

## Unit 2: GLOBALIZATION AND VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

Fortunately voluntary sector in India is vibrant and dynamic; it is ever growing in number as social entrepreneurship is not in short supply. An important question is whether the blossoming of a variety of voluntary organizations at local, national and international levels is merely co-incident with **globalization**, or whether there is something about the processes of globalization that spawns these enterprises. An equally important question is what impact these enterprises can be expected to have on the processes of globalization themselves. Will they tend to accelerate globalization by effacing national boundaries and uniting people in common ideological commitments? Or, will they impede globalization by allowing those who feel pressured by the process to develop new enclaves which can be defended against global trends? A third question is what impact the voluntary organizations can be expected to have on the quality of governance at both the national and international level. Will such organizations strengthen democratic accountability and make governments more responsive to the will of their peoples, and can they help citizens deal with the pressures of marketization and the growing power of corporate actors? Or will they become agents for the more or less idiosyncratic social goals of the social entrepreneurs who establish VOs, the aid organizations and foundations that support them?

Most VOs focus on issues like poverty alleviation, human rights, environmental degradation, and other issues of social, economic and political development and carry out a range of activities, such as providing services to poor populations, building local capacity for self-help, analyzing and advocating policies that support disadvantaged constituencies, or fostering research and information-sharing. Some VOs focus on serving their members, and others focus on serving clients outside the organization. Some operate domestically, working on projects whose impacts may be felt from the village level to national policy to international arenas.

While VOs located in developed countries seek to expand their impacts beyond local and national boundaries, they establish *international NGOs* (INGOs) to work across national boundaries. Transparency International, for example, has member organizations in more than 30 countries that provide national support to the international initiative to identify and reduce corruption. There are instances of Indian VOs joining the *transnational network* whose members share values, information, and a common discourse that enables them to coordinate their actions locally. An example of a transnational network is the emergence of

widespread linkages among VOs and other actors concerned with environmental issues over the last two or three decades. Such networks allow exchange of information and strategies, but they are less useful for sustained coordination of activity or mobilizing large numbers of people for contentious politics. Some VOs create *transnational coalitions* to coordinate shared strategies and tactics for influencing national decision-makers. A coalition among national and international environmental VOs and directors of the World Bank produced a reform in the Bank's information access policies as well as the creation of an Inspection Panel to investigate complaints about impacts of Bank projects. And *transnational social movement organizations* link VOs with shared purposes across countries to mobilize members for contentious action on behalf of shared goals. The international women's movement comes close to being a transnational social movement, at least on some issues where it can mobilize members to challenge opponents in several countries. The different organizational forms offer different capacities for international action as well as increasing demands for coordination of resources and commitments.

As said by Rajesh Tandon (2004, PP: 7-9), it may be difficult to present how Civil Society or Volunteer Organizations have been affected by globalization. Many analyses have been presented but three common implications seem to emerge around the world. First, domestic Civil Society has gained greater recognition and visibility as a rightful player in addressing various problems; it has emerged separate sector, 'first' not 'third' in respect of their relations with the state and the market.

Second, greater expectation on civil society organisation has been placed in respect of delivery of public services. As the welfare state restructures itself, it has placed new demands on civil society for undertaking delivery of public services, especially for the marginalized.

Third, there has emerged greater demand for and requirement of engaging with global institutions and issues as they impact the lives of their own people. CSOs have been visibly participating in numerous international conferences of the UN system, attempting to critique programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions and raising their voice in relation to new arrangements of trade.

There is tremendous variation in the extent to which VOs are active at national level as well as how open they are to the impacts of globalization. When national doors are opened to information, trade, and travel, however, the impacts on voluntary sector organizations can be profound. The torrent of information now available through media, videos, faxes and the

internet can very quickly raise the awareness of people at all levels of the society about how others live, spread ideas about factors that constrain their own and their neighbors' lives, and disseminate a wide range of alternatives to past practices.

This flow of information and increased consciousness about the wider world is almost inevitable. Exposure to this flood of information challenge old beliefs and expectations, reawaken loyalties to old values and social identities, or provoke intense discussions of highly-charged concepts like "women's liberation," "land to the tiller," or "ethnic cleansing." Information flows that resonate with core social values can be the basis for the emergence of voluntary civil society organizations or social movements that speak with powerful new voices in national policy and governance processes. These voices may be perceived to be particularly threatening when they are backed by resources from outside the country, such as INGOs or coalitions.

