment and review processes.
- The process of quality setting standards and putting them into actual practice should make all associates to be proud of being part of such institutions.
- Fruits of all development should reach the poorest of the poor through hard work, sincerity, humility, conviction and the focus should be to ensure that the quality standards are all encompassing so as to enable the poor or its next generation to work towards sustainable and enduring livelihoods.

### 6.1.9.

#### *Making Strong Partnerships<sup>5</sup>*

The first and foremost requirement of an NGO is to be able to articulate very well what it stands for. This must come from consultations with the community, and an understanding of what is the right way forward. An NGO should also articulate well its philosophical base, so that its relevance can be examined from time to time, also avoiding the risk of mission drift.

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5- Smita's reflections

Given that an NGO articulates what it stands for, and has created good and responsible mutual relationships with the community, it needs to develop work plans and budgets. The next step is to go and seek funding from like minded organisations, especially within the country and region. Development of funding strategies and plans is critical to making good partnerships.

The plan should carefully include diversified sources of funding, so that dependence on any ONE donor is reduced. Theoretically, a broad band of funding partnerships would imply less pressure to conform to any one donor. In practice it could mean that by the time an NGO gets several donors on board, several external northern donor processes would have already been internalised by the organisation, thus defeating one of the main advantages of diversified funding! In order to get out north south contradictions, it is important to find more and more local sources of funding, so as to depend less and less on northern donor funding.

At the same time, it is important to seek long term funding partners, so that partners can mutually strengthen one another. It is really not possible to have partnerships and not to be influenced by the partners. Indeed that is not even the intention. As Sampark has experienced with some of its partners, partners must mutually reinforce and support one another, not put pressures. This is the real spirit of partnership, in which it becomes a nurturing and caring relationship.

Sampark's experience has been that demanding honesty from people itself is very important, and also difficult. Even as NGOs work with the community, it is important to point out that an idealised conceptualisation of the community is problematic. Often as an NGO, Sampark has had conflicts with people who preferred corruption over honesty. It can be quite fallacious to presume that all in the community are honest and shun corruption. The ground reality is that communities can collude with dishonest NGO, government or bank staff to promote corrupt practices. For instance, the government has a scheme for training in tailoring, whereby the women who join get a stipend per month. Several women joined, but none learnt. The government officer booked the expenses but did not appoint a teacher or hold the class. The women went to collect the stipend; they gave a portion of it to the government officer. The women continued earning money from their farm labour. The women got stipend without using their time, the officer got the money that would have gone to running a class. Both saw these as benefits. The skill improvement did not take place, which was the original intention of the scheme.

There are hundreds of such examples. Yet, development discourse absolves the community and puts them on a pedestal. NGOs are seen as corrupt, government or bank officers, never people. At such times, we have to realise that we are important stakeholders ourselves. Our stakes are high too. We don't only fight for the benefit of the people; we also fight for upholding our values. Honesty is non-negotiable.

In this context, the forging of North-South partnerships can now be analysed. The southern NGO category is not uniform. There are various kinds of southern NGOs. There are those who pass on funding from northern donors, and are agents. Others implement projects. These latter are also **agents**, in that they begin to behave the same way with the local population as the donor behaves with them. They tend to imbibe the attitude of the donors, as their answerability and accountability is to the donor.

As said earlier, the attitudes of the community can be collaborative, or distrustful and extractive. Sometimes, if people have taken loan from an NGO's microcredit fund, and find out that the fund has been contributed from a foreign donor, they are less likely to return it. When foreign funds are handled by NGOs, people are also likely to believe that the intermediary NGO has kept a large part of it. This perception is also compounded by two factors: NGOs tend to keep

confidential the information about their salaries and overheads, and NGOs costs tend to be high, as they need to source and retain good development expertise. Transparency to a certain extent cannot be negotiated and the players have to understand the roles and responsibilities. At the same time, full information disclosure to the community creates another problem, as it often encourages farmers and local people to be less rather than more responsible. If they see that resources are available from outside, they can often recede on their own committed human and financial resources. If the NGO is not able to influence the grass root beneficiaries or participants to be more responsible, then the intervention may turn out to be futile. Non-negotiable quality standards have to be built in, for them to understand and operate.

Quality is judged by scale and sustainability, leading to industry drift from the poor. This has been a major flaw leading the whole industry to a spin, so much so that the whole industry has moved away from the poor. What was called 'mission drift', denied vehemently, later turned out to be an exercise in making money from the poor, in favour of NGOs, who then turned corporate. Thus development NGOs found and turned to 'markets'. This whole change in MF industry would not have come about if the southern perspectives had prevailed. Right wing attitudes have led to a bias towards profits and profit making organisations, rather than collective financial and social capital. Northern perspectives perpetuated in the south have cost development all over the world a great deal. Development funding has shifted from the poor to the non poor, from the NGOs to the corporate, from activists to contractor NGOs.

Those who monitor and enforce standards become a little bit like the donors themselves. The fears of donors get transferred to them. So does the attitude of having power over the implementing organisation.

In this scenario, it is important to respond from local needs and preferences, which invokes issues of 'Us' versus 'The Other'. Internal- external is defined differently for different agents. For instance, for the women's self help group, non members who are from the village may be 'internal' but for the NGOs, they may be 'external' to the groups. NGOs perceive the groups to be 'their' agents, but don't believe the same about non members whom they have not supported.

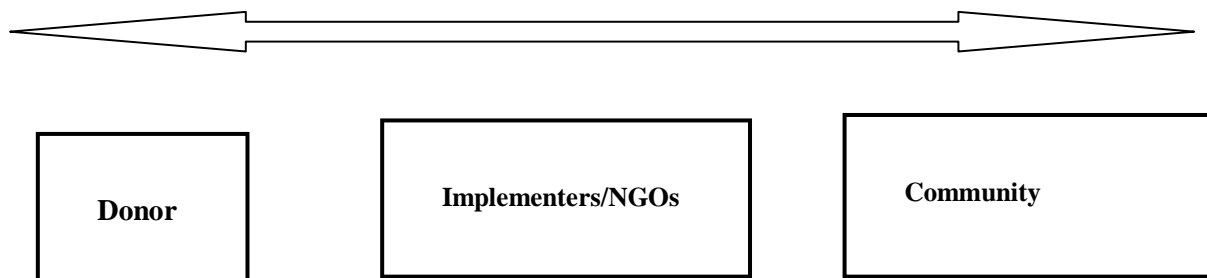
Measures of quality then also include those about governance, how money is spent, who is at the helm of affairs, whether they are related, and when and how accounts are completed etc.

Development is about NGO management, but it is also about relationships with people. Development has become a 'delivery' process, and an NGO the 'delivery vehicle'. I would draw attention to this gendered image, where the 'productive' power of the NGO is harnessed to "deliver" benefits packaged by external agencies, according to their understanding. To my mind, this undermines natural development processes, which would ensue if we proceeded on the basis of making long term relationships and mutual respect.

### 6.1.10.

#### *Partnership Quality Influences Quality of Development*

The single most critical factor in good development is good relationships, and good partnerships. The relationships of the NGO with the people it seeks to benefit is the most critical as it determines the quality of engagement and work done. Next is the partnership of the NGO with its donors, and fundraising agencies. This is depicted in the following diagram:



NGOs, as implementers of donor programmes, are the latter's' link with the community. Donor perceptions of the community are distant and largely second hand. Their expectations about quality and what "should" change at the community level can therefore be quite different from those of local NGOs. The differences in these "shoulds" create an interplay of expectations of the community, NGOs and donors that constitutes the foundation of the quality of development partnerships. Partnerships can be of three types:

- North-north, such as between northern donors and northern NGOs or consultants;
- North-south, such as between northern donors (NGOs or bilateral donors), and
- South-south, such as between southern government/donors and NGOs, or between southern NGOs and the community.