Contact with the larger world may also exacerbate both the fact and the awareness of economic discrepancies among VOs at local and national levels. Apart from the impact on the voluntary sector, national economic stabilization can provide more goods at decreased costs to individuals with resources, and it may offer new jobs as corporations relocate to use cheap labor. But it may also result in layoffs of employees in response to economic fluctuations, marginalize groups dependent on declining exports, or demonstrate through business failures how difficult it is to meet the standards of global competition. When the "poor get poorer," the clients to be served or mobilized by VOs or social movements expand in number and in needs. Globalization forces at the national level can reduce state controls over the economy, increase pressure for democratic accountability, or raise questions about state sovereignty.

These developments can create political space for voluntary civil society organizations as alternative sources of services once provided by the state, as watchdogs over and advocates for government policy formulation and implementation, as policy entrepreneurs or implementers with state partners, and as social innovators to guide improved services. When globalization expands political space, the size and nature of voluntary civil society sectors may change in order to respond to the concerns of impoverished and marginalized groups.

It is not however immediately obvious that political, cultural and economic facets of globalization will necessarily co-vary or reinforce one another. In general, however, the

more open the country is to globalization, the more voluntary civil society organizations can be expected to become important actors in the country's development. This is a function of three factors: (1) globalization has impacts on consciousness—both liberating and counter-revolutionary—that are likely to be expressed via voluntary civil society organizations; (2) globalization is likely to place enhanced emphasis on the political ideologies of individualism, freedom, and equal rights; and (3) globalization invites in INGOs that actively promote and strengthen the emergence of national civil societies.

INGOs and alliances have emerged to respond to problems associated with globalization in several arenas, delivering services and responding to disasters, analyzing and advocating policy alternatives, and promoting learning will be differently affected in delivering services, advocating policy changes, or promoting learning and problem-solving about new issues. INGOs and VO alliances have been *responding to disasters and delivering services* for many years, and this is still the most common INGO role. Most of these organizations originated in industrialized countries; many have branch organizations and large projects in developing countries. A recent conference of the eleven biggest international relief and development organizations (e.g., CARE, OXFAM) identified a number of challenges associated with globalization processes.

The end of the cold war, for example, has increased the frequency of intrastate conflicts and internal refugee flows, and public cutbacks have reduced the ability of state agencies to deal with conflicts and humanitarian crises.

Globalization has increased poverty in many regions, and declining development assistance funds have increased competition among INGOs and national VOs for resources. An important consequence of these trends is significantly increased demand for assistance, and seriously reduced capability to meet that demand. In a scenario where government grants and international development aid are shrinking, VOs find themselves faced with multiple accountabilities and shifting relationships. Many of these agencies also feel pressure from private and public donors to become more "business-like" and "results-oriented" in response to widespread emphasis on market-based approaches to resource mobilization and management. Learning becomes key to their survival. Managers of VOs have to have the ability to select most effective alliances and strategies to realize their mission on continuous basis.

In addition, the rise of Indian voluntary civil society organizations is pressing INGOs to turn over local operations to Indian VOs. This change threatens to redefine primary tasks of the INGOs and render their staffs largely obsolete. The effects of globalization are thus pressing many service INGOs to undertake fundamental changes. Those who are in charge of finance, strategy management, administration and human resources management and those who are in the business of monitoring implementation and assessment of development projects require a variety of resources – credible image, organizational intelligence, finance, leadership, skilled staff, good will, networks, community support, movable and immovable assets etc.

For INGOs and alliances that focus on *policy analysis and advocacy*, the thickening networks of global interdependence created by globalization have raised a variety of issues in which VOs have important interests. Some of these initiatives have formed initial organizations at the international level and then built alliances with VOs at the national and local levels. Transnational advocacy networks concerned with the environment, corruption, and human rights, for example, have often been launched by INGOs that later allied with national and local partners – top-down pattern. In other cases, national VOs and social movements have built coalitions with international allies to influence national and international policy-makers – bottom-up pattern. In both top-down and bottom-up alliances, the processes of globalization have built awareness of alliance possibilities, enabled easy exchange of information, and contributed to personal contacts among key actors. The targets of advocacy campaigns have often challenged the legitimacy of INGOs that claim to represent grassroots constituents, and so contributed to building genuine coalitions across large differences in wealth, power, and culture.

Such cross-cultural contacts often involve work across highly-charged differences in norms and values that can set off conflicts. As value-based organizations, INGOs and VO alliances are often highly sensitive to such conflicts, they can play critical roles in articulating and synthesizing issues across value differences and so help to mobilize publics on international concerns and problems. The Global Network on Violence Against Women, for example, has helped to identify and illuminate the common themes in movements focused on violence problems around the world—dowry deaths, female foeticide, female genital mutilation, spouse abuse, rape and torture of dalit women. INGOs and VO alliances may be peculiarly suited to recognizing, articulating, and synthesizing integrative frameworks to contain values-based perspectives and conflicts that shape global problem-solving in the future.

Recent research suggests that INGOs and/or VO alliances are playing active roles in the formulation and implementation of many international decisions and policies. They have shaped international events level in at least the following ways: (1) identifying problems and globalization consequences that might otherwise be ignored, (2) articulating new values and norms to guide and constrain international practice, (3) building transnational alliances that advocate for otherwise ignored alternatives, (4) altering international institutions to respond to unmet needs, (5) disseminating social innovations that have international applications such as PRA, (6) negotiating resolutions to transnational conflicts and disagreements, and (7) mobilizing resources and acting directly on important public problems. In these activities, INGOs and VO alliances have been building the attitudes and institutions for a transnational civil society that makes a different kind of international governance possible.

Whether the emergence and active participation of both domestic and international VOs in policy-making processes can be viewed as an advance in the quality of democratic governance seems to depend crucially on what kind of claim they can make to holding both domestic governments and international governance arrangements to account. Accountability is at issue in at least two ways when voluntary civil society actors participate in national and international governance processes. First, INGOs and VO alliances have the potential to increase or decrease *democratic accountability* in their challenges to national/international institutions that formulate and implement national/international policies or problem solutions (e.g. civil strife in Sri Lanka). If those alliances represent the world's citizens, or even a substantial part of them, their interventions arguably may increase the democratic accountability of the target institutions. But this representativeness is a very difficult claim to substantiate. Democratic accountability might be grounded in the claim that these organizations represent transcendental purposes rather than particular groups or individuals. In this view, there are urgent rights to freedom from political oppression, from the threat of starvation or malignant illness, from the darkness of illiteracy, and so on, that are fundamental to human rights. Democratic accountability is about governing entities' ability to deliver on these fundamental human rights. VOs that align themselves with these causes can be considered to advance democratic governance.

A second important set of issues revolves around the *institutional accountability* of the INGO or VO alliance itself. This is a complex question for international NGOs and VO alliances, since their missions often commit them to serving multiple constituencies (donors and allies

as well as clients) at different levels (local, national, international). Those constituencies often have very different capacities to impose sanctions for failures to meet commitments. Grassroots groups may find it difficult to influence distant international NGOs even when they are nominally part of the same coalition. Successful INGO alliances often build “chains” of accountability, in which the influence and sanctions are transmitted across many links to span the organizational distance between INGOs and grassroots groups. Accountability also turns on clear definitions of performance expectations by the parties to the accountability relationship. Different forms of alliances vary considerably in how explicitly goals, strategies, and responsibilities are formulated. As transnational alliances become more focused on shared strategies and tactics, their investments in mutual influence and accountability can be expected to rise.

In this globalized context, there are great expectations from national VOs. Having multiple sources of support is a preferred strategy for VOs. Seeking support from multiple sources of support without losing track of the organization’s mission is a challenging and balancing act. VOs cannot rely on hierarchy, coercion, command-and-control, financial or material rewards to obtain staff compliance towards organization’s mission. Rather they have to rely on self-motivation, personal commitment, job satisfaction, shared ideology and a sense of significance as important incentives to perform. Managers of VOs have to be aware about the advantages and disadvantages of partnering or networking with international civil society organizations, about the issues that require to be sorted out at the organizational level vis-à-vis regulatory agencies.