While expectations can differ among any of these categories, in general, the further removed a donor is from the community, the greater the differences. These distances are often defined by the social and cultural aspects of the environment in which the development work is situated. The examples given here elaborate some of these differences in approach and expectations.

##### *6.1.10.1 NGOs and Fundraising agencies*

The views expressed by those actively engaged in development, and those passing funds can be quite different. This is because the fund-raising organisations are oriented towards satisfying the demands of the funds-'giving' agencies, and tend to put the pressure on the funds-'recipients'. The quality standards of the former are impressed upon and demanded from the latter, and in the 'giver-receiver' equation, the funds giver, and dispenser (fundraising agency) have more power than the organisations who receive the funds. The latter need to be perceived as 'implementing' organisations and those who are directly in contact with the poor, their experiences and perspectives should therefore be valued and considered for the use of funds. However, this vast experience is often under-valued, revealing that transactions in funds have a bigger say in determining power equations than experience and contact with the poor. This is unfortunate, as no good development can be delivered without strong and long term relationships with the people one seeks to benefit. They are the final actors for whom the entire development chain works, and if the relationship with them is undervalued, then what quality of development can we hope to generate?

There are a few donors and fundraising agencies who are able to mediate effectively and be good representatives of both the sponsors on the one side and the implementing organisations and people on the other but some fundraising organisations get so occupied implementing donor standards that they completely swallow and endorse them, so that there is no difference between the donor and the agent. Such agents, fundraising organisations, are also important stakeholders, and instead of using their position to mediate and negotiate better deals for grassroots NGOs, they choose instead to just absorb and pass on donor perspectives and pressures. In this case, the fundraising organisation becomes the representative of the donor(s), and a valuable opportunity is lost, wherein it could also have been an agent of the implementing organisation, the NGO on the ground. A perfectly good opportunity to be a mediator and a learning organisation is lost when a fundraising organisation prioritises the funding agencies over the implementing ones.

### **Donor Orientations of a Fundraising Organisation**

A leading fundraising organisation in India started small, with direct relationships with a small number of NGOs and donors. Over time, the funding agencies have increased and the NGOs are 'listed', using some qualifying criteria. These criteria, referred to as "credibility" standards, are mindlessly monitored. More importantly, the relationship with the NGOs has undergone a subtle change, with the listing staff of the fundraising organisation becoming more and more directive and authoritative, even rude. NGOs are given notice and then dropped from the 'list' of organisations that can receive grants, till they comply. The reward and punishment system is put in place to ensure compliance to standards.

An even more important change has taken place. Earlier, it was the fundraising organisation that raised funds by offering a place on its website to host some 'funding products'. The NGOs decided which activities they needed regular funding for, for instance, education of children, and put information about these on the website, along with a funding product, for instance, sponsor a child's schooling for a year. The fundraising organisation then added another way of fundraising, by hosting events like marathons. In these, the NGOs invite some friends to run for them, and others to donate for the runners. The NGO engages with the fundraising, and their staffs spend a lot of time and money finding friends to run for them, and others to donate. While some benefit, others NGOs find it difficult to find the staff time to engage with this. They engaged with the fundraising organisation so that the latter would raise funds, and they could continue to engage with implementation on the ground. By demanding an intensive engagement with fundraising activities, the fundraising organisation passed on a lot of the work it was supposed to do, to the NGO, thus burdening the latter, and defeating the very purpose for which the partnership was set up.

There is yet another important implication of such event-based fundraising. NGOs engaged in implementation need to raise funding that matches long term implementation commitments with long term funding commitments. Therefore they need strategic partners. Many funding agencies are fond of 'the flavour of the day' and support different activities in different years. And they often change the NGOs they support, picking and choosing new partners every year. These trends make it difficult to find strategic long term partners.

These trends affect the quality of development partnerships that are created between NGOs, funding and fundraising agencies.

#### **6.1.10.2 Need for Remote Control**

A newly registered donor organisation in USA started off with the objective of investing in Indian agriculture sector, with the belief that attention to agriculture is important to food security. The premise that livelihoods of the farmers need to be secure for them not to shift away from farming, led to an intention of increasing farm productivity. The realisation that large tracts of India are rain-fed, and that investment is needed in these areas, the donor

focussed on looking for intervention options in these regions. He then did internet research and decided that he would fund drip irrigation for farmers, and on further research, decided which company he would order the drip irrigation sets from.

He selected NGOs based on internet search, and approached some, many of whom did not show an interest on working with this project. He then approached a medium sized NGO, who agreed with his philosophy and agreed to partner with him. The partnership negotiation, however, was not easy. The differences are listed in the following Figure:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Northern Donor</b>	<b>Southern NGO</b>
<b>Selection of farmers for piloting the scheme</b>	Send a list to the donor, who will confirm that the farmers conform to the criteria he wants, and indicate the selection	Farmers will be selected based on a process led by the women's groups in the villages, who will decide the criteria, and select ten farmers who best conform to that criteria
<b>Selection of a company to supply the drip irrigation equipment</b>	Selected by the donor, based on an evaluation of information on the web, of the most well known companies, and their web reputation of success	The NGO wanted a process by which the farmers short-list and evaluate options, and select the equipment best suited to their needs, with the best negotiated offers of price and service terms
<b>Close monitoring and evaluation by American interns for a year</b>	Selected and suggested an organisation which sends American interns to the NGO, for which the costs have to be borne by the NGO	Suggested that evaluation be done only AFTER the project has started and completed reasonable time. If interns are to come in the first year, they should assist implementation rather than evaluate. It is better to take local interns, who speak the language and can relate better to farmers than bring American youngsters as they need much more investment in language support and other costs.

These issues came to a head when the local NGO decided not to continue with the partnership, as the northern donor seemed too overbearing. Fortunately, the issues were resolved, when the two organisations decided to talk about them, and each conceded a lot of space to the other. The southern NGO realised that the American young people were in fact very dedicated and would bring good energy to the organisation, and invited the young interns. The northern NGO realised that they need to trust the Indian NGO for good work, and give greater independence to local people about their choice of participants and equipment.

### **6.1.10.3 Women's Empowerment: A Shared Agenda**

The head of a voluntary organisation, at her speech in an international forum, talked about the fact that women, even though illiterate, are able to manage money, and manage their own organisations. It is most beneficial for them to save money and rotate it among themselves, as it



augments their social and financial capital. However, few donors acknowledge this. They choose to invest in microfinance organisations which are externally managed and controlled. Donors have a preference for large and computerised data bases, rather than informal money management and minimum book keeping, the latter being viewed as “lack of systems”. On this premised, little investment is made in building women’s own organisations. After she completed her speech, an Italian woman approached her and said she would like to talk with her. The Italian woman said she represented a new NGO, The Pangea Foundation<sup>6</sup>, whose objective was women’s empowerment, and would like to fund the work of this organisation. The local NGO head was surprised. She explained to the Italian how the organisation was totally focussed on women taking their own time to learn and a partnership with people that guided and was also guided by their needs. There was a clear element of ‘trans-disciplinarity’ in the development work of the NGO, with the community participants and NGOs both being teachers and learners. The Italian woman respected and valued this approach. The proposal was drawn, and it took a year for the formalities to be completed. The relationship has now lasted five years. The Indian NGO articulates the local needs, and the Italian NGO participates every year in understanding this need. The proposal is then formulated, based on which the Italian NGO raises the funds. The fundraising has spanned supporting women’s organisation building, educating children of the poorest women, vocational training, health and mental health support to women, and legal awareness: holistic support for women’s empowerment. Staff and leader training, and investment in monitoring and impact assessment systems has enabled women’s organisations to demand and access credit from mainstream organisations. The coverage is 35 villages, with 3,000 women members. It has lifted all these households out of poverty, and the women manage a fund of over \$300,000 today, through seven cooperatives. The Indian organisation was able to leverage the Italian funds to raise resources to support the education of 1600 children, vocational training of 400 young women, and developing a community based mental health model that is documented and replicable across women’s self help groups.

#### ***6.1.10.4 Outreach to the Poor and Financial Sustainability: A Conflict Confirmed***

Sampark started its work with extreme poor women, many of them from among the scheduled castes (SCs). Many of these were devadasis, who are dedicated to God by social customs, and are denied the right to marry. They suffer human rights deprivation, and are subjected to sexual arrangements outside of marriage. Even though this practice has been illegal since the early 1980s, its social sanction has allowed its continuation, and its only for the past ten years that the dedications have stopped. This means that there are several women in the villages of north Karnataka, numbering ten to twenty per village, in the age group of 30 to 60, who have had little support from their male partners, and have the responsibility to bring up their children as well as care for their ageing parents. Their children often drop out of school because they cannot cope with studies, and also to support the mother with house care and earning. These children have had very little schooling, are engaged in grazing animals, or head loading, or other work which does not provide a decent work environment or income. They required vocational training so that they could improve their work and livelihoods, but they could not afford to get themselves trained, the opportunity cost was too high for them. So Sampark needed to introduce a programme which provided vocational training suited to the needs of each young girl and boy, along with a stipend that enabled the family to forego the work the child was employed in. Sampark had been talking about this need in various forums, and a Swiss organisation came forward to join hands for the vocational training. The training programme was started, stabilised and found useful for changing the lives and livelihoods of the extreme poor. However, the programme was fully grant based, so the Swiss organisation suggested that

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6- <http://www.pangeaonlus.org/en/>

Sampark look for options to expand operations, and launch a vocational training institute which could reach the poor, but at the same time charge fees to others, and to companies in which it places these youth, so that the institute operates at a scale that becomes viable, not needing continuous grant assistance. Sampark evaluated this possibility twice, each time the finding has been that if the poor have to be reached, they have to be given not only free training, but also stipends to enable them to afford the time to get skilled. And the market is not yet so sophisticated that these costs can be covered by profits derived from those who can pay. The potential for such an institute is still under examination. A path which reaches the poor, and at the same time can be followed at a scale which is financially sustainable for the organisation, has not yet been found. The Swiss organisation has continued to support Sampark, through the training and now with the search for scale and sustainability. The partnership has been one of mutual support and listening, especially to the needs of the families that require continued and substantial support to attain sustainable livelihoods.

#### **6.1.10.5 Women's Literacy and Women's Empowerment: Long Term Investments**

Sampark started its work in Koppal in 1995, with the first self help groups (SHGs) formed in 1996-97. The oldest groups are, therefore, 13 years old. Sampark's focus was always on the poorest women in the villages; hence most members of SHGs were from the scheduled castes (SC), whose homes are always on the peripheries of the village, separated from those of the general castes. Even among the SCs, the ones most marginalised are the devadasis, who are denied the right to marriage, and make socially sanctioned sexual alliances with the better off men in the village, usually from the general castes. Invariably, the SCs are poorer than the rest of the village, and the devadasis the poorest among these.

The SHGs are groups of 10 to 15 women who come together every week to save money. After three to six months of savings, the members loan the money out to one another for small needs, such as medical expenses, buying food, paying school fees, etc. As their money grows, it is possible for them to open bank accounts and take loans from banks. To qualify for bank and other external loans, it becomes important for members to maintain account books. It was, therefore, important for the women to learn to read and write, yet, most were unable to spend the time, and could not see the need to become literate.

Over the years, the SHGs grew, the women consolidated groups of 8 to 10 SHGs to federate into cooperatives, and their money operations grew from handing up to \$1000 per group, to handling \$10,000 - \$20,000 per cooperative. Sampark supported the cooperatives to appoint staff who would do the book-keeping, but in the meanwhile, women also realised the importance of learning. Sampark prepared a proposal for offering adult literacy to women, with the objective of empowering them to manage their livelihoods needs. This project is supported by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, and aims to offer literacy to 2000 women in 30 villages.

As part of the project, street plays were done in each village to raise awareness, and 30 literacy facilitators were hired, one per village, and they received technical inputs and exposure visits for planning the literacy classes. A village literacy centre (VLC) has been opened in each of the 30 villages. Women have enrolled for classes, and 1000 have attended two residential courses of five days each; they now need to practice and advance their basic knowledge of numbers and letters at the VLC.

The attendance at the VLC is good, and the women very enthusiastic to come there. Yet, an early review revealed that they spend some time learning, and the remaining time talking to one another. The social contact is at least as important as literacy skills. The VLCs are building solidarity among the women. A pure technical review would criticise this on the ground that women would progress faster on their learning of reading and writing, if they interacted less. It

is important, however, to realise that two important factors are at work. First, the women are so busy in their farm work and household chores, they have very little time to socialise, the contact with other women, to share their life's experiences, are very valuable to them. The second is that these women have never been to school, and are not used to classroom learning formats. They get tired of learning after half an hour, and they also get scared when they cannot understand concepts, words or the written language. To break the latter, Sampark has introduced learning techniques which are simple and enjoyable, such as writing letters to one another, or of immediate use, such as filling forms for bank deposits and withdrawals and railway tickets. These act to break the learning barrier and keep the motivation high.

The programme has high costs. It supports women to take control of their lives and their organisations. The actual rate of learning has been slower than the expected rate. Yet, these are long term investments in women's empowerment. The bottom line is that any intervention which is high quality and people oriented has to be long term, and has to learn and adapt itself to their needs and situations.

#### ***6.1.10.6 Loan Monitoring and Repayment Systems: External and Internal Perceptions of Creditworthiness***

The next story relates to the same cooperatives. In 2010, 2800 women are members of 200 groups, federated into seven cooperatives. Their own savings are about \$ 120,000 and together with their profits and external loans, they manage a total capital of over \$ 300,000. However, their loan demand, which has now reached another \$300,000, remains unmet. To get them this additional loan fund, Sampark has been connecting them with loan providing organisations in India. The first loan from mainstream banking sector was provided by NABARD Financial Services (NABFINS), to three cooperatives. These are the best cooperatives, which have largely the better off women among them. The poorest women tend to have weaker cooperatives, and take longer to come up to standard.

Along with building the capacities of the other four cooperatives, Sampark invited another mainstream private organisation to assess them for providing loan funds. The external organisation noticed that the women were allowing advance payment of loans. This means that even if the repayment schedule of a loan of Rs. 10,000 is for 10 equal instalments in a year, if a woman wishes, she can pay more than the instalment due in any month. For instance, in March, when the harvest comes in, if she wishes to, she can pay Rs. 5,000 instead of Rs. 1,000 of instalment. The external agency which came for evaluating the credit and repayment system took an objection to this practice, and termed it "Lack of system". The practice of making advance payments was judged as the cooperatives being less creditworthy.

Let's see it now from the women's point of view. When the cooperative gives a loan to a member, it stipulates a repayment period and instalment, say ten instalments of Rs. 1,000 each for a loan of Rs. 10,000. The woman started paying this in January, and paid a second instalment in February, and then in March had good yield from the crops, so repaid Rs. 5,000. From the point of view of the external agency, this increases the cash flow for the cooperative, which the cooperative has not planned. It also reduces the interest the cooperative would have earned. The cooperative members, however, welcome such advance payment. To begin with, they have realised repayment. The member who has repaid has reduced her loan burden, and her interest burden. The cooperative can now lend this money to another member, with money circulating faster; interest earning will increase and not reduce. As the interest earnings are to be shared among the members of a cooperative, the lender and borrower both benefit. This teaches us important lessons about differences in external and internal perspectives in microfinance.

*When the microfinance organisations of the poor are owned and managed by them, the conflicts arising from an external/internal dichotomy are the least. For an externally managed MFI, women's earning is their loss. For a cooperative, as the individual is part of the same collective, the differences between the individual and the collective are minimised. Thus what is good practice in a people-owned organisation can be perceived as negative from the point of view of an external and commercial NGO.*

*It is very important that supporting and capacity building NGOs don't build pecuniary interests that compete with those of the people they seek to benefit.*

## **6.1.11.** **Conclusions**

The experiences shared by the authors of this paper highlight that all stakeholders in development assign meanings to the work that they do. Field based discussions, project designs, grants, bribes, loans can all carry different meanings, depending on the perspectives of the particular stakeholder. What donors consider a 'partnership' may be a 'contract' for the NGO, and may imply 'compliance' for the local community. It may mean 'rejection' to those the project does not define as its beneficiaries, even if those excluded are too rich to be included on poverty focussed projects. This reminds us that the community is not one homogeneous whole, but divided in its interests and alliances. Thus 'development quality' can have a different meaning to different stakeholders, depending on their own perspectives.

In the debate about NGOs and funding agencies, and north and south organisations, we need to recognise that organisational processes are very much like family processes. The heads of organisations are perceived as the centre, with even other equally senior staff often competing to be close to them. This proximity can be quite important for their motivation, and can even confer a certain power in the eyes of others.

Relationships among staff, senior-senior, senior-junior, and junior-junior, become equally important to the motivation and happiness with which people work in organisations. The tensions that people carry from home to work affects the work atmosphere. Often, we ignore these links, or consider them so "natural" that we forget to allow for them in our workspaces. Invariably, when the relationships with partners, parents, or children are disturbed, work relationships get affected. When heads of organisations go through these troubles, the fundraising and managerial capacities of these organisations dip down as well.

There is a third set of relationships, that between the NGO and the community. Here again, expectations and resources both come into play. The community expects NGOs to bring external resources, and the NGO in turn expects people to collaborate with external projects. As ground realities often change, whereas project designs remain inflexible, the pressure to comply creates tension in the equation between NGOs and the community. These relationships affect the quality and impact of development on the ground. Often we account for all the professional issues, but forget to consider the social relationships and processes that determine the quality of all development work.

The discussion in this paper shows that each partner must be willing to give up on preconceived notions. The US donor had to give up on the control over all decisions relating to implementation, and had to leave decisions to the women if it wanted to see meaningful development on the ground. The loaning organisation first agreed to this, but later could not

deal with what it perceived as lack of control, and did not in fact carry forward the contract or send loan funds to the NGO that wanted greater trust and agency for women.

The quality of development depends fully on the quality of relationships between the local NGO and the community at one end and that between the NGO and the donor at another. Good relationships between the community and the local NGO do not imply smooth sailing operations. The lives and livelihoods of the poor are strained, and these strains and difficulties reflect on the success of the intervention projects introduced by the NGO and donors. If a linear growth is imagined and expected, tensions arise, and the community, NGO and donors can end up creating documents and imageries which conform to the ideals that were imagined, but are far removed from ground reality. If the NGO and donors are open to dealing with ground realities, and have a conversation of equality with the local community, then negotiations are possible, and an environment of joint learning is created. Such an environment is never free of stresses and strains. Each actor group, the community, the NGO and the donor, must step out of the pre-conceived perceptions it carries, and engage with issues relevant and important to the other. It means the NGO must step into the shoes of the community, and the donor into the shoes of the NGO, and the community into the shoes of the NGO and the donor. The processes of this type of 'trans-disciplinarity' need to be recognised or valued in development partnerships. When such processes exist, each partner goes beyond what is expected, to what is the reality, and adapts the programme strategy. The adaptation strategy has to be jointly developed, and to be successful, has to have a meaning for all the partners. Thus shared meanings are absolutely essential for partnerships to be long term, sustainable and effective in terms of development results.

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## 6.2.

# La Qualité vue du Sénégal

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Septembre 2010

### 6.2.1.

#### *Section 1 : Perceptions des contextes*

##### *6.2.1.1. Les contextes généraux*

Ils sont avant tout marqués par les **Ajustements structurels** : les pouvoirs publics n'ont plus les mêmes champs d'intervention. L'apparition de **nouveaux acteurs** et la part de plus en plus importante de la Société Civile dans la gestion des affaires redessine les rapports public-privé.

Les **Crises récurrentes** au niveau mondial, entraînent la nécessité d'investissements conséquents par les états du Nord et les agences des Nations Unies pour sauver plusieurs institutions de la faillite ; d'où un intérêt moindre pour les questions liées à la lutte contre la pauvreté et les inégalités.

Dans ce contexte, il faut retenir aussi la tendance générale à gommer les spécificités des structures à but non lucratif (publique ou non) et à vocation sociale pour les placer sous l'exigence d'une **modernité** et d'une **rationalité** caractérisant plutôt les entreprises du secteur marchand. Et parallèlement à celle-ci, la tendance à exiger des organisations marchandes à prendre en compte des objectifs de protection de l'environnement et une responsabilité sociale dans leurs actions et leur fonctionnement.

##### *6.2.1.2. Les contextes de la Solidarité internationale*

Le « monde du développement » est caractérisé depuis longtemps par une **tendance à la transposition** des concepts, outils et modes expérimentés avec succès, dans le domaine militaire et principalement celui des affaires (théories et démarches du management). On a déjà fait remarquer la similitude du langage du développement avec ces derniers : « cible », « impact », « stratégie », « lobby », « plan stratégique », « gestion axée sur les résultats », etc. La « mode naissante » d'une « démarche qualité » et de certification de labels ne serait alors que la dernière d'une longue liste.

Les constats de **large insatisfaction des bénéficiaires** et/ou d'**échec des politiques de développement** dans les pays du Sud devraient pourtant inciter à la prudence. Des processus sont lancés qui ne produisent pas les effets attendus : il est alors naturel que l'on revienne sur les

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différents moments de ce processus pour identifier les nœuds propices au changement souhaité et ceux qui ne le sont pas.

Enfin il y a aussi une prise de conscience grandissante de l'impact de la **corruption** sur l'**efficacité** et l'**efficience** des politiques et stratégies de développement

#### *6.2.1.2.1. Selon les parties prenantes*

La **persistance d'inégalités** au sein de la société et dans le fonctionnement des institutions, y compris les projets / programmes de développement domine les préoccupations ; d'où la nécessité que les innovations sociales promues à travers les ONGD ne reproduisent pas les mêmes mécanismes soit au regard de leur action, soit au plan de leur fonctionnement.

La multiplication des exercices d'**évaluations** font voir de **grands déficits** en termes de rendements, d'efficacité, d'efficience et d'impact en ce qui concerne les programmes de développement.

Les **détournements de fonds**, la corruption, etc., restent des enjeux délicats notamment dans les pays bénéficiant de programmes d'aide publique au développement<sup>8</sup>

#### *6.2.1.2.2. Selon les ONGD*

Au plan international : c'est d'abord et surtout la **raréfaction de l'Aide Publique au Développement** (APD) en même temps qu'augmente l'exigence d'efficacité et d'efficience de cette aide. Cela crée une pression et des exigences accrues au niveau des donateurs, qu'ils reporteraient sur les ONGD.

En même temps que s'effectue un désengagement de l'état, une décentralisation avec cependant un faible transfert de ressources de l'état vers les Collectivités Locales, les ONGD sont appelés à « boucher les trous » pour la prise en charge de la « demande sociale ».

### **6.2.1.3. Traduction en enjeux pour les ONGD**

L'**accès aux ressources** et le **contrôle** de celle-ci par différentes parties prenantes ayant des intérêts parfois concurrents sur celles-ci ; derrière l'exigence de qualité portée par des parties prenantes envers les ONGD, se cacherait ainsi une volonté de réduire leurs marges de manœuvres en tant qu'intermédiaires, en relais des bailleurs de fonds et « bénéficiaires » (directs ou indirects) et ainsi les pousser à consacrer une bonne part des ressources mobilisées aux actions directes sur le terrain (et donc moins aux frais de structure).

La **dimension politique** est aussi très déterminante ; les enjeux de pouvoir sont en effet fort exacerbés aujourd'hui : les processus ouverts dans le cadre des projets/programmes de développement se limitent de moins en moins à des aspects techniques, organisationnels, etc. mais investissent et agissent sur les phénomènes liés à la citoyenneté, aux droits (minorités, marginalisés...), à l'exploitation des ressources naturelles, etc. Ainsi, l'intervention « développement », sans être nécessairement partisane, investit le champ du « politique » et en conséquence fait réagir les acteurs « professionnels » de la « politique » qui, le plus souvent, voient cela comme un incursion non justifiée sur leur « territoire ». A défaut de renvoyer les OSC et ONG dans leurs « enclos » traditionnels, il est question d'éprouver à la fois leur

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8- Guillaume Olivier, "L'aide publique au développement : un outil à réinventer", Édition Charles Léopold Mayer

**légitimité** et leur **consistance** en les interpellant sur la « qualité » de leurs processus et la significativité de leurs résultats. C'est aussi pour mettre la pression de leur côté, comme ils ont tendance à le faire avec les acteurs étatiques.

Dans ce sillage, un enjeu majeur tourne autour de la **clarification des rôles des parties prenantes, notamment la place de la société civile (ONG, OSC, OP<sup>9</sup>) dans les processus de décision et la gouvernance**. Les OSC et ONG font face au défi de justifier leurs prétentions à jouer un rôle significatif dans ce cadre ; ce qui passe par la démonstration de leur **crédibilité** au-devant des autres parties prenantes.

## 6.2.2.

### *Section 2 : Les exigences et attentes en matière de Qualité des ONGD*

#### 6.2.2.1. Selon les parties prenantes

Pour ce qui est des acteurs étatiques, ce serait une **contribution au service public** qui est attendue d'elles pour compléter l'action de l'état qui ne peut être exhaustive par rapport aux besoins et qui souffre parfois d'inadéquation des approches, démarches, outils, etc. au regard des caractéristiques des bénéficiaires.

Les bailleurs de fonds parlent d'abord de **respect des procédures** à l'effet de « sécuriser » les investissements financiers, de façon à amoindrir les risques sur ce plan et assurer la **redevabilité** requise par les institutions et l'opinion publique au Nord.

L'**expérience** et la **base sociale** sont très importantes aussi au regard des bailleurs dans la mesure où l'un des motifs de leur conjonction avec les ONGD réside dans leurs proximité avec les populations ciblées et dans leur capacité supposée à adresser et mettre en œuvre des processus les touchant directement.

Il y a aussi l'exigence de **prise en charge de certaines questions sociétales** pour lesquelles des principes fondamentaux pour les sociétés occidentales sont en jeu : le genre, l'environnement, les droits humains, etc.

Pour les bénéficiaires, c'est l'**écoute** par rapport à leurs préoccupations et la **capacité à mobiliser des ressources et des partenaires pour la satisfaction de leurs besoins** qui sont primordiaux dans leurs attentes. Ils attendent également d'eux : une bonne connaissance du problème et une réelle proximité dans l'action.

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9- OP : organisations paysannes, OSC : organisations de la société civile



### 6.2.2.2. Selon les ONGD

Des représentants d'ONGD estiment que les acteurs étatiques (du sud) font montre de beaucoup d'attentes implicites et de peu d'exigences envers les ONGD. Au contraire de leurs homologues du Nord qui exprimeraient clairement leurs attentes par des invitations à la mise en place de cadres de concertation avec les OSI. Ici, on ne sent d'exigences que quand on « gêne » : quand il y a quelques frictions du fait de positions critiques envers le gouvernement; ou quand les ONG et OSC prennent des responsabilités dans la mise en œuvre de certains axes ou stratégies des politiques publiques ou composantes de grands programmes. Ces mêmes acteurs sont beaucoup plus familiers avec les attentes et surtout les exigences des bailleurs de fonds, auxquels ils se confrontent régulièrement. Les principales attentes à l'égard des ONGD :

- La réactivité et la rapidité dans la mise en œuvre des actions,
- La proximité avec les bénéficiaires,
- La connaissance du contexte,
- La capacité à rendre compte,
- Une grosse attente porte sur la capacité à rendre visible l'action.

Les acteurs ONGD ne perçoivent pas vraiment d'exigences manifestées de la part des bénéficiaires ; certes, les choses commencent à changer mais on reste toujours dans un « marché du développement » où ce sont les opportunités d'accès à la ressource financière qui structurent les rapports entre acteurs.

### 6.2.2.3. Autres dimensions et questionnements

Les évolutions sur le plan de la qualité souffrent d'une absence de débat de fond qui peut oblitérer la pertinence des dispositifs en place. La justification semble aller de soi tant la qualité est un « désirable absolu » en tant que « *norme supposée idéale et universelle*<sup>10</sup> » : personne ne peut se prononcer contre la qualité. Certes, mais les modalités diffèrent, les situations sont particulières.

Certaines **mesures d'accompagnement** semblent manquer dans le paradigme actuel :

- Les bailleurs de Fonds devraient être plus proactifs dans la **maîtrise par les OSC de leurs outils** (formats, canevas, procédures...), à l'exemple de l'UE qui organise des formations là-dessus, met en place des outils de gestion de programme,
- Un accompagnement externe en **renforcement des capacités d'analyse des politiques publiques** est requis car les capacités sont très faibles à ce niveau (prendre du recul par rapport à ces politiques publiques aux différentes échelles, pouvoir les analyser, les interpeller, etc.),
- Les **ressources** (au sens large) de l'état devraient être mise à profit pour tous les intervenants **sans discrimination** et l'état doit associer plus étroitement les OSC / ONG aux initiatives de formation et renforcement de capacité qu'il organise pour ses agents,
- Le renforcement institutionnel et organisationnel et la disponibilité des ressources qui les rendent possibles,
- Assurer stabilité, sécurité sociale et développement personnel (vs ressources non prévisibles, précarité),
- Procurer aux ONGD ou OSC qui ont fait leurs preuves des ressources programmatiques sur trois ou quatre ans,

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10- Cf. Justine ROSSELET. «- ONG et management fondé sur la qualité : terre des hommes ou terre des normes ? ». - ITINÉRAIRES - Etudes du développement ; n° 19. – IUED Genève, septembre 2003.

- Faciliter / soutenir des diagnostics organisationnels
- Favoriser la reconnaissance du rôle des ONGD dans les processus de politique

Quoi qu'il en soit de leur pertinence, ces démarches, dispositifs-outils imposées<sup>11</sup> aux ONG et OSC par souci de garantir la qualité ne sont pas sans **conséquences** sur celles-ci, leurs évolutions et leurs résultats :

- Tendance à la spécialisation pour répondre aux « préférences » de bailleurs de fonds,
- Exacerbation de la tendance à la professionnalisation qui peut se révéler source de nouvelles lourdeurs, sans nouvelles plus values pour la réalisation de la mission propre de la structure<sup>12</sup>,
- Nécessité d'avoir des structures administratives solides et assez stables (gestion des contrats, de la relation avec les bailleurs de fonds, gestion financière, etc.); d'où nécessité de faire face à des coûts supplémentaires non négligeables,
- Nécessité de se tenir informé et avoir une circulation de l'information touchant le niveau micro mis aussi macro comme les grandes politiques internationales.

### 6.2.3.

## **Section 3 : Les démarches, outils et dispositifs en matière de Qualité des ONGD**

### 6.2.3.1. Selon les parties prenantes

Du point de vue de l'administration, il semble que les démarches et support en matière de qualité se confondent avec la fonction de contrôle telle qu'elle existe classiquement. Le contexte actuel marqué par la faiblesse des résultats et la multiplication de scandales financiers impliquant des agents de l'état au niveau déconcentré entraîne certes un surplus d'efforts sans que des innovations ou des systèmes spécifiques soient mis en place... Pour ce qui est des ONGD/OSC, la question se traite dans le cadre de la contractualisation (cf. Cas des Programmes nationaux d'alphabétisation où les attentes et exigences sont consignées dans les cahiers de charge). Ensuite, dans les cadres de concertation où ces organisations sont interpellées comme les autres acteurs (Etat, partenaires, société civile...). Enfin, par le biais des missions de supervision (à la quelle participent les OSC) qui permettent parfois aux parties prenantes de s'informer sur les réalisations des ONG et OSC.

Le représentant de partenaire technique et financier interrogé renvoie cela aux procédures qui encadrent les actions financées, lesquels doivent être conformes à ce qui est défini par Bruxelles. D'ailleurs, l'agence de Coopération Technique Belge, la CTB « *est en train de constituer une démarche qualité qui servira de référence pour toutes leurs actions dans ce domaine* » (cf. notre entretien avec le représentant sénégalais de la CTB).

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11- « Beaucoup de ces relations sont basées sur du consensus mais il y a des parties qui sont imposées ; beaucoup d'éléments du contexte que nous sommes obligés de prendre en compte sont ignorées par l'autre partie ; même lorsque leurs analyses sont devenues caduques.

12- « Par exemple, pour ce qui est du GRET au Sénégal : est-ce qu'en mettant en place un système de GRH centralisé (on est 700 salariés dont 100 salariés français), on va vers plus de qualité ? Je n'en suis pas sûr ; on va aller vers plus de visibilité ([sur ce qu'on fait] pour le bailleur, plus de sécurité pour celui qui finance, mais cela ne signifie pas *ipso facto* que nous allons être beaucoup plus pertinents dans nos interventions, par rapport aux bénéficiaires. » ( entretien représentant avec le représentant du GRET au Sénégal).

### **6.2.3.2. Selon les ONGD**

De façon générale, il n'existe pas encore de démarche systématisé ni d'outils – support consacrant une « démarche qualité » en tant que telle ; par contre, sont cités plusieurs dimensions déjà en place et ancrées dans la culture d'association et qui correspondent à ce souci :

- Les démarches en termes de suivi-évaluation – apprentissage qui sont de plus en plus systématisés,
- La professionnalisation des tâches et fonctions,
- Le renforcement de capacités par des dispositifs de formation continuée qui permettent aux agents de maîtriser les procédures.

Dans les relations avec les « bénéficiaires », on fait mention simplement des démarches participatives → implication, dialogue et concertation dans les phases de conception et de mise en œuvre.

## 6.2.4.

### **Section 4 : Analyse transversale**

#### **6.2.4.1. Le rapport entre contexte et exigences**

La tendance à la professionnalisation et la propension grandissante à instaurer des dispositifs « qualité » autant pour l'action que la structuration / gouvernance des ONGD est-elle la dernière expression de la verticalité des rapports dans le milieu du développement ?

L'exigence de qualité, apparaît toujours comme d'origine exogène. Certes, « il y a des réseaux de la société civile qui existent et qui travaillent là-dessus pour leurs membres ». Mais on remarque que « très peu en ont fait un combat politique qui engage leur propre crédibilité au devant d'eux-mêmes » et une exigence à l'égard des autres parties prenantes, même quand celles-ci détiennent le pouvoir politique ou les ressources.

Le lien entre *diminution des ressources consacrées à l'APD* et *recrudescence d'exigences procédurales se justifiant de la « qualité »*, lequel est fait spontanément par l'ensemble des acteurs ONGD et bailleurs de fonds interrogés, semble un indicateur pertinent des enjeux véritables. Cela pourrait signifier que les justifications politiques ou éthiques viennent seulement en appoint. Si les bénéficiaires ont théoriquement autant sinon plus de raisons que les autres parties prenantes à rechercher des garanties sur la pertinence et la fiabilité de l'action des ONGD, ils n'ont pas pour autant les mêmes moyens pour s'assurer de la prise en charge de leurs préoccupations par les ONGD et autres parties prenantes. D'où leur tendance à seulement émettre des doléances. Certes, les processus initiés par ces parties prenantes leur donnent de plus en plus de place dans les phases de formulation des projets. Mais on pourrait dire que le dernier mot revient toujours aux ONGD et bailleurs de fonds.

En ce qui concerne les « bénéficiaires » (tels les organisations paysannes ou communautaires de base), lorsqu'il arrive qu'ils manifestent des exigences, ils ont aussitôt à répondre de défis qui supposent l'existence en leur sein de capacités importantes (avoir des structures organisées ou à défaut un leader charismatique) ; d'où, on finit souvent par retomber dans le schéma classique de relations... Pour « porter leurs nouveaux habits » de partie prenante à part entière de l'élaboration des politiques, il y a un changement important nécessaire au niveau des organisations paysannes et OSC tant nationales que locales (expertise, accès et traitement de l'information, maîtrise de l'environnement juridique et institutionnel, etc.).

#### **6.2.4.2. Convergences-divergences intra- et intercatégorielles**

Il est important de souligner ici la faiblesse du dialogue avec l'état relevé par les ONGD et surtout le fait qu'ils ne parviennent pas à lire clairement les exigences de celui-ci. Pourtant, il existe un cadre juridique encadrant les ONG, leurs droits et devoirs, la validation et l'évaluation régulière de leur programme d'investissement<sup>13</sup> et son utilité pour les parties prenantes. Dans les textes, une évaluation conjointe (Direction Développement Communautaire<sup>14</sup> – ONG) est prévue qui permet d'éviter les dérives et les possibilités de réajustements pour les organisations. Dans l'esprit, il s'agit de trouver des voies d'améliorations ensemble. Mais la Direction rencontre des problèmes de programmation des évaluations car cela représente nombre important et qu'elle se trouve face à un manque de moyens. Ce qui pose la question de la

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13- Le PI représente l'engagement pris par l'ONG auprès de l'État pour une période de deux ans, auquel l'Etat contribue en attribuant des facilités telles que la défiscalisation, la détaxation, etc. Il présente le programme d'activités de l'organisation demandeuse, la stratégie de mise en œuvre, les résultats attendus, les moyens matériels à acquérir, moyens financiers, etc.

14- Qui assure la tutelle des ONG au Sénégal

cohérence de l'action gouvernementale dans l'encadrement des actions des intervenants dans le développement (ONG, Association, organismes privés, etc.).

Il semblerait que les acteurs étatiques aient eu jusqu'ici une approche fonctionnelle de leurs relations avec les ONGD, d'où une absence d'initiatives propres pour les solliciter ou leur faire part d'attentes et d'exigences explicites sur le plan de la qualité. Les acteurs étatiques (à toutes les échelles) se plaignent invariablement du manque de visibilité des actions des ONGD et de leur manque de maîtrise de leurs agendas, sans prendre d'initiatives hardies et soutenues pour changer cela. La rencontre avec les ONGD est plutôt occasionnée par les conditionnalités (explicites ou implicites) des bailleurs de fonds ou l'effet de la montée en puissance de mouvements citoyens davantage que par l'effet d'une vision et d'une stratégie intégrée.

Le fait que les administrations comme les ONGD restent dépendantes du « marché du développement » les place dans des contraintes réelles pour s'organiser selon des perspectives à long terme.

Par ailleurs, les attentes des bailleurs de fonds ne sont presque jamais discutées dans des instances de concertation, mais sont introduites directement dans les termes de référence des appels à proposition, les contrats et procédures à respecter. En général, c'est « à prendre ou à laisser ».

*A contrario*, certains acteurs pensent, qu'au-delà des limites du paradigme actuel, chaque acteur dispose d'une liberté d'agir selon sa propre vision, ses stratégies, ses pratiques, etc. mais tous sont appelés nécessairement à prendre en charge les exigences des autres parties prenantes avec lesquels ils sont en interaction. Il s'agit surtout d'**ajustements nécessaires dans le cadre d'un partenariat orienté vers la recherche de la qualité**. Si on n'est pas prêt à accepter d'ajustement par rapport aux autres parties (alors qu'on n'est pas seul, ni le plus légitime, ni n'agissons pour notre propre compte), il est alors indispensable de réexaminer avec ces parties prenantes comment gérer ce différentiel »

#### **6.2.4.3. Les façons de penser la qualité (tentative typologique) et leur rapport avec les conceptions plus classiques de la qualité**

##### *6.2.4.3.1. Point de vue d'acteurs<sup>15</sup>*

*Qu'est-ce qu'on entendrait par qualité ? Pour qui ? Pour quoi ?*

"La qualité, c'est la traçabilité avant tout », c'est d'être capable à un moment donné, par rapport à un évènement, de pouvoir retracer cet évènement, de voir comment on en est arrivé là, via quelles personnes, quelles moyens, quelles circonstances" (Un représentant sénégalais de l'ONG française GRET).

"Ça interpelle sur la notion de capitalisation...ça remonte à loin dans l'histoire : c'est ce que faisaient les égyptiens avec leurs scribes...capter et archiver l'information sur les différentes actions, c'est quelque chose de très important... ; mais ça suppose une organisation, une façon de faire qui est propre à chaque institution et qui demande une certaine discipline ; mais à défaut, on ne peut pas tendre vers la qualité ; faut aussi avoir, au sein d'une organisation donnée, une vision partagée i.e. que tout le monde aille dans le même sens par rapport à cette question de la qualité, que les références soient compris et acceptées par toutes les personnes qui vont être soumis aux démarches...." (Un représentant sénégalais de l'ONG française GRET).

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15- Dans cette section, sont repris des propos d'acteurs rencontrés lors des investigations de terrain.

*C'est quoi ?* C'est s'assurer que le travail qu'on fait répond aux enjeux (sociétaux, politique, etc.) et au contexte dans lequel on évolue (un entretien avec un représentant sénégalais d'OXFAM).

#### 6.2.4.3.2. *Mes réflexions et quelques commentaires libres*

La qualité apparaît à certains comme l'effectivité d'une adéquation des moyens aux finalités. Or, la finalité dans le domaine qui est questionné ici, c'est la solidarité : la question devient alors « qu'est-ce qui montre / fait que c'est de la solidarité ? » et non pas « qu'est-ce qui fait / montre que ce que je donne est bien géré ? ».

Ensuite, s'agissant de développement – donc de changement social et politique – la qualité est une matière politique, c'est-à-dire que c'est un objet qui est déterminée et régulée collectivement par l'ensemble des parties prenantes impliquées ou concernées, de façon horizontale, quels que soient par ailleurs leurs statuts, rôles et fonctions. Il importe alors de ne pas confondre la « qualité » elle-même – définie AVEC les autres dans le cadre de la négociation des projets – programmes – et le fait de s'organiser pour contribuer à cette qualité (pour sa part). Croire que tout seul, de par son ingénierie, on peut atteindre la qualité est encore une forme de centration et de conception linéaire de l'action de développement de ses « effets » / « impacts ».

La définition de ce qu'est la qualité appartient à toutes les parties prenantes impliquées / concernées par une situation ; même s'il fallait qu'elle y consacrent un nombre élevé d'investigations, d'études et de publications, les acteurs du Nord ne sauraient tout seuls définir la qualité (autrement dit, le type de société, de rapports et les formes de régulation qui y ont cours) pour le compte des acteurs du Sud, pour ensuite voir comment l'appliquer, dans « l'intérêt des bénéficiaires », par des processus supposés participatifs.

Par contre, la manière de s'organiser pour arriver à ce qui est désigné « comme « qualité » appartient à chaque famille d'acteur/organisation ; le défi étant alors d'y arriver au terme d'un processus articulant outils et créativité. Dans ce sens, la qualité est également perçue comme corollaire à l'innovation dans le sens où il est recherché des solutions qui permettent de sortir des impasses habituelles ou des lourdeurs classiques connues dans les interventions jusqu'alors en cours. Ainsi, on aboutit à l'amélioration des situations par le biais d'innovations en lieu et place de standardisation, car il ne peut y avoir une seule démarche pour satisfaire des exigences universelles. Même si la finalité impose naturellement certaines formes dans la démarche (si on vise l'autonomie des OP, le processus doit forcément être orienté vers cela et ne pas y contrevenir par des procédés contraignants), il s'agira plus d'avoir un dispositif permettant de questionner chaque aspect par rapport à cette finalité que de déterminer à l'avance les indicateurs, en ignorant les dynamiques réelles.

L'injonction paradoxale pour les ONGD consiste dans le fait de devoir répondre en même temps à des critères « qualité » différents, attendus ou exigés par les différentes parties prenantes avec lesquelles elles sont en interaction dans le processus de changement social. En effet, les bailleurs de fonds, les bénéficiaires, les états,... appartiennent à des mondes différents ayant chacun leur logique. C'est parfois à un exercice de « grand écart » auquel les ONG sont obligées de s'adonner.

En pratique, la difficulté pour les ONG et OSC travaillant dans le sens du changement social, économique et politique, c'est qu'elles doivent se justifier de dispositifs "qualité" relatives à des

« externalités »<sup>16</sup>, autrement dit des effets induits indirects de leurs activités. D'où la tendance à se contenter de ce qui est plus facile à organiser, réaliser et contrôler : ainsi s'explique la domination des tendances « mainstreaming » au moment même où toutes les analyses du contexte font voir la complexité des situations et des processus.

Mais ces dispositifs finissent par s'auto-normer et ratent alors leur principal objectif<sup>17</sup> par un décrochage progressif d'avec les réalités puisqu'excluant de leur sphère tout acteur qui ne serait pas enclin à se plier aux règles du jeu ainsi définies et justifiées par des valeurs intransigeantes car universelles... Mais, à vrai dire, on le sait tous, ils ne les « éliminent » ainsi que sur le papier...

*Stricto sensu*, la qualité n'est pas intrinsèquement liée à la procédure censée l'encadrer mais c'est le contrôle portant sur cette qualité qui est consubstantielle à cette procédure<sup>18</sup>. Autrement dit, c'est l'observation des facteurs qui détermineraient la qualité pour des raisons de traçabilité, sécurité, fiabilité, et donc pour fonder la confiance des parties prenantes. Mais quand l'exigence de traçabilité domine et induit des lourdeurs dans le processus jusqu'à être une entrave à la qualité recherchée, le « serpent se mord la queue ».

La limite des paradigmes actuels seraient que les ONG cherchent légitimement à s'assurer qu'il n'y a « pas de tromperie sur la marchandise » sans pour autant tendre à la même qualité dans la détermination de ce que devrait être "la bonne marchandise". Un renversement des perspectives ici amènerait à imaginer des dispositifs qui installent les bénéficiaires au cœur du processus pour une démarche qualité. Mais, en fait, cela revient à leur donner du pouvoir sur le fonctionnement des institutions (ONGD, agences de coopération). Si l'on met de côté les présupposés en termes de compétences, demandons-nous tout de même ceci : est-ce vraiment envisageable dans le contexte actuel ?

Néanmoins, cela fait entrevoir une approche différente de la qualité qui ne serait plus installée dans des relations bilatérales entre entités, qui est alors fonction des rapports de pouvoir. Ce serait alors une approche qui consistera plutôt, par l'analyse et la revue multipartite des actions, à identifier les facteurs clés de la qualité et formuler les règles réciproques à respecter par chacun à son niveau pour la satisfaction de chaque partie. Dans ce sens, cela renvoie à la notion de « partenariat » ou de « plateforme multi acteur ».

## 6.2.5.

### ***Section 5 : Questions à approfondir et matières à réflexion***

*Peut-on appliquer des « démarches-qualité » au niveau des OSC/ONG ? La situation est-elle comparable lorsqu'il s'agit d'entreprises du secteur marchand et quand il est question*

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16- Sur l'acceptation de cette notion, voir Roland PEREZ, « L'articulation marchand-non marchand au cœur du débat sociétal : jalons pour un nouveau paradigme en management » ; Note de recherche, juillet 2005. Cf. [http://www.smia.info/files/eh93op7r.f1\\_fr-1234.pdf](http://www.smia.info/files/eh93op7r.f1_fr-1234.pdf)

17- Notamment une *démonstration* d'efficacité et d'efficience dans la « production » d'un changement social, économique et politique durable

18- Bien entendu, une qualité qui ne serait pas constatable, observable, etc., resterait subjective. Toujours est-il que ce ne sont pas les dispositifs ou moyens d'observation ou d'attestation de la qualité qui produisent cette dernière. La « démarche qualité » réduite à des outils qu'on applique n'est pas égale à qualité. La preuve en est donnée par des évaluations d'impacts où l'on voit que la même démarche "qualité" et les mêmes stratégies, outils et supports stabilisés par les intervenants (qu'on peut alors considérer comme des "invariants") ont donné des résultats et induit des effets très différents selon le degré de cohésion propre à la collectivité locale et à la nature (ou qualité) des relations entre parties prenantes du "projet" (négociations pour faire aboutir les changements visés)...

*d'ONGD ? Quel est-ici le « produit » dont il s'agit de s'assurer la traçabilité ? Quel est le risque encouru ?*

- On n'est pas sur un « produit » comme dans les entreprises privées, mais on est sur « l'humain » dans le cadre du travail « social » que l'on fait ; Ici, l'exigence de qualité ne se porte pas sur un résultat attendu comme veulent le faire croire les bailleurs de fonds, mais on sait qu'en fait c'est sur la démarche qu'on sera évalué (on est dans le changement social et on regarde si on a respecté les exigences d'un processus portant sur l'humain : a-t-on respecté une démarche inclusive ? dans les moments de conflits, a-t-on su les gérer ou mener des négociations en respect de l'ensemble des parties prenantes) ; la « traçabilité », l'exigence de qualité doit donc se porter sur le processus et la démarche utilisée bien moins que la comptabilisation des réalisations.
- On ne peut pas faire une transposition simple du modèle tel qu'expérimenté dans le milieu des affaires, mais on devrait rechercher comment répondre de ce même souci dans notre propre contexte, selon une analyse propre de la vocation de la structure, des processus et de la situation.

*Pourquoi les ONGD ne réfléchiraient pas d'elles-mêmes et pour elles-mêmes sur la qualité et les démarches idoines ?*

En effet, on se rend compte que c'est, sinon toujours, largement exogène comme processus, du moins la pression, les exigences et les outils. Certes, il est vrai qu'« *il y a des réseaux de la société civile qui existent et qui travaillent là-dessus pour leurs membres* » (extrait de l'entretien avec un représentant du GRET à Dakar). Mais très peu en ont fait un combat politique qui engage leur propre crédibilité au devant d'eux-mêmes, encore moins un critère qui détermine les alliances stratégiques qu'elles nouent ou les partenariats qu'elles acceptent/refusent. Cela ne signifie pas que les OSC et ONG n'ont pas le souci de la qualité, ni ne mettent en œuvre des réflexions pertinentes à son propos, mais simplement qu'au vu de la précarité et de la faible prévisibilité de leurs ressources propres, très peu ont les moyens de pousser un agenda propre, c'est-à-dire décider d'aller au changement pour des raisons propres et dans un processus d'abord "domestique", même si on n'ignore pas l'environnement ou les pressions externes. En même temps, on peut considérer que, de nos jours, l'action des OSC et ONG consiste, pour une large part, à exiger cette même qualité aux gouvernants, au nom des populations pauvres ou opprimées. Or, « *si on exige la qualité des autres, il faut d'abord l'exiger de soi-même* » (extrait de l'entretien avec un représentant du GRET à Dakar).

La qualité ne saurait être une exigence exogène, et donc pas une contrainte extérieure à l'entité concernée, du moins si elle doit être durable. Consolider la réflexivité, l'autoévaluation et les apprentissages issues de l'expérience, c'est également une manière intelligente d'accompagner les OSC et ONG à prendre conscience et à se motiver aux changements institutionnels, techniques et organisationnels nécessaires à une prise en charge correcte de telles préoccupations.

*"Il faut agir de sorte que le « marché du développement » ne soit pas la variable d'ajustement mais un élément d'appoint, qui suppose déjà existants une volonté politique réelle, un engagement citoyen et cohésion sociétale"* (extrait de notre entretien avec un représentant d'OXFAM à Dakar).

*"On est habitué aux systèmes de suivi – évaluation qui se professionnalisent de plus en plus...mais on n'est pas encore capables d'avoir les mêmes outils ou performances sur le plan*



*de l'évaluation du changement social, qui est pourtant crucial"* (remarque d'un animateur d'organisation locale à Dakar).

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